

## Directors Report August 2022

In no particular order, here are the issues I have been focused on as of late with a few upcoming events

1. Wildfires
2. Mosquito Service
3. Election 2023 work plan
4. Learning sessions
5. Columbia River Treaty Local Government Committee
6. Columbia Basin Trust Meeting, July
7. Funds

### **Wildfire**

We live in a predominantly forested area; most residents have become accustomed to our annual fire season. Each year, I learn something new and keep my fingers crossed that we stay safe. Forest fires are a mix of healthy ecological behaviour and concern for community assets that may end up in the line of fire. In the Central Kootenay Regional District, we took the lead on education and action with Fire Smart supports for both individuals and communities. Further to this work, Area D does have a community wildfire protection plan (CWPP). These plans originally were intended to identify areas of high risk where fuel prescriptions should be applied as well as other recommendations for how to co-exist within the wildland urban interface (WUI). While the process for actioning the areas of interest in the WUI has changed, the RDCK remains actively involved in advocating for ecological and community health as the drivers for forest health within the interface. For more information on this work, do reach out.

When you see a fire or have questions regarding one, if you have not heard from the RDCK – this is generally good news as we have not been requested to activate our emergency operation center (EOC). If we are activated, then you will hear from us. All information on fires is sourced with the BC Wildfire Service- please do keep updated via the

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/f0ac328d88c74d07aa2ee385abe2a41b>

### Briggs Cr

The only fire that instigated the activation of our EOC was Briggs Cr., burning to the southwest of Kaslo in the Keen Creek drainage along the Nashton face. This fire was reported and assessed on August 2<sup>nd</sup> with crews on site immediately. Once discovered, it was about 400 hectares in steep terrain along Briggs Creek. It is now estimated at 1700 hectares with an evacuation alert now rescinded for 14 residents in South Fork.

The Briggs Creek fire has been classified as a 'fire of note' due to its size and proximity to communities. This enables BC Wildfire (BCWS) to provide daily updates outlining how the fire is behaving, resources deployed to attack the fire, how it has changed and how the attack is being managed. The Regional District's role is logistics; including ensuring public safety via the evacuation alert and resources on standby should it be moved to an evacuation order. BCWS determines when that call needs to be made by assessing the fire containment lines and having clear trigger points that indicate when the fire is too close. If the fire reaches the trigger points, the RDCK Emergency Operations Center is requested by BC

Wildfire to execute an evacuation alert or order, an order requiring the activation of a State of Local Emergency – this is my job to authorize. This authority is as Chair of the RDCK, not as Director. As Director I represent the community of South Fork (one of 24 in Area D) ; residents in the Village of Kaslo would have Mayor and Council as their elected representatives .

If a community is evacuated, Emergency Support Services (ESS) is activated and a reception center pops up to check in and redirect residents to temporary shelter, and to provide food and other essential provisions. ESS is operated the Red Cross under contract with the RDCK, and would not exist without the amazing volunteer staff, who are locally based.

I will note that Fry Creek fire occurred after this report, and I was unable to add details regarding that fire in time for board publication.

For daily updates: [Wildfires of Note \(gov.bc.ca\), https://www.rdck.ca/EN/main/services/emergency-management/emergency-response1/evacuation-order-and-alert-page.html](https://www.rdck.ca/EN/main/services/emergency-management/emergency-response1/evacuation-order-and-alert-page.html)

For all things emergency services: <https://www.rdck.ca/EN/main/services/emergency-management/emergency-response.html>

If you have not yet had a Fire Smart assessment, please do, they are free! I do provide grants to communities who embark on the community recognition program. Congrats to Johnson Landing, Pine Ridge, The Back Rd, Woodbury and a few others who have been actively working as a team to ensure community safety.

<https://www.rdck.ca/EN/main/services/emergency-management/wildfires/firesmart.html>

### **Mosquito Service**

I cannot get too far in an update and not discuss mosquitos. Area D is the only area in the RDCK with a mosquito abatement service and it is not across all of Area D, only in parts of the Lardeau Valley (Lardeau, Meadow Creek, Cooper Creek, lower parts of Hamill Creek) and Pineridge. The RDCK contracts the service to Morrow BioScience. The service samples larvae count in specific sites around the communities and when larvae are at a certain concentration and the right age, treatment occurs via hand and helicopter. The material used is BTi which is host specific and, as residents can tell you, never decimate the mosquitos to a level that would impact their place in the food chain. I will link resources below.

This season has been unbearable for the Lardeau Valley service area and rightfully so, residents are raising concerns with how the program is operating. Upon investigation, I have found various impacts from dam operations that either instigate the need for early season or late season treatments, significantly high snowpack that extended the annual melt over a much longer spring, and a change in helicopter operators and other contractors that failed to gain the necessary information for succession. I will be meeting with the contractor and staff in the early fall to discuss the program as well as review potential funds that can be applied to the service to compensate for this year's issues.

I will note that this service already depends on a grant to operate because the geography is vast with low human population in the area, creating an expensive service. Previous subsidization was via

Affected Areas funding. I moved it from there to Community Development to ensure sustainability to the budget and have increased the taxation by \$1000 - \$3000 annually with an annual grant of \$20,000.

To provide insight on the program, you can contact:

me: [Awatson@rdck.bc.ca](mailto:Awatson@rdck.bc.ca)

RDCK Staff: <https://www.rdck.ca/EN/main/services/environmental-initiatives/mosquito-control-program.html>

or the contractor:

<https://www.morrowbioscience.com/>

### **Election and Workplan**

This year is an election year in the 4-year local government cycle.. I have been the Area D Director for 2 terms (8 years), and alternate Director a previous 3 years, making my total time at this desk 11 years. In that time, I have served as Board Chair for the last 4 years and in many committee appointments including but not limited to the Columbia River Treaty and Columbia Basin Trust board. It's an odd notion to pause to seek to continue the job when there is so much occurring, but I also of course appreciate democracy. When you work for the people, it's good to pause, check in and ask, 'How am I doing?'

As of September 16<sup>th</sup>, I have been acclaimed to the role as Area D Director.

Moving forward, there are several projects I will focus on. Again, in no particular order nor a complete list:

- Commission reactivation.
  - o Area D has 2 inactive commissions, and I would love to see more involvement. Both the Kaslo and Area Recreation commission and the Glacier Creek Commission have not had members come forward to enable the function of oversight and recommendation to elected officials. Both commissions are shared services with the Village of Kaslo
  - o APHC. I am happy to see the Area D Advisory Planning and Heritage Commission operating at rather good speed. We are saying goodbye to two members this month, Terry Halleran and Ken Hart. Thank you! I would like to see members who have a connection to heritage and/or first nations representation.
  - o For information on any of these commissions, send me a note.
- Alternate. Electoral Area Directors have appointed alternates that are the Director when a schedule conflicts. This was my role for three years before I was elected. I would like to find an alternate that has some flexibility, is great with documents, research, and listening. Perhaps a student that has an interest in politics. Previous alternate Jace Lamoureux has moved onto all sorts of endeavors! I thank you Jace for your time and support with the West Kootenay Boundary Regional Hospital District and the Kaslo and Area Health Select Committee.
- First responder service. Area D currently does not have a first responder service. To this point it has been serviced through the Kaslo and Area Volunteer Fire Dept. An area D wide first responder service will enable more capacity for training, recruitment, equipment, and emergency supports such as house numbering and regular meetings with all stakeholders in

emergency services to build capacity and mutual relationships. The process for creating the first responder service starts with a service case analysis (available soon) which guides how and what the service could look like, if board supports, will then go to the public for assent.

- Community planning phase 2. There continues to be pressures on residential areas with business and industrial development that is not aligned with community values. Land use regulations are quite limited in Area D: There is no zoning outside of Ainsworth, no noise, unsightly or dog bylaw. Rural living is generally inclined to less rules, and I certainly am not a fan of government getting in my living room; however, as I do represent the people, the neighborliness of communities co-existing has certainly shown that in some areas, regulations are needed. There will be community specific discussions to start building their values into tangible tools throughout 2023. Not all 24 communities in Area D will need nor want land use guidelines. Community engagement is critical to getting the needs and subsequent regulations to be a right fit to each community.
- Power and communications sustainability. We live in vulnerable times where essential services such as power and phone are too often either out of service or at risk of being so. In the Lardeau Valley, I have supported with the efforts of LINKs to embark on a power feasibility study and now phase 2, an assessment of residential needs to ensure back up support. The RDCK has begun investigating alternative power concurrently with promoting and looking at how regionally we can reduce GHG emissions. One of the projects within that service is also looking into grid stabilization options. I have set funds aside over the past two years to support the creation of such a program and will continue this work.

### **Learning sessions**

Flood Fire and Disasters/Leadership Workshop. A large part of this job is to know the details on a broad range of topics, from land management, emergency services, and fire behaviour, to water systems, economic development, and mosquito biology. The list, at times, feels endless. The average amount of active files I have is around 150, and many not even RDCK jurisdiction [because in this political age constituents expect knowledge and engagement even on subjects beyond the mandated scope].

To be as prepared and informed as possible, I do spend a considerable amount of time learning through workshops, courses and reading. Three recent areas of focus have been: a) leadership and resilience, b) floods, fire, and other potential disasters and c) forestry.

- a) For leadership, I was honored and quite excited to coordinate a day long workshop with Dr. Christopher Horsethief. We hosted this workshop with an open invitation to Regional District colleagues, staff at the RDCK and many involved in various community development services. We had 30 participants and determined the day was merely an intro to many critical concepts. One concept I have been working with in more depth is that of resilience based on complex systems, with a specific look into the work of Andrew Zolli.
- b) The other learning experience of note was an evening presentation by UBC professor Younes Alila, a hydrologist that is using a new methodology known as attribution studies. Attribution science develops the probability of events using frequency distributions for prediction. A bit of a mouthful but very helpful to start addressing how impacts are rarely isolated but rather

do interact. As we are responsible for emergency response and have been working in mitigation and risk assessment, this scientific approach is much more comprehensive as a tool.

- c) Forestry, although provincial jurisdiction, is one that comes my way almost daily for either advocacy or information. Forestry has been a mainstay for our rural economy, while changes to land management and global trade have removed more resources with less return to the community on an annual basis. This, combined with the mounting pressures of a climate that is increasingly unstable, creates much conflict, debate and requests for support. I have always worked with the mindset that all constituents are my bosses (1380+) and I do not lead based on who speaks the loudest. To do this work, research and learning as much as possible while engaging many stakeholders is my foundation. There are changes needed to forestry and they are in the cue; however, the transition must account for the economic impacts we are already feeling and cannot be simply replaced with tourism. This is tough work and debate with respect at the front is critical.

**Columbia River Treaty- Local Government Committee**

The CRT LGC meets at minimum once a month, more as various projects move forward. The past few months, we have had webinars on the ecosystem function modeling and socio-economic research. For all of the background information, go to [Columbia River Treaty \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)

Most recent was the 13<sup>th</sup> round of negotiations. There is a statement available from Minister Conroy at the link above regarding what this round focused on.

**Columbia Basin Trust**

I have been on this board for two years as the RDCK appointee. We meet every other month; I am also appointed to the Columbia Basin Broadband Corporation Board and the Housing Initiatives Committee.

Our most recent board meeting was held in Cranbrook. These meetings tend to fall the day after our board meetings for the RDCK and to present a timing issue; thus I have been more often in attendance remotely. This board meeting had two wonderful and engaging presentations from First Nations: A presentation on the wetlands from Norm Allard, community planner for the yakan nukiy; and a lively sharing of the Ktunaxa creation story from Bonnie Harvey.

**Area D Community Development Funding for 2022**

This funding stream is now officially closed as we enter election season. Here is the list of entities funded this year.

<b>2022 Commitments</b>		
Community Futures	Cannabis Council policy support	\$3,000
Seniors Branch 81		\$4,000
LV Mosquito		\$28,000
Kaslo Fire Department	Ty bursary	\$3,500
	AED's	\$10,000
Fire Smart Recognition	Ainsworth	\$1,350
	Argenta	\$1,350
	Howser	\$1,350

	Lardeau	\$1,350
	two more	\$2,700
NKLCSS	hampers, nobody's perfect, emergency fund	\$3,750
Schroeder Creek Water Society	GARP assessment	\$7,000
JLCA	Community Readiness	\$10,000
	Food security projects	\$6,000
KSAR	building	\$25,000
Lardeau	water bladder	\$5,000
Ainsowrth Fire Society	insurance	\$2,500
Emergency Social Services	team meetings	\$250
BCEHS	training fund	\$2,500
LINKs	operational	\$12,000
	power stability next steps	\$25,000
	wilderness first aid	\$1,500
	communication	\$1,525
KORTs	bike trails	\$5,000
Argenta Community Assoc.	misc projects for the hall	\$7,900
Howser Water Users	back up generator	\$4,750
Empire Wilderness Society	parking lot maintenance	\$2,500
Argenta Community Assoc.	phone	\$600
Grizzly Bear	bear proof bins for Area D	\$5,000
KiN	AAP carry over	\$11,752
LVCC	hall maintenance	\$9,500