



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
July 12, 2021

Community of Mackenzie Now has a Safe Emergency Evacuation Route

MACKENZIE, B.C.—Highway 39 is heavily forested on both sides of the highway and is the only access route in and out of the community of Mackenzie. The Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC) provided a grant of \$1 million toward supporting a project by the District of Mackenzie (DOM) to reduce flammable woody fuel along the corridor.

The community of Mackenzie is located on Highway 39 in the Rocky Mountain Trench, about two hours north of Prince George. The target treatment areas of the FESBC-funded project aligned with the recently updated District of Mackenzie Community Wildfire Protection Plan and project activities included planning and prescription development, harvesting, understory pruning and thinning, and forest floor fuel piling and burning.

“The District of Mackenzie is very grateful for the support from FESBC,” said Joan Atkinson, Mayor of Mackenzie. “As a ‘one road in - one road out’ community, having a secure egress route in the event of a wildfire has been an ongoing concern. The safety of our community is our top priority and funding provided by FESBC and the Provincial government allowed wildfire mitigation prescriptions to be carried out along the Highway 39 corridor.”

Due to the scale and dispersed nature of the treatment areas, the project was conducted over a span of three years. In 2019, activities focused on refining the areas requiring treatment and developing fuel management prescriptions. Approximately 190 hectares of high fire risk areas were prescribed for treatment along the highway. In 2020 and 2021, fuel reduction treatments were carried out on 120 hectares of the highest risk areas. An additional 26 hectares of high fire risk area was treated by the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development under its Wildfire Risk Reduction initiative using treatment prescription funded by the FESBC.

“Wildfire risk reduction treatments along key community access corridors like Highway 39 are important to help ensure safety of citizens in the event of a wildfire threatening the community,” said Ray Raatz, RPF, FESBC Operations Manager. “The success of this project was the result of a collaborative effort by local First Nations, the community of Mackenzie, contractors, and industry partners.”

The District of Mackenzie received significant support from the McLeod Lake Mackenzie Community Forest - a 50/50 partnership between the McLeod Lake Indian Band and the District of Mackenzie - which contracted out the work to reduce fuel loading in the priority treatment areas. Mechanical treatments were used in most areas enabling the recovery of low value fibre.

Ian LeBlanc, RFT, Wildfire Project Coordinator with the District of Mackenzie said there was a real effort made to take the visual quality and wildlife values of the corridor into account while reducing wildfire risk.

“I’ve had calls from folks saying how impressed they are with the work done and the considerate manner it is being done in,” said LeBlanc. “It makes people feel more comfortable to see this work going on—especially after some large wildfires in recent years.”



Forest Enhancement
Society of British Columbia

The project also supported training opportunities at the College of New Caledonia campus in Mackenzie with residents receiving training which facilitated nine temporary full-time positions working on the project. The community now has local people who are trained in wildfire mitigation work.

“The town of Mackenzie Community Wildfire Advisory Committee coordinated efforts to apply for funding through FESBC making the project possible,” said LeBlanc. “Thanks to the cooperation of many, it has been a highly successful project. It would be great to be able to access additional funding from FESBC to complete the remaining 25% of high fire risk areas. FESBC staff are well informed professionals and have been great to work with. We hope this program can be extended as it has been a huge success.”

For information on/or an interview regarding this project, contact:

Aleece Laird, Communications Liaison | FESBC | communications@fesbc.ca | 250.574.0221

Ian LeBlanc, Wildfire Project Coordinator | District of Mackenzie | wpc@mlmcf.ca | 250.640.6287

Project Partners

