

KCP STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2024-2029

PURPOSE

Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP) is a broad partnership of land and water conservation and stewardship groups, First Nations, other government agencies, and agricultural producers working throughout the East and West Kootenays. KCP recognizes the continued loss of biodiversity and the threat that this poses to nature and community well-being. The partnership seeks to cooperatively conserve the biological diversity and naturally functioning ecosystems of the region through land conservation and stewardship while sharing knowledge and expertise, building financial support, and promoting collaboration. KCP seeks to have a group of partner organizations who utilize and contribute to the best science in their practice, work collaboratively in productive and efficient partnerships, coordinate private land activities to achieve landscape-level objectives in conservation, and positively influence private land stewardship and conservation in the region. The KCP service area is in the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Ktunaxa, Secwépemc, Sinixt and Syilx Okanagan who have stewarded this land since time immemorial.

VISION

The KCP **vision** is to have connected habitats and landscapes in the Kootenays that sustain biodiversity and naturally functioning resilient ecosystems that, in turn, support community well-being.

MANDATE

The KCP **mandate** is to coordinate and facilitate landscape-level and local conservation efforts focusing on private lands, share conservation knowledge and expertise, and build support and resources for this effort.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles are necessary for an effective partnership and for the successful achievement of KCP's desired outcomes. KCP is a network of autonomous partner organizations that have different goals and priorities, yet each partner sees the value of collaboration and comes together around the following set of guiding principles:

- *Focus on a 'one river, one watershed' approach to conservation in the region and work towards a shared vision.*
- *Apply the spirit and intent of the Principles of Reconciliation, United Nations Declaration on The Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA).*
- *Maintain a commitment to conservation that respects Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures, values, rights and practices.*
- *Be accountable and maintain credibility as a partnership.*
- *Promote collaboration and facilitate communication.*

KCP SERVICE AREA



Kootenay Conservation Program Service Area

KCP STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

KCP's approach is to support land conservation for biodiversity and ecosystems in a 'one river, one watershed' approach by promoting **collaboration**, providing **support** to partners through sharing of knowledge and expertise and building financial tools, and coordinating **stewardship** and **land conservation** in our service area.

PRIORITY 1. PROMOTE **COLLABORATION** AMONGST AN ENGAGED NETWORK OF CONSERVATION PARTNERS

With diverse landscapes, large geographic distances, and a multitude of active conservation partners, the Kootenays are a special place. KCP acknowledges that conservation in the Kootenays is taking place within the traditional and unceded territories of four First Nations¹ whose traditional laws and practices continue to guide stewardship of this region. The basic premise of KCP is that we work better and more effectively together than apart. KCP is regarded as an important regional network capable of bringing diverse perspectives and partners together to support conservation initiatives and form a cohesive conservation community. KCP supports the principles of reconciliation in order to build relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners in the Kootenays. KCP also works beyond its boundaries to bring resources, knowledge and skills into the Kootenay region. Finally, KCP recognizes the contributions of its partners by showcasing their conservation successes within and outside the region.

1.1 FOSTER ENGAGEMENT AND FACILITATE COLLABORATION, COMMUNICATION, AND CONNECTION **WITHIN** THE PARTNERSHIP

1.1.1 Maintain and promote KCP as a “one-stop shop” that can help align partner skills with conservation needs.

1.1.2 Communicate to existing and potential partners the benefits of participating in KCP as a means of identifying and achieving shared priorities in the most effective and efficient way.

1.1.3 Build a collaborative network to enhance both local and landscape-level conservation by providing, and communicating, the concrete and meaningful benefits of working together and connecting people and groups.

1.1.4 Continue to build the KCP partnership by identifying key missing partners for land conservation and stewardship and encouraging them to participate.

1.1.5 Maintain KCP's relevance to partner organizations by conducting regular surveys and soliciting feedback.

¹ First Nations is used, rather than Indigenous nations, to recognize those Nations who lay claim to the land in the Kootenays.

1.2 RECOGNIZE AND INTEGRATE **FIRST NATIONS' PRIORITIES** FOR CONSERVATION

- 1.2.1 Create ethical space to authentically engage First Nations in the KCP partnership.
- 1.2.2 Build meaningful relationships between KCP and First Nations based on respect, trust, collaboration and participation in KCP's leadership and program delivery.
- 1.2.3 Support First Nations-led initiatives and priorities for conservation and collaborations that weave together Indigenous and Western science, knowledge and practices.
- 1.2.4 Identify and work to reduce barriers (i.e., financial, cultural, capacity) to First Nations participation in the KCP partnership.

1.3 REPRESENT KCP INTERESTS AND CONNECTIONS **OUTSIDE** CURRENT PARTNERSHIP

- 1.3.1 Represent the interests of KCP and partner organizations outside the KCP partnership.
- 1.3.2 Promote transboundary learning and information sharing by participating in events outside of the Kootenay region.
- 1.3.3 Connect organizations focusing on public and private land conservation and stewardship in the Kootenays.

1.4 **SHOWCASE** CONSERVATION EFFORTS INCLUDING THE ROLE OF KCP AND ITS PARTNERS

- 1.4.1 Showcase the accomplishments of KCP as a valuable partnership program and increase the profile for land stewardship and conservation including how these activities contribute to community well-being of the Kootenay region.
- 1.4.2 Provide outreach and communication within the partnership to highlight achievements of partners and to recognize conservation leaders.
- 1.4.3 Collate and communicate conservation achievements to illustrate joint successes, while ensuring partners are recognized for their roles and contributions.
- 1.4.4 Celebrate land use decisions that are aligned with KCP's vision by featuring them on the KCP website, e-news and partner activities.
- 1.4.5 Develop mechanisms to measure and report on the effectiveness of KCP's program.

PRIORITY 2. SHARE TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND BUILD FINANCIAL TOOLS FOR PARTNERS TO UNDERTAKE LAND CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES

KCP's broad range of partners bring a wealth of knowledge and skills to conservation and stewardship in the Kootenay region. One of KCP's roles is to facilitate the sharing of leading-edge knowledge, expertise and technical resources among partners and others so that land and water stewardship considers the best available information and practices. As well as technical expertise, KCP promotes the building of financial support for partners through facilitating the establishment of local conservation funds in the region, given that many of KCP's partners are non-profit societies or other organizations with limited funding. In order to continue the valuable role that this conservation partnership plays, KCP must ensure that its internal capacity is also maintained.

2.1 PROVIDE ACCESS TO LEADING-EDGE EXPERTISE AND RESOURCES

- 2.1.1 Identify and publicize opportunities for training, education, networking, and technical support in the Kootenay region.
- 2.1.2 Facilitate peer learning by providing opportunities for partners to share knowledge and showcase on-the-ground best practices.
- 2.1.3 Facilitate the implementation and use of technical resources for partner agencies.
- 2.1.4 Identify partner technical needs and hold workshops or webinars to build this knowledge and skills.
- 2.1.5 Create awareness of the range of tools available to aid in the conservation of private lands.
- 2.1.6 Maintain a web-based collection of conservation resources in the Kootenay region.

2.2 BUILD AND PROMOTE FINANCIAL TOOLS FOR PARTNERS

- 2.2.1 Lead the expansion of Local Conservation Funds in the Kootenay region.
- 2.2.2 Work with local governments to administer Local Conservation Funds.
- 2.2.3 Raise awareness about the success of Local Conservation Funds through positive media coverage and field tours.
- 2.2.4 Explore opportunities to increase financial support for partner organizations.
- 2.2.5 Identify new funding sources and bring existing funding opportunities to partners' awareness.

2.3 MAINTAIN INTERNAL CAPACITY FOR KCP

- 2.3.1 Work with funding agencies to ensure that KCP's priorities and contributions to a coordinated regional conservation approach are recognized.
- 2.3.2 Foster and build relationships with partners, governments, businesses, the public, and funding institutions.
- 2.3.3 Maintain a strong Board with clear roles and responsibilities and diverse knowledge and skills.

2.3.4 Develop a sustainable fundraising strategy to ensure KCP is financially viable and can achieve its priorities through the provision of a Program Director, and contract specialists as needed.

PRIORITY 3. INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND COORDINATION OF **STEWARDSHIP** ACTIVITIES TAKING PLACE IN THE KOOTENAYS

Stewardship promotes responsible use and conservation of biodiversity, habitats and ecosystems through sustainable land and water practices. In the Kootenays, over 80 KCP partners are involved in stewardship focusing on local priorities such as grassland restoration, forest health, invasive species control, species at risk management, and wetland construction and restoration. KCP supports land stewardship by facilitating a neighbourhood conservation approach to identify shared local high priority actions. KCP also supports partners who provide information to private landowners that motivates them to be stewards of their property and supports local governments by sharing and promoting conservation tools. Finally, KCP fosters a landscape approach to conservation. These activities protect biodiversity, ecosystem services, and ecological connectivity to promote healthy and vibrant landscapes and human communities that are connected to their natural surroundings.

3.1 INCREASE **COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION** BETWEEN PARTNERS

- 3.1.1 Maintain East and West Kootenay Stewardship Committees as a forum to share ideas, knowledge, best management practices, and resources in a manner that encourages collaboration.
- 3.1.2 Identify gaps in stewardship services and practices and encourage partners to address those gaps.
- 3.1.3 Regularly update and promote the KCP Stewardship and Conservation Framework to identify shared stewardship priorities and refine KCP's approach to stewardship coordination.

3.2 FACILITATE A **NEIGHBOURHOOD CONSERVATION APPROACH** TO IDENTIFY CONSERVATION TARGETS AND HIGH PRIORITY ACTIONS

- 3.2.1 Host and facilitate meetings, workshops and other opportunities to identify conservation threats and priority actions within KCP's conservation neighbourhoods.
- 3.2.2 Bring multiple perspectives and partners together in order to facilitate collaborative efforts.
- 3.2.3 Identify opportunities for developing a common direction and strategies for conservation in conservation neighbourhoods including land conservation, stewardship agreements, ecological enhancement and restoration, habitat protection, and landowner outreach and incentives.
- 3.2.4 Work with KCP partners to identify and map important corridors, inventory information, and identify sensitive ecosystems to strengthen natural area conservation within a regional focus.

3.3 PROMOTE A COORDINATED APPROACH TO **LANDOWNER OUTREACH** FOR CONSERVATION

- 3.3.1 Facilitate and support partners' efforts to engage landowners in conservation and stewardship.
- 3.3.2 Maintain a central hub of stewardship information.
- 3.3.3 Facilitate training opportunities for KCP partners who visit private lands in aspects of stewardship and resource management beyond their own expertise (e.g., Conservation Ambassador Training).
- 3.3.4 Seek opportunities to recognize outstanding private land stewards in the Kootenays.

3.4 FOSTER A **LANDSCAPE APPROACH** TO CONSERVE BIODIVERSITY, WILDLIFE CORRIDORS AND ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY

- 3.4.1 Facilitate the integration of landscape-level science into private land conservation and partners' activities.
- 3.4.2 Promote a landscape-level approach so partners can work locally and regionally to collectively address larger issues of biodiversity, connectivity, and climate resilience.
- 3.4.3 Develop strategies and partnerships that will protect and improve biodiversity and habitat stewardship on private land to contribute to larger landscape objectives.
- 3.4.4 Support partners to better link conservation actions with landscape-level conservation priorities.

3.5 SUPPORT **LOCAL GOVERNMENTS** TO INCORPORATE AND APPLY CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES INTO LOCAL LAND USE PLANNING

- 3.5.1 Work with local governments to identify their needs and gaps in incorporating and applying conservation principles and natural resource information and science to land use planning.
- 3.5.2 Keep local governments involved and aware of conservation tools, resources and successes.

PRIORITY 4. INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS, COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION OF PRIVATE **LAND CONSERVATION**

KCP recognizes that private lands in the Kootenays are located primarily in valley bottoms which is also where there is the highest density of wetlands, rare habitats, species at risk, and key wildlife corridors. From a large landscape perspective, valley bottoms in the Kootenays act as the connective tissue between adjacent mid and high-elevation habitats, enabling contiguous wildlife travel corridors to exist between different higher elevation habitats. It is imperative to protect habitat in these valley bottoms to maintain healthy functioning ecosystems, biodiversity and ecological connectivity, and securement is an important tool to enable protection. Land conservation through securement is the acquisition (fee simple) or long-term protection (covenants) of private lands for conservation purposes and protects conservation values on the property for generations to come. There are many partners involved in land conservation in the Kootenays and KCP plays a critical role in ensuring effective coordination of these activities.

4.1 FACILITATE, SUPPORT AND **COORDINATE** PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION EFFORTS

- 4.1.1 Maintain the Securement Committee (with land trusts, provincial government, and others who secure conservation lands) as a confidential forum to share information and discuss and coordinate securement acquisitions, activities and issues.
- 4.1.2 Strategically support funding applications for land conservation in the region.
- 4.1.3 Continue to build confidence in funding partners that the best projects for the region are being proposed and that all interested parties are in agreement with those priorities.
- 4.1.4 Increase understanding of Indigenous cultural values and support the development of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), Indigenous land trusts, or other First Nations approaches to land conservation and stewardship.
- 4.1.5 Ensure the KCP map layer of conservation lands is updated regularly and is accessible to the KCP Securement Committee in order to identify corridors and better coordinate activities.
- 4.1.6 Ensure landowner contact for land conservation purposes is conducted in a strategic and unified manner.

4.2 **PRIORITIZE** EFFORTS TO ENSURE THAT PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION IS FOCUSED ON THE MOST ECOLOGICALLY VALUABLE PROPERTIES

- 4.2.1 Maintain and improve a property ranking system as required to identify the most ecologically important properties.
- 4.2.2 Evaluate high priority candidate properties using a ranking system based on biological criteria and expert opinion.
- 4.2.3 Maintain a current database of candidate properties and their rankings to identify regional priorities for land conservation.

4.3 PROVIDE A COORDINATED AND COLLABORATIVE APPROACH FOR PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION **INQUIRIES AND INFORMATION**

- 4.3.1 Respond to public inquiries about donations, covenants and sale of private land for conservation.
- 4.3.2 Provide information about land conservation to partners and the public including the process, conservation value and available tools.
- 4.3.3 Support engagement with key agencies and landowners to find win-win solutions for private land conservation.
- 4.3.4 Track public inquiries about candidate conservation properties

4.4 **INCREASE FUNDING FOR PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION ACQUISITIONS**

- 4.4.1 Maintain close contact with major funders to look for opportunities.
- 4.4.2 Promote annual funding for private land conservation in the Kootenays.

REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION

These strategic priorities will be in effect for five years and will be reviewed annually. Any changes will be brought forward to the partners for ratification at the Annual General Meeting. KCP's annual work plan will define the specific actions that are to be taken to address the strategic priorities as defined in this document.