



## **Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP)**

### **2018-19 Final Report**

**FWCP Project COL-F19-W-2855-DCA**



*Photo credit: Nicole Trigg*

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## Executive Summary

Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP) and the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP) are partners in delivering a healthy environment for residents and communities of the East and West Kootenay. KCP and FWCP have a common understanding that fish and wildlife populations thrive in ecosystems that are functioning and sustainable. Similar to the FWCP, KCP supports partners in maintaining and improving the integrity and productivity of ecosystems and habitats. Through our collaborative relationship, priority conservation lands are secured, landowner's knowledge of how to care for their land is improved, overall conservation efforts are coordinated, and access to additional financial and technical resources are increased.

KCP contributes to the FWCP goals of the *Upland and Dryland Action Plan* and *Riparian and Wetlands Action Plan*. Specifically, KCP identifies opportunities to secure priority upland/dryland habitats in the Kootenays. As well, we identify threats to habitat connectivity and support opportunities, including but not limited to land securement, in order to secure and steward lands with high conservation values for upland, dryland, wetland and riparian areas.

KCP continues to coordinate communication between land trust organizations in the region. During this period, KCP completed three property evaluations with restricted FWCP funding and also supported one property appraisal report. Based on the dedication and hard work of our partners, particularly the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), Next Creek was acquired this year which expands the Darkwoods Conservation Area. FWCP also contributed to the purchase of the Columbia Wetlands – Edgewater Conservation Area (Tegart) which will be acquired in 2019/20.

In October, KCP partnered with Pandion Ecological Research Ltd. to bring together researchers and land managers to identify conservation action priorities focused on species at risk for the Lower Columbia Valley. This approach brought together a broad range of partners to work collaboratively towards conservation. In addition, KCP launched the Stewardship Solutions landowner outreach hub and finalized the updated KCP Stewardship Framework.

KCP continues to engage a wide range of stakeholders through a variety of tours, partner events, and presentations. We provided a valuable professional development and networking experience for our partners at our Annual Gathering on the theme of *"Conservation in the Context of Climate Change"*. We continue to utilize our website, Facebook and monthly eNews which is distributed to over 700 recipients as well as host our four-part Winter Webinar series.

KCP continues to administer and deliver the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund (CVLCF) in partnership with the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) and the Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund (KLLCF) in partnership with the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) which in combination awarded over \$466,000 to conservation projects in 2018.

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## 1. Introduction

The Columbia Basin of southeastern British Columbia is a unique landscape of global ecological significance. The East and West Kootenay still function as natural ecosystems with a full complement of ungulates and carnivores and are home to a variety of both common and rare plants, wildlife and fish species.

Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP) and the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP) are partners in delivering a healthy environment for residents and communities of the East and West Kootenay. KCP and FWCP have a common understanding that fish and wildlife populations thrive in ecosystems that are functioning and sustainable. Similar to the FWCP, KCP supports partners in maintaining and improving the integrity and productivity of ecosystems and habitats. Through our collaborative relationships, priority conservation lands are secured, landowner's knowledge of how to care for their land is improved, overall conservation efforts are coordinated, and access to additional financial and technical resources are increased.

KCP works towards the FWCP goals of the *Upland and Dryland Action Plan* and *Riparian and Wetlands Action Plan*. Specifically, KCP identifies opportunities to secure priority upland/dryland habitats in the Kootenays. As well, we identify threats to habitat connectivity and support opportunities, including but not limited to land securement, in order to conserve and steward lands with high conservation values for upland, dryland, wetland and riparian areas.

Over the past decade, KCP has helped partners conserve over 230,000 hectares of land and invest \$150 million into conservation projects across the Kootenays. World-class conservation efforts include Darkwoods, Pine Butte Ranch, Wycliffe Wildlife Corridor, Lot 48, Hoodoo-Hofert, The Frog Bear Project and The Big Ranch. However, development pressures throughout the region continue, leading to significant and irrevocable loss of wildlife habitat and the loss of other natural capital including clean water, clean air, food production, timber production, and carbon storage and sequestration.

Although valued habitats occur throughout the East and West Kootenay, the valley bottoms have the richest diversity and possess the greatest biodiversity values. Many of these important habitats are located on private land. There remains a viable opportunity to conduct private land securement and stewardship activities that conserve and enhance these lands within the East and West Kootenays.

## 2. Goals and Objectives

The vision of the Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP) is to have landscapes in the East and West Kootenays that sustain naturally functioning ecosystems that can in turn support economic and social well-being. We envision vibrant communities that demonstrate the principles of environmental stewardship for future generations. This vision relates directly to the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program's vision of ensuring that fish and wildlife populations thrive in watersheds that are functioning and sustainable.

KCP is a partnership of over 80 conservation, industry, government and business organizations involved in conserving natural areas for Kootenay communities. The KCP partnership coordinates and facilitates acquisitions, covenants and stewardship projects on private land. In addition, we work to build the organizational capacity and serve as a network for our partner organizations. We are strategic and focused on bringing organizations together for the greatest long-term return on investment.

KCP aims to achieve the following:

- 1) Increase the effectiveness, collaboration and coordination of private land **securement**;
- 2) Increase the effectiveness and coordination of **stewardship** activities taking place on private lands;
- 3) Build and provide technical, financial and internal **capacity** for KCP and partner organizations to undertake securement and stewardship activities; and,
- 4) Strengthen the **network** of conservation organizations through communications to achieve efficiencies, synergies and ultimately greater effectiveness.

## 3. Study Area

The KCP Service Area extends across the Kootenays including the RDCK, RDEK, Area A of the CSRD and Areas A and B of the RDKB (Figure 1). KCP also maintains connections with regional, national and international conservation collaborations.



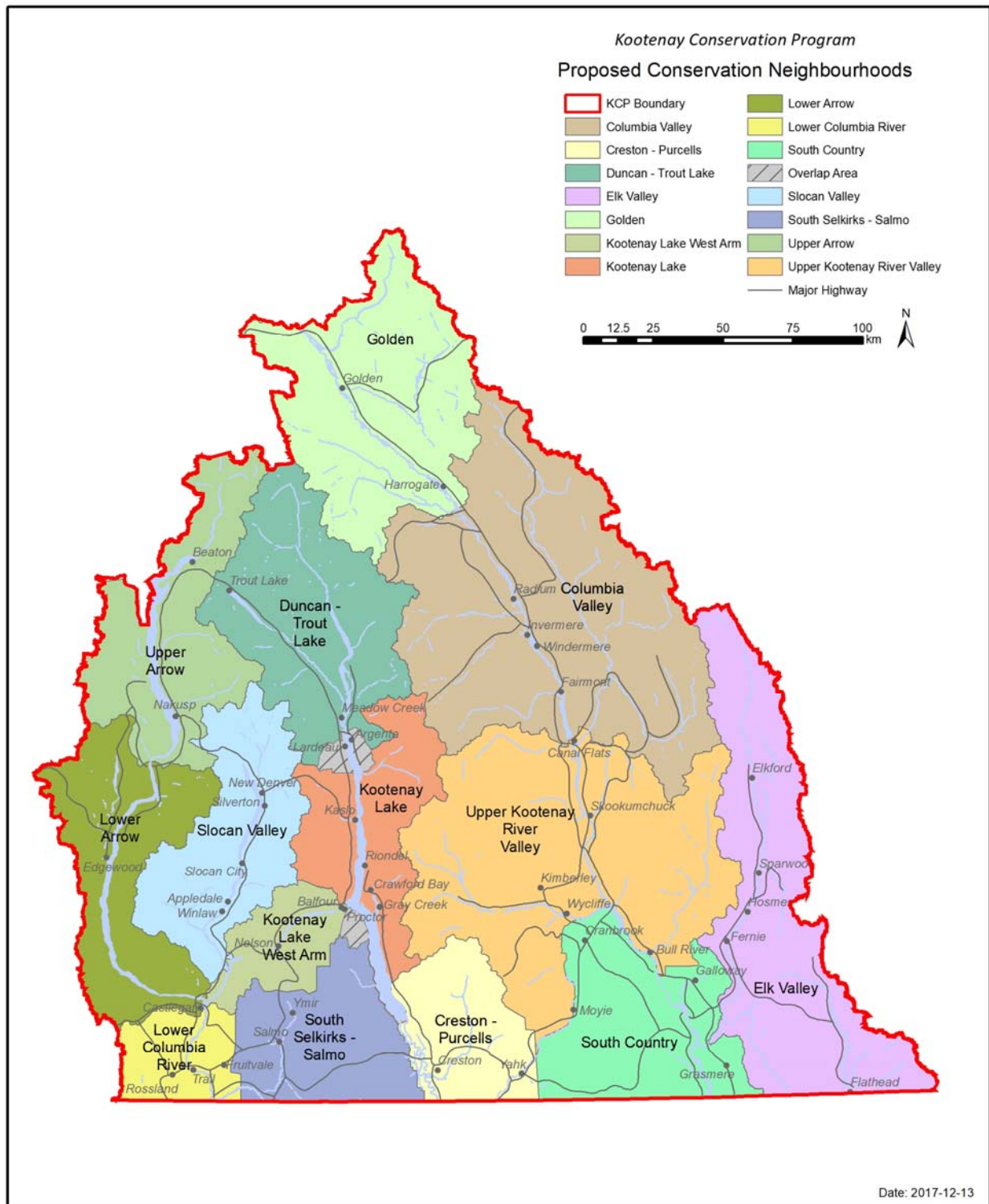


Figure 1: Map of KCP Service Area including Conservation Neighbourhoods.

## 4. Methods

Membership and participation in KCP is open to any organization that aligns with, and signs off on, our Governance and Participation Charter. Four KCP committees guide the organization (Figure 2). The Board provides general guidance and strategic oversight of KCP operations, initiatives and priorities. The Securement Committee leads the prioritization process for securement projects and further coordinates communication amongst all of the land trust organizations working in both the East and West Kootenays. Both the East and West Kootenay Stewardship Committees are composed of partner organizations interested in and/or involved in private land stewardship. Collectively, they assist individual partners in engaging communities, landowners, businesses and individuals in voluntary private land stewardship.

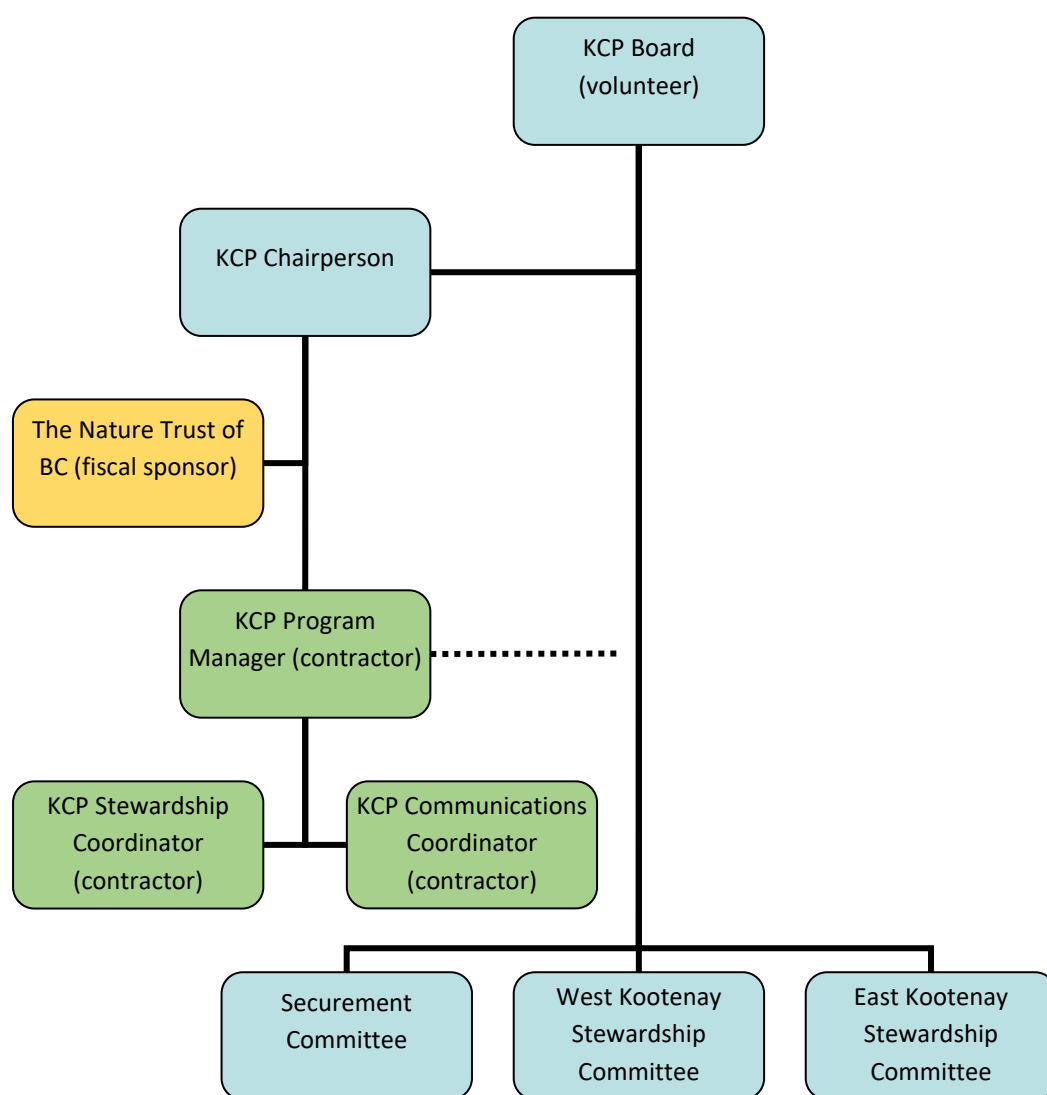


Figure 2: KCP Governance Structure



KCP committees are supported by three part-time contract positions; Program Manager, Stewardship Coordinator, and Communications Coordinator. The role of the Program Manager includes organizational development, fundraising, overall program administration, coordination of securement activities, partnership building, increasing capacity building efforts and management of the local conservation funds. The role of the Stewardship Coordinator is to focus exclusively on stewardship activities including setting goals and objectives for both stewardship committees and moving priority stewardship initiatives forward. The role of the Communications Coordinator is to coordinate KCP capacity building and communication functions. The KCP team this year was comprised of Juliet Craig (Program Manager), Adrienne Shaw (Stewardship Coordinator) and Nicole Trigg (Communications Coordinator).

## 5. Results, Outcomes and Discussion

The 2018-19 year was another productive one for the Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP). This year focused on *Conservation in the Context of Climate Change* and this theme was carried through the workshops, Fall Gathering and webinars. Highlights of 2018-19 include:

- ✓ Co-facilitating the Lower Columbia Conservation Neighbourhood Action Forum
- ✓ Finalization of the updated KCP Stewardship Framework
- ✓ Launching the Stewardship Solutions Hub for landowner outreach materials
- ✓ Successful hosting of a Fall Gathering including a field tour to the Slocan Valley and hosting spring tours at Balfour and the Fernie area
- ✓ Hosting a webinar series on the theme of “*Conservation in the Context of Climate Change – Restoration in Action*”
- ✓ Promoting the concept of “*Kootenay Connect*” which identifies high priority landscape connectivity and biodiversity hot spots in the Kootenays.
- ✓ Hosing a Local Government Forum on Tools for Conservation
- ✓ Co-hosting Critter Day with the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program
- ✓ Administration and delivery of the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund (CVLCF) with over \$413,000 being disbursed to eight conservation projects
- ✓ Providing a 10-Year Celebration of the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund in Invermere
- ✓ Administration and delivery of the Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund (KLLCF) with over \$52,000 awarded to four local conservation projects

- ✓ Completion of a market survey of Kootenay residents as a first step in expanding the Local Conservation Fund
- ✓ Assisting the RDCK with the development of the KLLCF Guidance Document
- ✓ Continued coordination of land securement amongst land trust organizations in the region with one major property acquired through this collaborative approach
- ✓ Finalization of the *Securement Private Land for Conservation in the Kootenays - Frequently Asked Questions* document

The following list of activities aligns with the workplan provided to FWCP for the 2018-19 Fiscal Year and with the KCP Strategic Priorities.

## 5.1 Securement

### Securement Committee Coordination

KCP assists with identifying opportunities to secure priority habitats in a number of ways. We coordinate the Securement Team comprised of The Nature Trust of BC (TNTBC), the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (MFLNRORD), the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP), and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). This Team has been extremely successful in ensuring dialogue, coordination and prioritization of securement properties in the region. During this period KCP conducted five Securement Committee meetings. We updated both the East Kootenay and West Kootenay Securement lists and received three land securement referrals from KCP partner organizations, or directly from interested landowners. We also completed the document *Securement Private Land for Conservation in the Kootenays - Frequently Asked Questions* which outlines the securement process in the region.

### Property Evaluations

The KCP also acts as a "one window" approach to land securement. Landowners contact the KCP to discuss securement opportunities for their property. In addition, any funding proposals for securement to the FWCP are reviewed and recommended by the Securement Team. KCP also plays an important role in providing an independent evaluation of candidate properties for securement based on biological and administrative criteria (e.g. landscape connectivity, Ungulate Winter Range, species and habitats at risk, urgency of acquisition, etc.). The properties are then added to the database to determine their priority/rank in the region. The ranking number is used as part of the evaluation of funders as well as among the Securement Team to identify securement priorities.

The FWCP Restricted Funds support property appraisals and evaluations for securement. These appraisals determine fair market value for a property and are used to guide acquisition costs or

the "cost" of a covenant on the property. Funds are also used to evaluate properties to determine their relative rank in the Kootenays so that shared priorities are defined. For the current year, we have completed three property evaluations with restricted FWCP funding and also supported one property appraisal report.

### 2018/19 Property Acquisitions

Based on the dedication and hard work of our partners, particularly the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), Next Creek was acquired this year. This large land acquisition (7,881 ha) grows the size of the Darkwoods Conservation Area by 14% and protects the ecological integrity of a conservation network that has national and international significance and protects habitat of wide-ranging species like grizzly bear and wolverine. It is the last, missing piece in a vast conservation landscape puzzle that extends over 1,100 km<sup>2</sup>. The long-term vision for this landscape, the only inland temperate rainforest in the world, is that it is a global example of effective, large landscape conservation through a connected network of private and public conservation lands.

Funding was also contributed by FWCP in 2018/19 to the Columbia River Wetlands – Edgewater Conservation Property being acquired by the Nature Trust of BC. Also known as the Tegart Hereford Ranch, this property contains a mosaic of habitats, including: open forest (primarily Douglas-Fir), shrub steppe, grassland, wetland and riparian floodplain. Located within a biogeoclimatic zone of provincial conservation concern, the very dry cool Interior Douglas Fir (IDF<sub>fxk</sub>), it also serves as critical habitat for many species, including the Red-listed American Badger and the Blue-listed Grizzly Bear. The property functions as a wildlife corridor by creating a linkage up and down the river valley, while also providing some connectivity across the valley, from the Rocky Mountains to the Purcell Ranges. Its securement will contribute to landscape level biodiversity conservation in the Columbia Valley by adding to 539 hectares of existing TNTBC conservation land, while also tying into the 1002 ha Columbia National Wildlife Area and the 16,952 hectare provincial Columbia Wetlands WMA. This property is expected to close in 2019/20.

## 5.2 Stewardship

The KCP continued with its focus on stewardship priorities including: increasing collaboration and coordination between partners, facilitating neighbourhood conservation planning to identify conservation targets and high priority actions, promoting a coordinated approach to landowner outreach for conservation, and supporting local governments to incorporate and apply conservation principles into local land use planning. KCP updated the Stewardship Framework which was approved by the East and West Kootenay Stewardship Committees and KCP Board in 2018.

### Spring Tours

In May and June 2018, KCP hosted full-day East and West Kootenay Stewardship Committee meetings that included a morning business meeting and networking lunch for committee members, followed by local field tours in the afternoon — the afternoon field tours were open to all KCP partners. Participants in both the east and west meetings were extremely engaged and shared many ideas around promoting conservation and restoration, and KCP's collaborative role in the region. Most valuable, perhaps, was the opportunity for partners to learn firsthand about each other's projects and activities, with many synergies identified, ultimately promoting increased cooperation and effectiveness in each region.

Highlights from the West Kootenay tour included showcasing water sampling and monitoring by the Friends of Kootenay Lake, protecting bat roost sites by the Kootenay Community Bat Project, great blue heron conservation by Pandion Ecological Research, and outreach materials from a variety of KCP partners. Highlights from the Elk Valley included visiting restored beaver habitat, discussing the Elk River Alliance's latest Cutthroat Trout Research Initiative, visiting Alexander Creek to talk about restoration and community water monitoring, seeing a collaborative approach to wetland restoration near Hosmer and discussing protecting private land and stewardship with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and The Nature Trust of BC.

### Critter Day

Once again, KCP co-organized Critter Day in May with the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program to raise awareness of the valuable conservation opportunities in the Trail area. The event brought together 10 conservation partners, five funders, and approximately 700 community members to learn about local critters that inhabit the area.

### Neighbourhood Conservation Action Planning

In October, KCP hosted its third Conservation Action Forum in the Lower Columbia (Trail area). KCP partnered with Pandion Ecological Research and Jakob Dulisse Consulting to bring together researchers, land managers, stewardship organizations, first nations, and other government partners to identify conservation action priorities for the Lower Columbia. This Forum included speed presentations by six researchers focused on best practices for land managers to conserve for species and habitats at risk. The Forum included break-out sessions to identify priority actions under the themes of planning/permitting and data management, invasive species and vegetation management, development and field operations, and access management. The afternoon field tour showcased an on-the-ground look at species and habitats at risk in the Lower Columbia. The majority of the Forum focused on how to better incorporate species and habitat at risk consideration in land management activities.

### **'Kootenay Connect': Shared Priorities for Landscape Connectivity**

KCP joined forces with Dr. Michael Proctor, a leading Grizzly Bear Biologist, to collaborate on the concept of "Kootenay Connect", an initiative to identify key landscape linkage corridors and biodiversity hotspots in the Kootenays. At this meeting, Michael provided background on the concept and KCP partners strategized on how to best apply the concept locally. This research will inform many conservation activities including securement acquisitions, stewardship opportunities, and policy applications.

### **Stewardship Solutions Hub**

KCP moved forward in the coordinated landowner outreach initiative by finalizing the online and print hub of "Stewardship Solutions". This hub showcases the services that many KCP partners offer to promote private land stewardship in the Kootenays. These local organizations may offer information, tools, incentives, services, learning opportunities, and/or funding for stewardship activities. They focus on such topics as wildlife, species at risk, invasive plants, water quantity and quality, forest and grassland ecology, fire interface management, and habitat restoration to name a few.

This online toolkit serves as a central hub for this information and features Kootenay-based resources for stewardship solutions that address issues on private land. This toolkit is designed for stewardship practitioners, local government planners and other service providers as well as a one-stop shop for private landowners interested in stewardship options for their property.

### **Local Government Forum: Tools for Conservation in the Kootenays**

In March, 2019, KCP hosted a Local Government Forum to identify specific tools and resources required by local governments of the Kootenays to integrate conservation principles into their activities. Focused on local government elected officials and staff, this Forum provided an opportunity to learn more about examples of how local governments have successfully integrated conservation into their activities. Special guests included:

- Deb Curran, author of the Green Bylaws Toolkit and specialist on local government regulatory tools in BC.
- Dr. Michael Proctor, grizzly bear biologist, shared his recent research on key corridors for bears and other wildlife in the Kootenays including important private land corridors.
- Scott Boswell from the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Partnership showcased an ecological corridor protection model being used in the Okanagan that has been designed by a Steering Committee of local governments, the Province, First Nations, academia and environmental organizations.
- Kootenay Conservation Program shared recent market research on the values of residents of the Kootenays and potential for expansion of the Local Conservation Fund.

This forum also provided an opportunity to network, learn about local topics, and be the first to see new resources that encourage private land stewardship for residents.

### 5.3 Capacity Building and Serving as a Network

#### KCP Fall Gathering

The KCP Fall Gathering & AGM serves as one of the primary opportunities to connect and re-connect KCP partners from across the region. We provided a valuable professional development and networking experience for our partners at our Fall Gathering and AGM held in Nelson on October 12 and 13, 2018, on the theme of *“Conservation in the Context of Climate Change”*. We explored predicted impacts of climate change and how to build ecosystem resilience in the face of this change. The field tour included visits to Marsden Face, Crescent Valley Park, Crooked Horn Farm and the Slocan Integral Forestry Cooperative forest tenure. Presenters including representatives from The Nature Trust of BC, Kootenay Native Plant Society, Selkirk College, Slocan Integral Forestry Cooperative, MFLNRORD Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program section, and Slocan River Streamkeepers Society.

#### Webinar Series

KCP coordinated and delivered another ‘Winter Webinar Series’ under the theme of *“Conservation in the Context of Climate Change – Restoration in Action”*. The four-part webinar series included:

- Whitebark Pine Restoration – Adrian Leslie, Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Wetland Restoration in the Kootenays – Neil Fletcher, BC Wildlife Federation
- Riparian and Wetland Restoration in the Slocan Valley – Gregoire Lamoureux, Slocan River Streamkeepers Society
- Rocky Mountain Trench Ecosystem Restoration Program – Marc Trudeau, Rocky Mountain Trench Ecosystem Restoration Program

These webinars were recorded and all are available at [www.kootenayconservation.ca](http://www.kootenayconservation.ca).

#### Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund

In 2008, KCP was instrumental in establishing the first Local Conservation Fund in Canadian history in the Regional District of East Kootenay’s Upper Columbia Valley. The Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund (CVLCF) has now invested over \$1.7 million in more than 80 securement and stewardship projects which address local priorities including ecosystem restoration, invasive species control and lake stewardship. This critical funding has helped leverage \$6 million in conservation investments in the local area. In 2018-19, the CVLCF was awarded to seven stewardship projects receiving almost \$110,000 in funding as well as one securement project that received \$303,000 in 2018 (and the remainder in 2019).



In April, KCP hosted a 10-Year Celebration of the Columbia Valley Local Conservation Fund in Invermere. This information-packed evening included display booths and presentations from organizations who have received CVLCF funding over the years and some of their major achievements. This opportunity allowed participants to get a better understanding of the importance of this funding to local conservation in the Columbia Valley.

### **Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund**

In 2018, the Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund (KLLCF) funded its third year of projects in the Kootenay Lake area after becoming a service of the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) in 2015. KCP worked with the RDCK to coordinate funding \$53,000 to four high priority projects in the region including projects western toad mitigation, bat surveys, grizzly bear co-existence, and north Kootenay Lake water monitoring. KCP also assisted RDCK with the development of a Guidance Document for the KLLCF to identify priority conservation actions for the region and delivered three Open Houses (Kokanee Creek, Boswell and Argenta) to promote the KLLCF.

### **Local Conservation Fund Expansion**

KCP took first steps towards expanding the Local Conservation Funds by engaging a market research company to conduct telephone polling in the Kootenays. Similar to the polls conducted in 2006 and 2012, the questions focused on residents' values, their support for a dedicated conservation fund, and their willingness to pay towards this concept. From this report, KCP will be developing a strategy to expand the current Local Conservation Fund areas in the coming years.

## **5.4 Serving as a Network**

### **Strategic Partnerships & Collaboration**

KCP provided presentations, creating and fostering valuable cross-border partnerships, to the Friends of Kootenay Lake Stewardship Society Annual Summit, Elkford Rod and Gun Club, and Sparwood Fish and Wildlife Association. KCP continues to be an active participant on the Steering Committee of Teck's Lower Columbia Ecosystem Management Plan (LCEMP).

### **Network News**

We continue to maintain and optimize our website and monthly eNews which is distributed to over 700 recipients across the region and Facebook which has 284 Likes. Our 'Faces & Places' features continue to have high uptake and offers the opportunity for KCP partners to showcase their current projects both on our website, Facebook page, and in our eNews.

### **Celebrating Conservation Leadership**

The KCP awarded the annual Conservation Leadership Award as part of our Annual Gathering and AGM in Nelson. This award showcases some of the outstanding work being done in conservation in our region. This year Gerry Wilkie (RDEK Director) and Rob Frew (Trail Wildlife Association) were the recipients of the 2018 Conservation Leadership Award.

## **6. Recommendations**

KCP plays an important and valuable role in the coordination and facilitation of private land conservation. Recommendations for 2019/20 include:

- 1) Continue both base and restricted funding for KCP's activities;
- 2) Continue to apply the conservation action planning model to other areas of the region;
- 3) Continue to develop a coordinated approach to landowner outreach in the region;
- 4) Continue to explore the expansion of the Local Conservation Fund; and,
- 5) Continue to engage existing and potential partners.

## **7. Acknowledgements**

Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP) would like to acknowledge the support of the following organizations in the successful delivery of the 2018-2019 Work Plan.

- Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program on behalf of its program partners BC Hydro, the Province of B.C., Fisheries and Oceans Canada, First Nations and public stakeholders
- Columbia Basin Trust
- Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation
- Real Estate Foundation of BC
- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Schad Foundation
- Regional District of East Kootenay
- Regional District of Central Kootenay
- Nature Conservancy of Canada
- The Nature Trust of British Columbia
- Parks Canada
- Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development

## 8. Confirmation of FWCP Recognition

FWCP's support continues to be recognized in a number of ways (Figure 7), including:

- 1) As a feature supporter on KCP's website: [www.kootenayconservation.ca](http://www.kootenayconservation.ca)
- 2) In our brochures and on our display stand
- 3) In our Annual Report and on tent cards at our Fall AGM & Gathering

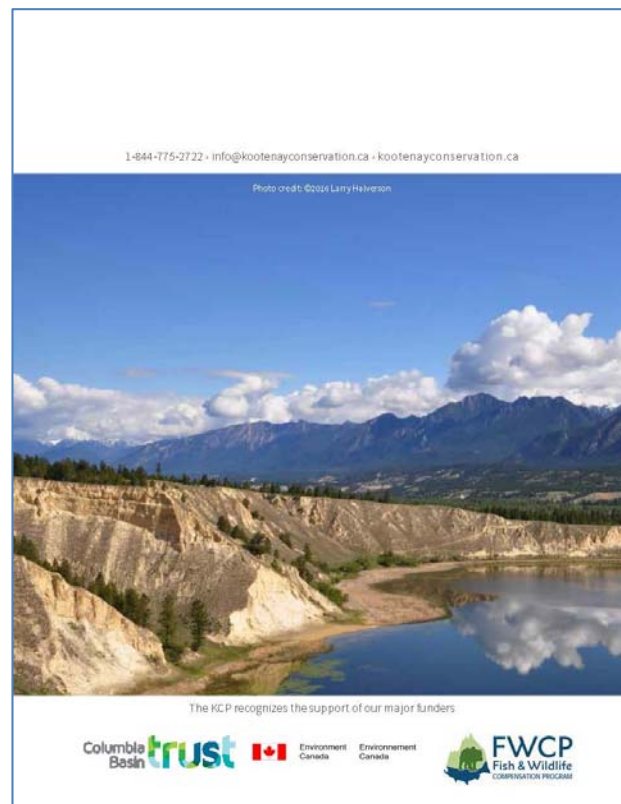


Figure 3: FWCP logo featured on Fall Gathering poster (top left), back of Partner Profiles booklet (top right), KCP website (bottom left) and public presentations (bottom right).