



HABITAT  
CONSERVATION  
TRUST FOUNDATION

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**STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2009-2012**

## Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Board of the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, I am very pleased and proud to present the new Strategic Plan for the Foundation. The past two years have seen significant changes implemented, first and foremost being the transition from a government based organization to becoming a not-for-profit, charitable public foundation.

One of the priority tasks that the Board set for itself after that transition was complete was the development of a Strategic Plan that would position the Foundation to respond to new challenges in conservation. The plan you see here is the culmination of many hours of thought, discussion and argument between and among Board members. As volunteers (and passionate conservationists) the Board members collectively put tremendous effort into ensuring that this is the right plan for the times, and I would like to thank them for their efforts.

The Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation is a proposal-driven organization, inviting funding proposals **from anyone** who has a good idea that seeks to benefit fish, wildlife and habitat in British Columbia. The Foundation invests in projects that maintain and enhance the health and biological diversity of British Columbia's fish, wildlife, and habitats so that people can use, enjoy, and benefit from these resources. It bears repeating that the diversity of fish and wildlife found in British Columbia is unique in Canada, and perhaps the world. The Foundation will continue to invest in projects that sustain this incredible natural heritage.

To implement our new Strategic Plan, we will continue to invite proposals from anyone who has a good idea to help sustain native fish and wildlife in BC. We will also continue to rely on a multi-stage technical review process that is multi-stage, very rigorous and quite competitive; only the best proposals are funded, and demand for project funding far exceeds supply. This level of scrutiny gives us confidence that the proposals that we fund have a high likelihood of success, and that the investments we make are going to benefit conservation across BC.

I am confident that this Plan will guide us to build on our record of sound investment in conservation in BC. I invite project proponents to read the plan, and to submit high quality, innovative proposals designed to help us meet our strategic objectives. The plan will serve to guide the Board in making funding decisions, and to guide staff in making program and operational decisions for the Foundation.

I am also confident that our contributors will like what they see; after all, without the anglers, hunters, guide-outfitters and trappers of this province, there would be no Foundation. It is their commitment to conservation that provides the funding for the Foundation, and without that commitment, British Columbia would be a poorer place.

Harvey Andrusak

Board Chair

## Our History

The original idea for what was to become the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation came from the anglers, hunters, guide-outfitters and trappers of British Columbia, who are the “shareholders” of the HCTF. In the late 1970s, those shareholders approached the provincial government with a simple business proposition:

“We, the resource users, have always paid our way through licence fees. We are prepared to pay even more money, via an additional surcharge fee on our licences, provided that 1) this additional money is invested in enhancement, restoration and land acquisition projects that are over and above the fundamental conservation and management responsibilities of the Province of British Columbia and 2) we, the users, have a direct say in how the money is invested.”

Faced with a straightforward request from the resource users for a self-imposed additional surcharge, government agreed to act as collector, and to ensure that the funds are directed towards fish and wildlife projects. This original trust-based agreement has persisted and is at the very core of the HCTF.

Over the years, the actual mechanism used to govern and oversee the Trust has changed, and has required refinements to the legislated basis for the Trust. As an excerpt from Hansard on Tuesday, March 1, 2005 explained:

The *Wildlife Act* is amended to improve governance of the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund. **These amendments will ensure that the trust fund remains independent from government.** Therefore, the Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection will no longer be the trustee for this fund. Instead, a board composed of stakeholders with a variety of expertise will make the decisions as to where and when trust fund money should be spent. The new trustee will be bound to follow the directions of this board. This new governance structure will allow the habitat conservation trust fund to continue to provide funds to assist in maintaining healthy ecosystems and diverse populations of species that rely on those ecosystems.

The legislative changes went on to spell out that the new board would be comprised of:

two people appointed from the Ministry of Environment,

two people appointed from the BC Wildlife Federation,

one person from the Guide Outfitters Association of BC,

One person from the Trappers Association, and

Four additional people appointed by the Board, each having demonstrated expertise in one or more areas including conservation science; fish, wildlife or habitat conservation or management; business; law; education and communications.

With the new board structure, yet another important milestone was passed, one made possible by those distant events in the East Kootenay region in 1979, when an idea became firmly embedded in the minds of conservationists outside and inside government. The idea being that dedicated funds, generated by resource users, should be used to do vitally important fish and wildlife enhancement work and habitat conservation through the acquisition of key parcels of land. In the intervening 25 years no less than three different political parties have ruled in the province and throughout that time the fund has remained in place.

In 2007, the new Board worked with government to further refine the governance model for HCTF. This took place in two phases – the first phase saw the Board establish a new society, the **Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation**, as a mechanism to unite the business operations of the board into a non-profit model.

The second phase saw government amend the *Wildlife Act* to appoint the newly established Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation as the trustee for the Habitat Conservation Trust. One of the first objectives of the new Foundation was to seek charitable foundation status from Revenue Canada, and this status was achieved in the summer of 2008.

To date, more than \$100 million has been invested through the HCTF with incalculable benefits to wildlife populations. New stream channels have been created to expand fish habitat. Rare desert and grasslands have been purchased to help preserve some of the most threatened ecosystems in the province. Winter rangeland has been protected to help conserve wild sheep populations. Inventories have been conducted to help ensure that biologically distinct populations of lake trout are managed properly so that they can be fished in a sustainable way to the benefit of local communities. And new generations of threatened and endangered species such as burrowing owls have been raised in captivity and reintroduced to their environment.

Thanks to the vision of a few key people, an idea germinated and began to spread in the late 1970s. As more and more people were infected by the idea, its spread became too great for anyone to stop it. In a remarkably short two years, the scales tipped allowing what became the HCTF to be born. And with vigilance, the scales will remain tipped in its favour for years more to come.

## **Our Strategic Plan**

**Vision Statement: Investing for the future of British Columbia's fish, wildlife, and their habitats.**

***Goal 1: Fish and wildlife habitats and populations are effectively conserved.***

**Objective 1.1: Restore and enhance habitats that support fish and wildlife in British Columbia.**

This is important because:

- Habitats are a critical foundation for fish and wildlife and support the natural diversity of the province.
- Fish and wildlife resources provide many benefits to people.
- Habitat degradation and loss threaten the future of fish and wildlife populations.
- Habitat degradation and loss are increasing due to urban and industrial development and human population growth.

HCTF will:

- Invest in habitat rehabilitation and restoration projects.
- Invest in habitat maintenance and enhancement projects.
- Invest in land acquisition, easements, and covenants.
- Use partnerships to increase desired habitat outcomes.

Also, HCTF may:

- Support selected habitat inventories, assessments, and studies to evaluate or facilitate these investments.

## **Objective 1.2: Sustain the diversity, resilience, and productivity of fish and wildlife populations in British Columbia.**

This is important because:

- Fish and wildlife are public resources that provide ecological, cultural, social, and economic values to British Columbia, its citizens, and visitors.
- Effective fish and wildlife population management is a component of socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable strategies for natural resource development and use.
- The complexity of resource management increases as competing interests and cumulative impacts exert more pressure on fish and wildlife populations.
- Effective fish and wildlife population management requires funding and partnerships to fill knowledge and regulatory gaps.
- Improvements in fish and wildlife population management require innovation, research, and proven best practices and these needs, in turn, require sustained investment.

HCTF will:

- Support development of science-based knowledge and tools to enhance resource management practices.
- Be a catalyst for better practices, innovation, and coordination in population management.

Also, HCTF may:

- Invest in population maintenance and enhancement projects.
- Support selected population inventories, assessments, and studies to evaluate or facilitate these investments.

***Goal 2: More people use, enjoy, and participate in the conservation of British Columbia's fish, wildlife, and environments.***

**Objective 2.1: Increase the levels of participation and satisfaction in activities that responsibly use fish and wildlife resources (fishing, hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing).**

This is important because:

- Fishing, hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing provide economic, social, cultural, and health benefits to people.
- People conserve only what they value; therefore, encouraging the responsible use and enjoyment of fish and wildlife is a key part of conservation.
- Pressures from competing land uses are reducing opportunity for recreational use of fish and wildlife.
- Declining hunter numbers and stagnant angler numbers are reducing the funding base for conservation investment.
- Responsible use and enjoyment of fish and wildlife is a core interest of HCTF stakeholders.

HCTF will:

- Invest in projects that promote the responsible use and enjoyment of fish and wildlife.
- Increase awareness about the benefits of outdoor activities that involve consumptive and non-consumptive uses of fish and wildlife.

Also, HCTF may:

- Take into account the actual or potential use of a population as a significant factor in evaluating fish and wildlife proposals.
- Take into account the provision of access for fishing, hunting, trapping, or viewing as a significant factor in evaluating fish, wildlife, and land acquisition proposals.
- Invest in events that provide hands-on opportunity to use and enjoy fish and wildlife.

**Objective 2.2: Increase British Columbians' level of engagement in activities that promote environmental understanding and resource stewardship.**

This is important because:

- The issues around environmental and resource sustainability are broad-reaching and complex, requiring awareness and engagement among all sectors of society.
- Conservation goals are beyond the capacity of government alone to deliver; collaborative action from diverse stakeholders is required.
- Informed and motivated individuals are more likely to adopt environmentally responsible behaviours.
- Community action at the grassroots level is a powerful means to inform, motivate, and engage individuals in activities favourable to conservation and the environment.
- A more informed, motivated, and diverse base can increase the scope and impact of HCTF investments.

HCTF will:

- Invest in effective conservation information, education, and demonstration programs and activities.
- Invest in community-based stewardship projects that identify tangible conservation results for fish, wildlife, habitat, or the environment and that increase stewardship capacity.

***Goal 3: HCTF is a recognized leader in fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation.***

**Objective 3.1: Gain broader recognition of the conservation capabilities and achievements of the HCTF and its contributors, partners, and funding recipients.**

This is important because:

- Those who contribute to HCTF deserve to see the results and benefits of those investments.
- Expanding the HCTF's funding base will require a demonstrated record of effective investment.
- An increased public profile may engage more British Columbians as HCTF contributors, participants, and supporters.

HCTF will:

- Maintain and enhance transparency, discipline, and accountability in its funding processes.
- Focus funding on technically sound projects that produce measurable results and value for the money invested.
- Maintain and enhance credibility and quality assurance through technical reviews of proposals, monitoring of project progress, reporting of project results, and systematic evaluation of investments.
- Extend results and achievements through outreach.

### **Objective 3.2: Increase the HCTF's conservation impact through strategic partnerships.**

This is important because:

- A secure funding base, efficient organization, and record of accomplishment place the HCTF in a strong position to attract new partnerships.
- The HCTF can increase its capacity by sharing expertise and leveraging funds with selected partners.
- Careful selection of the right partners can increase the HCTF's conservation profile and revenue stream.
- British Columbia's academic institutions are potential sources for high-quality applied research proposals addressing fish, wildlife, and habitat information needs.
- An independent HCTF has more opportunity than before to form partnerships with agencies, academic institutions, companies, and non-government organizations.

HCTF will:

- Be inclusive while ensuring that the record and reputation of potential partners is consistent with the vision, goals, and values of the HCTF.

Also, HCTF may:

- Systematically evaluate potential partners for a wide variety of purposes and benefits.

- Enter into selected strategic partnerships based on the evaluation results.
- Develop or participate in networks of organizations that share the HCTF's vision, goals, and priorities.
- Establish partnerships with academic institutions to address high-priority needs in applied research.
- Favour project proposals that include funding from other sources.

## **Ineligible Activities**

Given the finite resources that the Foundation has to make available to applicants, the Board has developed a list of ineligible activities to add further definition to the goals and objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan. This list ensures that HCTF is targeting its resources effectively.

HCTF does not accept proposals for the following types of projects:

- Non-applied research (research not directly related to a management purpose)
- Training costs for contractors
- Enforcement activities
- Fish rearing, farming, stocking or hatcheries projects
- Rehabilitation, captive breeding, feeding or control of wildlife species\*
- Salaries for regular provincial and federal government employees
- Salmon only or marine projects that do not benefit freshwater species or habitats
- Mapping only projects\*
- Inventory only projects\*
- Fishing and hunting, tour, or curriculum guides
- Information projects on regulations or stocking
- Conferences
- Production or sponsorship of commercial programs
- Interpretive services\*
- Individual plant species projects
- Creation or management of electronic databases, websites or file systems\*

\*these activities will be considered if they are part of an eligible project or in the development of a larger HCTF project and deemed a provincial priority.