

Newman Farm Update—Calendar Years 2019 and 2020



The following summary report is from The Farmlands Trust (Greater Victoria) Society which outlines our key activities at Newman Farm during the period of the calendar years of 2019 and 2020.

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The Farmlands Trust (Greater Victoria) Society

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FLT Society Charitable Number: 80839 3359 RR0001

1. Organizational Background

Founded in 2008, the FLT Society is a charitable not-for-profit organization based in Saanichton, BC – Registered Charity #80839 3359 RR0001. Our mission is to enhance farming capacity in the Greater Victoria area by protecting local farmland, protecting eco-sensitive and culturally special areas, producing food for those in need, providing relevant educational opportunities, promoting the economic viability of farmland, and providing community access and public awareness programs.

The FLT Society is operated by a volunteer Board of Directors comprised of Greater Victoria community members who have a diverse array of experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities that enrich the planning and implementing of farmland preservation and local food security activities. The FLT Society team is also comprised of an honorary Patron, Founder, volunteer community advisor, part-time farm manager, part-time farm assistant (2020), and contracted webmaster/social media specialist.

2. Agricultural Stewardship at Newman Farm

From 2012 to present, the FLT Society is continuing to return the 100+ year old historic Newman Farm in Saanichton, BC to active agricultural uses. In May 2012, the FLT Society signed a three year Letter of Understanding with the District of Central Saanich to serve as stewards of a designated portion of Newman Farm off Central Saanich Road.

From October 2015 to present, the FLT Society is advancing a 10 year license agreement (October 2015 – October 2025) with the District of Central Saanich to continue the Society's agricultural stewardship of the historic Newman Farm in Saanichton. The *License to occupy for agricultural park purposes* agreement facilitates the future long term stewardship of the historic Newman Farm. Please refer to Appendices A and B for an excerpt of said agreement and a map of the current licensed area.

During this time, the FLT Society team installed an irrigation line and deer fencing; pruned, ploughed, planted, harvested produce at the historic farm; installed a new fruit orchard; and installed raised garden beds (for assorted vegetables and herbs) as part of the FLT Society's "field to plate" initiative – whereby produce grown and harvested at Newman Farm is primarily shared with Our Place Society. Also, as a pollinator advocate, the FLT Society engages in pollinator-friendly farming practices – includes the "field of dreams" sunflower and wildflower field; installation of lavender garden beds; and installation of hedgerows.

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3. 2019 Activities

In 2019, the FLT Society carried out the following activities on the Newman Farm property:

- **FLT Society “Field to Plate” Initiative.** As part of our mission, the FLT Society produces food for those in need in the Greater Victoria region (e.g., homeless and food insecure populations). In 2019, the FLT Society (via our Newman Farm “field to plate” initiative) grew, harvested, and donated 18,127 lbs. of fresh produce to marginalized and vulnerable individuals in the Greater Victoria region (e.g., Our Place Society) – equating to \$54,711.50



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 meal and snack programs (e.g., preparation of entrees, soups, side vegetables, nutritious salads, and desserts).



In 2019, on average, 10-12 community volunteers from the Greater Victoria area assisted at each of the scheduled monthly work parties that occurred throughout the annual farm season (May – September).

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- Contributions to Equine Therapy.** Also, annual produce contributions (feeding apples and carrots) are made to the Victoria Therapeutic Riding Association in Central Saanich for their equine therapy programs – part of the therapeutic bonding and relationship building between riders with disabilities and horses.
- Fruit Orchard Installation.** In recognition of the important role that trees play in aesthetics, air quality, soil and water conservation and protection of the environment, the FLT Society planted a fruit tree orchard at Newman Farm in 2019. Via a Community Grant through the Victoria Foundation, the FLT Society team installed a new fruit orchard (approximately 30 fruit trees) at Newman Farm - included corresponding deer fencing and irrigation installation. Our thanks are extended to Le Coteau Nursery for donating the fruit trees and the Megson Fitzpatrick Insurance staff for assisting us with the fruit tree installation coordinated by the United Way of Greater Victoria (as part of the annual day of caring). The District of Central Saanich created a drainage ditch for the new orchard and assisted with debris removal. The new fruit orchard provides another food source that the FLT Society can share with Greater Victoria individuals and families in need.



- Environmental Farm Plan Assessment.** The FLT Society advances best management farming practices which included receiving 2019 certification from the Canadian Agricultural Partnership for completing an environmental farm plan assessment.
- Pollinator Advocacy and Bee-Friendly Farming Practices.** 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

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through our “field to plate” and bee-friendly farming “field of dreams” initiatives, while continuing public awareness and educational programs. We are happy to be working with the Island Pollinators Initiative to continue growing pollinator-friendly plants and crops for the local native bee population. In 2019, via a Saanich Peninsula Community Foundation grant, the FLT Society installed a lavender garden to expand our bee-friendly farming program.



- Educational Walkabouts and Guided Tours.** In August 2019, the FLT Society led a series of walkabouts and guided tours of Newman Farm which brings an experiential component of our work with strategic partners, collaborators, and funders.



- Sheep Operation.** The three-year Memorandum of Understanding (2016-2019) with Seaward Farm concluded in summer 2019 where a small-scale sheep farm operated on a designated portion of Newman Farm (central portion of Newman Farm).
- Intergovernmental Relations.** In 2019, Carol Pickup (FLT Society Chair), Brian MacDonald (FLT Society Treasurer), and Steve Grossnickle (FLT Society Board Director) participated in a series of Select Standing Committee meetings on the Newman Farm Agricultural Program and presented recommendations to the District of Central Saanich Council. Zeb King (District of Central Saanich Councillor) chaired the meetings with support from the District of Central Saanich Community Services Manager, Britt Burnham.

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Megan Misovic (Central Saanich citizen) also participated in said meetings.

4. 2020 Activities

The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we focused our 2020 initiatives on producing food for those in need and protecting eco-sensitive areas. The FLT Society's Newman Farm Program aligns with the Government of British Columbia's pandemic essential services: service provider for vulnerable populations and provider of food and agriculture – as part of the Greater Victoria food supply chain for food insecure populations.

With our mission in mind, and the reality of safely operating during a pandemic, the following are notable highlights of the FLT Society's activities in 2020:

- **Farm Operation and COVID-19 Protocols.** Access to and from Newman Farm by volunteers during the 2020 farm season was restricted due to provincial health orders on safe distancing, etc. Farm operation protocols and COVID-19 protocols were established in adherence with provincial health orders which facilitated FLT Society to continue safely operating during the 2020 farm season. Part time farm labour assistance was coordinated by the FLT Society whereby Don Clarke worked with Bert James during the 2020 farm season. Also, we utilized our farm operations and COVID-19 protocols to coordinate a small group of dedicated volunteers (between 3 – 6 people) to strategically support the FLT Society Newman Farm Manager and FLT Society Newman Farm Assistant with spring planting, summer garden maintenance, fall harvesting, and winterizing of Newman Farm. In 2020, Stantec and the Shelbourne Community Kitchen assisted us with the irrigation line set up and wind down.
- **FLT Society “Field to Plate” Initiative.** During 2020, we continued to focus our efforts on our “field to plate” initiative (producing apples, assorted herbs, assorted squash, beets, carrots, cucumbers, garlic, leeks, parsnips, pears, turnips, and swiss chard). In 2020, we grew, harvested, and shared over 7,300 lbs., worth \$24,400.00 of fresh, local produce.

From 2014 – 2020, our cumulative “field to plate” initiative total is over 72,000 lbs. of produce grown, harvested, and shared with food insecure populations in the Greater Victoria region, worth over \$177,000.00.

The primary recipient of the “field to plate” initiative is Our Place Society – *linking food production with a local homeless shelter and soup kitchen to aid in relieving poverty and mitigating food insecurity for vulnerable populations in society.* Since 2014, the FLT Society is the largest single supplier of produce to Our Place Society throughout the summer and fall – estimated 1,200+ daily meals and snacks.

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- **Herb Garden and Expanded Raised Garden Bed Installation.** In 2020, the FLT Society installed a series of raised-bed herb gardens with funding from Peninsula Co-op and Vancity Savings. We secured additional funds from the Peninsula Co-op and will continue the raised garden bed initiative to grow more produce - thereby expanding the variety of produce grown and lengthening our farming season.



- **Fruit Orchard Maintenance.** With in-kind support from Bartlett Tree Experts, the orchard is flourishing. The orchard provides another food source that we are sharing with Greater Victoria families in need.
- **Pollinator Advocacy and Bee-Friendly Farming Practices.** Every year at the Newman Farm, we plant a portion of our lands into a bee-friendly meadow; including sunflowers, wildflowers, buckwheat, and clover. This beautiful display of flowers is an attractant for birds and bees from the local agricultural lands to support pollination activity. In 2020, we planted assorted pollinator-friendly flowers and crops (with funds

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from the Saanich Peninsula Community Foundation) to expand our bee-friendly farming program.



The FLT Society’s licensed area of Newman Farm is a certified bee-friendly farm via the Pollinator Partnership Bee-Friendly Farming Program. The FLT Society is a member of the Island Pollinator Initiative and received the 2018 Pollinator Advocate Award for Canada.

5. Cumulative Experience



The FLT Society “field to plate” food redistribution initiative assists Our Place Society and its expanding regional meal and snack programs at its Pandora Street location (dining hall), the former Comfort Inn, Therapeutic Recovery Centre, and My Place.

From Brian Cox (Our Place Society Food Services Manager) – “I would like to thank The Farmlands Trust (Greater Victoria) Society for donating tons of fresh local produce over the last several years to our meal and snack programs. The fresh local produce has improved the nutritional consumption of our clients from Sooke to Sidney. I look forward to continuing our relationship for years to come.”

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Table 1. Overview of annual weight and dollar value equivalent for food grown and harvested as part of the FLT Society’s “field to plate” initiative at Newman Farm.

FLT Society Newman Farm “Field to Plate” Initiative Summary (2013/2014 – 2020)

Year	Amount/Weight (in lbs.)	Value (in \$)
2014	3,500 lbs.	\$ 7,005.00
2015	2,400 lbs.	\$ 4,900.00
2016	7,580 lbs.	\$16,005.00
2017	15,830 lbs.	\$32,373.75
2018	17,585 lbs.	\$38,147.60
2019	18,127 lbs.	\$54,711.50
2020	7,369 lbs.	\$24,353.79
TOTAL TO DATE	72,391 lbs.	\$177,496.64

Table 1 Notes:

- 2013/2014 was the pilot testing phase of the FLT Society’s “field to plate” initiative at Newman Farm.
- In 2015, the Newman Farm 10 year license agreement was signed between the District of Central Saanich (Newman Farm landowner) and the FLT Society (licensee). As such, the FLT Society is the agricultural steward of a licensed area of Newman Farm from 2015 to 2025.
- In 2016, Bert James was retained to provide FLT Society Newman Farm management services. Bert’s work has continued from 2016 to present.
- In 2020, Our Place Society and the FLT Society Newman Farm Manager updated the “menu options” for food grown at Newman Farm in favour of more diverse produce types – e.g., garlic and herbs. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 impacted and influenced volunteer engagement whereby monthly volunteer work parties were put on hold in adherence with BC Provincial Health Officer protocols.
- From 2013 – 2020, the FLT Society team recognized and endeavoured to adapt to the annual effects of extreme weather conditions and related climate change considerations. In particular, drought and windy conditions at Newman Farm during the annual farm season placed stress on the soil, produce, and pollinator-friendly plants.

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The FLT Society team was delighted by the opportunity to be profiled in local media (Peninsula News Review and CHEK News) about our organizational mandate and mission, particularly our agricultural stewardship and charitable “field to plate” initiative at the historic Newman Farm. Check out the [Peninsula News Review article \(2019\)](#) and [CHEK News video \(2019\)](#).

The FLT Society Board of Directors is most appreciative of the District of Central Saanich granting our charitable not-for-profit society with a multi-year permissive tax exemption. The permissive tax exemption provides certainty to the FLT Society as a means of advancing our farmland management activities at Newman Farm. Also, in 2020, we received a \$10,000 grant from the District of Central Saanich to support farm operations at Newman Farm.

6. Looking Ahead

During the 2021 calendar year, the FLT Society Board of Directors are proposing the following activities as they relate to Newman Farm:

- **“Field to Plate” - Crop Production Program.** The FLT Society continues to expand its licensed area cultivated by approximately 10% per year (i.e., vegetable growing area and new fruit orchard). To continue with the existing program and program expansion, the following initiatives are to be addressed: (1) diversification of crops, which includes purchasing seeds, starter plants, and gardening tools; (2) expanding the current one-acre+ Newman Farm vegetable garden; (3) expanding the range of produce that we grow in the coming years; (4) supporting organic (fall/winter) fertilization and cover crops to support soil revitalization; (5) raised garden bed program expansion; and (6) orchard maintenance.



- **“Field of Dreams” – Certified Bee-Friendly Farming/Pollinator Program Activities.** This includes offering forage – providing good nutrition for native bees on 30% of the licensed area. To conduct and maintain this program requires planting a continuous bloom of different flowering plants throughout the growing season, especially in early spring, offering a clean water source for bees, providing a variety of habitats for nesting and mating utilizing hedgerows, natural brush, and buffer strips, and practicing Integrated Pest Management – utilizing no chemicals on the Farm. This program requires an annual

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maintenance and revitalization program to operate these activities utilizing pollinator-friendly wise practices.



- **Irrigation Management.** Repair, maintain, and update our irrigation line and watering systems at Newman Farm to support optimal food growth (includes our new fruit orchard, vegetable and herb garden boxes) and our national award-winning certified bee-friendly farming practices (includes a lavender garden installed in 2019). The FLT Society maintains the water line on the designated portion of Newman Farm that we manage, and we also monitor any risks of deficiencies in the irrigation system infrastructure throughout the growing season. Irrigation line upgrading would support our “field to plate” initiative and award-winning certified bee-friendly farm practices on our three-acre+ Farm.



- **Hiring of Part Time Staff.** Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, seasonal volunteer work parties at Newman Farm have been cancelled to align with the provincial health officer’s health and safety protocols. This has resulted in the hiring of part time staff to help maintain Newman Farm Program Operations.

Sincerely,
FLT Society Board of Directors

Note: Photo contributions for the 2019 and 2020 Newman Farm Summary Report are courtesy of Natasha Caverley (FLT Society Board Secretary), Steve Grossnickle (FLT Society Board Director), and Bert James (FLT Society Farm Manager).

Appendix A: Background information about the Newman Farm License Agreement

LICENSE TO OCCUPY FOR AGRICULTURAL PARK PURPOSES

THIS AGREEMENT (this "Agreement") dated for reference August 20, 2019,

BETWEEN: THE CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT OF CENTRAL SAANICH
1903 Mount Newton Cross Road,
Saanichton, British Columbia, V8M 2A9

(the "District")

AND: THE FARMLANDS TRUST (GREATER VICTORIA) SOCIETY (Inc. No. S-0053429)
P.O. Box 9
Saanichton, British Columbia, V8M 2C3

(the "Licensee")

WHEREAS:

- A. The District is the registered owner of that parcel of land known as the Newman Farm located in the District of Central Saanich and legally described as:

Parcel Identifier: 009-396-985

Those Parts of Section 3, Ranges 3 and 4 East, South Saanich District, Lying to the South of Parcel K (DD 477991) of Said Sections, and to the East of the Road Dedicated by Plan 7532, except Part in Plans 3 RW, 2306 RW and 2319 RW

(the "Park");

- B. The portion of the Park named Upper Field and Mid Field Remnant highlighted on the plan attached as Schedule A hereto, comprising approximately 1.3 ha, called the "License Area";
- C. The Licensee wishes to be granted a license and the District wishes to grant a license of the License Areas for the Licensee to establish and operate a productive organic farm dedicated to enhancing local food security through sustainable practices and community engagement, and preserving the cultural heritage of the License Areas, on the terms and conditions of this Agreement;

NOW THEREFORE in consideration of the covenants and agreements hereinafter set forth, and other good and valuable consideration (the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged by the Parties), the District and the Licensee (collectively, the "Parties" and individually, a "Party") hereby covenant and agree as follows:

Source: Excerpt from updated license agreement between the District of Central Saanich and the FLT Society – signed August 20, 2019.

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Appendix B: Current Site Plan of Newman Farm Property

Note: FLT Society licensed area is in the Upper Farm – ALR (upper field and mid field remnant areas of Newman Farm).

SCHEDULE A SKETCH PLAN OF LICENSE AREAS

