

Local Conservation Funds in British Columbia

A Guide for Local Governments and Community Organizations



Third Edition

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Third Edition is a minor update to provide the inclusion of a new fund in the North Okanagan and updated case study funding and project information. This version of the Guide builds on the very good work of those who contributed significant time and effort of previous editions (see back page).

PROJECT MANAGER

Bryn White

EDITOR

Kendal Benesh

DESIGNER

Salina Curtis

REVIEWERS

Special thanks to the following individuals, who contributed time and expertise to develop this Third Edition of the Guide:

Scott Boswell, Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program
Juliet Craig, Kootenay Conservation Program
Wayne Darlington, Central Okanagan Regional District
Laura Frank, Regional District North Okanagan
Jeff Leahy, Capital Regional District
Brandin Schultz, Capital Regional District

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover Photos: Tim Ennis, Michael Bezener, Drew Desharnais

Document Photos: Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society, Nature Trust of BC, Nature Conservancy of Canada, South Okanagan Conservation Fund, and Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program

Citation: South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program. (2022). *Local Conservation Funds in British Columbia: A Guide for Local Governments and Community Organizations* (3rd ed.). Penticton, B.C.: South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program.

Copyright © 2022 South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program. All rights reserved.

Funding for the Third Edition of this Guide was generously contributed by the Real Estate Foundation of BC. First and Second Editions of the Guide were made possible with funding and support from: the Real Estate Foundation of BC, The Schad Foundation, the Forest Enhancement Society of BC, Vancouver Foundation, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, and the Stewardship Centre of BC.



Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
A. INTRODUCTION	7
Definition	
A Local Government Service	
B. BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES	10
Ensuring Livable Communities	
Planning Ahead	
Taking Initiative	
C. KEY STEPS	12
1. Build the Leadership Team and Support Network	13
Leadership	
Community Support	
2. Determine Community Priorities	15
Public Opinion Polls	
Focus Groups	
3. Make the Case for a Conservation Fund	17
Communication and Outreach Strategy	
Frequently Asked Questions	
Navigating a Public Process	
4. Design the Conservation Fund	20
Developing Conservation Priorities	
Determining the Type and Scope of Fund	
Preparing Terms of Reference	
5. Determine Financing Options	23
Calculating the Annual Amount of Funding	
6. Understand the Establishment Options	24
Municipalities	
Regional Districts	
Indigenous Governments	
7. Gain Participating Area Approval to Establish the Fund	25
Petition for Electoral Area Services	
Alternative Approval Process	
Assent Voting	
Consent on Behalf of a Municipality	
D. CONCLUSION	28
E. CASE STUDIES	29
Regional District of East Kootenay – Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund	
Regional District of Central Kootenay – Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund	
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen – South Okanagan Conservation Fund	
Regional District of North Okanagan – North Okanagan Conservation Fund	
Parkland Acquisition Funds: Capital Regional District Regional District of Central Okanagan	
F. GLOSSARY	40
G. REFERENCES	41



A conservation fund is a local government service that is funded through a dedicated tax or fee and used to support environmental conservation and community sustainability projects.

The regional district or municipality that holds the conservation fund decides which projects to support according to criteria in the fund's terms of reference.

Conservation funds support projects that reflect local priorities, such as:

- Protecting clean water sources.
- Conserving natural areas for people to enjoy.
- Restoring fish and wildlife habitat.
- Strengthening community vitality by taking care of ecosystems and the benefits they provide.
- Support climate action through nature-based solutions.

Three Good Reasons to Support Conservation Funds

1. **Ecosystem services** – A healthy environment provides us with clean water, pure air, and many other natural resources. It can be very expensive to try to make things right after we have damaged our environment. It's smart to take care of what we've got.
2. **A healthy environment supports a healthy economy** – Robust property values; attractive, investable, safe communities; tourism, agriculture, and other renewable resource sectors all rely on a functioning environment.
3. **Local control** – Funds are generated locally and directly benefit the community.

A Group Effort

Establishing a conservation fund is a big job that requires cooperation for success. Conservation groups usually initiate the process; however, local government staff and elected officials play an essential role. Cultivating community connection and collaboration is also necessary to create a conservation fund that meets residents' needs and addresses local environmental priorities.

Community Vision

Conservation funds are forward looking. They show that communities can work together to protect local environments and steward the natural resources that support their lives and livelihoods. Conservation funds empower communities to improve on past decisions and give future generations a leg-up.

Existing Conservation Funds

Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund

- Subregional fund established by Regional District of East Kootenay in 2008.
- Established by assent vote (referendum) in the participating areas.
- Property owners in the service area pay a parcel tax of 5¢ per \$1,000 of taxable assessed value, up to a maximum of \$230,000 annually (this works out to about \$20 per parcel).
- Fund themes: Conservation of water, wildlife, habitat, and open space.
- Between 2010-2021, funded 101 grants totalling \$2.55 million.
- Leveraged over \$22.6 million in matching cash and in-kind contributions (2010-2021).



Columbia Wetlands Stewardship Partners work to re-establish the northern leopard frog in the Columbia marshes.

Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund

- Subregional fund established by Regional District of Central Kootenay in 2014.
- Established by assent vote (referendum) in the participating areas.
- Property owners in the service area pay an annual parcel tax of \$15 per parcel of land.
- Fund themes: Conservation of water and aquatic systems, wildlife, and habitat.
- Between 2016-2021, funded 37 grants totalling just over \$468,000.
- Leveraged nearly \$20 million in matching cash and in-kind contributions (2016-2021).



BC Wildlife Federation provides education and on-the-ground support to improve grizzly bear/human coexistence.

South Okanagan Conservation Fund

- Subregional fund established by Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen in 2016.
- Established by alternative approval process.
- Property owners in the service area pay a property value tax of 3.72¢ per \$1,000 of net taxable value of land and improvements, to a maximum of \$450,000 annually.
- Fund themes: Conservation, protection, enhancement, and restoration of valuable natural areas, including water and land-based ecosystems, wildlife, and habitat.
- Between 2017-2021, funded 38 grants totalling just over \$1.5 million.
- Leveraged an additional \$6 million in matching cash and in-kind contributions (2017-2021).



Working to protect the yellow-breasted chat, an endangered species in B.C.

North Okanagan Conservation Fund

- Subregional fund established by Regional District of North Okanagan in 2020.
- Established by alternative approval process.
- Property owners in the service area pay a property value tax of 2¢ per \$1000 of net taxable value of land and improvements to a maximum of \$102,000 annually.
- Fund themes: Water quality and quantity, terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, wildlife (including those at risk and culturally significant), and habitat for native fish and wildlife.
- Two rounds of applications to the fund have been completed since 2020 and have resulted in 7 grants totalling \$141,000.
- An additional \$210,000 has been leveraged in matching cash and in-kind contributions.



Working with landowners to improve stewardship for wildlife habitat.

See the Case Studies section of the guide for more information about each of these conservation funds.

Find this guide, terms of reference for the existing B.C. conservation funds, and other resources online: soconservationfund.ca/conservation-fund-guide-bc



Introduction

British Columbia is an exceptional place, known for its spectacular landscapes and quality of life. Accelerating development and resource use demands have put a great deal of pressure on land, water, and wildlife in many areas of the province.

Natural areas benefit our communities in various ways. Investing in clean water, air, and functioning ecosystems is not only good for our physical and mental well-being, but also for the well-being of our communities.

This guide is for local government staff, elected officials, community groups, conservation organizations, and conservation minded individuals that are interested in setting up a local, dedicated source of funding to support conservation efforts.

The guide outlines the steps involved in establishing conservation funds in B.C., and includes examples of successful campaigns and experiences.

Establishing a conservation fund is a collaborative initiative. This document can help ensure that everyone who may be involved in the process is on the same page.

Conservation Funds and Parkland Acquisition Funds

In general, there are two kinds of conservation funds.

Several B.C. local governments have set up **parkland acquisition funds**, which are an important way for local governments to achieve amenity and greenspace objectives.

This guide focuses on **conservation funds** that have broader sets of objectives and support a more diverse range of environmental conservation and sustainability activities in a community or region. At the time of writing, there are four areas in B.C. that have established conservation funds focused on broad conservation objectives: Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund, Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund, South Okanagan Conservation Fund, and North Okanagan Conservation Fund.

See the Case Studies section for more information.

DEFINITION

A conservation fund is a local government service that is funded through a dedicated tax or fee, held and overseen by local government, and earmarked for the specific purpose of undertaking projects that support environmental conservation and community sustainability.

Conservation funds support local priorities, such as:

- Protecting clean, abundant water resources.
- Preserving natural places for people to enjoy.
- Restoring and maintaining important habitats for fish and wildlife.
- Enhancing the viability of local agriculture, food production, and other renewable resources.
- Maintaining and enhancing ecosystem health to be more resilient to the effects of a changing climate, such as floods, fire, and drought.

A LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE

Though the inspiration to create a conservation fund often comes from a community or conservation organization, conservation funds must be established and financed through legally-binding local government mechanisms.

Local governments provide a range of services for the taxes they levy. Services may include planning, parks and recreation, libraries, fire protection, recycling and solid waste disposal, water supply and distribution, and environmental conservation. As such, a conservation fund can be financed through local government taxation: property value tax, parcel tax, local area service tax, or fees.

Existing conservation funds in B.C. are established as “environmental conservation services” or “local conservation fund services.” For simplicity, the remainder of this guide will refer to such services as either “conservation funds” or “conservation fund services.”

It is worth noting that once a conservation fund has been established, some of the operational workload can be shared with other organizations. In every case in B.C., funds are allocated to eligible recipients to deliver environmental conservation projects through an application-based system.



Local governments retain direct control of financial administration and decision-making while partnering with community organizations to support other aspects of fund administration and management.

In addition, money in a conservation fund can be non-lapsing, which means it can be carried over from one fiscal year to the next. Monies can be used immediately or saved for future use—when sufficient funds are available for a larger or more significant project.

Importantly, funds generated locally can be used to leverage and attract significant additional resources from other funding sources outside the community. In the case of the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund, every \$1 raised locally has leveraged almost an additional \$9 from outside funding sources.

Other Tools for Conservation

A conservation fund is just one tool to support stewardship initiatives and protect ecologically important lands. The *Green Bylaws Toolkit for Conserving Sensitive Ecosystems and Green Infrastructure* provides local governments with information on a range of other conservation tools. The toolkit includes bylaw language that local governments can use to protect ecologically important lands and explains the various legal approaches to protection, including their benefits and drawbacks.

greenbylaws.ca





Benefits & Opportunities

ENSURING LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

We depend on natural systems. We rely on land, air, water, plants, animals, insects, and other living things to give us what we need. By all accounts, it is in our best interests to support what sustains us.

While nature has intrinsic value, it also benefits us—and our communities—by providing essential services. Rivers and lakes, wetlands, grasslands, forests, and so on perform complex functions that we cannot get any other way. Here are just a few of the ecosystem services that healthy ecosystems provide:

- Flood and erosion control, and recharging groundwater resources
- Air and water purification
- Clean and abundant water for drinking and irrigation
- Pollination of fruits and vegetables
- Attracting tourists and enhancing quality of life for residents
- Providing areas for outdoor recreation
- Supporting Indigenous cultural activities
- Providing fish and wildlife habitat, including species at risk
- Storing carbon and moderating the effects of climate change

What ecosystems provide to our communities and economies is incredibly valuable. All we have to do is care for the natural systems that allow them to function—nature does the rest.



PLANNING AHEAD

Unfortunately, the true value of ecosystems is revealed when they are destroyed or degraded and we have to manage the consequences.

Habitat fragmentation and loss, climate change, invasive species, pollution, and human disruption of natural processes, such as fire and water cycles, are the most significant threats now contributing to the decline of our environment. Many of these threats are historically unprecedented.

In B.C. there is significant need for communities to protect ecologically important lands sooner rather than later. By planning ahead, it is possible to protect and care for the natural assets that are the cornerstone of safe, livable communities.

TAKING INITIATIVE

While many local governments in B.C. are aligning with other sustainability policies and strategies, or are leading the way themselves, most local governments and community organizations have limited resources to address these objectives.

By taking the initiative to establish conservation funds, local governments are recognizing the importance of biodiversity and a healthy natural world for maintaining human health and community resilience. Conservation funds bring together local governments, conservation organizations, and community members to develop capacity and meet these goals.

Conservation funds can help communities to:

Build a network of parks, greenspace, and natural corridors for both people and wildlife.



Enhance the viability of local agriculture, food production, and other renewable resources.



Enhance quality of life, tourism and recreation opportunities, and understanding of the natural environment.



Protect the integrity of watersheds and aquifers; ensure clean, abundant water resources.

Restore, enhance, and steward natural areas that provide services important to economies and communities.



Protect ecosystems to sequester carbon and meet community climate action objectives.

Partner with other organizations to pool financial resources and leverage funding from outside the community to achieve local goals.



There is no “one size fits all” way to establish a fund. Everything—from choosing a legislative approach, to deciding how to finance the fund and engage the public—depends on the nature and needs of each community. Even so, there are several main tasks to be undertaken during the establishment process. The next section of the guide expands upon the following tasks:

1. **Assemble a leadership team and build a network of support.** Setting up a conservation fund requires a champion (or champions) to lead and coordinate efforts, and a core group of supportive and dedicated people. Collaboration is crucial, so be sure to engage key community members, as well as local government staff and elected officials, from the beginning.
2. **Determine community priorities and gauge support for the fund.** Public opinion polls and focus groups are two methods that can be used to learn about people's views and priorities and assess community support.
3. **Make the case for a conservation fund.** To be successful in establishing a conservation fund, support is required from two different sources: the local government that will host the fund and the community members that will pay for it. While participating organizations will have different points of view on various aspects of the initiative, it is important for project partners to consult with one another from the outset as they develop strategies to frame the issues, determine communication tactics, define tasks and responsibilities, lay out a timeline, and establish budgets.
4. **Design the conservation fund.** A conservation vision and terms of reference provide a road map for the design and implementation of the fund. Where conservation funds exist in B.C., monies are allocated for projects through an application-based system to eligible recipients. Each fund has its own terms of reference, which detail such items as goals, governance, administration, timelines, funding, and project eligibility. It is best practice for conservation funds to be designed and administered using objective science-based criteria to guide and select the activities it supports. This ensures that decisions regarding allocation of funds are effective, informed, and defensible.

5. **Decide how to finance the conservation fund.** A dedicated conservation fund can be financed through a property value tax, parcel tax, or a local area service tax or fee. The form of financing chosen should be based on what works best for the community.
6. **Understand the establishment options.** Funds can be established for whole or parts of individual municipalities and regional districts, or with municipalities and regional districts cooperating for a regional or subregional approach; Indigenous governments may also be part of such an arrangement. A service area needs to be defined for the conservation fund, and the choice of how to proceed depends on the community's unique circumstances. In any case, the conservation fund service must be established according to applicable legislative mechanisms.
7. **Select the appropriate approval process to establish the fund.** There are various legal options available to local governments to seek elector approval and establish a conservation fund, and the particulars partly depend on whether municipalities, regional districts, Indigenous governments, or a combination are participating to establish the fund.



1. Build the Leadership Team and Support Network

LEADERSHIP

Establishing a conservation fund requires considerable investment of human and financial resources. While conservation groups tend to initiate conservation funds, establishment is a collaborative process that involves key local government staff and elected officials.

Local government staff members play an important role in the establishment of the fund, with expertise related to financial administration, corporate services, legislative process, and public engagement. Staff must be directed by elected officials in order to be involved, and must remain impartial to maintain the integrity and transparency of the process. Working together ensures that roles, responsibilities, and tasks are outlined clearly and delivered appropriately.

For community organizations, successful examples from around the province show that the process requires champions and leaders who can carry the vision, advocate for the fund, and work closely with local government to manage overall design and coordination.

Having a core team to facilitate the process is key. Leadership team members should be people with the time, energy, and skills to lead and manage a major undertaking that includes strategy development, fundraising, volunteer coordination, communications, and public relations. A conservation fund establishment process could take up to two years or longer.

Indigenous governments and local governments sometimes partner to deliver shared services, and establishing a conservation fund may be an opportunity for such collaboration. As with any conservation fund process, it is important to initiate preliminary discussions with the relevant people and departments long before one expects to seek elector approval.

Partnerships developed during the establishment process can be valuable in delivering the fund after a successful campaign too. In some areas of B.C., umbrella organizations or partnerships bring together many non-profit and government agencies to share knowledge and work toward common goals. Assembling a group or partnership like this, even ad hoc, can inform and support the local government in its legislated roles and help meet the community's conservation fund goals. If there is already a conservation group that is working on big ideas and issues, start there and ask for appointees or volunteers to join the team.

Conservation Programs and Partnerships

Coastal Douglas-Fir and Associated Ecosystems Conservation Partnership was launched in 2012 to pursue a collaborative approach, based on sound science, to conserving Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystems. Forty-plus partners are working to implement a strategy to secure more protected areas, support active ecosystem management, and raise awareness of both issues and solutions.

cdfcp.ca

Comox Valley Conservation Partnership, formed in 2008, is a partnership of over 20 organizations in Vancouver Island's Comox Valley that support the Comox Valley Conservation Strategy. The strategy plans to reverse the trend of ecosystem losses by identifying, maintaining, protecting, and restoring treasured natural areas.

cvlandtrust.ca

Kootenay Conservation Program (formerly East Kootenay Conservation Program) was established in 2002 as a partnership of conservation, industry, and government organizations focused on conserving natural areas for Kootenay communities. Today the partnership includes over 80 organizations that pool expertise to develop, facilitate, and coordinate conservation efforts on private land through securement, stewardship, and capacity building.

kootenayconservation.ca

Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team is a non-profit organization dedicated to the recovery of Garry oak and associated ecosystems in Canada and the species at risk that inhabit them. The team was formed in 1999 as a comprehensive partnership of experts affiliated with all levels of government, non-government organizations, academic institutions, First Nations, volunteers, and consultants.

goert.ca

Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program was created in 2006 as a partnership of organizations and businesses with shared goals, which include maintaining regional biodiversity, protecting species at risk, maintaining ecological connectivity throughout the Okanagan Basin, and balancing regional growth with conservation.

okcp.ca

South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program was founded in 2000 by various groups concerned with the special environment and habitat of the South Okanagan-Similkameen area. SOSCP is a partnership of 50 non-government, government, and First Nations organizations working together to conserve biodiversity. SOSCP coordinates and facilitates the partners to help improve the effectiveness of their conservation efforts.

soscp.org

South Coast Conservation Program was established in 2005 as a multi-partner, landscape-level conservation program that coordinates and facilitates the implementation of conservation actions to maintain and restore species and ecosystems at risk for the South Coast (or Lower Mainland) of B.C.

sccp.ca

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

There is likely to be a broad base of support as interest in protecting the community's natural assets and creating a conservation fund will come from all sides of the political spectrum.

For this reason, it is helpful to reach out to groups and individuals that represent the community's many social, economic, and environmental interests. They may be invaluable in sharing information with their contacts, hosting information sessions, or providing expertise to support the fund campaign.

When making a list of whom to include, consider local business and industry; youth and seniors; recreation, environmental, health, and education groups; and other levels of government, including Indigenous governments.



2. Determine Community Priorities

Establishing a conservation fund requires an understanding of community members' various interests and priorities, as well as which sustainability objectives the majority of residents share. People have different reasons for supporting conservation, and it is the leadership team's job to find out what those reasons are and make the case for a fund from various perspectives.

Opinion polls and focus groups are two ways to discover people's views and gauge support. To be sure of valid results, it is important to have a professional assist with both the design and implementation of any public opinion research.

Note that the local government may have developed conservation priorities through official community planning or sustainability planning. It makes sense to be aware of existing work, as it could provide useful context when designing the conservation fund.

Also keep in mind that understanding residents' willingness to pay for a conservation fund service is an important factor in the establishment process. Even if there is widespread public support for a conservation fund, there will be an amount, above which many people would say no. It is important to know what that threshold is; focus groups or polling may provide that information.

PUBLIC OPINION POLLS

The team can use a public opinion poll to collect answers to questions such as:

1. What do people in the community care about?
 - Leaving a legacy for future generations?
 - More parks and natural areas?
 - Recreational opportunities?
 - Clean water and air?
 - Protection of watersheds, wildlife corridors, and greenways?
 - Farmland and food security?
 - Protection of scenic beauty, landmarks, and local identity?
 - Natural areas as outdoor classrooms?
 - Ecotourism opportunities?
 - Slowing sprawl?
 - Reducing the loss of habitat and wildlife species?
 - Keeping important lands as a public asset and resource?
2. Do people support the concept of a conservation fund, and how much are they prepared to pay in taxes for it?
3. What do people think is the best approach for collecting the money (e.g., property value tax or parcel tax)?
4. Do people feel like the natural environment is improving or worsening?
5. What areas do people feel need the most protection and why?

Some local governments regularly conduct public opinion polls or surveys to seek residents' opinions on a wide range of topics, including parks, ecosystem protection, and natural areas. Existing local government polls or surveys should be considered as a first step in assessing the community's readiness for a conservation fund and their conservation priorities.

The leadership team may find it worthwhile to invest in additional, in-depth public opinion research to more fully understand residents' perspectives, motivations, levels of support, and willingness to pay for a conservation fund service. While people may readily support the idea of a conservation fund, when it comes to the official process to gain the community's approval, it is crucial to be able to provide the information residents need to feel confident turning their in-principle support into actual endorsement.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups provide the opportunity to gather input from people with different backgrounds, roles, and perspectives.

Communications or marketing professionals can provide advice around the number and composition of focus groups, and assist with their design. When skillfully devised, focus groups can be both enlightening and useful, informing both communications and outreach, and the proposed service area boundary.





3. Make the Case for a Conservation Fund

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH STRATEGY

Clear and effective communication is essential to inform and educate the public and decision makers about what the proposed conservation fund is, what it will do, and why it matters.

A communication and outreach strategy can help the leadership team frame issues, outline tactics, and define tasks and responsibilities to be undertaken within certain time and budget constraints. The strategy should underlie all of the team's communications—from advertising to correspondence, and educational activities to social events.

It is important to keep in mind the following points when developing and implementing a conservation fund communication strategy:

- **Key messages** – Use the results of polls and focus groups to help decide what the messaging needs to address. Emphasize the fund's benefits to people, rather than "the environment."
Include ideas on how the leadership team will deal with opposition to the proposed conservation fund, as well as answers to questions that you expect will be asked frequently. As local government staff and elected officials may receive questions from the community, it is important that they have the information they need to be able to respond accurately.
- **Target audiences** – Target your communication to different audiences, and ensure that appropriate members of the leadership team make personal contact with local government representatives, and other community leaders and organizations, to explain the proposal and gain support.
- **Roles and responsibilities** – Every member of the leadership team should have a clear role in the communication and outreach efforts, including staying on-message when talking about the conservation fund in the community. It is helpful to identify specialized roles, such as authorized spokesperson(s).
- **Budget** – Consider what might be the most effective and efficient vehicles for sharing information and engaging with the audiences in your community, and partner with others to extend the reach of your message without greatly increasing costs.
- **Monitoring** – Make note of how your efforts are measuring up to your objectives. Keeping track of positive and negative public response to the conservation fund campaign can help the team to hone its communication and outreach strategy.

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

It is helpful to use a range of tactics to reach people from different interest groups and demographics. Consider using a combination of printed outreach materials—such as brochures and news articles—face-to-face contact at meetings and informal gathering places, online methods such as a website and social media, and television and radio announcements.

Design your strategies according to what you know about your audiences and their habits. Be prepared to change course if key audiences are not receiving your message.

Consider the following as part of your outreach campaign:

- **Presentations to municipal councils, regional district boards, and local government staff.** These are vital. Conduct presentations early on to inform and engage key decision makers and staff.
- **One-on-one meetings with local government representatives.** Time allotted for delegations at board or council meetings is limited. It is helpful to have additional opportunities to meet with elected officials and staff to delve more deeply, answer questions, and build support.
- **Presentations to community organizations.** Attending and providing information at others' meetings, gatherings, and trade shows will help to gauge and build support with different groups and sectors (e.g., service clubs, naturalist groups, business associations, rod and gun clubs, etc.).
- **Public information sessions.** These can be hosted by different members of the leadership team and can be formal or informal.
 - Hosting a forum and inviting speakers from areas with existing conservation funds to share their experiences and successes can demonstrate that conservation funds are doable.
 - An open house can provide a relaxed atmosphere where the public is invited to drop by during a set time and date. They can speak with leadership team members, view displays set up around the room, and break into small discussion groups. The team may be able to obtain written feedback on the proposed fund through comment forms.
 - Public meetings are typically more formal events hosted by local governments where attendees are asked to arrive at a specific time to receive information, which is usually in the form of a presentation by staff and/or leadership team members, followed by a question and answer period.
- **Informal gathering places.** Grocery stores, hardware stores, and farmers markets can also be effective locations for outreach efforts. These places provide informal settings for promoting the idea of a fund, addressing questions and concerns, and receiving comments from community members.
- **Mass media: newspaper, television, and radio.** The media are a cost-effective and efficient way to get the message delivered to a large number of people. It is important to develop positive relationships with local media early on—even before submitting anything for coverage. This will help them understand your needs and will pay off in increased reporting, better media relations, and fewer factual distortions. Consider various formats in your outreach strategy, including interviews, stories, letters to the editor, and public service announcements. In some cases, paid media (i.e., advertisements) might be worth the cost.
- **Outreach materials.** Having something to distribute (e.g., frequently asked questions, brochures, rack cards, posters, and flyers) at events or key public locations can be helpful.
- **Graphics and video.** Find someone with the skills to produce high-quality graphic material: photos, social media posts, images with information and messages that can be shared with other organizations and the media. Consider video as part of your strategy.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Frequently asked questions that the leadership team should consider include:

- What benefits will the conservation fund provide to the community and to individuals?
- How will the fund be spent? Who decides? Having an accountability plan in place reassures residents that funds will be spent properly and fairly.
- Isn't there already funding for conservation?
- We already pay taxes. Why should we pay more?

It also may be useful to develop scenarios contrasting what the conservation fund could do compared to what would likely happen without it, and share these with the community to illustrate the importance of the fund.

NAVIGATING A PUBLIC PROCESS

Depending on the circumstances, the local government likely will have to seek elector approval, such as by assent voting (formerly known as "referendum" or "other voting") or an alternative approval process (see sections 6 and 7 of this guide for details). In order to be successful, an assent vote (referendum) requires that a majority of the qualified electors who show up to vote (50% +1) support the proposal, whereas an alternative approval process requires that less than 10% of qualified electors register formal opposition to the proposal.

It is important to note that under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*,¹ conservation organizations and individuals involved in communicating and campaigning as part of an assent voting process (referendum) need to register as a third party sponsor (if the assent vote is conducted at the same time as a local election) or a non-election assent voting advertising sponsor (if the assent vote is conducted at a time different from a local election). Information on the requirements can be obtained from the Elections BC website.²

While the leadership team's communication and outreach efforts will encourage public support for a conservation fund, the team should be aware that it is local government staff's responsibility to remain impartial and unbiased, as their role is to conduct a transparent, sound process. While they might answer questions from the public, it is inappropriate for local government staff members to promote the fund, regardless of how they may feel about it personally.

The team's broad base of knowledge should be used to identify if any groups are likely to oppose an assent vote or other approval process, and assess whether such groups have the funds, capacity, or a leader who could mount opposition. Being prepared to answer people's concerns and arguments will help the team stay on-message rather than becoming reactive and losing positive momentum.

The Assent Voting Question

Local governments must comply with strict guidelines for the wording of assent vote questions. It is the leadership team's job to interpret or "translate" the bylaw question in plain language for electors as part of the communication and outreach campaign.

Since the ballot question is the last thing people see as they cast their vote, it is important that they understand what they are voting for in advance of the vote. If they are unclear about what the question means, the vote may be spoiled, or perhaps marked no instead of yes.



4. Design the Conservation Fund

DEVELOPING CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

A conservation vision or statement of conservation priorities outlines the community's conservation goals, provides rationale for the conservation fund, and clarifies how monies will be used.

In some cases, the local government and/or an external organization may already have completed the groundwork for a conservation vision by mapping important natural areas or developing a strategy that details priorities for maintaining and preserving certain ecological values.

Other levels of government (i.e., provincial³ and/or federal⁴ agencies), land trusts, and/or conservancies⁵ also may have done studies in the area and be able to provide data and assist with interpretation, assessment, and prioritization.

Check to see if the following information is available for the community:

- **Regional conservation strategy.** Examples include:
 - City of Surrey Biodiversity Conservation Strategy⁶
 - Islands Trust Regional Conservation Plan⁷
 - Keeping Nature in Our Future: A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the South Okanagan-Similkameen⁸
 - Keeping Nature in Our Future: A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region⁹
 - Nature Without Borders: Comox Valley Conservation Strategy¹⁰
 - Strategic Directions for Biodiversity Conservation in the Metro Vancouver Region¹¹
- **Official community plan (OCP).** An OCP is an effective way for a local government to express a community's long-term vision for conservation and development. OCPs may contain policies for the “preservation, protection, restoration and enhancement of the natural environment, its ecosystems, and biological diversity.”¹² It is most efficient to make changes to an OCP during the review process when community consultation must occur. Such changes can enshrine visions and goals that pave the way for bylaw provisions that align with conservation fund objectives (e.g., Environmental Development Permit Areas).
- **Ecosystem mapping,** such as Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory (SEI),¹³ which identifies remaining rare or fragile ecosystems in a region, can be very useful in determining priority areas for conservation.
- **List of ecologically important lands** that need to be protected. Governments, land trusts, and conservation partnerships often have up-to-date priority lists.

- **Parks/open space system plan** and/or **natural areas conservation plan** for the area or region.
- **Information about present and future land development pressures.**
- **Land and resource plans** such as:
 - Sustainability studies
 - Growth management studies or plans (e.g., regional growth strategy¹⁴)
 - Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction plans
 - Water stewardship plans
 - Watershed management plans
 - Strategic Land and Resource Plans¹⁵
 - Sensitive ecosystems protection
 - Parks and open space plans
 - Agriculture or food security plans

DETERMINING THE TYPE AND SCOPE OF FUND

A conservation fund is shaped by a conservation vision and the needs of the community. Parkland funds are typically more narrowly focused on the purchase of land for parks, whereas conservation funds are designed to support a broad array of activities; both can provide immense benefit for the natural environment and the community itself.

For example, in the Capital and Central Okanagan Regional Districts, funds focus solely on parkland acquisition as the main vehicle for achieving conservation and recreation objectives.

In the case of the Columbia Valley, Kootenay Lake, South Okanagan, and North Okanagan Conservation Funds, monies can be used to fund land acquisition in addition to a broader range of possible projects, such as conservation of water and aquatic ecosystems, restoration or enhancement of wildlife habitat, and addressing invasive species, for example. Each fund has its own terms of reference that outline local priorities.



PREPARING TERMS OF REFERENCE

Terms of reference provide a road map for fund design and implementation. They should include the following details:

- a) Purpose of the fund.
- b) Governance of the fund, including specifying the organization that will administer the fund and how decisions will be made regarding which projects receive funding.
- c) Conservation themes and goals, including targets and goals for funding, issues with the highest relevance, ineligible activities, project ranking, review process, and evaluation criteria.
- d) Annual timelines for the fund, such as call for proposals announcements, proposal submission deadlines, and funded projects announcements.
- e) Responsibilities of the partners that govern and administer the fund (i.e., various government and non-profit groups involved).
- f) Technical advisory committee guidelines, including conflict of interest provisions.

The terms of reference for existing conservation funds are linked on the guide web page (soconservationfund.ca/conservation-fund-guide-bc). You can also find specific information about each of the four conservation funds currently in B.C. via the following links:

Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund

Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund

South Okanagan Conservation Fund

North Okanagan Conservation Fund

kootenayconservation.ca

kootenayconservation.ca

soconservationfund.ca

rdno.ca/our-communities/community-grants



5. Determine Financing Options

These are common categories of financing options for conservation funds. Local government staff can advise on other options, as well as what is most appropriate to the circumstances.

FINANCING OPTIONS	
Property Value Tax	<p>Local governments calculate property value taxes on the basis of the assessed or net taxable value of land and improvements (e.g. house, barn, garage, yard), unless exempted, and the local government tax rate.¹⁶ Property value tax can also be calculated on land only or on improvements only.</p> <p>Most local governments calculate property taxes using the variable tax rate system where tax rates are based on an amount per \$1,000 of assessed property value (e.g., 10¢ per \$1,000 of assessed property value). Tax rates vary for different property classes of land such as residential, industrial, and commercial, so if the tax rate stays the same but property values rise, the local government's property tax revenue rises.</p>
Parcel Tax	<p>Regional districts and municipalities can apply a parcel tax to properties that receive a particular service.¹⁷ A parcel tax can be imposed in one of three different ways: on the basis of the same amount for each parcel of land; on the taxable area of a parcel; or on the taxable frontage of the parcel. For conservation funds, a single amount for each parcel is the appropriate method to use. Under this method, the service establishment bylaw states the maximum dollar amount that can be taxed or requisitioned each year and that amount is divided equally across the taxable parcels in the service area.</p> <p>Note that a parcel tax does not rise as property values increase. The maximum amount that can be taxed each year remains the same over time (unless the bylaw includes a provision that the maximum is determined by so many dollars or cents per \$1,000 of taxable assessed value in the service area). In addition, a parcel tax may be significant to a property owner with several separate parcels of land. (To alleviate this issue, a municipality could perhaps waive or reduce the tax for an owner or a regional district could exclude specific parcels from the service area.)</p> <p>The local government must create a parcel tax roll to impose a parcel tax. The roll lists the parcels to be charged and includes the name and address of the owners of each parcel. Once the local government completes the parcel tax roll, they must make it available for public inspection. The local government must form a review panel to consider any complaints about the roll and to authenticate it.</p>
Local Area Service Tax	<p>Municipalities may impose a local area service tax where only part of a municipality will receive a benefit from a service.¹⁸ Property owners may petition for a local area service, or a municipality may impose a service, subject to assent of the electors. Local area service taxes are imposed by way of a parcel or property value tax.</p>
Fees	<p>Both municipalities and regional districts may recover costs on a fee-for-service basis provided the fee is associated with an already established service. For example, instead of imposing a tax on property, a fee could be collected from each household as part of a local government water service (e.g., for a rainwater management program) or from park facility users (e.g., for ecosystem restoration within parks).¹⁹</p>

CALCULATING THE ANNUAL AMOUNT OF FUNDING

Regardless of the financing mechanism selected, there are several approaches that can be used to figure out how many dollars a particular financing approach could raise and what the total size of the fund would be in each case. This is a complicated exercise.

It is critical to work closely with the local government's chief administrative officer and chief financial officer, who can advise on these matters. Local governments are equipped to calculate the annual amount of funding, to evaluate the options, and to choose the best mechanism for your community or region.



6. Understand the Establishment Options

Local governments provide a broad range of services in return for the property taxes levied. Such services can include land use planning, recreation, libraries, fire and rescue, solid waste management, water supply and distribution, and sewage collection and disposal. Other services, such as conservation funds, can also be provided.

The methods by which conservation funds can be established differ for municipalities and regional districts. The purpose of this section is to outline, in general terms, the options that municipalities and regional districts can consider, and to briefly discuss partnering with Indigenous governments.

Because the process of establishing a service, especially for regional districts, is quite complex, it is essential to rely on local government staff to present the options to their boards or councils and to address all matters related to the legalities involved in setting up a conservation fund service.

MUNICIPALITIES

The *Community Charter*²⁰ gives municipalities authority to provide any service that council deems necessary or desirable.²¹ A municipal council can establish a conservation fund service to benefit:

- The entire municipality, or
- A portion of the municipality (local area service).

If the conservation fund will benefit and be paid for by the entire municipality, council can choose to authorize the fund by resolution or by bylaw. Elector approval is not required; however, council might want to seek the community's opinion by conducting a vote (perhaps in conjunction with a general local election) or by using another process they deem appropriate. The results of such a process are not binding on the council.

If the conservation fund service will only benefit and be paid for by a portion of the municipality, a bylaw is required to establish a local area service. Council can only adopt such a bylaw if:

- A sufficient petition to set up the local area service is received (strict content requirements apply), and signed by the owners of at least 50% of the parcels representing at least 50% of the assessed value of land and improvements that would be subject to the tax for the conservation fund, or
- The conservation fund local area service is proposed by council initiative and a sufficient petition against the service is not received (same 50%/50% rule as noted above applies), or
- The conservation fund local area service is proposed by council initiative and receives assent of the electors (assent is obtained by voting following the same basic rules as an election).

REGIONAL DISTRICTS

The *Local Government Act*²² gives regional districts authority to establish services. A regional district board includes representatives from both electoral areas and municipalities, and can establish a conservation fund service to benefit:

- The entire region (all electoral areas and municipalities), or
- All electoral areas (no municipalities), or
- Some electoral areas and some municipalities (e.g., a subregional service), or
- Portions of one or more electoral areas, or
- Any combination of electoral areas (or portions thereof) and/or municipalities.

In all cases, a regional district conservation fund service must be established by bylaw²³ and approval of the electors is required before the bylaw can be adopted (see section 7 of this guide).

INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENTS

Indigenous governments and local governments sometimes partner to deliver shared services; establishing a conservation fund may provide an opportunity for such collaboration.

Many Indigenous governments in Canada have enacted laws imposing direct taxes within their reserves or settlement lands. The powers for enacting real property tax bylaws are contained in both the *Indian Act*²⁴ and the *First Nations Fiscal Management Act*.²⁵ Other taxation powers related to land are set out in the legislation that gives effect to modern treaties, comprehensive land claims, or self-government agreements. (See Fact Sheet - Taxation by Aboriginal Governments.²⁶)



7. Gain Participating Area Approval to Establish the Fund

As noted earlier, a municipal council has the authority to provide a conservation fund service for the entire municipality, through resolution or bylaw, without elector approval. If a service will only benefit and be paid for by a *portion of the municipality*, a bylaw is required to establish a local area service (see section 6).

However, a *regional district* conservation fund service *must* be established by bylaw, which requires approval of the electors before the bylaw can be adopted. A regional district conservation fund service could include the entire region (all electoral areas and municipalities), or be established as a subregional service, which could include many possible combinations of whole or parts of electoral areas and municipalities.

Elector approval must be obtained from each of the participating areas²⁸ separately unless the regional district board, by resolution, decides that elector approval is to be obtained for the entire proposed service area. What this means is:

- If approval is obtained *from each participating area separately*, each of those areas is "counted" individually and if the results in even one of the participating areas is no, the service for the entire proposed service area does not go ahead. In this case, the council decides the method of obtaining approval for the municipality, and the regional district board decides the method for the electoral areas.
- If approval is obtained from the entire proposed service area, the participating areas are "counted" or added together as if there was only one. In this case, the regional district board decides the method of obtaining approval for the participating municipalities and electoral areas.

There are a few different processes that a regional district (or a municipality, as applicable) can use to obtain participating area approval. When making their decision, the board (or council) will examine the options as presented by administration, weigh what they deem to be the advantages and disadvantages of each option, and consider the needs and wants of the communities involved.

This section is meant to provide only a brief description of the methods for obtaining participating area approval. The amount of time and the cost associated with conducting the different processes, and other factors that must be considered, will vary depending on the size of the service area being proposed, the public process that the local government wishes to undertake, and any other jurisdictional requirements.

Due to the complexity associated with each of the different methods, it is essential to rely on local government staff to present the options to their board or council and to address all matters related to administering the participating area approval process.

PETITION FOR ELECTORAL SERVICES

The owners of parcels in an electoral area can sign and submit to the regional district a petition for a service²⁹ in all or part of that electoral area.

- Only applies in electoral areas or portions thereof.
- The petition must describe the service being proposed, define the service area boundaries, indicate how the service will be paid for, and might include other information required by the regional district board.
- To ensure accuracy of the content, the regional district will likely prepare the petition and send it out to the individual property owners within the proposed service area along with information regarding the service and the petition process.

Steps to Establish a Regional District Service

The conservation fund as a regional or subregional service must be established by bylaw, and approval of the electors must be obtained. Establishing bylaws must be given three readings and approved by the B.C. Inspector of Municipalities²⁷ before an elector approval process. Be aware that this can take a considerable amount of time.

The general outline of the conservation fund establishment process is as follows:

1. Determine the participating areas. It is important to do this before the bylaw is drafted and a motion put forward. If not every member municipality or electoral area in the regional district supports the idea of a conservation fund, a smaller initiative may be considered; the service area boundary is established based on areas that show support for the fund.
2. Draft the establishing bylaw.
3. Work with the Inspector of Municipalities to ensure the bylaw is acceptable.
4. Obtain three readings by the regional district board.
5. Submit the draft bylaw to the Inspector of Municipalities for approval.
6. Conduct an elector approval process.
7. Move to adopt the bylaw at the regional district board.

- The owners of all the properties within the service area are given the opportunity to sign a petition.
- For a petition to be sufficient, it must be signed by the owners of at least 50% of the parcels representing at least 50% of the net taxable value of land and improvements within the proposed service area.
- If a sufficient petition is received, the board can authorize consent on behalf of the electoral participating area(s). This is done by the electoral area director(s) consenting in writing to adopt the bylaw.

ALTERNATIVE APPROVAL PROCESS

Participating area approval for a conservation fund service can be obtained by alternative approval process (AAP)³⁰ if the maximum amount that can be requisitioned for the service is equivalent to 50¢ (or less) for each \$1,000 of the net taxable value of land and improvements included in the service area.

- Can be used if just electoral areas (or portions thereof) or if both municipalities and electoral areas (or portions of electoral areas) are included in the service area.
- The local government must give public notice of the AAP and provide forms for electors to submit indicating that the local government cannot proceed with the conservation fund service establishment bylaw unless it is approved by an assent vote.
- Only *qualified electors* within the participating areas are eligible to submit elector response forms. The resident and non-resident property elector qualifications are the same as the qualifications to vote at a local government election or assent vote (e.g., Canadian citizen, resident of B.C. for 6 months, resident or property owner in the service area for 3 months).
- If at least 10% of the electors of the participating area or areas (see second bullet above) submit elector response forms, the local government can either abandon the proposed service or conduct an assent vote.

ASSENT VOTING

Participating area approval for a conservation fund service can be obtained by assent voting³¹ (formerly known as a "referendum" or "other voting").

- Can be used if just electoral areas (or portions thereof) or if both municipalities and electoral areas (or portions of electoral areas) are included in the service area.
- An assent vote is conducted in basically the same manner as a local government election, with just a few differences.
- Only qualified electors within the participating areas are eligible to vote. The resident and non-resident property elector qualifications are the same as the qualifications to vote at a local government election (e.g., Canadian citizen, resident of B.C. for 6 months, resident or property owner in the service area for 3 months).
- For the conservation fund service to proceed, at least 50% + 1 of the electors that show up to vote must vote yes (see the introduction to this section for information on how the votes are counted if participating area approval is obtained separately for each area or for the entire proposed service area).
- The results of an assent vote are binding on the regional district board.

CONSENT ON BEHALF OF A MUNICIPALITY

If the proposed regional district conservation fund service includes a municipality as a participating area, the council can give participating area approval by consenting on behalf of their electors to adoption of the service establishment bylaw.³² This is done by the council adopting a resolution at an open council meeting and then notifying the regional district board of its consent. What this means is that if a municipal council chooses to give consent on behalf of their electors, an alternative approval process or assent vote is not required for that municipality.



As the name indicates, conservation funds give local people the opportunity to support local conservation goals. Conservation funds allow residents a measure of control over the environmental sustainability activities that are designed to benefit their community or region. They also give residents the opportunity to invest in protecting the environment that sustains them, preserving natural treasures, and creating a legacy of community health and sustainability.

The case studies that follow provide more detail about the nuts and bolts of conservation funds that have been established already. Feel free to contact the people who are involved with those funds to learn about their experiences. They are eager to support your success.

Since this guide represents experience to date, there will be new developments that are not captured here. Visit the guide web page (soconservationfund.ca/conservation-fund-guide-bc) for additional documents and updates.



Lake Enid Restoration Project by Wildsight. Supported by Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund.

Conservation funds are a relatively new concept for local governments in British Columbia. They are broad in scope, addressing multiple conservation priorities and activities. As of spring 2022, there are four such funds: two in the Kootenay region, one in the South Okanagan, and one in the North Okanagan.

Parkland acquisition funds are more common. Sometimes local government park funds make environmental conservation a priority, but more often they are intended to meet public amenity requirements and provide space for active and passive recreation in the community.

Because it is also possible to create parkland acquisition funds that are conservation-focused, this guide includes information on two such funds: one on Vancouver Island and one in the Okanagan.

Regional District of East Kootenay

COLUMBIA VALLEY LOCAL CONSERVATION FUND

ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

The Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund was the first of its kind established in Canada.

In 2005, Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP, then East Kootenay Conservation Program)—a partnership of conservation organizations, resource industries, educational institutions, First Nations, and government agencies—saw the opportunity to establish conservation funds in Canada similar to funds being established throughout the United States.

At that time, it was unclear whether these types of funds could be established in Canada and if so, what the available political processes were. KCP completed a basic feasibility study, and also attended a training course in the U.S.

The initial leadership team was the KCP steering committee. Eventually, a sub-committee was struck to explore the opportunity further. The team also sought out and received assistance from elected officials and senior staff within the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) regarding the establishment process.

KCP was able to secure a number of capacity-building grants to develop a strategy, and to fund polling and focus group research. The leadership team used this baseline information to understand local values and priorities, and to explore willingness to pay for a conservation fund service through a dedicated tax.

KCP conducted polling at two different times during the establishment process and held several focus groups. This research helped select the fund service area, not only for the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund, but also for the Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund.

The original goal was to have all municipalities and electoral areas in the RDEK participate in the service, however, the conservation fund idea only received support from the Upper Columbia Valley portion of the RDEK.

The residents who were clear that they wanted the opportunity to vote on the initiative wanted it to happen in the most cost-effective way possible. This translated to an assent vote (referendum) being conducted in conjunction with a general election in 2008. Only electors in the service area (Upper Columbia Valley) were eligible to vote on the question of setting up a conservation fund.

After a successful vote, the RDEK board adopted the bylaw to establish the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund service in the Upper Columbia Valley portion of the regional district, including the Village of Radium Hot Springs, District of Invermere, Village of Canal Flats, and RDEK electoral areas F and G (which includes the communities of Fairmont Hot Springs, Windermere, Brisco, and Spillimacheen).

Community priorities are reflected in the conservation fund's terms of reference, which list the fund themes as conservation of water, wildlife, habitat, and open space. Focusing on these themes supports the community's desire to preserve the region's rural landscape and associated quality of life.

Property owners in the service area pay a parcel tax of 5¢ per \$1,000 of taxable assessed value, up to a maximum of \$230,000 annually (this works out to about \$20 per parcel). Local people said they preferred this option and the certainty it provides as opposed to an amount that is tied to assessed property value.

The RDEK has engaged KCP, through a fee-for-service contract, to administer the grant application and review process. This process draws on the expertise of a volunteer technical review committee to ensure that funded projects meet the fund's terms of reference and other criteria.

The RDEK maintains oversight by reviewing and making final decisions on applications for funding, developing direct contribution agreements between the RDEK and the successful proponents, as well as holding the parcel tax funds to deliver the conservation fund service.

The RDEK has been recognized for establishing the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund. In 2013, the initiative was a public sector finalist in the Real Estate Foundation of BC's Land Awards program.

Originally the service was due to expire in 2018 but RDEK Directors voted to remove the sunset clause so the CVLCF would continue.

FUNDED PROJECTS

From 2010 to 2021, the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund approved 101 grants totalling \$2.55 million. This local investment has leveraged almost nine times that amount in additional grants and in-kind contributions.

Here are a few of the projects funded by the RDEK over the past eleven years:

Farmland Advantage (formerly Ecological Goods and Services): Voluntary, incentive-based program that pays landowners and farmers to conserve and enhance the ecological services that they manage, and which impact the health of the broader landscape. Windermere District Farmers Institute – 10 grants totalling \$117,140.

Rehabilitation of Abel Creek: Increase the amount of high-quality spawning habitat for native fish species within the Columbia River watershed. Lake Windermere District Rod and Gun Club – 2 grants totalling \$8,000.

Dutch Findlay Ecosystem Restoration: Restore open structure to closed coniferous forest stands on the west side of Columbia Lake to resist climate change, safeguard communities from catastrophic forest fire, and create habitat for threatened species. Nature Conservancy of Canada – 2 grants totalling \$38,870.

Columbia Lake - Lot 48 Purchase: Contributed to the acquisition of 127 hectares of high-value land for conservation, south of Fairmont Hot Springs on the eastern shore of Columbia Lake. Nature Conservancy of Canada – \$700,000 (\$100,000/year for 7 years).



Farmland Advantage
agricultural incentive
program by Windermere
District Farmers Institute.



Rehabilitation of Abel Creek
by Lake Windermere District
Rod and Gun Club.



Ecosystem Restoration
using prescribed fire by
Nature Conservancy of
Canada.



Columbia Lake - Lot 48
Purchase by Nature
Conservancy of Canada.

Contacts:

Juliet Craig – Program Director, Kootenay Conservation Program
toll-free 1-844-775-2722 | info@kootenayconservation.ca

Tina Hlushak – Corporate Officer, Regional District of East Kootenay
250-489-2791 | thlushak@rdek.bc.ca

"It is heartening to see our Upper Columbia Valley community willing to invest directly in land conservation and biophysical protection through taxation. The micro projects we are funding are right here in our immediate environs. For most people here that's important. We have a say in and can see what's being done. We can experience and understand it and we can be proud that we said yes to conservation."

Gerry Wilkie – Director, Regional District of East Kootenay

Regional District of Central Kootenay

KOOTENAY LAKE LOCAL CONSERVATION FUND

ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

Building on the experience of establishing the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund, Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP) led the initiative to establish a conservation fund in the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK). KCP's full steering committee formed the initial leadership team, and RDCK elected officials and senior staff provided assistance on matters related to the establishment process.

Because KCP had polled widely in the Kootenays prior to the establishment of the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund, there was some information already available to support the Central Kootenay process.

In addition to widespread polling, the leadership team held six focus groups in 2013. As was the case with the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund, this research helped to determine the RDCK fund's service area, as well as offering insight into residents' values, priorities, and willingness to pay for a conservation fund service. Community open houses and roundtables also helped in this regard, as ways to ground truth the public opinion research.

Even with residents' support, it was the elected officials' role to decide whether or not establishment would proceed. In this case, of the areas that indicated support at the public opinion research stage, one municipality opted out, and so the assent vote (referendum) question was posed, on a subregional basis, to voters in three RDCK electoral areas.

The RDCK established the Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund after a successful vote in November 2014, which was held in conjunction with the local election in electoral areas A, D, and E. The financing mechanism is a parcel tax of \$15 per parcel per year, which is applied to all parcels (residential, industrial, commercial) in the service area.

As participating communities are located on Kootenay Lake, water issues emerged as an important focus. The conservation fund's terms of reference reflect this, listing aquatic systems and conservation of water, wildlife, and habitat as the fund themes.

The RDCK has engaged KCP, through a fee-for-service contract, to administer the grant application and review process. This process draws on the expertise of a volunteer technical review committee to ensure that funded projects meet the fund's terms of reference and effectiveness criteria.

The RDCK maintains oversight by reviewing and making final decisions on applications for funding, developing and holding direct contribution agreements with proponents, and holding the parcel tax monies in a dedicated fund to deliver the conservation fund service.



Kootenay Community Bat Project. Supported by Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund.

FUNDED PROJECTS

From 2016 to 2021, the Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund approved 37 grants totalling \$468,000. This local investment has leveraged over four times that amount in external grants and in-kind support, and almost 43 times that amount if two securement projects are included.

Here is a selection of projects funded by the RDCK over the past six years:

Grizzly Bear Co-Existence Solutions: Reduce grizzly bear and agricultural conflicts through an electric fencing cost-share program to allow safe passage of grizzly bears through private land. BC Conservation Foundation – 1 grant of \$9,080. Friends of the Lardeau River – 4 grants totalling \$47,000.

Darkwoods Ecosystem Restoration at Tye: Restore the most heavily degraded land at the Tye townsite in the Nature Conservancy of Canada's largest conservation property by dealing with pests and weeds, planting native shrubs and trees, and improving habitat for bull trout, kokanee, and mountain caribou. Provide opportunities for community members to become actively involved in restoration. Nature Conservancy of Canada – 1 grant of \$14,650.

Kootenay Watershed Science: Collect data that will help predict how the area's small and medium-sized watersheds will behave in a changing climate. The data will help with adaptation strategies in the areas of water supply, land use planning, forest management, and natural hazard prediction. Kootenay Centre for Forestry Alternatives – 4 grants totalling \$72,000. Living Lakes Canada – 1 grant of \$7,500.

Wildflowers for Pollinators Project: Support conservation of pollinators by engaging residents to create pollinator meadows on private land. Kootenay Native Plant Society – 3 grants totalling \$24,196.



Grizzly Bear Co-Existence Solutions Project by Friends of Lardeau River.



Darkwoods Ecosystem Restoration by Nature Conservancy of Canada.



Kootenay Watershed Science Project by Living Lakes Canada.



Wildflowers for Pollinators Project by Kootenay Native Plant Society.

Contact

Juliet Craig – Program Director, Kootenay Conservation Program
toll-free 1-844-775-2722 | info@kootenayconservation.ca

Sangita Sudan – General Manager of Development Services, Regional District of Central Kootenay
250-352-8157 | ssudan@rdck.bc.ca

"Community-led conservation based on regional priorities promotes stewardship at the local level. This is a necessary effort. The Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund provides a meaningful opportunity for conservation groups to establish projects that are worthwhile and long lasting."

Ramona Faust – Director, Regional District of Central Kootenay

Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

SOUTH OKANAGAN CONSERVATION FUND

ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

The South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP)—a partnership of 50 government and non-government organizations working towards shared environmental conservation goals—proposed the establishment of a conservation fund for the South Okanagan region and worked with local government partners to explore and advance the concept. SOSCP was aware of the success of the conservation funds established in the Kootenays and saw this as a significant tool to address the region's capacity for environmental and biodiversity protection.

SOSCP assembled a leadership team from within its partnership—a team that included local government staff at the direction of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) board. SOSCP conducted focus groups, drew from resident surveys, and engaged the community in other ways to determine priorities and gauge support for the proposed conservation fund.

Elected officials decided whether their electoral area or municipality was interested in participating in the environmental conservation service. In the end, it was decided that the bylaw would be proposed as a sub-regional service for 6 of the 9 electoral areas and 3 of the 6 municipalities within the region. Public approval for the bylaw was sought through alternative approval process conducted for the proposed sub-regional service as a whole.

The alternative approval process was concluded with less than one percent of eligible voters in opposition to the proposed bylaw. In December 2016, the RDOS board approved the environmental conservation service bylaw that established the South Okanagan Conservation Fund.

The South Okanagan property owners pay a property value tax of 3.72¢ per \$1,000 net taxable value of land and



improvements, to a maximum of \$450,000 annually in the communities of Summerland, Penticton, and Oliver, and rural RDOS electoral areas A, C, D, E, I and F.

The conservation fund's purpose, as specified in the terms of reference, is to provide financial support for projects that will contribute to the conservation, protection, enhancement, and restoration of South Okanagan valuable natural areas, including water and land-based ecosystems, wildlife, and habitat.

The fund is held and overseen by the RDOS in a dedicated account earmarked for conservation only. Community groups and organizations may apply to the conservation fund to support their environmental conservation projects.

Administration of the fund, including the granting process is provided through a modest fee for service contract, and a volunteer committee of technical experts has been put in place to ensure that projects are technically sound and contribute to important conservation goals. The RDOS maintains oversight by reviewing and making final decisions on applications for funding, developing and holding direct contribution agreements with proponents, and holding the parcel tax monies in a dedicated fund to deliver the environmental conservation service.

In early 2017, the RDOS was recognized with a peer-nominated award of excellence for establishing the South Okanagan Conservation Fund.

Since 2017, the Regional District Okanagan Similkameen has approved 38 grants representing 24 projects and has disbursed over \$1.5 million. This local investment has leveraged four times that with over \$6 million in external matching cash and in-kind funding. Here are some examples of projects funded between 2017 and 2021:

Sage and Sparrow Conservation Lands Addition: Supported the Nature Conservancy of Canada to secure two parcels of important habitat for a variety of species at risk totalling about 125 hectares that is now contiguous with Nature Conservancy of Canada's Sage and Sparrow Conservation Lands and the South Okanagan Grasslands Protected Area.

Park Rill Creek Acquisition: The fund helped The Nature Trust of BC to secure a large, ecologically important property that is home to species at risk and provides habitat connectivity for wide ranging wildlife species, through the sagebrush, grasslands, wetlands and woodlands. The property is now part of the extensive Nature Trust of BC holdings that make up the White Lake Biodiversity Ranch.

k'əmcənɪtkw Floodplain Re-engagement: Okanagan Nation Alliance and the En'owkin Centre re-engaged 12 hectares of the historic floodplain of the Okanagan River, reconnecting

the river to the last remaining contiguous piece of floodplain wetland in the Penticton area. Home to many species at risk, this project re-establishes habitat for wildlife including birds, amphibians, reptiles, and culturally significant species like ntytyix, Chinook Salmon Food Chief. Benefits include natural flood protection, salmon spawning viewing, and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat, improved water quality and more.

Land Stewardship: The Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society engages residents in environmental awareness and stewardship by promoting voluntary opportunities like habitat restoration and plantings, citizen science workshops, and works with landowners to restore riparian areas, wetlands, grasslands & shrub-steppe, and other important natural areas.

Contact:

Christy Malden – Manager of Legislative Services, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
250-490-4146 | toll-free 1-844-775-2722 | cmalden@rdos.bc.ca

"The creation of a regional conservation fund was a major accomplishment for the RDOS Board. This fund will allow for the preservation of land and species at risk through opportunities of land purchases and/or environmental conservation projects through joint partnerships."

Karla Kozakevich – Director, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Regional District of North Okanagan

NORTH OKANAGAN CONSERVATION FUND

The North Okanagan Conservation Fund is the newest conservation fund in British Columbia and was established in 2020.

ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

The Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP) – a partnership of 40 organizations that includes all levels of government, environmental NGO's, land trusts, tourism, and academia – assisted the Regional District of North Okanagan to establish the North Okanagan Conservation Fund (NOCF). A Technical Advisory Committee with representatives from the University of British Columbia's Institute of Biodiversity, Resilience and Ecosystem Services, the Province of BC – Ecosystems Branch, and two senior biologists from the region provide expertise in reviewing and recommending projects for the fund. The OCCP Program Manager and the Manager of Regional Planning Projects from the Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO) oversee the promotion of the fund to the community and the reporting to the RDNO Board of Directors.

OCCP and its partners worked with Regional District staff and elected officials for 24 months to identify local conservation priorities for the fund's terms of reference and assisted with the local government planning processes to create the fund.

On January 22, 2020 the City of Armstrong, the Village of Lumby and Electoral Areas "B" through "F" established the service bylaw for a sub-regional conservation fund to support local conservation priorities. The bylaw was established through the alternative approval process which notified property owners of a new conservation service in the form of a property tax of 2¢ per \$1000 of net taxable values of lands and improvements to a maximum of \$102,000 annually. The alternative approval process easily passed with little to no opposition to establish the fund.

The conservation themes for the North Okanagan Conservation Fund set out to address environmental and conservation issues that include the protection and enhancement of water quality and quantity, terrestrial and



aquatic ecosystems, wildlife (including those at risk and culturally significant), and habitat for native fish and wildlife. The fund's themes are consistent with the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region.

The first round of project applications opened in September 2020, and since then, the RDNO sub-regional board has supported seven grants totaling \$141,000. The approved projects focused on the themes set out in the fund's Terms of Reference. Examples of projects include:

Cultural and Environmental Awareness with Okanagan Nation Alliance developing interpretive signs for the Okanagan Rail Trail to increase the awareness of the importance of water in Sylix culture through water laws and land use decision making processes.



Landowner Stewardship and Restoration with the Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society to create landowner management agreements to improve stewardship for over 240 hectares of wildlife habitat, complete three habitat restoration projects and conduct two wildlife habitat enhancement workshops.

Environmental Assessment Tool with the Okanagan Fisheries Foundation to develop a rapid environmental assessment tool – A Healthy Watershed Checklist for BX Creek. This tool will be used to identify and assess key restoration sites along BX Creek and the tool be made available to other organizations.

Wildlife Monitoring with the North Okanagan Naturalists Club to conduct a comprehensive bird count for Swan Lake to update research that was last completed over 20 years ago. This information will identify the number and types of birds and their habitat requirements for Swan Lake and the surrounding area. This information will assist in planning for future restoration works with the objective to maintain or enhance populations of the identified species.



Contacts:

Scott Boswell – Program Manager, Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program
250-718-4096 | occp123@gmail.com

Laura Frank – Manager of Regional Planning Projects, Regional District of North Okanagan
250-550-3768 | laura.frank@rdno.ca

Parkland Acquisition Funds

Common features of parkland acquisition funds with environmental conservation as a primary objective include:

- The funds meet conservation objectives laid out in local government parks and greenways plans (i.e., they fit into a larger context or strategy).
- Often, they are intended to be temporary measures to raise money to establish new parks or expand existing parks.
- They may be part of an overarching strategy where the local government plans to use property value taxes or requisitions in concert with government borrowing and existing budgets, as well as co-funding land purchases with non-profits and other levels of government.



The following are examples of successful, long-standing parkland acquisition funds in different regions of B.C.

CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT

In 1997, the Capital Regional District (CRD) board of directors adopted the Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy³³ in order to maintain, conserve, and restore land and water areas on public and private land in the region. The strategy includes areas with a variety of values, including ecological, aesthetic, renewable resource, outdoor recreation, and greenway. It refers explicitly to safeguarding at-risk species and sensitive ecosystems.

In 2012, the board adopted the CRD Regional Parks 2012-2021 Strategic Plan,³⁴ which replaced the earlier Regional Parks Master Plan of 2000. The strategic plan describes the vision and purpose for CRD Parks and identifies areas of park potential for land acquisition. The general areas identified in the strategic plan are further assessed, and priorities for land acquisition for the park system are set out in a land acquisition strategy, which is approved by the CRD board. The land acquisition strategy includes sufficient flexibility that priorities may be changed with the approval of the board if an unforeseen opportunity to acquire a high value parcel of land arises during the term of the strategy.

The Regional Park Land Acquisition Fund³⁵ was originally created for a period of ten years: 2000 to 2009. Its goals are to purchase priority conservation land for regional parks and trails as identified in the above-mentioned plans. Due to its success, the fund was extended for ten more years, to 2019.

In 2000, the cost per average residential household was a flat parcel property tax levy of \$10. Over ten years, it became obvious that there was a disadvantage to the fixed \$10 approach, in that land prices had increased greatly and the fund had lost buying power.

In order to maintain the benefits of the fund, the CRD board approved an increase in the levy, starting at a rate of \$12 per average residential household assessment, increasing by \$2 per year to maximum of \$20 in 2014, and then remaining at this rate until 2019.

In 2019, a CRD online public opinion survey showed significant support for extending the Land Acquisition Fund (LAF) for another ten years to buy parkland. The CRD Board extended the fund for ten years and maintained the rate of \$20 per average residential household. The CRD's budget for 2020 included an additional \$925,000 to fund the refurbishment and replacement of existing regional park assets such as bridges, trestles, buildings and other infrastructure.

In October 2020, the Board also approved several amendments to the CRD provisional Financial Plan. Amendments included an increase to the Land Acquisition Fund of \$1 per year per average household, raising an additional estimated \$193,000 for park land acquisition in 2021. All revenues from the fund in 2021 were estimated to be \$4 million.

Since the establishment of the Fund, the regional parks system has grown by almost 4,800 hectares through several land acquisitions valued at \$62.6 million. CRD partners in land acquisition have contributed almost \$16.8 million, which is 27% of the overall cost of purchases.

"The Board is committed to ensuring the continued success of the Land Acquisition Fund. We are in a climate emergency and one of our top priorities is to preserve greenspace for future generations."

Colin Plant - Chair, Capital Regional District Board

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF CENTRAL OKANAGAN

The Regional District of Central Okanagan's (RDCO) parks and conservation land acquisition program focuses on securing parks and greenways that are "regionally significant," representing a complete range of Central Okanagan ecosystems and offering outdoor opportunities that attract people from across the region.

The program is supported by a long history of parks planning, and the work of key federal, provincial, First Nation, conservation and private stakeholders. The first official regional parks plan was developed in the year 2000,³⁶ followed by the 2006 FUTUREOK Sustainable Region Initiative,³⁷ the 2008-2020 Regional Parks and Greenways Plan,³⁸ and finally, A Central Okanagan Regional Parks Legacy Program: Ten Year Park Land Acquisition Strategy (2007-2017).³⁹ The 2017 park strategy is being updated and will be available in 2022. The updated strategy uses the conservation corridors to guide future acquisitions, as well as expanding core habitat areas.



The RDCO's initial ten-year land acquisition strategy got underway in 2007 with the establishment of the Regional Park Legacy Reserve Fund. At that time, the RDCO board considered an annual requisition of 2¢ per \$1,000 of assessed property value to be in line with residents' ability to pay for future parkland acquisitions, and the 2007-2011 annual budget bylaw included this tax.

The following spring, the board reviewed the results of a statistically valid survey that provided information about Central Okanagan residents' interest in and ability to fund such a program. Results showed that over 60% of residents supported a tax increase of approximately \$36 per household annually to finance the new fund. This was about three times the legacy reserve fund requisition initiated in 2007 (i.e., 7¢ vs. 2¢ per \$1,000). And so, in April of 2008 the RDCO board unanimously voted to support the implementation of a Regional Park Land Reserve Fund in the 2009-2013 budget period. This was to be a special tax requisition over

five years to build the fund in order to leverage the purchase and protection of important properties for the regional park system.

The acquisition fund program was to commence in the spring of 2009. However, in the fall of 2008, plans were influenced by a downturn in the economy, and the regional district board decided to cut the program in half, making the requisition 3.5¢ per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

In 2014, when the economy had improved, the annual property tax requisition associated with the Park Land Reserve Fund program was increased to the level that had been initially supported in 2008 (7¢ per \$1,000 of assessed property value) and was included in the 2014-2018 RDCO annual budget.

As of 2020, the RDCO is no longer using a Park Land Acquisition Capital Fund Reserve specifically for land acquisition and has adapted to a more general Parks Capital Facility Reserve Fund that can be utilized for land

acquisition(s), new parks capital infrastructure, and asset renewal of existing park infrastructure. This allows RDCO to utilize the funding more holistically and put the resources where they are needed. Beyond 2022, RDCO is projecting to spend about \$20 million acquiring new park lands over the next 20 years.

Even with the effects of economic variability, these parkland funds have contributed \$23.5 million to the RDCO's parkland acquisition program over the past ten years, and a total of 736 hectares of parkland have been purchased. Along with land donations and Crown tenure agreements valued at \$11.3 million, almost 1,011 additional hectares of land worth over \$33.4 million has been added to the regional park system, including geographically, ecologically, and culturally significant lands.

"Access and connection to nature empowers healthy lives. The Central Okanagan is the fastest growing region in the country; which means protecting and expanding parks in our natural environment is more important than ever. That's why the RDCO is focused on creating and investing into connected regional parks. They are vital to the wellbeing of our community, preserve land for future generations to enjoy, and safeguard the cultural significance of the traditional lands of the Syilx Okanagan people."

Loyal Wooldridge – Board Chair, Regional District of Central Okanagan

Glossary

Alternative Approval Process (AAP) means the process for obtaining approval of the electors established by section 86 of the *Community Charter*.

Assent Voting (formerly known as "referendum" or "other voting") is a process to receive the assent of the electors on questions that municipal councils and regional boards have the power to act. An assent vote may be held at the same time as local elections or at other times. The results of an assent vote are binding (which means the council or board must follow the will of the electors).

Assessment in B.C. is the market value of real property as determined by B.C. Assessment, a Crown corporation, in accordance with the *Assessment Act*.⁴⁰ Assessors assign a parcel to a property class, determine the market value of land and improvements, and enter those values on an annual Assessment Roll. Local government then uses the assessed values to determine property value taxes.

Bylaws are laws enacted by locally elected officials to govern and control the actions and services of municipalities, regional districts, and the Islands Trust.

Community Charter is B.C. legislation that provides all municipalities with a framework for their core areas of authority, including broad powers, taxation, financial management, procedures, and bylaw enforcement.

Local Government in B.C. can mean either the council of a municipality, the board of a regional district, or a local trust committee of the Islands Trust.

Local Government Act is the primary legislation for regional districts and improvement districts, and certain municipal provisions remain in effect for matters not covered by the *Community Charter*.

Parcel is a piece of property of any size. Each parcel receives a separate assessment and tax notice.

Parcel Tax is a tax imposed on property owners for services that are only provided to them. For example, the group may be the entire regional district, or part or all of an electoral area.

Participating Areas are the electoral areas and/or municipalities that are included in a regional district service.

Property Class means a property class under the *Assessment Act*.⁴¹ Most municipalities assess each property class (e.g., residential, utilities, business, farm) with a different rate of taxation.

Property Value Taxes are taxes under Part 7 - Municipal Revenue of the *Community Charter*. Every property owner in B.C. contributes to the funding of local government. Each year, property owners are sent two notices: an assessment notice and a tax notice. Both notices reflect the process through which each property owner's share of the local tax base is calculated. Calculation of property value tax is a two-step process. The first step is to set the value of the property (the "assessed value"). The second step is to apply a tax rate to the assessed value of the property to determine the property taxes payable. The amount of tax a property owner will pay is calculated as: Assessed Value x Tax Rate = Property Value Tax Payable.

Service Area means the defined area in which a service is provided.

Tax Rate is the amount (e.g., 30¢ or \$1.10) set to be taxed on every \$1,000 of assessed value of land and improvements, land only, or improvements only. The tax rate was called the mill rate in years past.

Variable Tax Rate is system by which individual tax rates for a specific taxation year are determined and imposed for each property class to which the system applies.

References

- 1 *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*, SBC, c 18. Available online: www.bclaws.ca
- 2 Refer to *Guide for Local Non-Election Assent Voting Advertising Sponsors in B.C.* and *Third Party Sponsor Guide to Local Elections in B.C.* for detailed information and where to go for further advice. Available online: elections.bc.ca/lecfa/
- 3 The B.C. Conservation Data Centre holds information on species and ecosystems at risk, and participates in Sensitive Ecosystem Inventories and mapping projects in several regions of the province. www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/conservation-data-centre
- 4 Environment Canada and Climate Change, Canadian Wildlife Service Branch has assisted with the development of several regional conservation plans in B.C.
- 5 The Nature Conservancy of Canada has completed ecoregional assessments, mapping projects, and conservation blueprints for different regions of the province: www.natureconservancy.ca/en/where-we-work/british-columbia/our-work/. For information about land trusts and conservancies working in B.C. visit the Land Trust Alliance of B.C. website: ltabc.ca
- 6 *City of Surrey Biodiversity Conservation Strategy*, 2014: www.surrey.ca/city-services/11565.aspx
- 7 *Islands Trust Regional Conservation Plan*, 2011: www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/initiatives/planning-for-conservation/our-goals.aspx
- 8 *Keeping Nature In Our Future: A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the South Okanagan-Similkameen*, 2012: www.soscp.org/biodiversity/
- 9 *Keeping Nature in Our Future: A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region*, 2014: www.okcp.ca/index.php/projects/current-projects/532-okanagan-biodiversity-strategy/
- 10 *Nature Without Borders: Comox Valley Conservation Strategy*, 2013: www.cvlandtrust.ca
- 11 *Strategic Directions for Biodiversity Conservation in the Metro Vancouver Region*, 2008: www.metrovancouver.org/services/regional-planning/PlanningPublications/StrategicDirectionsBiodiversityConservation.pdf
- 12 Official community plans: *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1, s 474(1).
- 13 Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory: www.env.gov.bc.ca/sei/
- 14 Regional Growth Strategy: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/local-governments/planning-land-use/local-government-planning/regional-growth-strategies
- 15 Strategic Land and Resource Plans: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/crown-land-water/land-use-planning
- 16 Property value tax: *Community Charter*, SBC 2003, c 26, s 197; *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1, ss 378, 384.
- 17 Parcel tax: *Community Charter*, SBC 2003, c 26, ss 200-204; *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1, ss 378, 388.
- 18 Service benefit to part of a municipality: *Community Charter*, SBC 2003, c 26, s 210. See also *Community Charter*, SBC 2003, c 26, ss 211-219.
- 19 Regional district fee-for-service funding option: *Community Charter*, SBC 2003, C 26, ss 192, 194 and *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 387 ss 378-380.

- 20 *Community Charter*, SBC 2003, c 26. Available online: www.bclaws.ca.
- 21 Municipalities can establish any service: *Community Charter*, SBC 2003, c 26, s 8(2).
- 22 *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1. Available online: www.bclaws.ca.
- 23 Regional districts must adopt establishing bylaws: *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1, s 338(1).
- 24 Aboriginal government powers to enact real property tax bylaws: *Indian Act*, RSC 1985, c 1-5.
- 25 Aboriginal government powers to enact real property tax bylaws: *First Nations Fiscal Management Act*, SC 2005, c 9.
- 26 Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada's Fact Sheet - Taxation by Aboriginal Governments: www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100016434/1539971764619
- 27 Establishing bylaws must be approved by inspector: *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1, s 342(1).
- 28 Methods of participating area approval: *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1, s 342.
- 29 Petitions for electoral area services: *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1, s 337.
- 30 Alternative approval process: *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1, s 345.
- 31 Approval by assent of the electors: *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1, s 344.
- 32 Consent on behalf of municipal participating area: *Local Government Act*, RSBC 2015, c 1, s 346.
- 33 *Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy*, 1997: www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/parks-pdf/greenblue_spaces_strategy.pdf?sfvrsn=0
- 34 *CRD Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012-2021*: www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/parks-pdf/regional-parks-strategic-plan-2012-21.pdf?sfvrsn=b19788c9_0
- 35 *Capital Regional District Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy 2015 to 2017* includes historical information: www.rdco.com/en/your-government/resources/Bylaws/Regional-Park-Plan-Bylaw-884.pdf
- 36 *Our Regional Parks: The Central Okanagan's Official Plan for the Regional Park System*, 2000: www.rdco.com/en/your-government/resources/Bylaws/Regional-Park-Plan-Bylaw-884.pdf
- 37 RDCO Regional Growth Strategy background information: www.regionaldistrict.com/your-services/planning-section/regional-growth-strategy.aspx
- 38 *Regional Parks and Greenways Plan for the Central Okanagan (2008-2020)*: www.rdco.com/en/your-government/resources/Documents/RegionalParks_Greenways_Plan.pdf
- 39 *A Central Okanagan Regional Parks Legacy Program: Ten Year Park Land Acquisition Strategy (2007-2017)*: www.rdco.com/en/your-government/resources/Documents/RegionalParkLegacyPlan.pdf
- 40 *Assessment Act*, RSBC 1996, c 20. Available online: www.bclaws.ca.
- 41 B.C. Assessment provides resources describing property assessment, which can be obtained from local Assessment Offices and online: www.bcassessment.ca

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Third Edition built on the thorough work of the First and Second, developed by the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) and published in 2011 and 2017, respectively. The SOSCP acknowledges the value of the following contributions, which made the First and Second Editions of this Guide possible.

PROJECT MANAGER

Bryn White, South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program

WRITERS

Kellie Garcia, Insight Environmental Consulting Ltd.
Katherine Dunster, Unfolding Landscapes

DESIGNER

Salina Curtis

EDITOR

Celina Owen

REVIEWERS

Special thanks to the following people who made significant investments of time and expertise to make this guide more accurate and useful for local governments and community organizations. Note that these individuals' affiliations were accurate at the time of publication in 2011 or 2017:

Marc-André Beaucher, Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area
Wendy Booth, Regional District of East Kootenay
Scott Boswell, Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program
Savannah Carr-Wilson, Environmental Law Centre
Juliet Craig, Kootenay Conservation Program
Lee-Ann Crane, Regional District of East Kootenay (retired)
Deborah Curran, Environmental Law Centre
Wayne Darlington, Regional District Central Okanagan
Gretchen Harlow, Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service
David Hillary, Conservation by Design Inc.
Brett Hudson, Capital Regional District
Jan Kirkby, Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service
Murray Kopp, Regional District of Central Okanagan
Christy Malden, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
Nancy Newhouse, Nature Conservancy of Canada
Janice Perrino, District of Summerland
Lucy Reiss, Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service
Tasha Sargent, Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service
Andy Shadrack, North Kootenay Lake Water Management Project
Wayne Stetski, East Kootenay Conservation Program
Sangita Sudan, Regional District of Central Kootenay
Jillian Tamblyn, Water's Edge Consulting
Andrea Tanaka, Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service
Jeff Ward, Capital Regional District
DG Blair Whitehead, Stewardship Centre for British Columbia
Hilary Young, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

The First and Second Editions were supported and funded by Vancouver Foundation, the Real Estate Foundation of BC, Schad Foundation, the Forest Enhancement Society of BC, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, and the Stewardship Centre for BC.

PHOTO CREDITS

Page 4: Drew Desharnais
Page 5: Larry Halverson, Jakob Dulisse
Page 6: Environment and Climate Change Canada
Page 7: Darcy Sawchek
Page 8: Michael Bezener
Page 9: Tim Ennis
Page 10: David Nanuk, Tim Ennis, Michael Bezener, Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of BC
Page 11: Bryn White, Tim Ennis, Michael Bezener, Richard Klafki
Page 12: Michael Bezener
Page 13: Grasslands Conservation Council of BC
Page 15: Jason Puddifoot
Page 16: Tim Ennis
Page 17: Tim Ennis

Page 18: Darcy Sawchek
Page 20: Chris Harris Photography
Page 21: Ryan Holmes, Pat Morrow, Tim Ennis
Page 22: Jared Maida
Page 24: Tim Ennis
Page 25: Chris Harris Photography
Page 28: Debbie Clarke
Page 29: Pat Morrow
Page 31: Joe Moulins, Ben Mitchell-Banks, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Tim Ennis
Page 32: Juliet Craig
Page 33: Juliet Craig, Richard Klafki, Katherine McGlynn
Page 34: Drew Desharnais, Michael Bezener, Nature Trust of BC
Page 36: Nancy Holmes
Page 37: Capital Regional District
Page 38: Regional District of Central Okanagan

