

Season's Greetings!

the *Dirt*

FLNRORD INTERNAL NEWSLETTER



Adios!!

After 28 years of service with this ministry (too many versions to list here) I have decided to retire, and this is the last *Dirt* newsletter that I have the pleasure of publishing!

My career began just three days after high school graduation. It started with 10 years in the Saskatchewan Provincial Government, working for the Minister of Rural Affairs and eventually moving through the Legislative buildings. I then shifted into a Human Resource supervisor role within the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation.

We headed west to BC in 1991, which led me to working 28 years within the Deputy Minister's office, Correspondence Services Section (CSS). During my time in the BC Public Service I have supported quite a few ministers, published countless editions of *The Dirt*, received hundreds of thousands of pieces of correspondence, and tracked more than enough mail to cause Cliff Clavin a severe anxiety attack.

Don't ask me why I worked in correspondence for so long (trust me it wasn't because of the pay...), but I've always enjoyed sharing information, and I was really good at what I did.

We have come a long way and seen many changes since the creation of CSS; but have always maintained the same goal—to respond to a wide variety of FLNRORD issues with meaningful information in a timely manner. Correspondence is an “important” job and I encourage everyone to respect and treat it as such. If you are interested to read how CSS was created refer to [page 5](#).

I have met and managed a lot of great people along the way—and will treasure all the wonderful staff and friends I have made and the memories of my time working in the BC Public Service.

Being part of the Newsletter Advisory Group and creating the newsletter over the years has been very rewarding. I am fortunate to have worked with some incredible people and to have had the opportunity to present ministry staff and retirees with the ongoing triumphs and tribulations of staff and the ministry.

So, what's next for me, you ask? Well, I'll still be dotting the i's and crossing the t's. Golf tees that is. My retirement plans include golfing, spending more time with friends and family, and traveling once the world gets COVID-19 under control.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the best in the future!

Signing off for the final time.
Di Bohja from Sonia Donison!

Advisory Group Vision:

“True to our proud histories, informing ministry staff through balanced and timely communication”

The Dirt Facebook



To join “*The Dirt*” facebook page, simply go to the link provided and ask to join the group. You must let us know where you worked/work within the ministry. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/flnrnews/>

Issues of “*The Dirt*” will be posted online quarterly. The newsletter and facebook group are for all employees and former employees and is intended to provide up-to-date information on the organization. Add your story to *The Dirt* facebook account. “Participating in social media means contributing content or comment. When doing so, we trust you to be professional, personable, and relevant.” Social media guidelines.



Submit an Article to [The Dirt](#) and receive a Notebook or Fruit Infused Water Bottle



The Dirt Contents, December 2020

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Kimm Magill-Hofmann, Resource Manager, Okanagan Shuswap Natural Resource District Retires

It seems like it might not be the best time to retire with international travel coming to a grinding halt and our bubbles shrinking, then expanding, then shrinking again. But you have to do what feels right.

I've worked with the provincial government for 30 years and it feels like the right time to leave. I've enjoyed my career immensely and never regretted leaving consulting to work for government. There have been a lot of changes, but I've found after a time of transition and adjustment, it usually turns out just fine. It all depends on your perspective and

attitude. I've tried to stay positive and have fun. I started in forestry, bounced to Lands in 2012, then to Water in 2014 and finally ending in Management. Change is what has kept it all interesting.

I have watched over the past few years, as the boomers have retired, an influx of young, brilliant and highly motivated people come to take their places. I leave knowing everything is in good hands.

I've enjoyed my time with the DIRT Advisory team, getting to know even more people around the province and sharing their stories with all of you in the quarterly newsletter. I look forward to reading all your stories in the DIRT as I sit at home with my feet up, drinking my coffee on my deck.

I wish everyone all the best for the days ahead.



Welcome Carolyn - New Dirt Advisory Group Member



I live, play and work in Smithers, BC. I can usually be found frequenting local hiking trails in the summer (when there is time!) and swimming in local lakes when the sun comes out. Every weekend from January thru March is spent at the local downhill ski hill, with maybe the odd weekday dropped in there as well. I live here with my husband and two young children, who enjoy the outdoors as much as I do!

I have been with the BC Wildfire Service on a temporary schedule since the summer 2018, working as the Communications Specialist at the

Northwest Fire Centre. I enjoy coming in and seeing the folks I share the office with, they make it a great place to come to work every day!

I graduated from broadcast journalism and started my career in the television news industry, where I worked for some time as a news writer, reporter and anchor. I got the travel bug and spent many long holidays abroad soaking in the sun and adventures. Life brought me and my family to Smithers where we said we would put down roots for five years, which we have exceeded thus far! I grew up in Salmon Arm and still enjoy getting back to that area of the province when time permits.

Welcome Sarah - New Dirt Advisory Group Member



I'm one of the Range Agrologists working out of the Okanagan-Shuswap Natural Resource District in Vernon. I have been in the Okanagan for almost 3 years and with government for just as long.

The sunshine, hiking, camping, and well, wine drew me here from Alberta where I recently finished my studies in Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Alberta.

I look forward to being a contributing member of the DIRT Advisory Group, improving communications and promoting engagement across the ministry so please don't hesitate to reach out.

Welcome - New Dirt Advisory Group Member - Angela Bello

Hello! My name is Angela Bello, and I am very excited to be joining the DIRT Advisory Group. I have contributed newsletter articles in the past and have also uploaded the newest editions of the DIRT onto our ministry's intranet site in my current position on the Internal Communications and Online Content team.

I started my FLNRORD career at the Correspondence Services Section, where I worked with Sonia Donison (who is now retiring), and I saw all of the care and effort that she put into each DIRT edition. Sonia has worked on the DIRT for over 15+ years and has done an incredible job – Thank you Sonia!

And to all my colleagues in the ministry, I look forward to reading your stories.

Thank you,
Angela



Have a Story idea?
Send *The Dirt* Advisory Group your ideas!

Don't forget about the Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/flnrnews/>

Keep those cards and letters coming in, folks!

Leslie Laird, manager of correspondence services, is obviously proud of her fledgling section. And yet a little more than nine months ago it was just a gleam in the eyes of a committee.

The evolution started in October 1991, when a steering committee was established to revamp the handling of ministry correspondence.

The Forest Service, through the Minister's office, receives thousands of letters every year from members of the public or other jurisdictions and organizations. And the Minister is obligated to reply to each one.

Some of these can be processed by the Minister's office. But letters that require detailed or specialized knowledge are referred to the appropriate branch, where a response is prepared for signature. These are called Minister's Referral Letters or MRLs.

"The old system was simply bogging down," explains correspondence resources co-ordinator **Ann Thompson**. "Our approval process was long and convoluted, and the method for tracking letters was difficult for our users to understand."

The steering committee looked at ways to expedite and smooth the MRL process.

"They discovered that letters were handled a phenomenal 32 times during their life cycle," says Laird. "They recommended that the processing be handled by a central office with a dedicated staff and that the tracking system be upgraded to better handle the volume of letters received."

The committee also felt that regional or district staff should be directly involved when letters referred to a site-specific issue. In the past, most letters were handled by headquarters staff who would consult with the appropriate region about area-specific issues.

Now fully staffed and housed in an attractive office loft at the edge of Victoria's Chinatown, the correspondence

services section, which reports to the deputy minister, has been up and running since November. The other team members include **Dave Fern**, computer systems co-ordinator; and **Joyce Sambrooke**, and **Sonia Donison**, correspondence assistants.

The whole process of dealing with MRLs has become much more streamlined and automated. Letters received from the Minister's office are assigned a number and placed on a computer tracking system. They are read and then faxed out to the most appropriate branch or region for replies to be drafted. The completed responses are then transferred to the section via the Office Vision network. They are then edited, proofread, and packaged.

Some branches receive a far greater share of the letters than others just because of the issues that are involved.

"We can manually produce some valuable, simple statistics that show us who is writing and from where, what issues they are writing about and, of course, which branch or region is handling the correspondence," says Laird. "These will enable us to gauge public opinion. As hot issues begin to emerge, we will be able to respond in a proactive manner by developing educational materials such as background papers or fact sheets."

The present letter tracking system does not have the capability of generating these important statistics and the manual compilation is time-consuming.

"We can search by the author's name and organization, and by issue or topic if these have been entered consistently, and we can narrow down the date that the letter was received," explains Fern. "Ideally, we would like to be able to call up letters by area or by time, and we would like to track them by date to see what the interval is between arrival and reply." An upcoming business area analysis will help to address the section's computer needs.

Besides settling into their new office and routine, the section staff have also given presentations on the ministry's correspondence initiative and provided support staff with training on the use of their new manual, which was distributed in September. It covers the entire range of ministry correspondence including MRLs, memos, internal letters, briefing notes, orders-in-council, and treasury board submissions.

"It has been quite an achievement to have all this evolve so quickly," Thompson said. "We have had such widespread support on this initiative."

Laird agrees, "What has been accomplished in pulling this section together is a clear indication of the dedication of the steering committee, the systems people, and all those from the branches and regions who put so much thought into it; and the deputy minister, who strongly supported this initiative. We really owe them all a debt of gratitude."

For further information about the correspondence services section contact **Leslie Laird** at 953-3860 or OV LLLAIRD.



The new correspondence services team (from left to right): **Dave Fern**, **Joyce Sambrooke**, **Ann Thompson**, **Leslie Laird**, and **Sonia Donison**.

Spacing Investments in Northwest B.C.'s Forests

Submitted by: Aaron Benterud, RPF, Stewardship Forester, Coast Mountains Natural Resource District

The Coast Mountains Natural Resource District in northwest B.C. is home to the communities of Terrace, Kitimat, Prince Rupert and Stewart as well as many diverse and historic villages. Its three timber supply areas (TSAs) include the Kalum, Nass and Great Bear Rainforest (North). Having productive coastal forests comprised primarily of Western Hemlock and Amabilis Fir, the area boasts a long history of forestry and has an abundance of second growth.

Many of these regenerating forests are a result of natural ingress and are overstocked resulting in stand densities in excess of 5,000 stems per hectare. Without intervention, these second-growth stands produce many small diameter trees that when harvested, are low in value and are usually burned as waste.

In 2017, the district submitted a proposal to the Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) to carry out incremental spacing on candidate stands in the Kalum TSA. The shelf-ready project had been previously funded in 2010-2012 through the Timber Supply Mitigation division of the province's Land Based Investment Program. During this time, the district had developed an inventory of candidate spacing blocks in the district with stand management prescriptions.

The FESBC proposal was approved in 2018 and the annual funding for spacing treatments has continued for three years. It has had a significant and positive impact in the district by enhancing approximately 600 hectares of forest and providing employment to local

contractors. The treatments involved thinning regenerating stands to 800-1000 stems per hectare, which increases log size and shortens rotation age by up to three decades. In addition to its positive effect on timber supply, spacing also improves stand level biodiversity by allowing more light and space in the understorey and mimicking old-growth stand attributes attractive to wildlife such as Northern Goshawk. The reduction in future harvest waste and residue is accomplished by converting small diameter stands into sawlog-producing stands, minimizing slash piles.

By making these long-term investments on the landbase, FESBC is contributing to sustainable forest management in B.C.'s northwest.



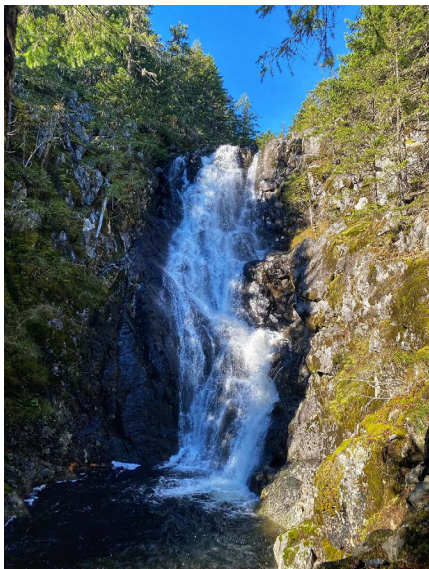
Project Implementation Coordinator and Terrace Community Forest Manager
Kim Haworth

If you are a former employee and want to keep up with the latest Dirt, please contact Michelle Larstone, provide her with your email and she will add you to the retiree's email distribution list.

You can contact Michelle directly at Michelle.Larstone@gov.bc.ca.

2020 Hiking Challenge: Mt. Everest Elevation

Submitted by: Brittany Wilson, Correspondence Coordinator, Correspondence Services



Banon Creek Falls

This year for my hiking challenge, I chose to do the accumulative amount of elevation of Mount Everest. Mount Everest elevation is 8,848 m and between February 1 and November 1 I accumulated 9,105 m.

One of the toughest hikes I did this year was on Canada day where I climbed to the top of Mount Wells, went down the back side and climbed to the top of Mount MacDonald, and then back. The total elevation gain was 725 m.

My favourite hike was the last one I did. It was to Banon Creek Falls in Ladysmith; the total elevation gain was 480 m and there was a beautiful waterfall I went swimming in.



Mount Macdonald with Mount Wells in background

These pictures are of the two climbs mentioned. With this challenge being over I have already planned my 2021 Hiking challenge; I will attempt to see 50 waterfalls in 50 weeks. I have already started my research of waterfalls on the island. If anyone has any suggestions, please feel free to send me a note at Brittany.M.Wilson@gov.bc.ca.

Become a Part of The Dirt Advisory Group!

Wouldn't you like to be part of this exciting team? If so, we would love to hear from you.

The Dirt newsletter advisory group members represents a number of locations around the ministry, but always looking for new recruits to add to our team.

The Advisory Group represents the overall balance of interests from across the ministry. Members of The Dirt Advisory Group have:

- ☐ High level of interest in the newsletter;
 - ☐ Passion for enhanced communication across the ministry and to retirees;
 - ☐ Ability to provide a corporate perspective;
 - ☐ Ability to objectively look at story content ideas and story plans, and provide guidance as appropriate;
 - ☐ Ability to recognize good story ideas;
 - ☐ Able to commit approximately four (4) - six (6) hours per "quarterly" edition; and
 - ☐ Editorial or communications experience would be helpful, but not considered as mandatory.
- If you are interested or know someone who may be interested you can contact FLNRNews@gov.bc.ca directly.

Are you being Recognized for your Contributions?

Submitted by: Graeme Henderson, Groundwater Technician, West Coast Region

Heather Carson, Advisor, First Nations Relations, Stuart Nechako Natural Resource District

Is your program area recognizing staff contributions? Informal day-to-day recognition has the biggest impact on employee engagement, yet most of us struggle with lack of time, lack of know-how, shyness or fear of causing favouritism and other bad feelings.

The West Coast Natural Resource Region and Stuart Nechako Natural Resource District are two areas that have implemented staff recognition programs. Originating in the West Coast Region, and adapted to Stuart Nechako Natural Resource District, the program encourages staff to recognize each other to foster a positive workplace culture, encourage individuals to go the extra mile and ameliorate intra-/inter-office relationships. Examples of the types of actions staff have been recognized for: empowering others, leadership, teamwork, service excellence, etc. The programs in the West Coast and Stuart Nechako differ in terms of draw frequency, included work groups, and number of available gift cards— demonstrating the adaptability of the program. At scheduled times (monthly for the West Coast, bi-annual in Stuart Nechako), entries are drawn with those selected staff receiving a gift card of their choice.

Recognition in this program can go up, down, lateral, or spin in circles. It is not limited to supervisors acknowledging their staff, you can recognize a manager, you can recognize a peer, and you can go across teams.

Don't you feel your staff needs recognition?

I'm Lichen Your Style!

Stuart-Nechako FLNRORD Offices' recognition program

Date: _____

From: _____

This card is to recognize _____ for:

☐ Teamwork	☐ Empowering others
☐ Service excellence	☐ Business improvement
☐ Office Culture	☐ Work environment
☐ Leadership	☐ Work Plan/Ministry goals
☐ Mentorship	☐ Exceeding job expectations

☐ Enter Bi-Annual Draw for Gift Voucher I prefer recognition ☐ Public
☐ Private

You weren't fishing for compliments...but you've landed one!

Stuart-Nechako FLNRORD Offices' recognition program

Date: _____

From: _____

This card is to recognize _____ for:

☐ Teamwork	☐ Empowering others
☐ Service excellence	☐ Business improvement
☐ Office Culture	☐ Work environment
☐ Leadership	☐ Work Plan/Ministry goals
☐ Mentorship	☐ Exceeding job expectations

☐ Enter Bi-Annual Draw for Gift Voucher I prefer recognition ☐ Public
☐ Private

Thanks-a-lot!

West Coast Region's recognition program

Write message here....

☐ Empowering others	☐ Teamwork
☐ Business improvement	☐ Accountability
☐ Work environment	☐ Integrity
☐ Work Plan/Ministry goals	☐ Service excellence
☐ Exceeding job expectations	☐ Curiosity
☐ Carbon reduction	☐ Passion
☐ Leadership	☐ Courage

I prefer recognition in:

☐ Private Enter a monthly draw for a \$25 gift voucher ☐ Public

Testalinden Fire-Re-developing Range Developments

Submitted by: Rob Dinwoodie, Range Officer, Okanagan Shuswap Natural Resource District



Peso



Peso Middle Mountain



Trough

Who hasn't travelled the south Okanagan through vineyards and orchards draping the valley and marvelled at the green, grass covered, steep slopes south and west of the community of Oliver? In July 2015 a wildfire, ignited by lightning, burned quickly across these slopes and south across the grassland plateau. Within hours it had burned hundreds of hectares and within days had consumed much of the infrastructure that was used to manage livestock on these important ranges.

I remember flying in an helicopter to assess the location of livestock in some of these steep areas, giving instruction to the rancher riding horses on the ground below with 2-way radios attempting to remove cattle from the threat of wildfire. Weeks later when the fire had been contained, we flew once again to assess the impact of the wildfire on range infrastructure. Most of the fences on 2 of the larger ranges were completely burned, the water infrastructure within 3 drainages, equating to over 10km of pipe and 13 water troughs, were impacted, damaged or destroyed. Assessment of the area was done using horses, ATVs, by foot and of course, by helicopter. There were many long days spent finding the layout of range infrastructure completed more than 40 years ago to provide much needed water to aid forage and distribution of livestock on these tenures.

Many times, I marveled at the tenacity of my predecessors who laid out these projects and the contractors who implemented the works, which were finally completed this fall (2020); with the difficulties of danger trees, steep terrain, and extreme weather conditions, it has taken 5 years to complete the rehabilitation of this important infrastructure. I think one of the things that I will remember most is that it takes many good people with vision to complete multi-year projects such as these and how relationships and collaboration are so critically important to the work we do here. Having been employed almost 3 decades in the Okanagan Range program I will attest that this project will be one that will remain in my memory and be a story I tell to my (lucky) grandkids.



Tin Horn

Forest Nursery Association of BC (FNABC) – 2020 Chief Forester's Award

Submitted by: Mark Hay, Senior Manager, BCTS Seedling Services

The Forest Nursery Association of BC (FNABC) Chief Forester's Award competition is a source of pride to growers and nurseries in BC who take it very seriously. Every year, since 1983, the Forest Nursery Association of BC Chief Forester's Award is given to the nursery that grows the most target specification container-grown seedlings based on BC Timber Sales' seedling specifications. This year, due to difficult conditions and logistical challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, the BCTS' Seedling Services group made an extra effort to collect the entries and continue the contest's tradition. In total, eleven container blocks of trees were entered in the competition, which BCTS administers on behalf of the Chief Forester.

All nurseries growing seedlings for planting in BC are eligible to compete. Each year a different species and stock type is chosen by the FNABC AGM organizing committee, and is based on which region the AGM is held in. Seed is usually donated by the government and/or a major forest company, with all the seed arrangements and handling completed by the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development's Tree Seed Centre. Nurseries who want to enter the contest receive enough seed to grow two or three container blocks, however, only one block is submitted for judging.

Container grown seedlings have the following benefits:

- an intact, fibrous 3d root system.
- a higher physiological function.
- a reduced transplant shock.
- a better survival rate and early growth and can be planted later in the growing season.

BCTS' Seedling Services staff adjudicate the competition. The criteria for assessment is based on which container block has the most target specification seedlings based on that year's seedling specifications. The number of empty cavities and cull seedlings are also considered, as is seedling form and colour. Empties are counted as a cull. There is no set rule as to the number of seedlings assessed per block, but usually 50 per cent are assessed.

The winners receive a wall plaque and their name is added to the prestigious silver dibble, which they get to keep until the next winner is announced the following year. This



FNABC 2020 Chief Forester's Award Winner – SilvaGro Juniper Beach Nursery

year's winner for the best quality crop of a selected species and type was the SilvaGro Juniper Beach Nursery in Cache Creek.

Thank you to the BCTS' Seedling Services and Spencer Reitenbach at the Tree Seed Centre for making a special effort to keep the Chief Forester's Award seedling growing contest going even though the 2020 FNABC conference in Penticton was cancelled. And, a big thanks to all the growers and nurseries who competed in the 2020 Chief Forester's Award.

Species – Yellow Pine

Seedlot – 40337

B Class
Collection year – 1994
Source Location - ANACHIST
Seed Planning Zone – TOD
Area of Use – TOD Elevation Range 850-1550,
Lat Range 48° 01' 00" Longitude

Range 117o 22' 00" – 122o 22' 00"

Test Info Germination – 92%
Collector – Wild Things Unlimited

Stock Type PSB412A

Specifications – RCD

Minimum 2.4mm, Target 3.4mm
Height – Minimum 8cm, Target 15cm,
Maximum 22cm

Winning Block – 100% Cavity Fill

No culls
94% Target Seedlings
Average RCD 4.23mm
Average Height 12.6cm

From FrontCounter BC to the *New York Times*



Melissa Thorpe (Wallinger) worked at FrontCounter BC with the Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB) in Nanaimo and Victoria from 2007-2009. She left to study her Master's at the London School of Economics in the UK in 2009. After achieving her MSc, she moved to Cornwall, in the far South West of the UK, to support the commercial growth of a regional airport, Newquay Airport.

In 2014, space came knocking! The UK build a large majority of the world's satellites, but currently have no sovereign launch capability. The UK Government identified a market opportunity and set about selecting several sites that might be suitable spaceports. Newquay Airport was a perfect fit for a horizontal launch spaceport, and Melissa was brought into the project to lobby stakeholders for backing and to ensure the benefits of the project would be captured in the local economy.

Melissa's team's first achievement was securing Virgin Orbit, Richard Branson's satellite launch company, as their launch partner in 2018, and the second was securing £20 million of private/public funding to create an operational Spaceport. The team is now working towards the first UK launch ever in early 2022, which will also be the first commercial space launch from an operational airport anywhere in the world.

Melissa's role is the main stakeholder liaison for the project. From Boris Johnson, to the military, to Richard Branson, to the local Extinction Rebellion contingent, Melissa uses all her Canadian-isms to rally investment and support. She also delivers the education outreach programme into local schools, as well as working with local businesses to see if space can improve their activities. She sits on expert panels around the world, alongside companies like SpaceX, Blue Origin and NASA, discussing the role of the growing satellite industry and how to increase access to space for all.

Recently, Melissa has been challenging the space industry to look at ways to be more transparent, sustainable and ethical. In October 2020, Melissa was featured in the [New York Times](#) for her role in 'Britain's Space Race' and has had subsequent features on international news outlets, including BBC World News and MSNBC.

Having grown up in Williams Lake, Melissa is passionate about the role of industrial diversification in rural areas which are currently dependant on traditional sectors. Her time with ILMB and the BC Provincial Government gave her the foundations to understanding multi-stakeholder projects where private/public relationships are key to securing sustainable economic growth.

Launch On!

Prescribe Burning Alive and Well in the North Thompson

Submitted by: Jessica Gunn, Woodlands Supervisor, BC Timber Sales - Kamloops

Day 1 of the burn



Teamwork, knowledge transfer, new learnings and fun are some of the intrinsic values that came out of a prescribed/broadcast burn conducted in the North Thompson Valley on Oct 1, 2020. Broadcast burns are an important silviculture and wildfire hazard abatement tool the Ministry has asked BC Timber Sales (BCTS) to try to increase the use of, where appropriate.

The Clearwater Field Team in BCTS' Kamloops Business Area travelled to their Miledge Creek operations, north of Blue River, to perform the burn. Broadcast burns, an annual event for the team, help improve access for planters and create areas that are better for planting. In addition, the burns provide an opportunity for crew members to work together as a team, to learn new skills and to befriend their inner pyro.



The Miledge Creek burn was truly a team effort between BCTS and the BC Wildfire Service's (BCWS) Valemount crew. One of the benefits of teamwork is increased efficiency. To this end, the collaboration of the crew members on this project led to the burn and mop up being completed in three days. Even the weather cooperated to open a perfect burn window to get the job done.



The prescribed burn covered 10.6 hectares and helps to prepare the terrain for reforestation by increasing the quality and quantity of suitable planting areas. Prescribed burns also help reduce the risk of future wildfires by removing the accumulation of slash within a block.

Day 2 of the burn and results



This particular block burn was part of a pilot project with Forests For Tomorrow (FFT), and the crew had FFT's full support to complete it. By executing the work internally, as opposed to contracting it out, BCTS and BCWS were able to build and expand on their knowledge of broadcast burns, while also supporting each other as a team.

This intra-ministry work between BCTS and BCWS is a great example of utilizing in-house experience and expertise within the Ministry. The experience and knowledge BCWS brought to the project, and their vigilant worker safety protocols, were invaluable throughout every stage including danger tree assessments and falling, and guidance on using the proper equipment and tools for the job. In addition, by completing the work in-house, BCTS was able to keep project costs down.

Thank you to all the team members for their hard work on a successful project.

BC Wildfire Service staff assist United States with wildfires

Submitted by: Carolyn Bartos, Communications Specialist, BC Wildfire Service, Northwest Fire Centre



When the call went out, over 800 BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) members volunteered to deploy to the western United States amidst a record-breaking wildfire season and pandemic.

In 2020, Oregon and California responded to more than 10,000 wildfires. According to [Cal Fire](#), five of the state's six largest wildfires occurred this year, with 1.7 million hectares burned. Similarly, the [Oregon Department of Forestry](#) has released its 2020 fire season review and reports one of the worst wildfire seasons on record with close to 500,000 hectares burned. As a result, these two states sought help from Canada to help fight the wildfires, which drove thousands of people from their homes. BCWS, along with their counterparts from other Canadian wildfire agencies, stepped up.



In total, BCWS responded to three requests for assistance from the United States via the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC), the agency that coordinates the mutual sharing of firefighting resources between Canadian provinces and other jurisdictions. In total, 429 personnel were deployed to support U.S. firefighting efforts. BCWS also supported Washington state's firefighting efforts, sending three Electra land-based airtankers and one birddog aircraft to the Custom Road wildfire south of the Canada-U.S. border on September 8 and 9, 2020.



The first wave of personnel went to Redmond, Oregon, on September 18. Due to a downturn of fire activity prior to the crews' arrival, they spent most of their time assessing and falling danger trees, patrolling for fires and extinguishing hotspots. After their initial deployment period, they were given an option to rest before moving to California to help with fire suppression efforts there and most chose this option.

California received two waves of BCWS staff members, including the wave that originally went to Oregon. Working under similar conditions to those described in Oregon, firefighters spent most of their time doing fire patrol, danger tree assessments and mop-up work but also experienced some aggressive fire behaviour.



continued...

BC Wildfire Service Deployed continued...



A message of gratitude from the U.S. Embassy Ottawa to the Canadian wildfire professionals who responded during the 2020 wildfires can be [seen here](#).

Deploying resources during a global pandemic required a level of planning and coordination unlike any other. A COVID-19 deployment plan had to be completed quickly and included deployment bubbles that identified the occupants of each deployed vehicle and the work unit to which each vehicle was assigned. Each bubble was also given a schedule for eating, showering, and a designated sleeping area. On the fire line, staff members worked within their established bubbles. When they were in the same area as other 'bubbles', they were given sanitizer and masks and maintained physical distance. The deployment plan also included a 14-day quarantine upon each worker's return to Canada.

All BCWS personnel returned to BC by October 17, and both states claimed the end of their wildfires season by mid-November. Although stringent COVID-related protocols were in place, 16 BCWS staff members tested positive for COVID-19 during the deployment or while in quarantine upon their return to BC. All have since recovered.

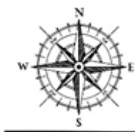
As the BC Wildfire Season prepares for 2021, the lessons learned during these U.S. deployments, and throughout the entire 2020 season, will have a significant impact on their 2021 COVID-related adaptations and protocols.

New Resource: The Field Guide to External Engagement

Submitted by: Michelle Larstone, Community Engagement Specialist, Skeena Region

Have you ever wondered how to plan your engagement for more inclusivity, or how to debrief a particularly challenging session? There's a new resource for staff who do community engagement, written by staff in the Skeena region. [You can view the field guide](#) here on the FLNR intranet.

We'd love to hear from those who have a chance to review it, and even better, use it! Feedback is always welcome.



Ministry of
Forests, Lands, Natural
Resource Operations
and Rural Development



Outland Youth Employment Program

Submitted by: Craig Tilander, BCTS Manager of Business Excellence

The Outland Youth Employment Program (OYEP) is a community driven initiative that promotes equity and opportunity for high school aged Indigenous youth through land-based education, training and work opportunities. BCTS has been a proud partner of the OYEP in Northern BC since 2018.

The six-week program offers Indigenous youth a regionally and culturally relevant curriculum that includes: natural resource-based education, training and hands on work opportunities; a substance free, holistic, culturally inclusive, safe and predictable camp environment; and a focus on work skills, life skill and independence through experiential learning. BCTS contributes to the program financially and with tools, expertise and work experience (tree planting contracts).

While in the program, youth are fully immersed in a natural resource-based work culture that places them in a remote setting. In BC, the program has hired 25 participants in each of the last 2 years. The program provides participants with certification in WHMIS and First Aid and experience in forest fire fighting, tree planting, chainsaw operation, land-use planning and Geographic Information Systems. Participants also learn about managing personal finances and cooking and can obtain their beginner's driver licence.

The continuous input of stakeholders and beneficiaries allows the OYEP to provide cutting edge programming to Indigenous youth. Recent graduates of the program are contributing to their communities by participating in band leadership, administration, social services, local industry and entrepreneurship.

Have a Story idea?
Send *The Dirt* Advisory Group your ideas!

Don't forget about the Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/flnrnews/>



Interested in reading past newsletters?
You can find archived ministry newsletters dating all the way back to 1922 at:

https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/ftp/HEX/external/publish/Web/News_Letters/

We hope you enjoy reading about the past!

FLNRORD Research Program – Brief Summary of Achievements –Coast Area

Submitted by: Francesco Cortini PhD RPF, Research Management Lead, Forest Improvement and Research Management Branch

The Coast Area Research Program is represented by 9 research scientists that conducted 25 collaborative research projects during the past fiscal year (2019/20). These projects fell within the Research Program's portfolios as follows:

Ecosystem Stewardship – 9 projects;

Species and Habitat – 6 projects;

Water – 5 projects;

Timber – 3 projects; and

Bioeconomy – 1 project.

The research scientists from the Coast Area also worked on 6 additional research projects funded outside the program.

Research on the Coast is an area-based service; staff work with Regional Management Teams and other research clients and collaborators across both West and South Coast regions to assess research needs and implement projects. The team works on projects spanning the Coast geographically and ecologically, including West Coast, South Coast and coastal portions of the Skeena Region, the latter associated with responsibilities for coastal Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification (BEC) and Ecosystem-based Management in the Great Bear Rainforest (GBR). Additionally, staff within the Terrestrial and Fish and Aquatic Wildlife Resources teams of the South Coast Regional office, and from the District offices of the South Coast, have been implementing FLNRORD-funded research projects within their Region.

Research in Coast Area over the past year has spanned topics as varied as: foraging and habitat requirements of species at risk to recovery of old forest attributes post disturbance. Two projects that span both West and South Coast regions are profiled below.

The BEC and Cultural Plant project is examining the potential to develop predictive models and mapping for effective stewardship of plant species at the landscape and stand levels within two focal areas: the shíshálh swiya (Sechelt), and the Great Bear Rainforest (GBR).

This project integrates: field data, ecological classification (BEC) data, ecosystem mapping (Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping, TEM), and emerging technologies (e.g., Light Detection and Ranging; LiDAR) with new statistical modelling approaches and cultural knowledge to refine information for planning and operations. Research within the shíshálh swiya, Sechelt peninsula, Sunshine Coast is a collaboration of the shíshálh Nation, FLNRORD District and Research staff (Coast and Thompson-Okanagan), A&A Trading, BCCF, and Ecora Resource Group. For selected focal species, based on cultural importance and ecological attributes, field data was collected at 170 locations and are now being evaluated to develop enhanced maps.



Figure 1. Examples of field sites for collecting data on BEC, site, terrain, and other ecological features to refine maps for prediction of presence and abundance of focal plant species on the Sechelt Peninsula.

continued...

Research Program - Coast continued...

The Coast Area research section is also working on a project to quantify the contribution of snow and ice to freshwater resources, and the downstream implications for water supply. The team is using remote sensing technologies, including plane-based LiDAR, drones, and satellite imagery and sensors, with field data in select watersheds. Partner institutions include VIU, UNBC, the Hakai Institute, the Regional District of Nanaimo, the Comox Valley Regional District, Metro Vancouver and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy Snow Survey Program.

Traditional techniques for measuring snow characteristics are largely limited to manual approaches using tools like the Mt. Rose or “Federal” Snow Sampler and small-footprint, automated weather stations (Figure 2). The stations record microclimate at the site and provide snow water equivalent (SWE), which is the depth of water remaining if the snow melted on an hourly basis. The data on current snow conditions provide a record of change through time that helps to drive and validate hydrological models.

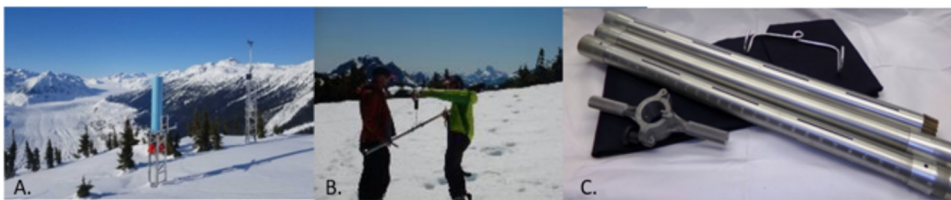


Figure 2. A. Coast area research automated weather station. B. Crew measuring snow density in Russell Creek Experimental Watershed, Upper Tsitika; C. Mount Rose Snow Sampler with 80 cm tube sections.

In collaboration with the Airborne Coastal Observatory (ACO), a technical collaboration of UNBC, the Hakai Institute and Kisik Aerial Survey, and collaborators across multiple organizations, this project compiles information from the existing snow survey network, automated weather stations, and Coast Area research installations to meet research objectives and operational needs. LiDAR surveys, and field work to validate the depth measurements, help characterize snow density across a range of conditions in order to model SWE.

Results from the Upper Englishman River demonstrate the high spatial and temporal variation of snow that could not be quantified using previous methods. These data will prove valuable to water managers who make decisions related to drinking water supply and environmental flow needs in the Englishman River.

Figure 3. Installation of snow depth validation plots, Russell Creek Experimental Watershed (left) and Snow survey plot, Upper Cruickshank watershed (right).



Burman River Restoration Project

Submitted by: Dave Hamilton, Operations Technician, BCTS - Strait of Georgia



Historic channels prior to excavation work.



August 2020 – Channel excavation begins



Channels brought to required elevations.

This fall, two historic fish bearing channels off the Burman River, south of the former Gold River pulp mill, were restored. The original side channels were cut off from the main river by pre-1950 landslides. The Burman is an extremely high flow river, and the restored channels will provide valuable off-channel spawning and rearing habitat for local steelhead and all five species of salmon.

Funding for this project was provided by the Canadian Wildlife Federation through the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF). BC Timber sales crews and contractors began work in August and completed the project in October.

The excavation stage of the project entailed clearing vegetation (sword fern) and storing it on site and removing soil and rock from the orphaned channels to dig down a metre and half, to below the depth of groundwater. Barrier nets were installed on the outlet of the main river as a precautionary measure, to prevent fish access to the site if channels became watered. Throughout the project, two 4-inch pumps removed sediment laden water from the excavation area and pumped it away from the work site onto the forest floor to allow for natural filtration. Mid-way through the project, forty-seven Northwestern salamanders were spotted in a borrow pit connected to one of the channels and were captured and relocated to a nearby wetland via dip net. The vegetation that was removed during channel excavation was stored off to the side of the project to be used later.

Once the channels had been excavated, they were complexed using large stumps and logs secured by riprap (human-placed rock or other materials used to prohibit streambed erosion) on top of them. All the riprap used on the channels' reconstruction was obtained from a natural landslide to ensure it was clean and free of contaminants. Local alluvial soil was placed over the excavated bank material, and the vegetation, which had been stored off to the side, was replanted to prevent streambank erosion and give the channels a more natural look. The new channels, which now cross the Burman FSR, also required the installation of two bridges. The bridges' locations and orientations were determined by the project's biologist and the engineer.

continued...

Burman River Restoration Project continued...

In total, 1.2 km of restored off-channel refuge and spawning habitat was created. The fish appeared to sense their new habitat immediately. Juvenile Coho were observed in the pool under one of the bridges shortly after the barrier nets were removed.

A big thank you to everyone who worked on this fish habitat restoration project. The Mowachaht/Muchalaht were pleased to have this project completed on their traditional territory. Its success is due to the collaborative efforts of a great team that included Mike Wright, the Canadian Wildlife Federation, Stonecroft Engineering Far North Contracting and the Ministry's Coastal Engineering group.



Channels complexed with the addition of woody debris and boulders.



Channel and bank grooming; placement of original revegetation



Typical sediment control measures used for the project.



Bridge installations complete.



Channel restoration project complete

The Dirt Photographers!

Time to get out and snap some photos! *The Dirt* Advisory Group increasingly requires good quality digital photos for the quarterly newsletter. We acknowledge that there are skilled photographers among ministry staff and would like to showcase your photos in each quarterly edition.

Categories

Photos can consist of:

- Workplace images – individuals or groups/teams in office and field settings; health, wellness and social activities;
- Community involvement;
- Wildlife; or
- Scenic.

Submission Details

- Deadline for submissions is changed with each edition and will be noted on the previous edition.
- Images can be submitted to: FLNRNews@gov.bc.ca
- The contest is open to all ministry employees and retirees.
- Interested staff can make submissions to as many editions (season/category) as they want, but there is a limit of 5 images per category.
- We are looking for recent photos; please limit your entries to shots taken within the past 2 years.

Prizes and Judging

- There will be an overall “Best” image in each category;
- Judging will be done by the Advisory Group;
- Images will be judged on composition, clarity, exposure, creativity, relevance to the ministry and category fit;
- The winner of the “Best” image in each category will be sent a prize for their photo (see Prizes available);
- Individuals can win only one prize; and
- All winners will be announced with their photo in the edition of the newsletter.

Technical Specifications/Requirements

The following specifications and requirements have been established to ensure that images can be used in a variety of applications.

1. All images must have relevance to the ministry and be submitted in digital format.
2. All images must be in full colour or black and white.
3. Photo dimensions (image size) should be at 300 dpi and preferably in a JPG format and sent to FLNRNews@gov.bc.ca.
4. Images can be digitally enhanced (i.e., colour/exposure adjusted composite photos are okay), but not digitally altered (i.e. NO “Photo-Shop” images must portray subjects and/ or material in photo as they were captured).
5. When submitting images, some descriptive information is to be included – category or image and location.
6. All images submitted, whether or not selected as a winning image, may be published in future issues of the newsletter or potential other sources (The [Dirt Facebook](#) account)

The DIRT Prize Inventory



Fruit infusers/water bottles
Blue or Green



Drybag for phone or tablet



Portable power bank



Golf Towel – dark blue



Pocket magnetic flashlight –
colours as shown

For further information, contact:

FLNRNews@gov.bc.ca

DEADLINE IS MARCH 19, 2021

Scenic Category - campsite just outside of Barkerville BC. When I walked around the site and saw this old stump it immediately jumped out at me as an elephant.

Photo taken by Bob Taylor, Land Resource Coordinator, Quesnel Natural Resource District

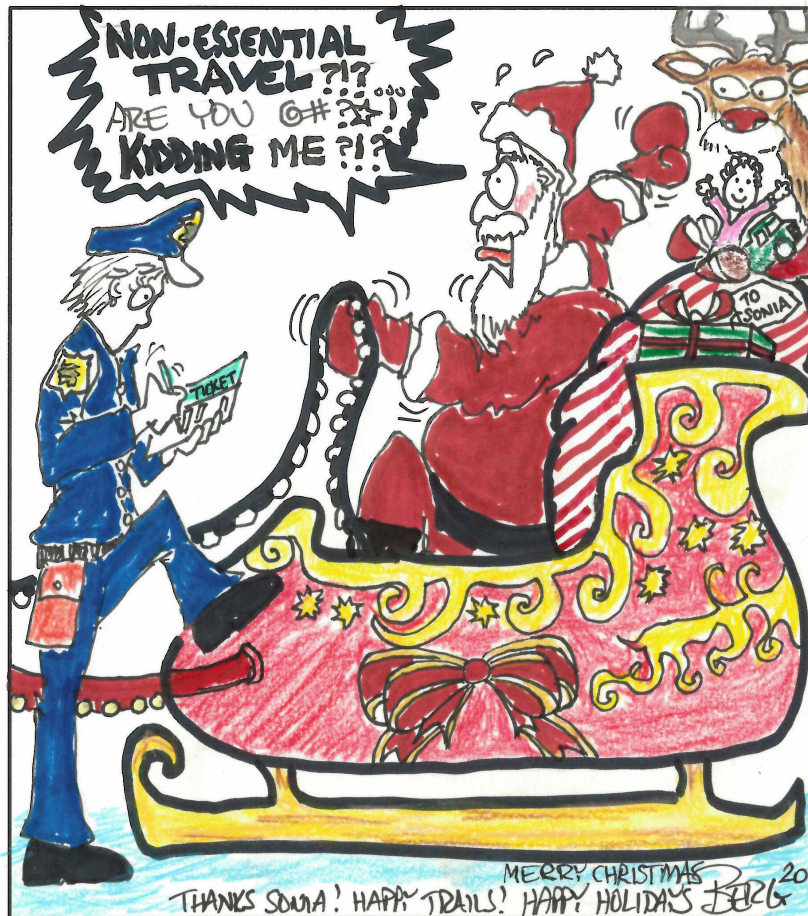


Photographers, please contact [Sarah Mortenson](#) to claim your prize or send an email directly to FLNRNews@gov.bc.ca

THANKS FOR
LAUGHING AT
ALL THE RIGHT
"BITS" SONIA.
HAPPY RETIREMENT!
Shane

BERG'S EYE VIEW

by Shane Berg



SADLY, OFFICER DONISON WOULD BE ON
THE **NAUGHTY** LIST FOR A VERY LONG TIME!

The Dirt is a quarterly newsletter for all employees and former employees.

Questions or comments about the newsletter should be directed to: FLNRNews@gov.bc.ca.

Call for Stories/Ideas

The success of the newsletter depends upon the active engagement of staff throughout the organization. One way for people to support the newsletter is to share your ideas, news, stories, successes, experiences with revitalization and learning, celebrations and photos for use in future editions of the newsletter. People are asked to check with the newsletter Advisory Group at FLNRNews@gov.bc.ca about their idea or ideas for an article prior to writing the story. Stories are to be submitted no later than 2 weeks prior to each quarterly edition (March, June, September, December).

Article deadlines for the next edition is March 19, 2021.

[SUBMISSION GUIDELINES](#)