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FIRE LOOKOUT TO BE RESTORED

ICET grant to rebuild lookout will strengthen tourism sector

WOSS - A piece of history in Woss is being rejuvenated thanks to nearly \$40,000 in matching funds from the Island Coastal Economic Trust.

The Woss Fire Lookout, built in the 1940s, offers spectacular views of mountains and valleys in the Nimpkish region.

The Woss Residents Association, with financial and logistical support from Western Forest Products and Recreation Sites and Trails B.C., will use the ICET funding to rebuild the lookout. Access trails, interpretive signage, and other amenities are also part of the project.

“Northern Vancouver Island is quickly gaining a reputation as a destination for hikers,” said WRA chair Dave Rushton. “Restoring this lookout gives people yet another reason to visit Woss, and to experience first-hand the rugged natural beauty of this part of the province.”

In the years before computerized lightning detectors, B.C. forest fires were often spotted by workers stationed in lookouts built atop mountains. Of the 350 lookouts, 20 or so are still active and in service.

Island Coastal Economic Trust chair Mayor Phil Kent said that the restored lookout is more than just a viewpoint for hikers.

“There is a niche tourism market of visitors with a passion for fire lookouts and other forestry-related experiences,” Kent explained. “Woss has a deep history with forestry, and by helping to fund the restoration of the lookout, we’re boosting the region’s tourism draw, and that’s good for the economy.”

The fire lookout project complements other forestry-related tourism initiatives planned for the new Heritage Park.

Western Forest Products, a significant employer in the region, is contributing to the restoration efforts too.

“Forestry is a part of the history and culture of northern Vancouver Island, and this project will help visitors and residents enjoy the natural beauty of our sustainably-managed coastal forest operations,” said Randy Boas, Operations Manager at Western Forest Products Englewood Forest Operation.

About the Island Coastal Economic Trust

The Island Coastal Economic Trust is a \$50 million endowment established in 2006 by the Government of British Columbia to help diversify the economies of central and northern Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

ICET is guided by a Board of Directors and two Regional Advisory Committees which include more than 50 locally elected officials and MLAs and five appointees. This exceptional team of leaders collaborates to set regional priorities and build vital multi-regional networks.

Through a community-centred decision-making process, ICET has approved over \$47 million for 96 economic infrastructure projects on the Island and Sunshine Coast since implementing its grant program in 2007. ICET investments have leveraged over \$260 million in incremental funding into the region.

A full overview of ICET can be found at www.islandcoastaltrust.ca

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