

# Local Conservation Funds in the Kootenays: Frequently Asked Questions

*Summary, November 2022*

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## What is a Local Conservation Fund (LCF)?

**A Local Conservation Fund is a local government service that is funded through a dedicated tax and used to support environmental conservation and community sustainability projects.**

- The Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund (CVLCF) was the first of its kind in Canada. It was established in Areas F and G as well as the municipalities of Canal Flats, Invermere and Radium as an RDEK Service in 2008. Residents pay \$20 per parcel per year towards a dedicated conservation fund.
- The Regional District of Central Kootenay Local Conservation Fund (RDCK LCF) was established in Electoral Areas A, D and E as an RDCK Service in 2014, and Area H joined the fund in 2022. Residents pay \$15 per parcel per year towards conservation.
- These Funds support conservation of aquatic systems and water, wildlife, and habitat.

## What are the benefits of Local Conservation Funds?

**LCFs fund projects that support the health of natural ecosystems and wild spaces, which in turn support healthy communities.**

- LCFs are a way for communities to address local conservation issues that residents know are important and to invest in local conservation for future generations.
- LCF projects support clean air, safe water, habitat for fish and wildlife, natural areas, and healthy watersheds.
- A healthy, prosperous community relies on a healthy local environment, which a LCF directly supports.

## Are there economic benefits?

**For every dollar acquired by tax, LCFs leverage at least 4:1 additional dollars that support local communities.**

- Broader granting agencies look more favourably on projects with a local funding contribution.
- For example, from 2010 to 2021, the \$2.55 million raised and distributed by the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund has helped leverage an additional \$22.6 million for the approved projects. In other words, each \$20 parcel tax paid by taxpayers has attracted an additional \$177 into the local community, almost nine times the original investment.
- From 2016 to 2021, the \$468,000 raised and distributed by the RDCK Local Conservation Fund has helped leverage an additional \$2.1 million, not including a large conservation land acquisition which, if included, raises the leveraged funding to ~ \$20 million.
- Funds are spent locally, which creates added economic benefit through the purchase of materials/supplies, and work for a broad range of contractors and businesses.
- People who work for local environmental non-profits also buy groceries, raise their families, and pay taxes in the community.

- Projects that receive LCF funding have successfully attracted a wide range of other funding partners based on this initial investment including regional funders, federal and provincial government, utility companies, businesses, foundations, non-profit societies and land trusts.

## Have LCFs in the Kootenays been successful?

**LCFs have been established in the East and West Kootenays and Okanagan and continue to spread.**

- Local Conservation Funds in the Kootenays have supported over 120 local conservation projects.
- The Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen established a Local Conservation Fund in 2016 based on the Columbia Valley and RDCK LCF examples.
- The Regional District of North Okanagan established a Local Conservation Fund in 2019.
- In 2020, the request for funding from the RDCK Local Conservation Fund was more than twice what was available, demonstrating the need for this local government service.

## What types of projects do LCFs fund?

**LCFs are dedicated to conservation and ensure that funding addresses local priority issues.**

**Residents see tangible results at the local level including:**

- Monitoring local water quality
- Functioning wetlands, creeks, and grasslands that improve water quality
- Improved local fish and wildlife habitat and species at risk conservation
- Funding for local farmers to manage natural assets on their lands
- Fewer invasive plants and improved forage for ungulates
- Citizen-science wildlife population monitoring
- Creation of wildflower meadows to promote pollinators
- Reduction in human-wildlife conflict
- Economic opportunities for jobs, contracts, materials and supplies
- Land acquisition of ecologically significant properties

## How are projects chosen?

**LCF project proposals are reviewed by an independent, volunteer panel of technical experts before being decided on by local elected officials.**

- The Technical Review Committee is made up of local experts (e.g., biologists, professors, foresters, etc.) who review and rank proposals according to pre-determined technical criteria and make recommendations on the perceived effectiveness of proposed projects.
- Based on Technical Review Committee recommendations, elected officials ultimately decide which projects receive funding and for how much in any given year.

## KCP Contact Information

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