



## Wildfire Risk Reduction Projects Obtain Funding to Protect Critical Okanagan Watersheds

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**Okanagan, B.C.:** watersheds within the Okanagan basin will soon be better protected through the development of a plan to reduce wildfire risk thanks in part to \$663,910 in funding granted by the Forest Enhancement Society of B.C. (FESBC). Four water purveyors in the Okanagan are proactively working together with Frontline Operations Group Ltd. (FLO) to protect this vital community resource in the immediate future and in the long term.

“We are incredibly grateful to FESBC for funding these projects as they may not have happened otherwise,” said John Davies, RPF, Wildfire Management Specialist with FLO. “Although these are separate watershed projects in the Okanagan, all work is collaborative because they are adjacent to one another and wildfires know no boundaries. Our immediate focus is to prescribe treatment operations to address the wildfire risk around critical areas within the watersheds.”

The four water purveyors involved are the District of Lake Country (Oyama and Vernon Creek Watersheds – receiving \$142,860 in FESBC funding), the Regional District North Okanagan (Duteau Watershed – receiving \$146,235 in FESBC funding), Glenmore-Ellison Improvement District (Kelowna Community Watershed – receiving \$140,910 in FESBC funding), and Black Mountain Irrigation District (Mission Creek Watershed – receiving \$233,905.00 in FESBC funding). Work will occur around residential developments as well as critical infrastructure associated with water intakes, treatment facilities, and communication towers essential to safe operations of the watersheds.

Plans are underway for Open Houses to share information with community members and the media to outline project scope and answer questions.

“These forest fire risk reduction projects for the Okanagan basin watersheds take careful planning, collaboration, and strategy,” said Dave Conly, RPF, Operations Manager, FESBC. “Once completed, treated areas will reduce fire behaviour and severity as well as provide important fire protection control points near critical water management infrastructure, and in some areas, the treatments will act as fuel breaks to impede the spread of fire. These projects are proactive and collaborative, two features we like to see when assessing projects to fund and we look forward to seeing the results of this good work.”

Working together with input from local governments, First Nations, and key stakeholders, prescriptions will be developed for high-value watershed infrastructure sites. Simultaneously, a landscape level wildfire risk management plan will be developed for the watershed to assess high-risk areas for wildfire behaviour, locations where landscape level fuel breaks can be constructed to interrupt the progress of a wildfire, and cultural and ecological values within the watershed.



Forest Enhancement  
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“Reducing the effects from wildfire on our watersheds and our communities is one of the most important things we can do,” said Pam Shumka, Resource Manager, Okanagan Shuswap Natural Resource District, Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource and Rural Development. “Our Natural Resource District is very pleased to partner and collaborate with the water purveyors, First Nations, FESBC, and FLO on these projects.”

The outcome for each project will be to produce management plans that are operationally feasible, ecologically appropriate, and account for all values and constraints within the watershed while ultimately protecting water quality and quantity as a resource. “The watersheds provide water to many communities, and tens of thousands of residents, throughout the North and Central Okanagan,” said Davies. “To have the water quality and quantity within these watersheds impacted to any degree by a wildfire would cause incredible duress to communities and residents alike.”

While the four watershed purveyors submitted separate applications for similar projects with almost identical work methodologies, cost savings will be realized as a result of all four applications being approved.

“We now look forward to having the community learn more about these critical projects in their area,” said Conly. “And ultimately, to have these projects undertaken to protect the area’s water.”

**For an interview with Frontline Operations Group Ltd.**

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