



## **2018/2019 FLT Society Annual Report**

From March 2018 – April 2019, The Farmlands Trust (Greater Victoria) Society [FLT Society] engaged in protecting local farmland, protecting eco-sensitive and culturally special areas, producing food for those in need, and providing relevant educational and related public awareness opportunities.

Our charitable not-for-profit organization advanced the following suite of initiatives and related activities in 2018/2019:

### **Farmland preservation and management**

As part of our mission, the FLT Society produces food for those in need. From 2012 to present, the FLT Society has been gradually returning the 100+ year-old historic Newman Farm in Saanichton to active agricultural uses. In 2018, the FLT Society “field to plate” initiative produced just over 17,500 pounds of produce at Newman Farm valued at \$38,148 – an organizational record! As part of the FLT Society’s “field to plate” initiative, the produce grown at Newman Farm is shared with people in need throughout the Greater Victoria region. This produce is primarily provided to Our Place Society for use in their preparation of entrees, soups, side vegetables, nutritious salads and desserts.

The FLT Society has also continued its program to grow sunflowers, buckwheat and wildflowers for our “field of dreams”, which supports pollination activities at Newman Farm and the surrounding area. The FLT Society was the recipient of the 2018 Pollinator Advocate for Canada award designation. This program promotes the value-added benefits of advancing bee-friendly farming practices and continues to engage in regional pollinator advocacy endeavours as a member of the Island Pollinator Initiative (IPI).

The FLT Society was also involved in a number of educational initiatives during 2018. The FLT Society was part of a case study that was published in the *Teaching Guide on Food Systems* - focusing on access to healthy food, and in particular, maintaining farms now and for the future.

The FLT Society commenced the process of installing a new fruit orchard which complements the historic Newman Farm orchard. The FLT Society worked alongside the District of Central Saanich, Central Saanich Lions Club, Bartlett Tree Experts and Tree Canada on Tree Appreciation Day. The result has been the expansion of our “field to plate” initiative by planting approximately 30 trees for a new fruit orchard at Newman Farm (trees were courtesy of Le Coteau Nursery) which provides another food source that the FLT Society can share with Greater Victoria families in need. Corresponding irrigation and fencing for the new fruit tree installation was made possible by a Community Grant through the Victoria Foundation. Funding and related support was also provided by the District of Central Saanich to aid in ditch installation and debris removal to support the fruit orchard installation project.

Bert James continues to provide valuable farm management services at Newman Farm - managing the various daily operational duties and responsibilities for the historic farm, the FLT Society vegetable garden plot and raised garden beds, and sunflower/wildflower field. Bert

James and FLT Society volunteers participated in planting and harvesting produce on the property as well as winterizing the vegetable plot.

As a charitable not-for-profit organization, the FLT Society remains committed to making the Newman Farm property a productive farm and fulfilling our mission to promote the economic viability of farmland in the Greater Victoria area through our “field to plate” and bee-friendly farming “field of dreams” initiatives, while continuing public awareness and educational programs.

#### **Did you know?**

***To date, the FLT Society is the largest single supplier of produce to Our Place Society’s Food Services Department from late July to early October.*** The produce shared by the FLT Society to Our Place Society via the “field to plate” initiative is used for the meals created for Our Place Society lunches and dinners. The uses of the produce are many - entrees, soups, side vegetables and nutritious salads with some of the apples (from the Newman Farm orchard) making for a great fruit crisp for dessert!

*From Brian Cox (Our Place Society Food Services Manager) – “I want to recognize the volunteers importance to the success of the ‘field to plate’ project...We are very excited that we are participating in a local food sustainability project.”*

#### **Governance**

In April 2018, we welcomed Dr. Steve Grossnickle to the FLT Society Board of Directors – serving as a new FLT Society Board Director.

The FLT Society Board of Directors appreciates the on-going working relationship with the Centre for Plant Health (Dr. Thomas Niederberger and staff) in North Saanich, BC for access to the Pavilion Building for our board and committee meetings.

#### **Financial**

Many thanks to the following individuals and organizations who supported the FLT Society in 2018-2019 with regard to farmland preservation and local food security protection activities in the Greater Victoria region, in particular, our work at Newman Farm: Bartlett Tree Experts; Center for Plant Health; District of Central Saanich; individual FLT Society supporters; Le Coteau Nursery; Our Place Society; Peninsula Agricultural Commission; Saanich Peninsula Community Foundation; Stantec; United Way of Greater Victoria; Vancity Savings; and the Victoria Foundation.

The FLT Society Patron and Board of Directors are appreciative of the District of Central Saanich granting our charitable not-for-profit society with a multi-year permissive tax exemption (2017 – 2019). The permissive tax exemption provides certainty to the FLT Society as a means of advancing our farmland management activities at Newman Farm.

#### **Communications and public outreach**

The FLT Society also led a series of walkabouts and guided tours of Newman Farm during the summer which brings the practical component of our work to strategic partners, collaborators and funders.

The FLT Society also engaged in the Saanich Fair in September 2018 as part of the IPI Booth in support of bee-friendly farming practices and pollinator advocacy.

In mid-October 2018, Bob Maxwell (FLT Society Community Advisor) and Dr. Steve Grossnickle (FLT Society Board Director) co-led a soil science learning event at Newman Farm with members of the Pacific Regional Soil Science Society (PRSSS). This was the second consecutive year that PRSSS and the FLT Society collaborated on a learning event at the Farm.

For more information about the FLT Society, visit

- FLT Society website: [www.farmlandstrust.org](http://www.farmlandstrust.org)
- FLT Society Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/The-Farmlands-Trust-Society-190493347776568/>
- FLT Society Twitter site: <https://twitter.com/FarmlandsTrust>

### **Looking to the future**

During 2019/2020, the FLT Society Board of Directors are proposing the following activities:

- ***Maintain Newman Farm program operations – includes diversification of crops.*** Subject to capacity and resourcing (human, technical and financial), explore collaborations with communities and organizations who expressed interest in collaborating with the FLT Society on specific projects to support local food security and healthy living/wellness initiatives in their respective communities – e.g., LifeCycles and Collaborators' Food Distribution Hub, local First Nations, and local area food banks.

The FLT Society's mandate (based on the District of Central Saanich's Newman Farm Master Plan and the District of Central Saanich-FLT Society 10-Year License Agreement) operates as a charitable non-profit program conducting agricultural stewardship and community development activities at the Newman Farm. The FLT Society continues to expand its licensed area cultivated by approximately 10% per year (i.e. the vegetable growing area, new fruit orchard). As such, the FLT Society at Newman Farm is interested in continuing the "field to plate" initiative (in cooperation with the District of Central Saanich) to aid in relieving poverty and mitigating food insecurity for marginalized populations in the Greater Victoria area.

Furthermore, the diversification of crops includes purchasing more seeds, starter plants, and gardening tools for the annual farming seasons based on the customized menu options of our existing and newly emerging partnerships with organizations that support local food access for those in need in the Greater Victoria area (e.g., Our Place Society). This includes (i) expanding the current Newman Farm vegetable garden; (ii) expanding the range of produce that we grow in the coming years; and (iii) supporting organic (fall/winter) fertilization and cover crops to support soil revitalization.

- ***Support the CRD Food and Farmland Trust concept.*** Under the leadership of FLT Society Chair Carol Pickup, the FLT Society made presentations to the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board in 2019 to support the creation of a CRD food and farmland trust as

a means of supporting farmland preservation to facilitate access for new and emerging farmers to grow locally sourced food in the region. At present, there appears to be a need for farm incubator and/or farm transition models in terms of facilitating land matches with landowners (public and private) and emerging farmers to support farming activities and food production in the region.

- **Develop a site-specific long-term farm management plan** (for growth and expansion of our existing licensed area of Newman Farm for new community partner access for those in need in Greater Victoria) which honors the history of Newman Farm while integrating current and historical farming practices on this particular property.
- **Maintain our irrigation management** (includes repair, maintenance and updates to our irrigation line and watering systems to support optimal food growth). The FLT Society maintains the water line on the designated portion of Newman Farm that we manage. We also monitor any risks of deficiencies in said infrastructure throughout the growing season particularly as we expand our vegetable plots each year based on demand and interest.
- **Maintain the “field of dreams” in support of pollination activities** at Newman Farm. This includes offering forage – providing good nutrition for native bees on 3-6% of the licensed area; planting continuous bloom of different flowering plants throughout the growing season, especially in early spring; offering clean water for bees; providing a variety of habitats for nesting and mating, through features such as hedgerows, natural brush, and buffer strips; and practicing Integrated Pest Management – no utilizing of chemicals on the Farm.
- **Engage and mobilize volunteers.** The recruitment and retention of FLT Society volunteers for monthly work parties at Newman Farm (May – September of each year), this includes coordinating annual day of caring and related events with the United Way of Greater Victoria and employers (throughout the Greater Victoria region).
- **Continue our pollination activities at Newman Farm.** This includes planting sunflowers, wildflowers and other bee-friendly flowers in the westerly field next to our vegetable garden plot to support pollination activities at the Farm and surrounding area.
- **Identify potential partnership opportunities in advancing agricultural learning and extension events** in support of producing local foods for marginalized people residing in the Greater Victoria region. The FLT Society is working with the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission, PRSSS, IPI, Haliburton Farm, and Young Agrarians to support extension events for emerging and transitioning farmers and the general public about topics/issues related to farmland preservation and food security protection.
- **Conclude sheep operation** with Seaward Farm on central portion of Newman Farm by June 2019 (expiry of three year Memorandum of Understanding).

**Many thanks to our 2018/2019 FLT Society Patron, board members, founder, advisors, members-at-large, farm manager, webmaster, Newman Farm volunteers, and supporters for your ongoing commitment to regional farmland preservation and food security protection in Greater Victoria!**