



# REPORT

**TO:** Lorraine Hilton  
Chief Administrative Officer

File: 2470.20  
Date: February 19, 2019

**FROM:** Tina Neurauter  
Corporate Officer

To Council  
March 18, 2019

**RE: HIGHLANDS STEWARDSHIP FOUNDATION (HSF)**

## PURPOSE

To inform Council of Highlands Stewardship Foundation's proposed additional activities in relation to insurance coverage by the District of Highlands.

## BACKGROUND

The Highlands Stewardship Foundation was formed in November 2002 whose Mission Statement at that time was "To promote the care and protection of land, water and air in the District of Highlands through community involvement and public education."

Understandably, the foundation has grown and changed throughout the years and in July, 2012 due to the group taking on increased American bull frogging activity in the District of Highlands waterways, the District was approached by the HSF regarding the District providing insurance coverage. The 2012 report on the proposed insurance coverage and changes which occurred at that time is attached for information.

The current registered Constitution of the HSF states its official purposes as:

- a) To educate the public, using nature as the primary focus, through experiential activities, arts programs, working in nature programs, workshops, conferences, research, and development of a database.
- b) To facilitate the protection and preservation in perpetuity of the lands of the Highland District, Victoria, British Columbia, as well as the adjacent underwater environment;
- c) In furtherance of the above purpose, to educate through printing, publishing and the use of the media;
- d) To establish and operate in the area, a Centre which will be open to the general public, from which the Society will offer services for the promotion of its purposes;
- e) To raise money, accept donations, gifts, legacies and bequests to further the objectives of the Society;
- f) To acquire such sites, real property and chattels as are required for the purposes of the Society.

## DISCUSSION

In order for the volunteer groups be to fully insured under the District's policy, the group provides the District annually with a list of their routine activities as well as a membership list. This list is provided to the District's insurance broker who then provides the information to the underwriter who approves the activities and issues the policy.

Over the last several years activities of these groups have not varied.

Recently staff was approached by the Highlands Stewardship Foundation in order to have an activity added to their list for insurance purposes. The requested additional activity includes the making of biochar which is explained below with information provided by the HSF:



*For clarity, a biochar workshop would involve making biochar (a form of charcoal that is subsequently used as a soil amendment) from woody biomass (like broom and forest debris) in “trough” shaped “kilns”. In our case, the kilns are made from recycled oil drums and/or propane tanks. The process is called “flame front carbonization” which is essentially an open-top fire in metal container. Our workshop will involve “roasting” wood in an open space, with due regard for safety, burning regulations etc. The result is that Broom and other woody debris is converted into Biochar - a valuable soil amendment that retains water, improves soil, and increases crop yields. Closer to the workshop we*

*will enlist support from the Fire Chief, and develop a “safety protocol”. We will also be working closely with the Broom Bash and Community Garden folks. The result is that Broom and other woody debris is converted into Biochar - a valuable soil amendment that retains water, improves soil, and increases crop yields.*

Staff understands that Council does not have authority to direct what projects or proposals the HSF may wish to undertake, but at the same time the District does pay for both the liability and accident insurance for the foundation based on previously agreed activities and as such staff wanted to bring this additional activity to Councils attention given recent discussions/correspondence on open burning.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

To provide staff with direction regarding insurance coverage for the Highlands Stewardship Foundations proposed biochar project.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina Neurauter  
Corporate Officer

CAO Concurrence

Lorraine Hilton  
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment: [CAO Report, July 2012 Volunteer Insurance](#)