



2022 BCCFA CONFERENCE & AGM

October 19-21, 2022
Nakusp, BC

Speaker & Advisor Profiles

Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests

Katrine Conroy was first elected as the MLA for Kootenay West in May 2009 and has represented the West Kootenays since 2005.

Katrine previously served as the Minister of Children and Family Development and worked to make life better for families across the Province.

Katrine had a varied career before becoming an MLA. She was one of B.C.'s first female power engineers and worked as an early childhood educator, administrator, college instructor, and a small business person.

Katrine has worked and volunteered in her community as the executive director of Kootenay Family Place, an instructor at Selkirk College; co-chair of the Castlegar and District Social Planning Council, treasurer of the Regional District of Central Kootenay Community Futures Board and founding board member of the Community Social Services Employers Association. Katrine lives in Pass Creek on a ranch breeding prize-winning Polled Hereford cattle. She has four children and nine grandchildren.

Matt Austin, Assistant Deputy Minister, Integrated Resource Operations Division, Ministry of Forests

Matt has over 25 years of experience working in the natural resource sector of the B.C. Public Service having had roles in a number of ministries and a diverse array of program areas. Matt holds a Master of Environmental Design (Environmental Science) from the University of Calgary and an Honors Bachelor of Science (Zoology) from the University of Western Ontario.

Matt was appointed Assistant Deputy Minister of Integrated Resource Operations Division in April 2018 and is responsible for a diverse portfolio. The division includes the Archaeology, Compliance & Enforcement, Fish & Wildlife, Water Management, Forest Tenures, Engineering, Lands and Crown Land Opportunities and Restoration branches.

George Brcko, RFT, BCCFA President

George has been the Manager of the Wells Gray Community Forest (CF) tenure since its inception in 2006. He is a Registered Forest Technologist with over 28 years of silviculture, small scale forest management, forest harvesting and wildfire and forest fuel planning and management.

George has played an active role on the executive BC Community Forest Association's (BCCFA) Board of Directors from 2014 to 2019. In 2022, he respectfully accepted the position as the President of the BCCFA after a two year leave. He currently provides oversight and is responsible for the planning and coordination of the Wells Gray CF annual operating plan and long-term objectives. He is passionate about managing the landscape to create climate resilient forests that can continue to provide social, economic, and environmental benefits to communities. He strongly believes in the connection between healthy forests and healthy people, which drives his daily work.

He believes that Community Forest tenures are an opportunity to lead the province in sustainable forest management with an appreciation and respect for the lands and people of British Columbia. When he is not working in the forest, he can be found hiking or touring up mountains in the beautiful interior of BC.

Callum Cathro

Callum started working in the forest industry 10 years ago first as a tree planter and eventually pursued his education in forestry at Selkirk College. Since then, Callum has gone on to work with Indigenous Bands and Community Forests throughout the West Kootenays and Northern British Columbia. Callum now lives in Nelson BC where he works seasonally as a wildland Fire Fighter, and is working on wildfire mitigation projects in the winter.

John Cathro, RPF

John Cathro is Registered Professional Forester and independent consultant. His clients include First Nations, communities, companies, organizations and governments across BC and around the world. He works on issues that include community wildfire protection, third-party certification, strategic land use planning and conservation area management. John has over 20 years experience working within complex multi-party situations involving jurisdiction, economic development, and cultural and ecological conservation. His approach is grounded in technical expertise and based on collaboration and capacity building. John has graduate degrees in forestry and land use from Oxford University and conflict management from Royal Roads University. John and his family live in Kaslo, BC.

Lori Daniels, Professor UBC & Research Team Kelsey Copes-Gerbitz and Kea Rutherford

Lori Daniels is a Professor of Forest Ecology in the Department of Forest and Conservation Sciences, where she directs the Tree-Ring Lab at UBC. Dr. Daniels' research investigates the impacts of natural and anthropogenic disturbances and climate change on temperate forests in North and South America.

With her graduate students, Dr. Daniels has on-going research on wildfires, forest dynamics, and social-ecological resilience to climate change in coastal and interior British Columbia, the Rocky Mountain National Parks, foothills of Alberta and northern Patagonia. Her research at UBC is supported by several prestigious grants including NSERC Discovery, Natural Resources Canada Climate Change Adaptation, Wall Solutions Initiative from the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, and a grant from the Intact Foundation to support ongoing collaboration with the St'uxwtéws Band.

Beth Eagles, RPF, District Manager, Nadina Resource District with the Lakes Resiliency Project

Beth Eagles is currently the District Manager of the Nadina Natural Resource District which includes the Lakes and Morice Timber Supply Areas. The office is situated in Burns Lake and the district encompasses the traditional territories of the Wet'suwet'en, Carrier Sekanni and Lake Babine Nations.

Beth is a registered professional forester and a graduate from the University of New Brunswick. She has worked for the government for 22 years in district, regional and branch positions and in the communities of Fort Nelson, Kamloops, Victoria and Burns Lake. Prior to joining government, she worked for a consultant in Alexis Creek.

Beth is also the co-chair of the Technical Planning Table for the Lakes Resiliency Project. The Project was initiated as a response to the 2018 wildfires and it's goal is to develop land use objectives and a forest landscape plan that will establish a more resilient forested land base and contribute to community stability.

Corky Evans

Corky is formerly an honourable public servant, and is now a citizen. He logged for 20 years, did politics for twenty years, and is now trying to learn to be a gardener. Sometimes he talks in public, although, thus far, never for money. He talks only for groups who he likes, who pay travel costs, and let him say whatever he thinks. BCCFA qualifies on all three counts. He lives in the Slocan Valley.

Jason Fisher, RPF, LLB, Partner, MNP

Jason Fisher is a father, husband, friend, mentor, volunteer, community member, avid reader and occasional angler who also works as a Partner at MNP LLP (mnp.ca), providing strategic forestry and business consulting. True to his values of family, growth and inclusion, he works with clients to envision and seize new natural resource sector opportunities that provide local-to-global benefits based on sustainable practices, renewable products and remarkable people. Educated and certified as a professional forester (RPF) and a lawyer (non-practicing), Jason has held senior leadership roles in lumber and biomass manufacturing companies and the B.C. Public Service, where he served as Associate Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.

Angela French, RFT

Angela started as the Regional District of Central Kootenay Wildfire Mitigation Supervisor in mid February of this year, after previously working as a RFT within the forest industry for the better part of a decade. After receiving the Forest Technologist Diploma from Selkirk College she landed positions in silviculture with BCTS in the Arrow Office and in timber development with Forsite Consultants in Northern BC. Most recently she worked as a planning technician at Atco Wood Products planning and developing forest management initiatives, including wildfire mitigation and forest health strategies. In her work with the RDCK, Angela has been focused on building collaborative management projects across agencies to strategically plan landscape level fuel breaks, co-managing fuel treatments and advancing the FireSmart Program which serves constituents across the Regional District.

Dave Gill, RPF, Westbank Community Forest Manager

Dave Gill has been the General Manager of Ntityix Resources LP, a Westbank First Nation-held natural resource company located in the central Okanagan Valley since 2013.

He and his team coordinate the planning, operations, silviculture, and community and local stakeholder engagement on Westbank First Nation's (WFN) forest tenures. Dave is a Director on the Association of BC Forest Professionals and the Silver Lake Forest Education Society. Since graduating from UBC Forestry Dave has worked for industry, his own consultancy, government, and First Nations in various locations across British Columbia. Since 1999 Kelowna has been home for him and his family.

Today, Dave's primary interest is in advancing ways to incorporate Indigenous and community values into all aspects of forest stewardship on WFN-held tenures and to continue earning the support of and developing opportunities for the WFN Community.

Jennifer Gunter, BCCFA Executive Director

With over 20 years of experience working in community forestry and community economic development, Jennifer is a passionate advocate for community-based resource management. The granddaughter of a woodsman, Jennifer was born and raised in New Brunswick and moved to British Columbia in 1996 to pursue a Masters in Resource Management from Simon Fraser University, focusing on community forestry.

After completing her studies, Jennifer moved to Kaslo, BC where she lived for 15 years with her family on a small farm. Relocating to Victoria in 2014, Jennifer continues to devote her energy to building sustainable local economies and to forest management that benefits local people while creating more resilient ecosystems. One of the co-founders of the BCCFA and long time Executive Director, she has had the pleasure of working with the Board of Directors, staff and membership to help it grow from an organization of just 10 member communities, to one of nearly 50.

Doug Kelly, Director, Forest Tenures Branch

Doug Kelly is the Director of Forest Tenures Branch. Doug graduated from UBC in 1980 beginning his career with BC Forest Products and then as a consultant prior to working in government. Before joining Forest Tenures Branch, Doug was the Director of the Resource Road Project. Other roles Doug has held include Safety Analyst with the BC Safety Authority, Financial Manager, Manager of Engineering and Real Estate Operations, Treasury Board Analyst and Manager of Implementation of the Forest Practices Code. Doug currently lives in Victoria and is looking forward to returning to some sort of normality where in person conversations are more frequent than virtual meetings.

Steve Kozuki, Executive Director, Forest Enhancement Society of BC

Steve has a strong track record in forest industry operations, forest policy and management for large and small companies, and for government. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Forestry degree in 1994 and has held key positions with an integrated forest products manufacturer, the Council of Forest Industries, a pulp company, BC Timber Sales and the BC Ministry of Forests. He is currently the Executive Director of the Forest Enhancement Society of BC.

Erik Leslie, RPF, Harrop-Procter Community Forest Manager

Erik is a forestry consultant and the Forest Manager for the Harrop-Procter Community Co-operative. He has over 20 years of experience working for the forest industry, First Nations, community organizations, and regional and provincial governments on projects from Haida Gwaii to Labrador. He has extensive experience in forestry planning and operations, community consultation, wildfire risk reduction, small business management, and forest certification. In 2018 Erik was the first recipient of the Association of BC Forest Professionals' Forest Innovation Award for his work developing and implementing collaborative ecosystem-based practices in the wildland-urban interface.

Erik has developed and is currently implementing an applied climate change adaptation pilot project in the Harrop-Procter community forest. The project is designed to demonstrate how managers can integrate climate science and risk assessment into practical forestry decision-making in the Columbia Basin.

Garnet Mierau, RPF, Logan Lake Community Forest Management Team, ABCFP President and Forsite Consultants

Garnet Mierau, RPF, plays a senior role within the management team of the Logan Lake Community Forest. He has over 25 years of experience in natural resource management in British Columbia. As a Senior Planning Forester within Forsite Consultants Ltd. his professional practice includes services in wildfire, visual resource and tenure management as well strategic planning. Garnet also serves as the Vice-President on Council with the Association of BC Forest Professionals where he strives to advance the profession in the interests of the public.

Other interests include skiing, curling, kayaking, biking and spending time with his partner Jennifer, children, step-children and grandchild.

Julie MacDougall, RPF, Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives, Office of the Chief Forester

Julie MacDougall started her career in the 90's as a practicing field forester in Burns Lake and then as a resource manager in Vanderhoof before relocating to work as a District Manager with Alberta Parks for 10 years. Now back home in BC, the province is benefiting from her diverse background as she leads the Innovative Bioeconomy and Indigenous Opportunities, the Forest Carbon and Climate Services Branches and the Old Growth Strategic Review in her role as the Executive Director Strategic Initiatives, in the Office of the Chief Forester, Ministry of Forests.

As an avid backcountry mountain biker and backpacker, her love of spending time outdoors with friends and family only strengthens her resolve to see BC's forests continue to thrive in a changing climate. Julie's breadth of multi-sector natural resource planning and management experience in both British Columbia and Alberta offers insightful, first-hand knowledge of sustainable forest management and forest landscape planning.

Erin McLeod, BSc, BIT, FIT

Erin McLeod has worked for True North Forestry Consulting for six years, assisting with the management of the Nakusp and Area Community Forest and local woodlots. Working within small landbases has allowed Erin to participate in many operational roles, from planning to silviculture. With a background in biology and geography, she enjoys managing NACFOR's stewardship projects, forest health management, and assisting with wildfire risk reduction implementation. Erin is also a project coordinator for the Arrow Lakes Caribou Society's Central Selkirk caribou maternity pen.

Garry Merkel, RPF

Garry Merkel is primarily a builder. He works with others to build organizations, relationships, and processes tailored to the unique characteristics and needs of the groups that he works with. He has helped numerous groups better shape their futures through the creation of governments, businesses, schools, various land management arrangements, public policy, foundations/trusts, working relationships and public policy. Garry is often sought out to help groups work through difficult situations in unknown territory. He adapts a variety of tools including negotiating, brokering, planning, facilitating, chairing, mediating, strategizing, managing, teaching or any other professional skill required for each unique situation.

Susan Mulkey, BCCFA Manager of Communication & Extension

With a background in social work, mediation, and six years as a tree planter, in the early 1990s Susan dove into the deep end of land use planning as the assistant mediator with the Commission on Resources and the Environment (CORE) West Kootenay Land Use Planning table.

She found the complex, multiparty process compelling and subsequently shifted her career focus from families to forestry and communities. In 1996 she facilitated the formation of the Kaslo and District Community Forest, and the awarding of a 15-year volume based tenure to a non-profit society, that migrated to a long term CFA in 2008. She participated in the creation of the BCCFA in 2002 and continues to be an enthusiastic student of community forestry. Susan lives in Kaslo, BC.

Eamon O'Donoghue, Associate Deputy Minister, Ministry of Forests

Eamon O'Donoghue grew up in Toronto where he attended the University of Western Ontario graduating with his undergrad in political science. In 1991 Eamon moved to Valemount, BC, where he attended the University of Northern British Columbia, studying Natural Resource Management. Eamon started his career with the BC Public Service in 1991 as a Park Ranger in Mount Robson Park. He moved on to join the Land Use Coordination Office, then onto Regional Executive Director where he served the Skeena Region for 10 years. In October 2018 Eamon was appointed into his current role as Assistant Deputy Minister of the North Area in the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.

Kelly Osbourne, RPF, BC Wildfire Service

Kelly Osbourne is a Registered Professional Forester with 18 years' experience in many parts of BC. She has worked in forest development, silviculture and fire management for both the public and private sector. Kelly currently works for the BC Wildfire Service as a Fire and Fuel Management Officer. Kelly is responsible for providing provincial oversight and expertise, and informing the relationship between fire, fuel and forest management. This includes assessing forest, fuel management and fire management planning policy, legislation, best practices, and quality assurance and making recommendations for improvement. She lives in Victoria BC for the past 11 years.

Connor Robertson

Connor is a featured panelist in the Growing a Future in Forestry session. He has been a part of the logging industry for just over 2 years, and currently works for Timber Ridge contracting. Connor works with the community forests in Kaslo and Harrop-Procter, conducting a variety of wildfire mitigation activities. He is passionate about being in the mountains and the Kootenays, and his work in forestry has made it possible to enjoy his passions while residing in Kaslo, BC.

Jeremy Shelford, RPF and Corporate Commercial Lawyer, Partner, Ratcliff and Company

Jeremy is a skilled advisor in corporate commercial operations and transactions with a focus on the natural resource sector. Prior to practicing law, he worked throughout British Columbia as a Forest Engineer and brings this unique industry knowledge to his work. Before joining Ratcliff, Jeremy worked at a national law firm in Vancouver. While he is not at the office (or riding his bike to the office), he enjoys reading, travelling and spending time outside doing almost any sport. Jeremy joined Ratcliff's team of business law solicitors in 2012, after having worked at a national law firm in downtown Vancouver since 2007, where he was a member of their business law group. Jeremy's practice at Ratcliff consists of assisting clients, including many First Nations, with corporate commercial issues and economic development spanning many industry sectors. Most of his work involves general business law matters, including contract negotiation and drafting, but he also regularly deals with natural resource-related regulatory matters and treaty implementation work.