

**Salt Spring Island Farmland Trust**  
**Annual General Meeting, February 15, 2018**

**President's Report**

The year began with a farewell dinner to say thank you to Marguerite Lee on her retirement from the board. Marguerite was a founding member of the Farmland Trust, incorporated as a non-profit society in 2009. She served as president through those eight years with tireless energy and commitment to make this new organisation the best it can be.

Four themes emerged in the course of our work in 201.:

- 1) We refined management of our properties. The Farmland Trust land assets are valued at over one million dollars. In the report on the Burgoyne Valley Community Farm and Shaw Gardens you will see, for example, that we established a committee of gardeners to self-organise the day-to-day operation of the allotment garden. We consulted with other organisations to improve management of the farm, including assessment of water and soil drainage and development of a plan for enhancing natural pollinators and biodiversity. At the Beddis Road property we issued a standardised Request for Proposals for construction of the new building and prepared the site for the next phase in the development of The Root.
- 2) We increased attention on the development of an Education Plan which began in 2016. The Education Report describes the many educational activities undertaken in 2017, all of which demonstrate an evolving and growing role that the Farmland Trust is playing in building local food and agriculture knowledge for the benefit of the community. Knowledge built through hands-on learning, demonstration of good practice, and social media are among the tools that the Farmland Trust is developing.
- 3) We advanced development of The Root at 189 Beddis Road as a focal point in the community for local food production. The Root report conveys the work undertaken by the Farmland Trust in collaboration with funding organisations and the community at large. The board kept its nose to the grindstone for much of the year, drilling the well, working with engineers to develop the stormwater, structural, and septic plans, to acquire the building permit, to build the community seed bank, to initiate the permaculture food garden design, and to prepare and issue the Request for Proposals for the construction of the facility, and the selection of a successful contractor. In October the board lifted its collective head and shared information about its hard work with the community. It was rewarded with community support that exceeded its wildest dreams.
- 4) The board continued to strengthen its commitment to sound governance and financial management. The board reviewed and updated the SSI Farmland Trust Society

constitution and bylaws, in alignment with the amended Societies Act of British Columbia. The revisions are on the agenda of this AGM and will be formally adopted when approved and filed. As the 2017 Financial Statements show, the SSI Farmland Trust operates on a sound financial platform. The Treasurer's Report helps to interpret the formal statements prepared by McLean, Lizotte, Wheadon and Company, ensuring accountability and financial transparency.

As president, I thank all the members of the board for their volunteer dedication and many hours of expert work for the benefit of the community. I thank each and everyone of you for the skills you bring 2 to this board and the multitude of ways in which you supported me in carrying out my president responsibilities through 2017. The work of the Farmland Trust is a group effort that only happens because everyone on the board cares about this community and works together to accomplish our collective goals. This is a hands-on management and working board with work that includes everything from heavy lifting to heavy thinking and for all your work on all fronts I am truly grateful: Mike Lakin, Larry Starke, George Ehring, Michael Hogan, Lorenz Eppinger, Rob Klein thank you for all you do for this community.

I also thank the board members' families for supporting and sharing their work for the SSI Farmland Trust. And I thank the volunteers who put their hands up and jump in when we need help.

One of the board's priorities is to collaborate with other Salt Spring Island community organisations. I thank SSI Community Services, SSI Conservancy, SSI Seed Sanctuary, and SSI Agricultural Alliance (and all its member agencies) for their contributions to making 2017 a successful year for the Farmland Trust.

On behalf of the board, I thank our financial contributors, without whom we could not have done the work we did in 2017: SSI Foundation, Victoria Foundation, Vancity Credit Union, the Seed Sanctuary Society, the SSI Conservancy, and the people of Salt Spring Island.

Respectfully submitted

Patricia Reichert

## **Education Report to the Farmland Trust Annual General Meeting, February 15, 2018**

Education remains a key purpose of the Farmland Trust, and the board is always looking for opportunities to provide educational opportunities to members of the community.

The educational activities of the Farmland Trust during 2017 were largely the result of the efforts of Rob Kline, who joined the board in March, but who left the board due to other commitments in the beginning of October. A number of educational items took place during the year; these are outlined in this report. However, some other ideas that were initiated did not come to fruition in 2017 after Rob's resignation because other issues took priority and the remaining board members were stretched too thin to pursue some of them. With an expanded board in 2018, a number of educational opportunities are expected to take place.

### **Native Pollinator Habitat Enhancement**

The board contracted with Lora Morandin, a Senior Staff Scientist with the Pollinator Partnership Canada to visit the Farmland Trust's properties and produce a report on native pollinator habitat enhancement. Lora conducted site visits and met with board members, and in November, 2017 presented a report called the Burgoyne Valley Community Farm Site Report and Program Development. (A copy of the report is available upon request.) Her report makes recommendations for enhancing pollinators, including the removal and control of invasive plants and provides a long list of native plant species that attract pollinators. The report also outlines a number of potential educational activities that the Farmland Trust could undertake. The board has requested some more detailed information about educational projects that it could do itself.

### **Earth Day Presentation**

Rob and Mike Lakin participated in the Earth Day celebration in Centennial Park with a presentation dealing with runoff.

### **Honey Bee Colony Tour**

Wendy Gilson set up twelve hives near the reservoir on the Burgoyne Valley Community Farm and held a series of educational events during the summer on bees, some of which took place at the Burgoyne Valley Community Farm, and others at different locations. This included collaboration with the Salt Spring Island Conservancy.

### **Permaculture Food Gardens Design**

Michael Nickels conducted a workshop with 12 permaculture apprentices at The Root in which they studied the site and developed a comprehensive conceptual design for growing nuts trees, fruit trees, berry bushes, and vegetables on the site, making best use of the various growing conditions on the site and with a view to demonstrating food production in a changing climate.

### **Wetland Development at Burgoyne**

The Conservancy brought in wetland expert Tom Biebighauser to discuss the development of wetlands at the Conservancy property on Blackburn Road, and the Farmland Trust arranged for him to tour the Burgoyne site in September. He met there with board members and discussed potential wetland opportunities. Tom recommended that a wetland not be created off the toe of the reservoir because it would make the land below it even wetter and have more impact on farmland. He suggested that enhancement of the existing cedar grove wetland adjacent to the reservoir is a preferred option.

### **Fall Fair Presentation**

Larry and George did a presentation at the Fall Fair outlining the proposed activities at The Root and explaining the development of the site.

### **Seedy Saturday**

The Farmland Trust participated once again in Seedy Saturday in February.

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### **Future Educational Opportunities**

During 2017, discussions took place with a number of individuals about potential educational activities. For various reasons these did not take place, but will be pursued in 2018. Among these are:

#### **Bio-char Demonstration with Rick Laing**

Rick is proposing to demonstrate the production of bio-char, either at his home or at the Burgoyne site. This got postponed for a number of reasons, including the summer burn ban and Rick's availability.

#### **Apple and Fruit Tree Production with Conrad Pilon**

Conrad has offered to do a workshop on apple and fruit tree production.

#### **Workshops with Linda Gilkeson Master Gardener**

Linda Gilkeson has offered to do a variety of workshops for the Farmland Trust. Some ideas included training on pest, disease and disorder identification; pest management and training for pesticide use by organic growers; tree fruit pests; and root diseases (garlic, potatoes, carrots, etc.).

#### **Grey Water Management with Gord Baird**

Discussions took place with Gord Baird about the potential use of grey water at The Root, but this was not pursued at the time because of doubts that grey water could be used there safely without considerable expense.

Report prepared by George Ehring

## **Shaw Gardens**

A committee of 5 was formed this year from the gardeners to help oversee the gardens and deal with any issues arising from underuse of the 77 garden plots. Six garden plots changed hands this year. Many plots are favouring the occasional fruit or nut tree. Many grow garlic and root vegetables as staples.

The harsh winter (2016/2017) created some issues with the water system in May but were resolved with a new maintenance system now in place. A permanent alternate non gravity water feed in emergencies is now plumbed and will be available as a backup if water problems occur again in our water system.

A successful Burgoyne Valley Community Farm potluck was held in August. Forty gardeners were in attendance. Directors from The Agricultural Alliance, The Farmers' Institute and Community Services were invited to take part in this communal dinner. This will continue to be an annual event.

A Sun Shelter 14' x 20' located adjacent to the pump house will be completed this March. There is still a waiting list for plots. For some, the 20' x 50' garden plots have proved to be a challenge and as a result 1/2 plots are now being offered. This will shorten the waiting list and make for more productive gardens.

The gardening committee will continue to take a more active roll in organizing and maintaining the gardens. A Community Services representative is always invited to participate in this committee.

## **Burgoyne Valley Community Farm**

About 21 acres are rented to four farmers and Community Services. The rented land is mostly used for hay, but also to produce fruits, vegetables and medicinal herbs and to raise pasture based farm animals. Most of the farm activities are not profit driven but centred around the need to improve the soil and protect the local ecology, some of the work is experimental in nature. Produce grown by Community Services is used for the social agencies' own charitable mission.

The communities need to compost food and abattoir waste on island was acknowledged. The compost would greatly contribute to soil regeneration on island. A composting system was studied but ultimately the implementation failed due to the extensive permit process required.

The lease on the garlic acreage was not renewed. It was determined after the review that a new proposal would have to be submitted due to a requested change of the tenants and size of the acreage. This 5 acre parcel has now been set aside for a seed saving project.

The Farm includes an extensive area of wetland below the pond. Thomas R. Biebighauser, a wildlife biologist and wetland ecologist visited the site with the assistance of the Salt Spring Land Conservancy and a grant from Environment Canada. He recommended the wetland area that should be delineated.

The twelve bee hives adjacent to the pond continue to be healthy have all made it through the winter so far.

Lora Morandin of Pollinator Partnership Canada submitted a report concerning areas most suitable for habitat enhancement or preservation for pollinators. Future possibilities may include options for pollinator monitoring, timelines for monitoring, role of SSIFT and suggestions for other agencies that could be involved.