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One Million Dollar Grant Helps Local Community Forest Implement Strategic Wildfire Protection Plan

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WINLAW, BC: Slocan Integral Forestry Cooperative (SIFCo), the community forest based in the Slocan Valley in the Southern Interior of BC, has received one million dollars from the Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) to continue with their Landscape-Level Strategic Wildfire Protection Plan. “This is huge,” says Stephan Martineau, Manager of SIFCo. “Since 2009, we have steadily gotten closer to creating a demonstration for the province of how a region can approach, at the landscape scale, climate change adaptation and wildfire preparedness. With this commitment and support from FESBC, we are making another giant step in that direction.”

To effectively protect rural areas in BC, SIFCo's Plan proposes a landscape-level approach rather than a piecemeal one. The Plan lays out 12 Strategic Fuel Managed Zones located across main fire movement corridors identified through computer modeling, amongst other things. These Fuel Managed Zones create large defensible fuel breaks spanning hundreds of hectares each. SIFCo's Plan also lays out five treatment types, to be used in those Zones including an ecosystem restoration type that reintroduces fire through prescribed burns.

“SIFCo's approach is leading edge,” says Gord Pratt, Operations Manager with FESBC. “The SIFCO landscape-level approach recognizes what can and should be done at the regional scale. The new reality is wildfires are a part of our future. The more defensible areas are, the more likely we will be successful in protecting threatened communities, infrastructure, and critical ecosystems.”

When people hear “fuel break,” they often imagine a bare landscape devoid of trees, but SIFCo's plan is the opposite: each of the five treatment types leaves a forest behind. “We are not talking standard prescriptions,” says Tom Bradley, Forestry Supervisor of SIFCo. “We want lots of large trees in the Strategic Fuel Managed Zones, and we want those trees to have good odds of surviving a fire. We get there by reducing fuel loads so the next fire is low intensity. This helps protect the forest ecosystem and is a perfect fit with climate change adaptation. Low fire intensity also means better suppression chances, which helps protect communities.”

Government support is of utmost importance for SIFCo to meet its goals of implementing this multifaceted approach. “SIFCo is committed to this plan and we are investing some of our own funds,” says Martineau. “Solid support from FESBC makes all the difference. The grant will go directly toward the treatment of over 300 hectares of land all located within our 12 strategic landscape-level fuel breaks. It's a team effort with FESBC and the ongoing support from the Selkirk Resource District.”

Media Interviews

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Forest Enhancement
Society of British Columbia

FESBC was formed in 2016 to advance the environmental and resource stewardship of British Columbia's forests by: preventing and mitigating the impact of wildfires; improving damaged or low-value forests; improving habitat for wildlife; supporting the use of fibre from damaged and low-value forests; and treating forests to improve the management of greenhouse gases. For a full list of funded projects visit: www.fesbc.ca