

Regional District of Central Kootenay Local Conservation Fund *Summary, April 2024*



RDCK Local Conservation Fund Background

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

- The Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) Local Conservation Fund was established in Electoral Areas A, D and E as an RDCK Service in 2014.
- In October 2022, residents of RDCK Electoral Area H voted by referendum to join the fund, expanding the service to the Slocan Valley and in September 2023, the RDCK approved Electoral Area F to join the service after the Alternate Approval Process indicated public support.
- This service provides funding for conservation projects that are not the existing responsibility of federal, provincial, or local governments and that benefit wildlife, habitat, and water, which in turn support healthy communities.
- Landowners pay \$15 per parcel per year towards a dedicated conservation fund.

RDCK Local Conservation Fund Accomplishments

Local Conservation Funds serve as seed funding for projects. Each \$15 paid per parcel turns into \$75 with matching and in-kind support.

- From 2016 to 2023, the RDCK LCF distributed nearly \$610,000, leveraging over \$2.6 million in partner dollars and in-kind contributions, not including a large conservation acquisition, which if included, raises the leveraged funding to over \$20 million.
- The fund has supported the securement of two properties for conservation:
 - Next Creek (7,900 ha), adding to Canada's largest private land conservation acquisition within the Nature Conservancy of Canada's Darkwoods Conservation Area; and
 - Cottonwood Lake Upland (49 ha).
- Approved 50 projects that address community conservation priorities.

RDCK Local Conservation Fund Benefits

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

- Expansion of Darkwoods Conservation Area for long-term conservation
- Citizen-science water quality monitoring and osprey monitoring
- Protecting bat colonies that reduce agricultural and forestry pests
- Recovery of species at risk (western toad, western painted turtle)

- Restoring and enhancing wetland habitat
- Creation of wildflower meadows to promote pollinators
- Reduction of human-wildlife conflict and protection of grizzly bears
- Increased awareness of the Shorelines Guidance Document that protects Kootenay Lake
- Fewer invasive plants and improved forage for ungulates
- Restoration activities that support bull trout and kokanee spawners in riparian areas
- Functioning wetlands, creeks, and grasslands that improve water quality
- 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

RDCK Leadership and Success

This service has been established in the Kootenays and Okanagan and continues to spread.

- RDCK Local Conservation Fund Directors and their communities are seen as innovative leaders.
- The Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen adopted a Local Conservation Fund in 2016 and the Regional District of North Okanagan in 2020 based on the Local Conservation Fund models in the Kootenays.
- RDCK Directors commissioned a Guidance Document for the fund to identify strategic priorities for conservation in the region; no other Local Conservation Fund has taken this type of strategic approach.

Supporting Local Land Use Goals

Projects and land acquisitions supported by the RDCK Local Conservation Fund have worked towards many of the values and goals outlined in the land use plans for the RDCK including:

- To preserve water quality in Kootenay Lake and other identifiable lakes.
- To encourage the maintenance of provincially identified wildlife winter range.
- Maintain high water quality of groundwater and surface water sources of domestic water supply.
- Foster an awareness of the values associated with the natural environment and conserve sensitive and significant natural features and values from negative impacts as a result of development.
- Encourage the maintenance of biodiversity, important to the biological functioning and ecological integrity of the area.
- Conserve the natural values in recognition of their importance to the local economy, residents, visitors, as a natural amenity, and for wildlife and ecological functioning.

KCP Contact Information

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