

# Kootenay Conservation Program 2014 Stewardship Tracking Report

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# **Abstract**

In the spring of 2014 the Kootenay Conservation Program's (KCP) East and West Kootenay Stewardship Committees conducted the KCP's first-ever annual stewardship tracking survey. Eleven KCP partners (20%) completed on-line surveys, reporting on 29 different land and water stewardship projects completed during fiscal year 2013-2014. The survey was designed to link directly to the goals, objectives, and success indicators of the KCP's Strategic Framework, and address priority habitats/ecosystems and identified threats. Projects reported affected 1024 hectares; over \$1.1 million was spent, provided by 31 funders. The survey provided valuable information about geographic scope and extent of stewardship projects, and the types of activities undertaken and threats targeted. Broader participation and therefore richer data is anticipated in future surveys.

# Introduction

In the spring of 2014 the Kootenay Conservation Program's (KCP) East and West Kootenay Stewardship Committees conducted the KCP's first-ever annual stewardship tracking survey. Eleven KCP partners completed on-line surveys, reporting on 29 different projects completed during fiscal year 2013-2014 (April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014). This pilot survey, which will now be conducted and reported annually, will help KCP and its partners and funders measure their collective impact on private land stewardship, and track progress toward reaching the goals and objectives in the KCP Stewardship Framework. Setting strategic priorities and monitoring success over time will make our work to abate the many threats facing the valuable habitats and species of the Kootenay region even more effective. The goals of the KCP Stewardship Framework are:

- 1) Identify common priorities to create efficiencies, synergies, and ultimately greater effectiveness; and
- 2) Strengthen engagement, collaboration, communication, education and accountability within, and outside of, the partnership; and
- 3) Increase the amount of stewardship activities taking place on private lands.

The survey included stewardship activities across the KCP Service Area on private land, as well as water-related stewardship activities, since water is closely connected to the health of terrestrial ecosystems. Please note that the survey results represent less than 20% of KCP partners. We can therefore assume that the numbers in this report under-represent the amount of stewardship taking place in the KCP Service Area (see Figure 1). In the future, we anticipate broader participation by partners in the stewardship survey, which will more accurately reflect the true magnitude of the collective stewardship effort.

Members of the Stewardship Committees identified four main areas of interest on which to collect stewardship metrics:

- 1. Habitat/ecosystem types and area affected;
- 2. Outreach/education;
- 3. Project funding; and
- 4. Strategic planning.

# Stewardship Survey Highlights

- 1. Habitat/Ecosystem Types and Area Affected:
  - The majority (67%) of projects took place in lakes, streams, wetlands, and cottonwood/riparian habitats.
  - Forty-five habitat structures were installed, ten of which were fish habitat structures and 35 of which were bat boxes.
  - Projects affected a total of 1024 hectares.

# 2. Outreach/Education:

- Respondents reported a total of 499 outreach/education events related to stewardship.
- At least 15,110 people were directly engaged with events or volunteer activities.

#### 3. Project Funding:

- KCP partners spent over \$1.1 million on the reported stewardship activities.
- Thirty-one funders provided grants, or gifts, totalling \$840,930.
- Average project cost was \$38,000.
- In-kind contributions generated by KCP partners totalled \$279,238.

# 4. Strategic Planning:

• Fifteen of the 29 projects (52%) had a higher-level plan or guiding document in place, with a total of 13 different strategic/guiding documents being used.

# **Participating Partner Organizations**

- 1. Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network
- 2. Columbia Basin Watershed Network
- 3. Friends of Kootenay Lake
- 4. Kootenay Community Bat Project
- 5. Lake Windermere Ambassadors
- 6. Nature Conservancy of Canada
- 7. Regional District of East Kootenay
- 8. Rocky Mountain Trench Ecosystem Restoration Program
- 9. Salmo Watershed Streamkeepers Society
- 10. Slocan River Streamkeepers
- 11. White Bark Consulting

# Methodology

Questions asked in the stewardship tracking survey were primarily determined based on the success indicators linked to the objectives identified in the KCP Stewardship Framework (see Appendix A). This allowed quantitative evaluation of progress based on direct linkages between objectives and survey data. Partners also saw value in collecting information on funding sources and identifying where higher-level plans were or were not in place to guide projects. Threats were categorized using the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) threat classification system. Only the most relevant threats to our region were included in the survey (see Appendix A).

Survey participants were permitted to assign each project up to three project types, up to three habitat types, and up to two threats being targeted. Limiting the number of criteria assignable provided greater descriptive clarity for each project.

KCP staff drafted the survey, using the online platform SurveyMonkey.com, with input from both West and East Stewardship Committees. The Ministry of Forest Lands and Natural Resource Operations and the Lake Windermere Ambassadors volunteered to test the survey and provide feedback on improvements. After several rounds of revisions a link to the survey was sent out to 59 KCP partners via email. Where needed, KCP staff provided one-on-one support to partners to assist them with filling out the survey. Once the comment period ended (including a one-month extension) KCP staff transferred the data received to an Excel spreadsheet for synthesis and analysis. Data analysis tools in SurveyMonkey were also used. Spatial data was sent to Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program GIS staff, who developed the stewardship map (Figure 1).

# Results and Analysis

#### **Project Location**

As seen in Figure 1, the stewardship projects included in this year's report were distributed across the KCP Service Area, but with notable geographic gaps in the Arrow Lakes, Trout Lake/Duncan, and Golden/Kinbasket areas. Because only 20% of KCP partners participated in the survey it is likely stewardship projects are occurring in some of these areas but were not captured by the survey. In 2015 we anticipate broader participation in the survey, which will more accurately reflect the distribution and scope of stewardship projects in the region.

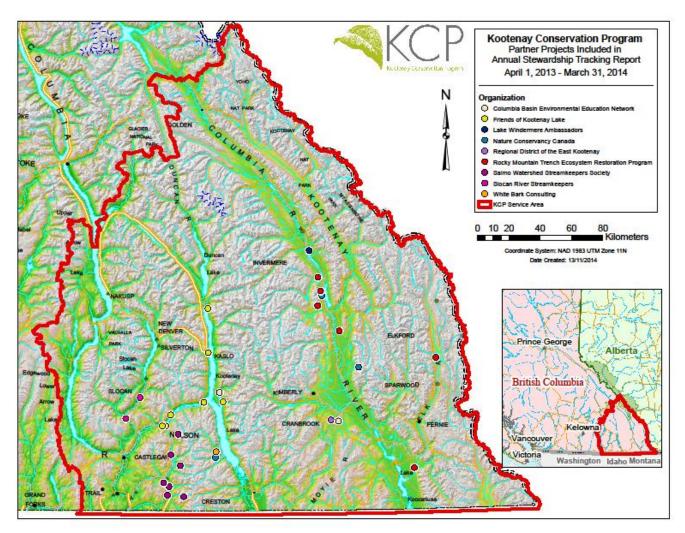


Figure 1: Location of 2013-2014 KCP partner stewardship projects reported in 2014 survey

Stewardship Committee members were interested in knowing how much stewardship is occurring in each Regional District area, in order to help identify potential service gaps. As seen in Table 1 below, a much higher percentage of the 29 reported stewardship projects took place in the Regional Districts of Central Kootenay and East Kootenay, potentially indicating service gaps in the Columbia Shuswap Regional District and Regional District of Kootenay Boundary.

Table 1 - Stewardship projects located by Regional District by reported KCP partner stewardship projects

Columbia Shuswap Regional District	8%
Regional District of Kootenay Boundary	8%
Regional District of East Kootenay	35%
Regional District of Central Kootenay	49%

# Habitat Types/Ecosystems

As noted above, survey participants were permitted to assign each project a maximum of three habitat types/ecosystems. These same habitat types/ecosystems are identified in the KCP Stewardship Framework as priority areas for stewardship effort. Figure 2 shows the most common habitat type/ecosystem targeted for stewardship activities was lake/stream (43%), followed by cottonwood/riparian (16%).

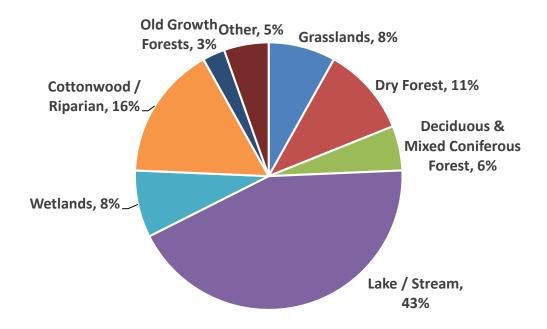


Figure 2 – Habitat types/ecosystems affected by reported KCP partner stewardship projects

#### Area Affected

A total of 1024 hectares was affected by the reported 2013-2014 stewardship projects. Thirty-three of these were aquatic/riparian hectares and included restoration activities such as shoreline restoration and cattle exclusion from wetland areas. The other 991 hectares were terrestrial; project activities included restoration, invasive weed control, and road deactivation.

# **Project Type**

Determining the types of stewardship activities occurring in the region can illustrate where we are collectively focusing our stewardship resources. This in turn may help to identify gaps, and guide the targeting of future stewardship effort. The list of project types was developed by partners to capture all projects categorized as "stewardship." Both education/outreach and leadership development were

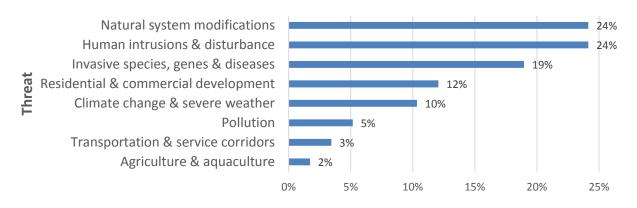
included, as partners determined that these two project types, although not typically described as "stewardship activities", are an essential component of effective land and water stewardship. Survey participants were permitted to assign each project up to three project types. Table 2 shows that the most common stewardship activity was education/outreach at 19%, with water and ecosystem restoration/enhancement/remediation tied for second at 13%. No projects were reported as including GIS, landscape connectivity or policy/regulation aspects, even though although these project types have been identified as important by the Stewardship Committees.

Table 2 – Project types by reported KCP partner stewardship projects

Project Type	Percentage of Total Projects
Education/Outreach	19%
Ecosystem Restoration/Enhancement /Remediation	13%
Water	13%
Citizen Science	10%
Fish/Wildlife Conservation	10%
Environmental Monitoring	8%
Invasive Species Control	5%
Landowner Outreach	5%
Species-at-Risk	5%
Leadership Development	5%
Inventory	3%
Land Management	3%
Planning	2%
Research	2%
GIS	0%
Landscape Connectivity	0%
Policy/Regulation	0%

# **Threats Targeted**

Survey participants were permitted to assign each project as addressing up to three threats, using the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) threats classification system. As per Figure 3, both natural system modifications and human intrusion and disturbance were targeted the most at 24%, with agriculture and aquaculture targeted the least at 2%. A total of eight threats were identified as being addressed. It is interesting that although many partners (e.g. Columbia Basin Trust) have identified climate change resiliency as a strategic priority, only 10% of stewardship projects reported focusing on this threat, potentially indicating a need for more partner education on what types of stewardship actions help increase ecosystem resiliency.



# **Percentage of Total Projects Targeting Threat**

Figure 3 - International Union for Conservation of Nature threats targeted by reported KCP partner stewardship projects

# **Project Costs and Funding**

Effective stewardship requires adequate financial resources, and a lack of sufficient funding is often a key constraint for stewardship groups. Through the stewardship tracking survey we were able to determine existing sources of fiscal support for stewardship in the KCP Service Area, providing partners with a better understanding of potential sources for future funding. Figure 4 shows that a large diversity of funders support stewardship projects in the KCP Service Area, with a total of \$840,930 in direct funding being provided by over 31 funders. Some projects had multiple funders. The average project cost was \$38,000. In addition, it was important to track in-kind contributions, to reflect the importance of the time and/or resources donated by many organizations and individuals. The total in-kind contribution reported was \$279,238. The combination of cash and in-kind contributions spent on stewardship activities by the twelve participating organizations totalled \$1,120,168.

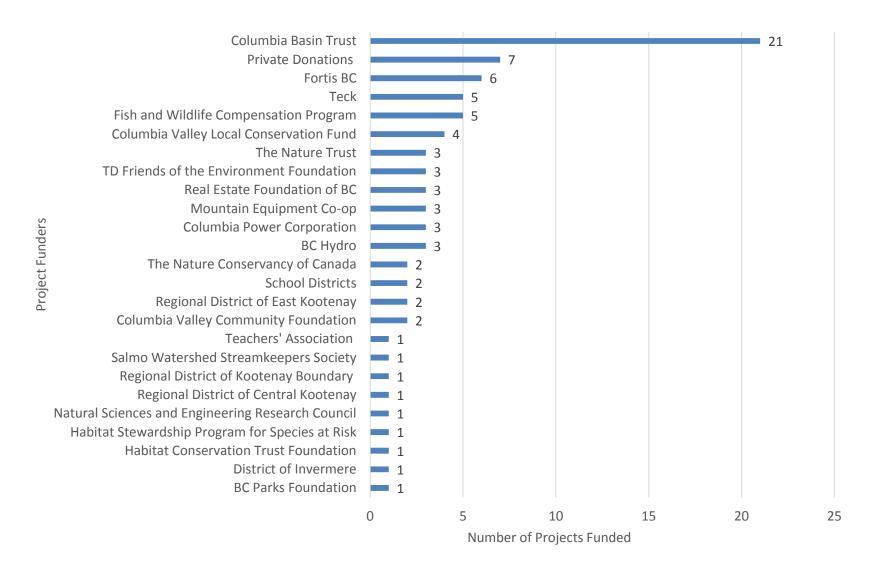


Figure 4 – Funders for reported KCP partner stewardship projects

# Conclusion

The KCP would like to thank the eleven organizations that submitted their stewardship project information for the 2013-2014 Stewardship Tracking Survey. The information collected in this survey will help us determine if we are meeting our goals of strengthening engagement, collaboration, communication, education and accountability within, and outside of, the partnership and increasing the amount of stewardship activities taking place on private lands, and provide a baseline against which to track progress over time.

This year's pilot initiative gave us a valuable snapshot of a portion of our work. Projects were distributed around the Kootenays, with potential service area gaps identified for the Arrow Lakes, Trout Lake/Duncan, and Golden/Kinbasket areas. The primary project types were outreach/education, ecosystem restoration/enhancement, and water. Gaps may exist in project types, including GIS, landscape connectivity and policy/regulation. Gaps may also exist in terms of threats addressed: for example, increasing climate change resiliency has been identified as a strategic priority by KCP and its partners and funders, but only 10% of reported projects addressed this threat.

As these results included less than 20% of the KCP partnership, we can assume that total numbers of projects conducted, money spent and area affected are in reality much higher. In the future we hope to engage a higher percentage of KCP partners in the annual stewardship tracking to better quantify and more accurately reflect the scope and extent of the stewardship efforts taking place in the KCP Service Area. Tracking stewardship over time will also help to identify gaps in the service area, programs, and knowledge of priority habitats and species. Increasing our knowledge of the partnership's collective stewardship effort will help to protect clean water and steward the land to allow for healthy, functioning ecosystems across the Kootenay region.