



# Forest service road upgrades keep workers and communities safe

by Jennifer McLarty, BC Ministry of Forests and Range

British Columbia's 55,000-kilometre network of forest service roads is getting a \$20 million facelift to improve travel and safety conditions, and maintain crucial economic links to rural communities and the province's world-class backcountry. A further \$20 million in shared funding from the provincial and federal governments was announced in April to support major road upgrades, including bridge construction.



BC Ministry of Forests and Range photo



BC Ministry of Forests and Range photo

"When you add it all up, BC's forest service road network is actually bigger than the provincial highway system, providing access to hundreds of small communities, parks, and wilderness areas," said BC Forests and Range Minister **Pat Bell**. "It's integral to keep these routes open and

safe to help support local economies and improve people's quality of life."

Improvements will be made to more than 200 forest service roads that benefit backcountry users and residents in about 70 communities. Scheduled road improvement projects for this fiscal year range from road realignment and widening to bridge replacements and rock stabilization.

While most people characterize forest service roads as "off-the-beaten track," they contribute significantly to BC's economy by providing access to communities and rural areas, tourism, forestry, and mining exploration. A \$600,000 upgrade to the Finlay–Causeway Forest Service Road north of Prince George will support plans for a connector between Mackenzie and Fort St. James, and provide reliable access to the proposed Mount Milligan copper mine.

"The mine is expected to be a commuter mine. Workers will commute from Fort St. James and Mackenzie to work, so having a good quality road is integral to the project," said Bell. "This funding will help to begin developing access to the mine."

In the West and East Kootenays, \$573,000 in road upgrades will ensure access to several popular recreation sites used by both residents and tourists. Ditching, grading, brushing, and surfacing with calcium chloride to reduce dust and improve visibility have been completed.

But road upgrades are only part of the BC Ministry of Forests and Range's ongoing efforts to improve safety for both the public and forest workers. For example, the majority of Compliance and Enforcement staff in the Northern Interior Forest Region have received training to monitor and enforce speeds on forest service roads using radar guns. Training for other forest districts is expected to occur later this year.

"Make no mistake, our Compliance and Enforcement officers are empowered to issue tickets and fines of up to \$1 million for repeat offenders," said Bell. "The maximum speed limit on our forest service roads is either as posted or 80 kilometres per hour—limits created to ensure everyone's safety."

A communication pilot project is also improving road-user safety through standardized radio procedures. These pilots, located on Vancouver Island, the Sunshine Coast, and near Tumbler Ridge, include enhanced radio signage and standardized radio protocols.

Road Safety Committees have also been established in all 29 forest districts to better co-ordinate and manage forest-road use.

Industry, locals, and tourists alike are benefitting from these road improvements and safety enhancements. Forest service roads are not only essential links to our province's rural areas, but truly do drive the economy. 🌲

For more information, contact Doug Stewart, Acting Senior Manager, Engineering, at [doug.b.stewart@gov.bc.ca](mailto:doug.b.stewart@gov.bc.ca)

**Top:** Sunshine Coast Forest District Compliance and Enforcement Technician Maurice Potesta shows BC Forests and Range Minister Pat Bell the speed readout from a radar gun. Radar guns will now be used to monitor and enforce safety on all provincial Forest Service Roads.

**Bottom:** A grader works along the Nass Forest Service Road near Terrace— one of about a dozen forest service roads in the northwest receiving \$4 million in upgrades.