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PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release**

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Volunteers Welcome at Community Forest Work Bee

A work bee to thin trees encroaching on grasslands in Cranbrook's popular community forest will be held this Saturday, September 25.

"We've got the Girl Guides and Scouts coming out, plus our own volunteers, and we're encouraging other groups and individuals who use the community forest to join us," said Tara Gillanders of the Cranbrook Community Forest Society.

"Come prepared to work and have fun. It's a great way to meet new people, get some exercise and help the community forest to thrive."

The work bee, the third in recent months, is being organized by the Community Forest Society with sponsorship by the Rocky Mountain Trench Natural Resources Society, planning by the Rocky Mountain Forest District, and support from the Southeast Fire Centre, Strategic Silviculture, Stihl Canada and M&M Meats.

Volunteers will be working near Sylvan Lake in an area that was once grassland but is now converting to dense forest. The thinning project will make for healthier grassland and forest, improve wildlife habitat and help reduce wildfire risk to the city.

"We'll be using brush saws and hand loppers to cut down trees under three metres in height, then dragging them to roadside and chipping them," Gillanders explained.

"There are lots of different jobs for people to do. Even an hour or two of time will be a big help. Any volunteer effort is welcome."

The work bee will run from 9 am to 3 pm, with a free BBQ at noon.

Work gloves, long pants and sturdy footwear are essential for all jobs. Safety equipment such as hard hats and high-visibility vests will be supplied but bring your own water. Volunteers using brush saws must attend a 90-minute training session to be offered prior to the work bee.

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The work site can be accessed via the Sylvan Lake Forest Service Road near the fire suppression base camp beside Sandor Rental at the north end of the Strip. A red-topped tent will mark the site. Parking is limited so volunteers are asked to carpool, hike or bike to the site.

Please contact Tara at 250-426-0140 to take the brush saw training or to volunteer.

The community forest is one of Cranbrook's most valuable natural assets.

Encompassing 1800 hectares to the east and north of the city, from Sylvan Lake through Isadore Canyon to Eager Hills, it contains grassland, forest and wetland ecosystems that provide winter range for elk and deer, grazing for domestic cattle, and habitat for many other mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians.

There are ancient fossil beds, First Nations archaeological sites, and remnants of historic 19th century trails within the community forest.

A 50 km network of trails and old roads is used year-round by cyclists, hikers, horseback riders, cross-country skiers and snowshoers, while picnic sites, viewpoints and interpretive trails provide families and school groups with recreation and learning opportunities.

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A volunteer at one of the community forest work bees organized in June by the Cranbrook Community Forest Society and BC Government employees. The volunteer work was later augmented by a crew from the Wildfire Management Branch. Thinning trees reduces wildfire risk and improves wildlife habitat.