

Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund

Summary, March 2023



CVLCF Background

A Local Conservation Fund is a local government service that creates dedicated funding to support local high-priority conservation projects.

- The Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund (CVLCF) was established in Electoral Areas F and G and associated municipalities as a Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) Service in 2008.
- This service provides funding for conservation projects that are not the existing responsibility of the federal, provincial, or local governments.
- Local Conservation Funds support high-priority projects that benefit wildlife, habitat, and water, which in turn support healthy communities.
- Residents pay \$20 per parcel per year towards a dedicated conservation fund.

CVLCF Accomplishments

Local Conservation Funds serve as seed funding for projects. Each \$20 paid per parcel turns into \$200 with matching and in-kind support.

- From 2008 to 2022 the CVLCF invested over \$2.68 million through 110 grants, leveraging over \$23 million in partner dollars and in-kind contributions.
- The fund has also supported the securement of four properties for conservation:
 - Marion Creek Benchlands (220 ha);
 - Columbia Lake - Lot 48 (127 ha - part of a network of 7,600 ha);
 - Windermere West (a.k.a. SRL-K2 Ranch; 4,529 ha); and
 - Columbia Wetlands – Edgewater (172 ha).
- Regional District of East Kootenay Directors voted in November 2016 to remove the expiry date clause from the CVLCF Service Bylaw which continues this fund indefinitely into the future.

CVLCF Benefits

Local Conservation Funds are dedicated to conservation and ensure that funding addresses local priority issues. Benefits of projects include:

- Protecting land for long-term conservation
- Reducing the risk of disease transmission to bighorn sheep
- Citizen-science water quality monitoring
- Reducing the negative impacts of invasive plants
- Protecting bat colonies that reduce agricultural and forestry pests
- Recovery of species at risk (Kokanee, bank and barn swallows)
- Completing restoration activities that reduce fuel load and fire hazard
- Supporting functioning wetlands, creeks, and grasslands that improve water quality
- Increasing recreational benefits with new trails, boardwalks and signs

- Providing incentives for local farmers to steward their land for habitat and food production
- Funds are spent locally, which creates added economic benefits through creating local jobs, the purchase of materials and supplies, and work for contractors and businesses

CVLCF Leadership

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

- Columbia Valley Directors and their communities are seen as innovative leaders.
- Local Conservation Funds have been established in the Regional District of Central Kootenay (2014), Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen (2016), and Regional District of North Okanagan (2020) based on the CVLCF example.

Supporting Goals of OCPs

Projects and acquisitions supported by the CVLCF have worked towards many of the values and goals outlined in the Columbia Valley's Official Community Plans (OCPs) including:

- "The **protection of existing forested areas, green spaces and grasslands** is supported." (Lake Windermere OCP)
- "Maintain **habitat connectivity** through undisturbed open space and wildlife corridors to support the movement of various wildlife species and access to important habitat." (Lake Windermere OCP)
- "Retain designated **wildlife corridors and undisturbed wildlife habitat.**" (Steamboat - Jubilee Mountain OCP)
- "Protect the **wildlife and habitat values** surrounding the plan area by supporting conservation efforts in important natural areas and wildlife corridors." (Steamboat Jubilee OCP)
- "Enhance **wildlife connectivity and habitat values** within and surrounding the plan area by **preserving important natural features and wildlife corridors** within the plan area." (Fairmont Hot Springs & Columbia Lake Area OCP)
- Retain **critical wildlife habitat, wildlife corridors and ungulate winter range.**" (Toby Benches OCP)
- "Recognize **environmentally sensitive areas** and the animal and plant species that rely on these ecosystems..." (Toby Benches OCP)
- "**Recognize the contribution that the natural environment and wildlife make** to the economy of the plan area." (Toby Benches OCP)
- "Support **rehabilitation, restoration and enhancement of environmentally sensitive areas** which were subject to negative impact in the past." (Toby Benches OCP)
- "Recognize the importance of containing and **controlling noxious / invasive plants** and preventing their establishment." (Toby Benches OCP)

KCP Contact Information

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