

June 25, 2025

## How the Community of Hornby Island is Managing Wildfire Risk

South Island Natural Resource District had a busy 2024-2025 year completing five wildfire risk reduction (WRR) projects across the region. The Hornby Island initiative stands out for being the first project to complete fuel management prescriptions in the fall and treatment during winter in the same fiscal year. The speed of completion, along with piloting innovative techniques and a focused approach to community engagement made this project a significant accomplishment.




*Wildfire Risk Reduction sign on Hornby Island*

In the spring of 2024, Fire Chief Doug Chinnery reached out to Land and Resource Coordinator Devon Barnes, where he raised concerns about wildfire threats near critical infrastructure on Hornby Island. During a panel discussion at [ForestFest](#), Doug had been asked what his community was doing to actively protect their community. “I realized that we were in an area incredibly dense with community buildings. A wildfire in that area could wipe out much of our beloved community values.”

Barnes agreed the site was a strong candidate for wildfire risk reduction due to its proximity to public facilities and the Fire Chief’s local knowledge. After a field visit with BC Wildfire Service, funding was approved, and planning began.



Typically, letters are sent out to residents prior to the start of a project, but for this project the choice was made to host an open house at the Community Hall. “The whole communication strategy is about dealing with the communication issues on the front end rather than on the back end,” said Barnes. A school tour and public walk-through followed the completion of the project. “We look at these as points of engagement to build momentum within the community and then bring those practices back to their own properties.” It was also a great opportunity to educate the community on fire safety in the form of BC FireSmart handouts and active discussion.



**Wildfire Risk Reduction Project**


# Open House

Come to the community hall to learn about our plans to protect our community infrastructure from wildfire. Fire Chief Doug Chinnery, Devon Barnes from BC Wildfire Service, and Dave Christie from Cascadia Natural Resource Consultants will be there to answer any questions.

**Tuesday, November 26**

- View the maps / photos / diagrams
- Ask questions about the plan
- Learn about maintaining healthy forests

Community Hall  
NOON to 2:00PM

Wildfire Risk Reduction Open House. Image source: [hifd.org](http://hifd.org)



## Guided Walking Tour

Thurs May 15

Meet at Farmers' Market at 1:00PM

Our Wildfire Risk Reduction project has wrapped up and we're thrilled with the results. Join Fire Chief Doug Chinnery, and Wildfire Risk Reduction Coordinator for the Ministry of Forests, Devon Barnes on May 15 for a guided tour of the area. You can see some techniques to keep your neighborhood safe from wildfire.

Guided Walking Tour. Image source: [hifd.org](http://hifd.org)

One of the standout features of the Hornby Island project was the decision to chip leftover wood debris instead of burning it. Burning slash piles releases a surprising amount of greenhouse gases, approximately 6% annually. Chipping keeps the fuel on site where it breaks down naturally, enriches the soil and helps grow stronger and more fire-resilient trees. It's a practical solution that supports both wildfire safety while maintaining the natural aesthetic of the forest, and it aligns with the Chief Forester's climate goals.

Another welcome benefit to the community was the opportunity for residents to collect firewood through a Free Use Permit during the project.

Firewood can be difficult to come by on the island, so having residents remove woody debris from the site reduces fuel loads while the community receives something of value in return.



Strathcona Tree Care woodchipper

Consultant Dave Christie, who owns property on Hornby, noted, “I’ve worked all around the province and in my career in forestry, which is 30-something years, I’ve never seen the public or the landowners being as accepting of what we’re doing.”

When asked about the impact of the project on the community, Fire Chief Doug Chinnery said, “I have received no negative feedback about this project. Aside from some wood chips in various spots in the forest, a layperson might not know anything took place...I would encourage any small community who has a similar area of occupied crown leases to consider this type of project.”

The success of the Hornby Island project stands as a testament not only to its innovative and climate conscious approach to wildfire resilience, but also to the power of value driven collaboration with local leadership and the community.



*Before WRR treatment on Hornby Island*



*After WRR treatment on Hornby Island*

To read more about Wildfire Risk Reduction initiatives in the province visit: [Wildfire Risk Reduction Community Engagement Resources - Province of British Columbia](#)

Written by Miranda Johnson

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