

Together we're taking care of our natural landscapes and our Kootenay way of life.



**STEWARDSHIP
FRAMEWORK**

2018 - 2021



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Introduction

Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP) is a broad partnership of over 80 organizations from across the East and West Kootenays, plus a portion of the Kootenay Boundary and North Columbia. KCP's role is to support its partners in protecting species and habitats at risk on private land in order to conserve biodiversity and landscapes that sustain naturally functioning ecosystems. KCP envisions vibrant communities that demonstrate the principles of environmental stewardship that can in turn support economic and social well-being.

The goal of KCP's Stewardship Program is to increase the effectiveness and coordination of stewardship activities taking place on private lands. Since 2015, the Stewardship Program has been guided by a Stewardship Framework that was developed collaboratively by a diverse group of KCP partners including representatives from both government and non-governmental organizations across the KCP Service Area (Figure 1). The Framework provides strategic guidance to KCP and its partners for how to collectively identify and advance stewardship priorities in the region.

This revised 2018 Stewardship Framework builds upon the initial foundation and incorporates new initiatives emerging within KCP's Stewardship Program. Key contributions came from:

- KCP's Landowner Outreach Workshops (October 2016 in Nelson and Cranbrook);
- KCP's Fall Gathering (November 2016 in Creston);
- KCP Strategic Planning Workshop (May 2017 in Creston);
- East and West Kootenay Spring Stewardship Committee meetings (May 2017 in Invermere and Meadow Creek); and
- Slocan Lake Watershed Science & Conservation Action Planning Forum (February 2017 in Silverton) and Columbia Valley Conservation Action Planning Forum (December 2017 in Invermere).

These events incorporated new perspectives, approaches, tools and people that have influenced and inspired the direction of KCP's Stewardship Program in order to support its partners in working more strategically and collaboratively to benefit species and ecosystems at risk, and build capacity for new opportunities to collaborate on projects.

This 2018 Framework should be reviewed annually with a comprehensive review after three years in 2021.

Background and Purpose

KCP Service Area

This Stewardship Framework applies to the KCP Service Area in the south-eastern region of British Columbia (Figure 1).

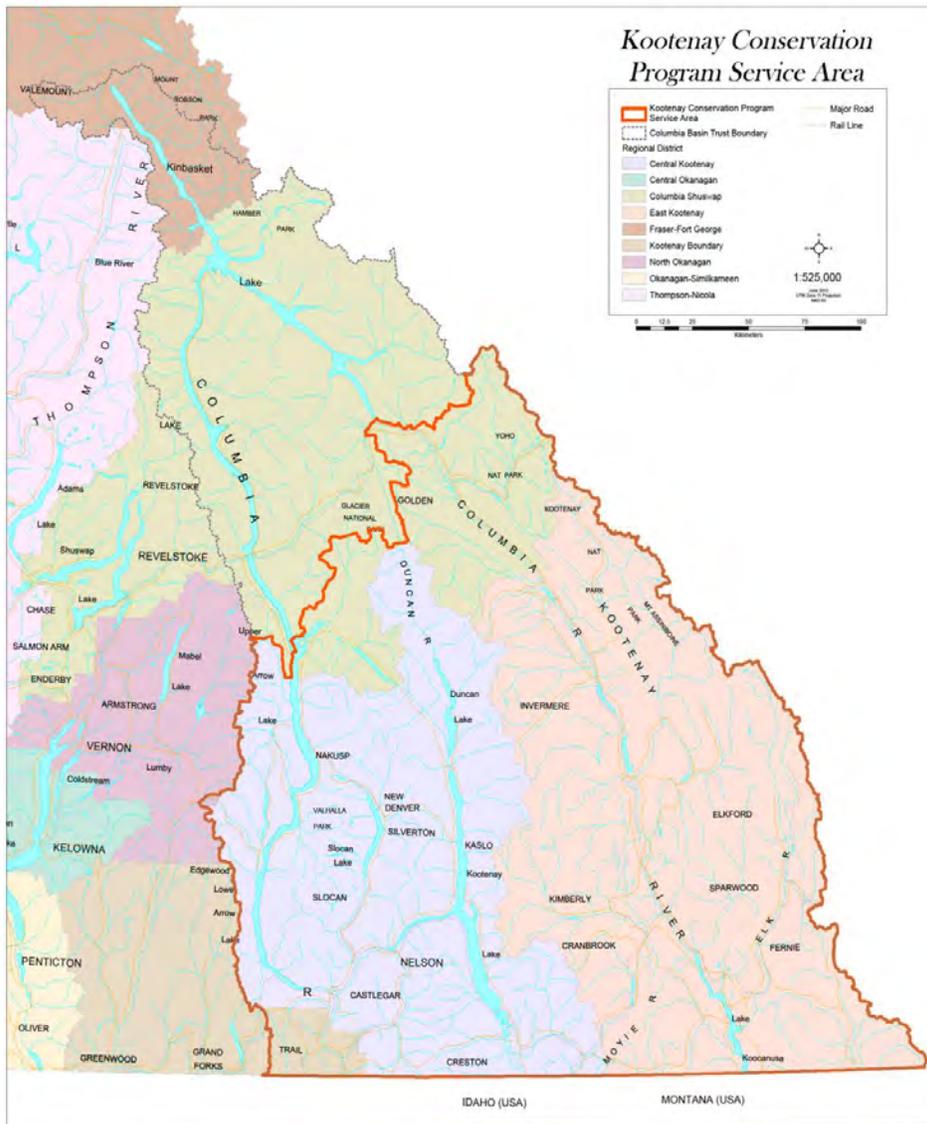


Figure 1. Kootenay Conservation Program Service Area (outlined in red) includes the Regional Districts of East Kootenay, Central Kootenay, and portions of the Kootenay Boundary and Columbia Shuswap.

Goals of Stewardship Framework

The Goals of this Framework are to provide a strategic approach for how KCP's Stewardship Program supports our partners by:

1. Identifying common priorities to create efficiencies, synergies and ultimately greater effectiveness in delivering stewardship and conservation activities;
2. Strengthening capacity for engagement, collaboration, communication and education within the partnership; and
3. Providing both a local and regional context for our partner's achievements in conserving native species, habitats and ecosystems at risk.

Conservation Foundation of KCP's Stewardship Framework

For the purpose of KCP's Stewardship Framework, stewardship is defined as: *an ethic that embodies the careful and responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices*. For KCP and its partners, stewardship activities are also guided by the principles of conservation biology to protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in order to increase ecosystem health by enhancing, maintaining or restoring populations of vulnerable species, sensitive habitat, essential ecosystem functions, and connected landscapes. KCP's partners have a common interest and desire to minimize or remedy human impacts on natural systems. Some KCP partners lead projects that identify and protect species at risk and sensitive areas, while others contribute to species and ecosystem recovery by managing threats to species and habitat through planning and sustainable management practices.

Stewardship Priorities for 2017-2022

At a high level, KCP's role in stewardship is to encourage greater collaboration between partners; provide new opportunities for learning; and increase capacity and strategic support for local and regional partner-led conservation initiatives. KCP's Stewardship Program was updated in 2017 as part of KCP's Strategic Priorities 2017-2022. The current goal is to:

Increase the Effectiveness and Coordination of Stewardship Activities Taking Place on Private Land

Specifically, the KCP Stewardship Priorities are to:

1. Increase collaboration and coordination between partners.
2. Facilitate neighbourhood conservation planning to identify conservation targets and high priority actions.
3. Provide coordinated approach to landowner outreach for conservation.
4. Support local governments to incorporate and apply conservation

principles in local land use planning.

Accomplishing the above goals will result in improved communication and coordination within KCP Stewardship Committees; increased resiliency of the Kootenay region to respond to ecological threats; effective efforts to maintain and restore populations of species at risk and habitat they depend upon; and more capacity within the partnership to increase stewardship on private land.

Goal 1: Increase Collaboration and Coordination Between Partners

KCP will work towards this goal by 1) maintaining stewardship committees to promote coordination and collaboration and, 2) identify priority conservation targets, ecological impacts, threats and urgency for stewardship in the region.

KCP Stewardship Committees

KCP facilitates two Stewardship Committees, one in the East Kootenay and one in the West Kootenay, in order to support partners in identifying ways to collaborate on stewardship activities involving conservation and restoration of species and habitats. Stewardship Committee meetings occur twice a year in each region, typically in the Spring and Fall. These meetings are designed to be engaging, educational and inspiring, and provide stewardship partners with opportunities to provide strategic input into KCP's Stewardship Program. Occasionally, KCP will offer field tours to showcase partners' projects as well as hands-on professional training opportunities to enhance stewardship capacity within the partnership.

Identify Conservation Targets, Ecological Impacts, Threats and Urgency

Conservation Targets

The Kootenay Region is known for its diverse mountainous landscapes that provide habitat for suites of native species that have existed here for thousands of years. The most biologically diverse land is concentrated in the valley bottoms between mountain ranges, a significant portion of which is privately owned and contains our greatest chance for connecting and maintaining native biodiversity in the Kootenays. KCP partners' stewardship activities focus on this ecologically valuable low elevation private land that is typically under pressure from residential, commercial and recreational development.

Stewardship targets guide where to focus inventory, monitoring and habitat enhancement efforts. KCP targets include: species at risk, vulnerable habitat types, special habitat features, and rare ecosystems. By supporting its partners in restoring,

enhancing and monitoring these targets on private land, KCP is contributing to the protection of native biodiversity, critical habitat and connectivity in landscapes throughout the Kootenays.

Priority Species

KCP partners work on a variety species; many, but not all, are species that are provincially red or blue-listed as well as federally listed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and officially listed under Schedule 1 of the Species At Risk Act (SARA) (Table 1). The Conservation Data Centre, BC Ecosystems & Species Explorer, E-Fauna and E-Flora are important resources for obtaining species-at-risk information for local landscapes.

Table 1: Examples of rare species that are priorities for private land conservation in the East and West Kootenay.

Examples of rare species that are priorities for private land conservation in the East and West Kootenay:

- American Badger (*Taxidea taxus*) – Red-listed; E (COSEWIC); SARA
- Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*) – Blue-listed; SC (COSEWIC); SARA
- Mountain Caribou – southern pop. (*Rangifer tarandus*) – Red-listed; E (COSEWIC); SARA
- American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) – Blue-listed
- Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorous*) – Blue-listed; T (COSEWIC); SARA
- Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) – Blue-listed
- Lewis’s Woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*) – Blue-listed; T (COSEWIC); SARA
- Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*) – Blue-listed; SC (COSEWIC)
- Western Screech-Owl (*Megascops kennicottii macfarlanei*) – Blue-listed; T (COSEWIC); SARA
- Williamsons Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*) – Blue-listed; E (COSEWIC); SARA
- Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*) – Red-listed; E (COSEWIC); SARA
- Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) – Blue-listed; SC (COSEWIC)
- Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*) – Blue- listed; SC (COSEWIC); SARA
- Northern Leopard Frog (*Lithobates pipiens*) – Red-listed; E (COSEWIC); SARA
- Western Toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*) – Yellow-listed; SC (COSEWIC); SARA
- Townsend’s Big-eared Bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) – Blue-listed
- Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) – Yellow-listed; E (COSEWIC); SARA
- Hairstem Groundsmoke (*Gayophytum ramosissimum*) – Red-listed
- Prairie Golden Bean (*Thermopsis rhombifolia*) – Red-listed
- Scarlet Gaura (*Gaura coccinea*) – Red-listed
- Spurless Touch-me-not (*Impatiens ecornuta*) – Blue-listed
- Canada Anemone (*Anemone canadensis*) – Blue-listed
- Montana Larkspur (*Delphinium bicolour*) – Blue-listed
- Common Twinpod (*Physaria didymocarpa*) – Blue-listed

- Bent-flowered Milk-Vetch (*Astragalus vexilliflexus*) – Blue-listed

Habitat Types at Risk

KCP supports partners to focus on the following low-elevation habitats for stewardship activities. These habitats include priority biogeoclimatic ecosystem classification (BEC) zones as well as priority habitat types (Table 2).

Table 2: Priority BEC zones and habitat types in East and West Kootenay for stewardship activities.

KCP Priority BEC Zones	
<i>*Note: BEC subzones and variants will differ between EK & WK</i>	
East Kootenay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ponderosa Pine • Interior Douglas Fir • Mixed Forest • Interior Cedar Hemlock 	West Kootenay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ponderosa Pine • Interior Douglas Fir • Mixed Forest • Interior Cedar Hemlock
KCP Priority Habitat Types	
East Kootenay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grassland or dry, open forest • Wetland • Deciduous riparian forest containing 	West Kootenay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grassland or savannah • Wetland • Riparian forest

<p>cottonwood, deciduous upland forest, and mixed wood forest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montane forest (all other forest >30% crown closure) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other forest: ponderosa pine, white pine, Douglas-fir, western larch, western red cedar or western hemlock forest
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Within these habitats, stewardship priority should be given to activities that aid in protecting, restoring and/or enhancing the following special highly valued ecosystems and ecosystems-at-risk:

- Riparian Cottonwood Forest
- Wetlands
- Grasslands

Stewardship priority should also be given to wildlife habitat features which provide the physical ecosystem elements used by wildlife to meet one or more of their important habitat requirements (Table 3). They are spatially located and are generally small areas. Examples include a significant mineral lick or wallow, a nest used by a bird, bat hibernaculum, or a burrow or den used by a mammal. Reducing impacts and preserving these features on private lands can play a critical role in sustaining healthy wildlife.

Table 3: List of 16 Wildlife Habitat Features from Forest & Range Protection Act (FRPA) that occur in the Kootenay region.

Wildlife Habitat Features from Forest and Range Practices Act	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A fisheries sensitive feature* 2. A nest of a bald eagle 3. A nest of an osprey 4. A nest of a flammulated owl 5. A nest of a western screech-owl <i>macfarlanei</i> ssp. 6. A nest of a great blue heron 7. A nest of a white-headed woodpecker 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. A nest of a Lewis's woodpecker 9. A nest of a Williamson's sapsucker 10. An American badger burrow 11. A grizzly bear den 12. A significant mineral lick 13. A significant wallow 14. A bat hibernaculum 15. A bat maternity roost 16. A hot spring or thermal spring

* Fisheries sensitive features (FSFs) include waterbodies that do not meet the FRPA definition of stream, are not classified as lakes or wetlands, but are occupied at least some time of the year by fish.

Assessment of Threats & Urgency

Threats to Stewardship Targets

Thriving species, healthy watersheds, connected landscapes and ecosystem resiliency occur when land and water use supports these desired conditions. In situations where

resource use has impacted or threatens to impact the ecological conditions and functioning of natural systems, stewardship is essential for prevention, restoration and remediation.

KCP uses the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Classification of Direct Threats to Biodiversity to determine the top threats in KCP’s Service Area (Table 4).

Table 4: Threats to conservation in the Kootenays based on IUCN classification.

IUCN Classification of Direct Threats to Biodiversity
<p><u>Residential and Commercial Development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts from housing and urban areas, commercial and industrial areas (including impacts from industrial development and natural resources extraction) • Impacts from tourism and recreational uses • Losses, degradation and fragmentation of habitat • Impacts on water systems from increasing demand in urban areas
<p><u>Climate Change</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases in temperature, declining snowpack, and increases in storm intensity • Shifts, alterations and removal of habitat • Effects of droughts, temperature extremes and flooding • Changes in climate affecting fire and hydrologic regimes, as well as plant and animal distribution and abundance
<p><u>Invasive Species</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptions/degradation of natural ecological processes and habitats • Loss of biodiversity
<p><u>Natural Systems Modifications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interruptions of normal fire regime including forest encroachment onto grasslands and in-growth into open forests • Dams, reservoirs, and water management issues – impacts of altered hydrologic regimes including changes to animal and plant distribution and abundance
<p><u>Transportation and Service Corridors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts from roads, rails, utility and service lines • Increased rates of wildlife mortality • Habitat fragmentation
<p><u>Human Intrusions and Disturbance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts of recreational activities resulting in adverse effects such as wildlife disturbance, soil compaction, erosion, and spread of invasive plants

Urgency

Ecological threats facing a property or a landscape can have immediate and long-term impacts on local conservation values. Here are definitions used by KCP's Securement Committee that can rate the urgency of threats that were listed above.

Urgency of threats facing a property is defined as:

- 1) *Threatened with irreversible change within 10 years*
 - For example: major development, landfill, urban sprawl
- 2) *Threatened with reversible change within 10 years*
 - For example: grazing of climax grasslands; logging of mature forest
- 3) *No short-term threat – No reasonable expectation of the above*

Goal 2: Facilitate Neighbourhood Conservation Action Planning to Identify Conservation Targets and High Priority Actions

Defining Conservation Neighbourhoods

KCP is interested in using focal areas as a consistent way of organizing both securement and stewardship activities within locally recognized subregions within the larger Kootenay bioregion. For example, the concept of focal areas could guide how KCP integrates private land stewardship activities and conservation action planning within KCP Stewardship Program's new initiatives in Landowner Outreach and Biodiversity Conservation Action Planning (Table 5). With this approach, KCP would work with groups of partners in focal areas which will be referred to as "Conservation Neighbourhoods" within the Kootenays to demonstrate how private land stewardship at the local scale fits into the larger picture of conservation in the Kootenay region.

As part of updating this Framework, the list of Securement focal areas has been refined by KCP's Stewardship Committees to better reflect how local landscapes makes sense ecologically and culturally as local stewardship and conservation planning units. The focal areas for Stewardship are listed in Table 5 and mapped in Figure 2.

Table 5. Proposed KCP Conservation Neighbourhoods (bold) in the East Kootenay, West Kootenay and North Columbia for coordinating conservation and stewardship activities (as of December 2017). Locations listed in parentheses are focal areas used by KCP's Securement Committee.

Focal Areas – EK (5)	Focal Areas – WK (9)	Focal Area – Extended (1)
Golden (Donald – Steamboat)	Upper Arrow Lake	North Columbia - Revelstoke
Columbia Valley (Columbia Lake, Radium, Spilimacheen)	Lower Arrow Lake (Nakusp)	

<p>Upper Kootenay River Valley (Island Pond – Torrent; Skookum – Wildhorse)</p> <p>South Country (St Mary Valley, Cranbrook, Steeples, Kooacanusa North, Newgate, Tobacco – Grasmere, Wigwam – Sheep Mtn)</p> <p>Elk Valley (Flathead Valley)</p>	<p>Lower Columbia River (Castlegar, Trail – Pend d’Oreille)</p> <p>Duncan – Trout Lake (Meadow Creek, Argenta)</p> <p>Slocan Valley</p> <p>Kootenay Lake Kootenay Lake West Arm South Selkirks – Salmo Creston Valley Purcells – Highway 3</p>
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Focal areas as conservation neighbourhoods can also help define a geographic area so stewardship partners can more efficiently develop an ecosystem-based approach to identifying priority actions for local landscapes. For example, through its Biodiversity Conservation Action Planning, KCP will collaborate with a local working group of stewardship partners in Conservation Neighbourhoods to develop a common vision and process for identifying and prioritizing conservation actions.

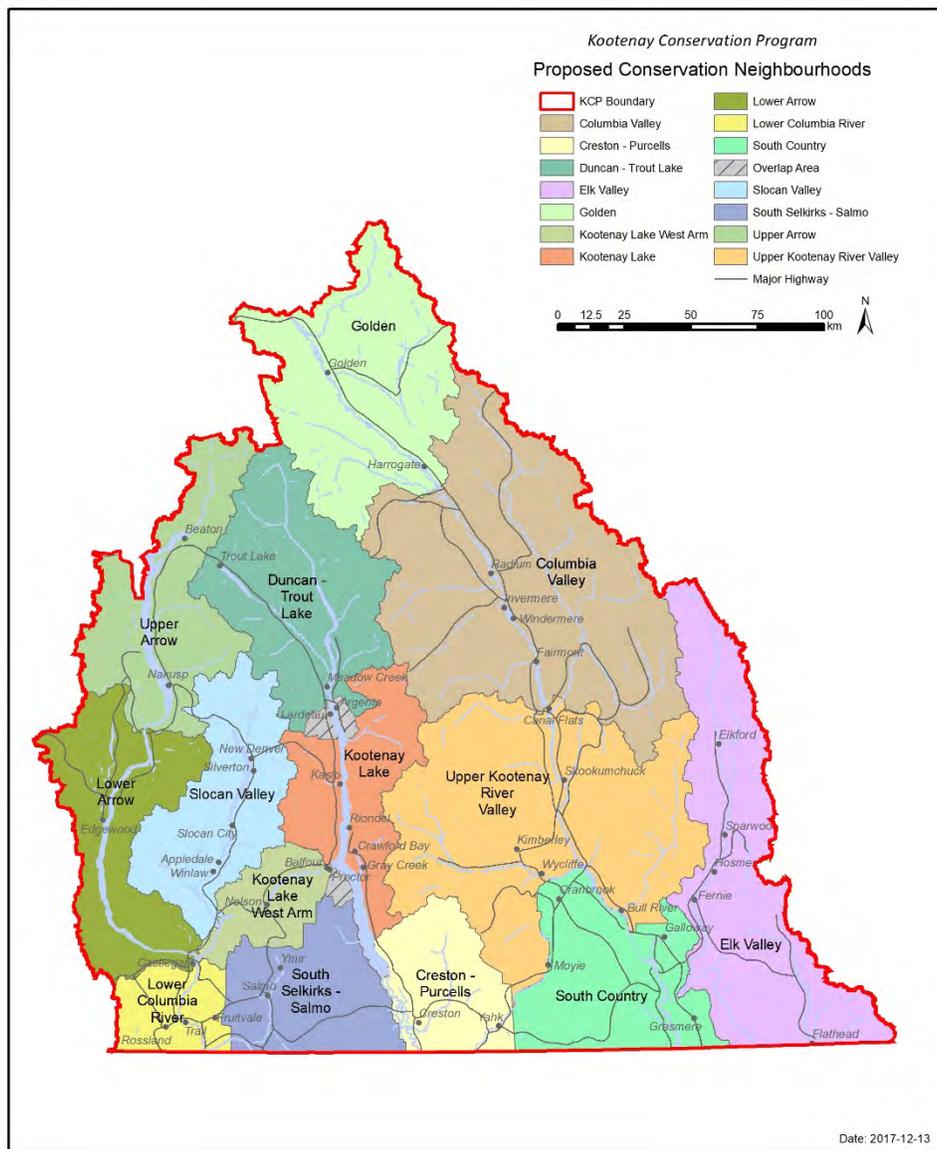


Figure 2. Proposed KCP Conservation Neighbourhoods listed in Table 5 to promote collaboration and priority-setting for conservation and stewardship efforts.

Conservation Neighbourhood Action Planning

Conservation Action Planning relies upon a working group of KCP partners in a local area, or neighbourhood, that want to cooperatively identify and address priority actions. Each Conservation Neighbourhood group will design its own goals and process. KCP’s role is to provide strategic support and facilitation; and help demonstrate how private land stewardship at the local scale fits into a larger landscape scale and the grand picture of conservation in the Kootenay region.

Example: Questions guiding Biodiversity Conservation Action Planning

1. What is the current knowledge regarding species of concern and critical habitat in this region? What more do we need to know?
2. Based on scientific findings, what actions will make the most difference in preventing / controlling invasive species, protecting critical habitat, enhancing connectivity, reducing recreational pressure and promoting climate change resilience?
3. Where do you see opportunities in your organization's or agency's plans, policies, programs, budgets and communications for realizing these actions?
4. What kind of alignment do we need to foster between scientists, non-profit organizations and local and provincial government to effectively collaborate and make a significant, positive impact while also meeting organizational mandates?

Conservation Neighbourhood Action Planning is based on key questions, considering habitat targets and threats, to identify high priority actions that partners can focus on within their mandate.

Goal 3: Promote a Coordinated Approach to Landowner Outreach for Conservation (“Stewardship Solutions”)

Priorities for Coordinated Approach to Landowner Outreach

The purpose of KCP's Stewardship Solutions (Landowner Outreach) initiative is to assist partners in becoming more coordinated and collaborative in promoting stewardship solutions on private land in the Kootenay region. In 2016, KCP Stewardship Committee members identified five priority actions as key to improving private landowner outreach in the East and West Kootenays.

1. Develop a **Conservation Ambassadors Program** whereby KCP would identify and train key contacts in each region of the Kootenays who can visit private properties to discuss stewardship concepts with landowners. Conservation Ambassadors would be existing resource people in communities who visit properties for their own purpose (e.g., invasive plants, environmental farm planning, species inventory) and would be trained on other aspects of stewardship and resource management. The Conservation Ambassador would visit properties to help landowners understand opportunities for stewardship and work with willing landowners to put together a conservation plan for the property.
2. Provide **Training and Professional Development** to increase expertise of KCP Partners to do their own outreach. For example, KCP could provide educational opportunities to address communications and marketing techniques for working with landowners on stewardship issues, as well as organize local field tours for

resource people and landowners.

3. Compile an **Online Resource Toolkit** that links to existing landowner outreach resources in the Kootenays that would be available to both KCP partners and landowners.
4. Serve as a **“Front Counter for Conservation”** in the Kootenays whereby KCP would act as a one-stop shop for private landowners to access contacts and information on stewardship. KCP would advertise itself more broadly to raise public awareness about this service.
5. Become a **Resource for Local Government Planning Departments** to actively support conservation and stewardship.

Given KCP’s mandate to build partner capacity (and not actually “do” landowner outreach), KCP’s Stewardship Program will lead a Landowner Outreach Initiative that incorporates elements of the priorities mentioned above in order to develop a regional community of practice. The strategic outcomes of the stewardship solutions initiative are to:

Strategic outcomes that guide the Landowner Outreach Initiative

1. Build capacity of partners, including their knowledge of stewardship actions.
2. Offer practical experience to partners who visit properties for conservation.
3. Develop a hardcopy resource package from partners’ existing resources.
4. Develop an online hub of stewardship solutions resources for landowners and partners.

Landowner Outreach Target Audiences

KCP Stewardship partners have identified four target audiences as key to our success on private land:

- Landowners with lakeshore, wetlands and riparian areas
- Large landowners such as industrial landowners, developers and agricultural producers
- Local government staff and elected officials
- Realtors

Goal 4: Support Local Governments to Incorporate and Apply Conservation Principles into Local Land Use Planning

A goal of KCP's Stewardship Program is building capacity within the partnership to increase opportunities for stewardship activities on private land. Given the importance of local governments in private land stewardship, it is critical that they are engaged in this process.

Local Conservation Fund Expansion in the Kootenays

In November, 2008 the KCP, in partnership with the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK), created the first Local Conservation Fund in Canadian history through referendum. The fund generates up to \$230,000 annually through a \$20/parcel tax/levy on all privately owned properties in the Upper Columbia Valley (Canal Flats to Spillimacheen). The fund then makes grants to qualified organizations to undertake conservation projects throughout the service area.

In November, 2014 the KCP, in partnership with the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK), created the second Local Conservation Fund in Canada through referendum. The fund generates up to \$130,000 annually through a \$15/parcel tax/levy on all privately owned properties in Electoral Areas A, D and E (Kootenay Lake region) of the RDCK. The fund then makes grants to qualified organizations to undertake conservation projects throughout the service area.

The KCP is now interested to learn whether taxpayers in other parts of the RDEK and RDCK would support expansion of this fund to include their areas, and also whether taxpayers in Electoral Area A of the Columbia Shuswap Regional District or Electoral Areas A and B of the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary would support the creation of a new Local Conservation Fund.

Growing Conservation Tools in the Kootenays: Forum for Local Governments

KCP will be working with local government representatives in the Kootenays to deliver a Forum on tools for conservation in the Kootenays. The workshop will be targeted to elected officials and staff of the RDCK, RDEK, RDKB (Areas A and B) and CSRD (Area A) as well as municipalities. The goal of this Forum is to identify specific tools/resources required by local governments of the Kootenays to integrate conservation principles into planning. This forum is for scoping needs, gaps and interests of local governments in the Kootenays for conservation tools and techniques.

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Appendix A – List of Regionally Applicable Strategic Plans Consulted in 2015-2017

List of applicable plans that should be considered by organizations and individuals to more effectively guide stewardship activities:

- Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program - Columbia Basin Strategic Plan and associated Action Plans:
 - Columbia Basin Plan
 - Large Lakes Action Plan
 - Riparian and Wetland Action Plan
 - Small Lakes Action Plan
 - Species of Interest Action Plan
 - Streams Action Plan
 - Upland and Dryland Action Plan
- Columbia Basin Trust – Environmental Strategic Plan
- East Kootenay and Central Kootenay Invasive Plant Council
- Columbia Basin Watershed Network Strategic Plan
- Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network (CBEEN) Strategic Plan
- Official Community Plans
- Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations
- Ministry Of Environment
 - Fisheries Program Plan
 - Wildlife Program Plan
 - Ecosystem Program Plan
 - Wetland Ways: Interim Guidelines for Wetland Protection and Conservation in British Columbia
- Nature Conservancy of Canada - Kootenay Rockies Natural Area Conservation Plan
- Forest Stewardship Plans
- Environmental Farm Plans
- Kootenay Lake Partnership – Kootenay Lake Scoping Study
- Teck Metals Ltd.—Lower Columbia Ecosystem Management Plan