

Salt Spring Island Farmland Trust AGM Reports for 2019

President's Report

2019 was another active and productive year for the Salt Spring Island Farmland Trust. The focus was on the development of the two properties that we own and their management for the benefit of the community.

Asset development included remediation of the reservoir at the Burgoyne Valley Community Farm (BVCF), 2232 Fulford Ganges Road, and the ongoing construction of the new building at The Root, 189 Beddis Road. The reports on each property provide more information.

The reservoir is an essential component of the ecosystem at the BVCF. It provides a reliable water source for food production on the farm and supports the rich ecology of the property. The Farmland Trust was proud to receive conservation stewardship designation from the SSI Conservancy in 2019. This designation shows a commitment to biodiversity and species protection on our properties.

By year-end the new building construction at The Root was approximately 85% complete. Remaining work on the building will be completed following installation of the exterior utilities. These utilities include installation of 3-phase hydro service, the design and installation of the water catchment system, and design and installation of a regenerative waste water system. The designs are significant and vital to the most effective operation of the site, taking community needs, climate emergency, and innovation into account.

At year end the net value of the SSI Farmland Trust capital assets had increased by approximately 19% over the previous year, and administrative costs declined by 23%. There is considerable work in progress that will increase the net asset position even further in 2020. These assets matter because they provide essential food and agriculture infrastructure that is core to building a robust local food system and increasing food self-sufficiency. The 2019 financial report provides details of revenues, expenses, and asset position. The board thanks the organisations and individuals that provided financial resources in 2019 for the development of this unique community infrastructure. The year-end Financial Statement for 2019 provides the complete financial position of the Farmland Trust.

The Salt Spring Farmland Trust participated in two key community planning initiatives in 2019—the SSI Climate Action Plan and the SSI Area Farm Plan Renewal. When completed in 2020, these initiatives will be considered in our strategic priorities. The Farmland Trust is committed to community climate action that mitigates greenhouse gas emissions related to food and agriculture. As part of this commitment, The Root will operate with 100% renewable and alternative energy and will maximise water catchment and conservation. At the macro level, the Farmland Trust is committed to demonstrating regenerative agricultural practices on both its properties and supporting farming and home food production through experiential learning, mentoring, and knowledge sharing.

One disappointment in 2019 was our inability to establish a community composter at the BVCF. We engaged in a collaboration with Community Services thinking the composter would be operating by mid-year. Unfortunately, the Islands Trust does not accept that the composter is a farming activity and has requested that the Farmland Trust apply for a Temporary Use Permit and rezoning at the BVCF which is in the Agriculture Land Reserve. Our composter proposal is consistent with Agriculture Land Commission and ministry of Environment Class A composting regulations. Talks that started a year ago with Islands

Trust continue in 2020. The community supports the composter proposal as does the agricultural sector. SSI is currently shipping Class A compostable materials off-island to the landfill.

We were pleased to host several educational tours of our properties throughout 2019, including 42 delegates from the 2019 National Farm to School conference held in Victoria, and a group from Hornby Island where they are setting up a new farmland trust. We provided many tours of The Root construction both with interested individuals and community groups. The organisations included the SSI Foundation board, the Area Farm Plan Renewal working group, Farm|Food|Drink from Nanaimo, SSI Energy Group, Community Evolution Foundation, Camosun College Culinary Arts staff, and local government elected officials.

The SSI Farmland Trust thanks the many people on Salt Spring who are contributing expertise and advice, financial support, and labour to our work. We thank those who helped with work parties and the contractors who worked so skillfully, some of whom were able to discount the cost of their work. We thank the farmers and gardeners on the BVCF for their expertise, goodwill, and for the care they take in their farming and gardening practice, and for increasing food production on Salt Spring.

I personally thank my Farmland Trust board colleagues. We are a small volunteer group and each person on the board brings truly amazing skills, good humour, and a mighty commitment to overseeing and managing the Farmland Trust for the benefit of the community. We have our collective fingers crossed that we will be able to engage paid staff support in 2020 as we continue to provide local food and agriculture infrastructure to the SSI community.

In closing I want to acknowledge the loss of two past board members at the beginning of 2020. Michael Hogan had served on the board for three years. He “retired” in 2018 for health reasons. Michael was a committed volunteer bringing his clear thinking and willingness to pitch in on every project. He constructed the Community Seed Bank at The Root, a unique resource that we provide in collaboration with the Salt Spring Seed Sanctuary Society.

We also are sad for the death of George Ehring in the early part of 2020. George served four years on the Farmland Trust board, contributing his insights and steady hand during the important developmental years of the Farmland Trust. He was secretary on the board executive and our policy expert. Long after retiring from the board he continued to be on-call to facilitate the board’s ongoing planning and management processes. He was a generous contributor to all aspects of the Farmland Trust’s work. His sense of humour and storytelling were unique and an immeasurable bonus.

With the death of these two past Farmland Trust board members we are reminded never to take our volunteers for granted. We honour Michael and George for their service and extraordinary benevolence in our community. We send our condolences to their respective families and many community friends.

On behalf of Salt Spring Island Farmland Trust board,
Respectfully submitted,
Patricia Reichert
President
March 2020

Burgoyne Valley Community Farm Report

Burgoyne Valley Community Farm (BVCF) is made up of various open fields, a reservoir, creek, second growth forest and the Shaw Community Garden. The total area is 62 acres.

There were no significant changes to the five farms that operate at Burgoyne Valley Community Farm. Five farmers continue to rent the fields, ranging from one-half to 13 acres in size. Hay, market gardens, perennial medicinal plants and pasture take up a total of about 22 acres. Produce from the fields is sold locally and used for on island Community Services food access programs.

A four-acre field is currently not rented as it is in an area where drainage issues around the reservoir are being investigated. The field was cut for hay, which was used by farmers and gardeners on BVCF as mulch.

The reservoir supplies the farm with irrigation water. In 2018 the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations had requested that all trees and shrubs are to be removed from the dam associated with the reservoir. Further the Ministry requested that operation plans are to be created for the dam operation and maintenance. Operations plans were completed and submitted in 2019. In the past there were difficulties in securing a contractor and proper equipment to remove the trees and shrubs on the berm. This year a local contractor, with some new-to-the-island equipment was able to remove all the trees and about half of the shrubs.

In May, the FLT board hosted 42 people from across North America who were attending the National Farm to School Conference in Victoria. The conference was sponsored by Farm to Cafeteria Canada. The group toured the farm and learned about the Farmland Trust and the work we do in the community to advance knowledge of and support for sustainable food production methods. Kevin Kunzler, one of the farm renters, shared information about medicinal plants that he's growing on his farm section and his partner explained the process of extracting essences. Kevin also talked about the beneficial experience of farming on a community farm. Simone Cazabon shared information about Community Services' food production on their farm section and the work they are doing there to provide agricultural learning experiences for people in their programs.

In September, the FLT board hosted a group of nine people from Hornby Island who visited the farm to learn about the SSI FLT's model of managing farmland. The Hornby group was in the midst of forming a farmland trust. Ben Korno from Heavenly Roots Farm market garden discussed their farming experience at BVCF and shared the benefits of farming at BVCF and having long-term tenure. Some of the allotment gardeners also joined in tea time with the group.

Chris Drake from The Salt Spring Island Conservancy undertook a study of the farm which led to a Stewardship Agreement with the Conservancy. As part of the Stewardship Partnership program, the SSI Farmland Trust is committed to protecting the biodiversity at the BVCF. It is helping to monitor endangered species on the farm and to providing stewardship public education.

With the help of several volunteers a new sign post was erected road-side and trees and shrubs were selectively trimmed to allow for safer entrance and exit to the farm from Fulford Ganges Rd.

Community Services and the Farmland Trust continue to collaborate on establishing community composting at Burgoyne Valley Community Farm. Throughout 2019, equipment has been selected, provincial and regional requirements were studied and complied with and funding had been secured. The Class A compost was to be used on island to improve soils. Compost improves water holding capacity, nutrient retention, soil structure while diverting organic matter from landfill. Unfortunately the Island Trust has so far presented obstacles to community composting at Burgoyne Valley Farm.

Shaw Community Garden

During 2019 the Shaw Community Gardens provided garden plots to 77 gardeners. Many plots are shared among 2 or more households. The 2019 Garden Committee was formed in April, to include gardeners Brent Talbot, Lucille Lamarche, Nate Poetker, and Carol Adam. The Garden Committee coordinated community garden work, such as broom removal, portable toilet maintenance, road repair and blackberry pruning. The committee provided advice and orientation to new gardeners and helped ensure that the Garden Handbook was understood and the guidelines were followed to engender good community stewardship of the Gardens.

The water system worked well, and a Water Team was formed so several gardeners understand how the water system works, and can be on-call should something need attention. Our irrigation expert, Dave Crowell, “summarised” the system in the early spring, and “winterized” it again in the autumn.

There was some turnover in the gardens during the season, and 10 new gardeners joined by the end of the season, looking forward to digging in their new plots in the 2020 season.

Respectfully submitted,
Lorenz Eppinger and Julie Martin
March 2020

The Root

Progress on The Root has continued steadily over the last year. The major phases of the construction of the building are now complete thanks to the excellent construction and management work of SR Design and all the contractors who helped develop the building. A major focus through 2019 has been the design and installation of an integrated water system. In order to ensure that The Root has ample water to operate and expand into the future we are in the process of conducting an assessment of the water available from the different sources on site, determining the water needs of the building and landscape, and ensuring that the effluent water will be treated properly and disposed of in beneficial ways.

Some of the major projects completed over the last year include:

- Installing the cedar board and batten siding on the main building, as well as the roofing,
- Completing interior construction, including drywall, flooring, windows and doors in the kitchen and apartment,
- Installing energy efficient heat pumps in the main building,
- Falling and processing several dead cedars, damaged maples and a Douglas fir tree in the way of the electrical lines.

Projects currently in progress include:

- The design of an advanced filtration wastewater treatment system,
- The design of the rainwater catchment and storage system,
- Connection to BC Hydro 3-phase service,
- Design of the grid tied solar panels
- Coordinating with the Emergency Operations Command about the emergency response plan for the site,
- Installation of the venting system for the range hood, along with the fire suppression system in the kitchen,
- Installation of the wiring for the 3 phase electrical system to the building and throughout the site,
- Installation of the gutters & downspout system on the main building and the barn,
- Building a utility building to house the electrical and plumbing equipment.

Interest in The Root has continued to grow in the community, with many tours were held to show people the building and site and discuss the future operations of the facility. A pool of volunteers wanting to help with the development of the landscape has formed, and as the work of completing the building nears completion plans for developing the landscape into a regenerative ecological landscape are being created.

Respectfully submitted

Nick Adamson-Jones

March 20, 2020