Kootenay Conservation Program
KCP

Conserving Private Land in the Kootenays

What Landowners Need to Know

Private land conservation is vital. It protects important ecological values, First Nations cultural sites, and certain types of recreational use. Though just 8% of the Kootenay Region is privately owned, most of these lands are in valley bottoms—areas rich in wetlands, rare habitats, species at risk, and vital wildlife corridors. These low-elevation lands connect mid- and high-elevation habitats, supporting ecological connectivity and biodiversity. With limited protection and significant ecological value, valley bottoms are a high conservation priority for land trusts.

Land conservation through securement is the acquisition or long-term protection of private lands to safeguard ecological and other values for the benefit of both humans and nature, now and for future generations.

Kootenay Conservation Program respectfully acknowledges that we live and work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Ktunaxa, Secwépemc, Sinixt, and Syilx Okanagan peoples, whose values and cultures continue to inspire and guide the stewardship of this region. We use the term “private land” conservation in this document and recognize that this concept stems from colonial history.

Private land conservation in the Kootenays:

- Conserves wildlife habitat, ecosystems, and ecological connectivity;
- Compensates for historical losses of important ecological features such as low elevation forests, grasslands, and riparian areas;
- Maintains important ecological values that might otherwise be lost due to the impacts of human development and activities, climate change, and preventable natural disturbances, either in the near-term or well into the future; and,
- Protects significant sites for cultural activities such as hunting, fishing, and plant harvesting.

Both Canada and British Columbia are striving to protect 30% of land by 2030.

Who conserves private land?

Typically, most private land secured for conservation in BC is led by land trusts. Land trusts or conservancies are provincially or federally registered non-profits or charities that receive land donations, purchase land, or place covenants on land for conservation purposes, then steward that land to preserve and protect its ecological integrity.

In the Kootenays, the following land trusts own and manage properties:

- Nature Conservancy of Canada
- NTBC
- Haven for Ecology
- The Land Conservancy of British Columbia
- BC Parks Foundation

Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP) is a broad partnership of land and water conservation and stewardship groups, First Nations, government agencies, and others, whose purpose is to cooperatively conserve the region's biological diversity and naturally functioning ecosystems. A key focus is supporting private land conservation that protects important ecological values for present and future generations.

While KCP is not a land trust and does not hold or purchase land, it plays a coordinating role—connecting private landowners with opportunities to donate or sell their land for conservation and fostering collaboration among land trusts and other key partners.

© The Nature Trust of BC

What are the key steps for land conservation?

1. Property Identification

Landowners may reach out to KCP or a land trust to explore options for donating or selling their land. Biologists or environmental organizations may also identify properties with unique ecological values and approach landowners to discuss potential conservation opportunities.

2. Evaluation

Because land is costly and conservation funds are limited, only private lands with high ecological value—such as endangered species habitat, wildlife corridors, or areas important for wildlife viewing and hunting—are prioritized.

How is private land conserved?

The two most common mechanisms are fee simple acquisition (obtaining legal ownership of a property through purchase and/or donation) and conservation covenants, also called easements (permanent title restrictions that guide land use and management to protect ecological values). *Land securement, in either form, is entirely voluntary.*

Why protect your land?

Protecting conservation values on your private land leaves a lasting legacy and helps support wildlife and habitat for generations to come. There are also potential tax incentives available for donating properties or portions of properties.

Which properties are conserved?

Private land is prioritized using conservation biology principles that aim to protect biodiversity. Conserved lands support vulnerable species, sustain umbrella and keystone species like grizzlies and beavers, and maintain habitat connectivity for climate resilience. Land trusts evaluate potential properties based on their specific goals, and often collaborate with other land trusts and levels of government to form "conservation complexes" (mosaics of adjacent conserved lands) that collectively strengthen regional biodiversity efforts. Land trusts also work with First Nations to incorporate their input and priorities. KCP plays a key role by assessing properties based on ecological criteria to help guide land conservation to the most strategic and ecologically significant properties.

© Pat Morrow

3. Securement

Property securement occurs when a landowner and a land trust agree to set a property into conservation status, and funds are available to support the transaction. It typically involves fee simple acquisition or a conservation covenant and depends on factors like property value, available funds, and management endowments.

4. Management/Stewardship

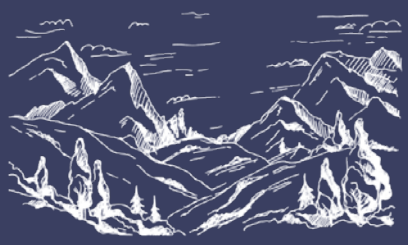
Each property must be assessed for past land use, invasive species, and title restrictions before securement to identify potential management issues. Once secured, ongoing stewardship is essential to protect its ecological values.

Useful Resources

- Case for Conservation brochure: kootenayconservation.ca/wp-content/uploads/KCP_Case-for-Conservation-2020.pdf
- Land Conservation Coordination: kootenayconservation.ca/land-conservation-coordination/
- Land Trust Alliance Information for Landowners: ltabc.ca/resources/natural-legacies-toolkit/information-for-landowners/
- Environment and Climate Change Canada's Ecological Gifts Program: canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-funding/ecological-gifts-program/overview.html

Protecting your property for conservation

If you are interested in donating, selling, or placing a covenant on your property for conservation, please contact us: info@kootenayconservation.ca.



We work with land trusts to assess whether a property fits their priorities before moving into evaluation. Because interest in conservation far exceeds land trust capacity, not all properties can be accommodated.

→ **kootenayconservation.ca/land-conservation-coordination**

Kootenay Conservation Program
KCP

May 2026