



Slocan Integral Forestry Cooperative

President's Report for the 2021/2022 Year

July 5, 2022

Welcome everyone, to SIFCo's 16th Annual General Meeting.

I am struck by the profound difference between this spring and the spring of 2021. Last year, after 10 years of drought conditions, we suffered through the heat dome and watched our forests dry out further. We put out one fire on July 3rd, up Popou Rd., and a second, above Graham Rd., was successfully put out on July 7th. The third fire ignited on July 9th above Trozzo Creek, and it became a beast of a different sort. It ate the forests above our homes on the east side of the river, and it took over our lives.

In contrast, this spring feels like a throw-back to my early years in the valley. Rain, rain and more rain. Cooler temperatures making it hard to get motivated in the garden. Planting in the near-mud at times (good for transplants) and watching a bumper crop of mosquitoes emerge.

From this bucolic perspective (I'll take mosquitoes over a wildfire any day), it's been a challenge to revisit last spring and summer as this annual report requires. But revisit I must, in what I call:

Trozzo Wildfire – the Aftermath.

The Trozzo Creek Wildfire took a lot out of us – from many perspectives.

It took 2,840 hectares of trees and undergrowth from our land-base. Although the fire burned little of our “potentially harvestable” timber, we still have to consider downstream effects from the fire (like possible earlier snow melt and increased sediment) on local hydrology when assessing any work we might do. Much of the burned area experienced extreme destruction due to very hot fire.

It took our energy as well. All projects ceased at a certain point to accommodate our full attention on the fire. Staff time starting in July until mid-October was almost entirely fire-focused; flagging access routes and fire-guards and other on-the-ground work, sharing our detailed maps, planning for a potential office evacuation, liaising with other agencies to provide current info to the general community, and supporting community in other ways. Our logging contractor, Gord Zaytsoff, interrupted harvesting to work 3 months straight on the fire. Roads were built, and later rehabilitated under FLNRORD. Consequently, a backlog of interrupted projects was created.

Stephan spent weeks evacuated from his property, with the fire less than 250 meters away from his home at times. I was evacuated myself. Tom spent long, long days with Jesper Neilsen up on the mountain side planning guard-lines. In the relatively early days of the fire, Rachael, Michelle and I watched from the office, stunned and alert, as the pyro cumulonimbus cloud formed above upper Winlaw Creek. By September, we were all exhausted.

And it cost us some money. Salvage work on the guard-lines, as expected by FLNRORD, commenced as soon as the fire was out. We took it on ourselves to ensure it was done to our standards, even though we knew it was unlikely to be a cash positive project. Two patches are done, 4 more have been identified up Goloff Creek and South Lemon. The two patches completed netted a \$20,000 loss.

And it cost us our summer, our time of ease and recovery, usually a less complicated time of year. Our time to sit on the porch (mosquitoes allowing) and watch the trees grow for a bit. Instead we sat on our porches (metaphorically) and watched trees candle while we tried to breath the dense smoky air. 2021 became a year where I came to anticipate winter with a particular relish.

But we gained something as well.

We got through it. We experienced first-hand the value of our forest fuel mitigation work. We saw its value in action. We saw our knowledge of, and relationship with, our land-base, pay big dividends – thank you Stephan and Tom.

Despite the significant disruption and its ripple effects, we also got stuff done. Michelle continued to work on the Community Resiliency Initiative projects and improved our safety plan, Rachael kept busy creating educational videos, and our interface crew completed a number of projects.

With so much of our land-base impacted by the fire, and seeing the potential for future losses, we are renewed in our commitment to finding/creating diverse ways of supporting community resilience. Actively evolving our approach to what a Community Forest can be, also contributes to our robust financial position and longevity.

Let’s look at the projects undertaken in 2021.

Projects During 2021

Type 1: Wildland Urban Interface Management, thin from below

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|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| • Alwyn 8 | 8 hectares | complete |
| • Bannock 14 | 14 hectares | complete |
| • Trozzo 18 | 18 hectares | complete |
| • Pedro 9 | 9 hectares | complete |
| • Paradise 74 (prescription) | 74 hectares | in progress |
| • Hills (prescription) | | complete |

Type 2: Partial cut harvesting with post-harvest clean-up

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|-------------|-------------|----------|
| • Trozzo 30 | 30 hectares | complete |
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Type 4: Fuel Management for habitat restoration and ecosystem resiliency

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|------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| • Ponderosa FSR | 150 hectares | complete |
| • Winlaw Creek | 152 hectares | complete |
| • Winlaw Creek | 164 hectares | complete |
| • Trozzo Creek | 106 hectares | in progress |
| • Winlaw Creek | 196 hectares | in progress |
| • Anderson 79 (prescription) | 79 hectares | in progress |

Type 5: Wildland Urban Interface Retreatment

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|-------------|-------------|----------|
| • Slocan 48 | 48 hectares | complete |
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Other Projects:

- Slocan Valley Wildfire Resiliency Program.1 complete
- Slocan Valley Wildfire Resiliency Program.2 in progress
- Slocan Valley Wildfire Resiliency Program.3 in progress
- Slocan Valley Wildfire Resiliency Program.4 (application) successful
- Winlaw Creek Restoration in progress
- Forest Garden in progress
- Documentaries (dating back to Rachael's hire)
 - Type 1, Type 2, Type 3, Type 4 & Type 5 complete
 - How to Create a Strategic Landscape Level Plan complete
 - Wildfire Conference Interviews & Presentations complete
 - Slocan Lake Stewardship Society complete
 - Valhalla Wilderness School complete
 - Slocan Valley Wildfire Resiliency Program complete
 - Slocan River Streamkeepers complete
 - Ponderosa Prescribed Burn 2021 complete
 - Living with Fire complete
 - UBC Wildfire Efficacy complete
 - UBC A Sane Approach to Forestry complete
 - Trozzo Burn Fly Over complete
 - Dance Umbrella complete
 - Spring 2020 River Fly-Over in progress
 - Forest Garden – Bannock in Bloom in progress
 - Silvertown Fire Resilient Garden in progress
 - Wildfire Resilient Hemp Crete Building in progress
 - Wildfire Resilient Tiny Home in progress
 - Firesmart Home-Owner Tips (3) complete

Leadership and Community Involvement in 2021

The Ponderosa prescribed burn was very visible, so attracted more attention from residents than usual. It generated some interest on Facebook, which gave Stephan the opportunity to engage with more community members. FireSmartBC has just released our Ponderosa Prescribed Burn video to the Provincial FireSmart community, as an example for other communities to follow.

Prior to the Winlaw Creek prescribed burns, Selkirk College students did some ground-based lidar work to capture details of the ground cover. The plan is to use lidar on the same plots again after burning, to assess the percentage of fuels of various sizes that burned under prescribed burn conditions. Working with Selkirk's Forestry program is a valuable resource for us, and an excellent opportunity for students to do fieldwork.

Another group of forestry students from UBC are focusing their studies on SIFCo's land-base. Eight students mapped sample plots to study the effectiveness of treatments and prescribed burns. The lead researcher from UBC is Lori Daniels; the student crew leader is Kea Rutherford.

We are also involved in a project best described as a Forest Garden. The area chosen for this forest garden trial is at Bannock Point, between the highway and the recreation site.

Some of the goals for the Forest Garden Project:

- Native berry and nut plants, and native herbs, increase the deciduous component on forest lands, which is a recommended way of lowering susceptibility to wildfires.
- All native wildlife is a critical part of the long-term ecological stability of forests. Food sources for wild creatures are being lost, whether due to drought and other effects of climate change or outright human incursion. Actively establishing (or re-establishing) more food sources provides more balance.
- We know that some sites that grow trees now, will not support them in a hotter near-future, at least, not the same species. Greater diversity of vegetation increases the odds that SOMETHING native will thrive.

As part of the program, five young people have been employed in a SIFCo, Kalesnikoff & Wildsight collaborative youth program; they spent 5 weeks working in the Slokan Valley.

Further attention from the wider public: The Sierra Club called to discuss tips for presenting to municipalities on how to move towards a non-conflict approach.

Bannock Point Restructuring

Since 2009, SIFCo has used resources (internal and funded) to maintain the Bannock Point Recreation Area as a safer, family friendly, local recreation resource. We installed fire pits, outhouses and a small number of low impact camp sites. We applied a type 1 treatment to the surrounding forest. Our vision for Bannock Point has always been to keep it small, simple and free, in keeping with how locals want to use it.

SIFCo received a document from Recreation Sites & Trails BC, in the early fall of 2021, informing us of their intent to take over management of the Bannock Point Recreation Site. Their plan includes adding more campsites, charging camping fees, and installing a paid attendant. It also includes advertising the site on their provincial website.

We are very concerned that this type of development will significantly alter the character of Bannock Point, and impact local access and use of the site.

At this point, Recreation Sites & Trails BC, does not appear to be interested in working with SIFCo, even though it is part of our tenured area.

In Closing

Alongside my current role as President, it has been my pleasure and honour to serve as SIFCo's Administrative Coordinator since our inception, but change is in the air. I am actively working towards my retirement. Phase 1 is in place; we have hired an Administrative Assistant, who is assuming a number of my day to day duties. My role will evolve from here, with the goal of eventually phasing my involvement out. We'll see what comes.

I humbly submit this report,

Lisa Farr, President