

## Habitat Conservation Trust Fund Projects Announced

*Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks 330-30:ELP99/00-101  
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VICTORIA - A total of just over \$5 million will be spent this year on 159 projects aimed at protecting, restoring and enhancing fish and wildlife populations and habitats throughout British Columbia.

Environment, Lands and Parks Minister Cathy McGregor and Fisheries Minister Dennis Streifel announced approvals for the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund 1999-2000 projects today in Victoria.

"All of these projects have clearly demonstrated the benefits they will provide to the restoration, preservation and protection of fish and wildlife species and their habitats across the province," said McGregor. "Funding projects like these helps to maintain British Columbia's fish and wildlife heritage for future generations."

"The protection of fish and fish habitat from expanding urban and industrial development is a priority for the government," said Streifel. "For this reason, I am pleased to see that a large number of these projects are dedicated to the enhancement and conservation of fish and their habitats."

The Habitat Conservation Trust Fund works in partnership with several contributors, including the federal government, Forest Renewal B.C., the Nature Trust of B.C., Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program. These are some projects of particular interest this year:

- The trust fund is contributing \$35,000 towards developing and implementing management, protection and enhancement plans for more than 25 critical wetlands along coastal Vancouver Island.
- Bat hibernation and habitat near Tahsis will be studied to develop bat/cave management and protection recommendations. The fund is providing just over \$40,000.
- A co-operative study of wolverine populations and habitat use in the Kootenay region will provide conservation recommendations. The fund's contribution is \$20,000.
- Juvenile steelhead numbers will be assessed in five Skeena River tributaries after the largest steelhead escapement in recent years. The fund's contribution is \$100,000.
- Banks will be planted along Fortune Creek in the Okanagan to cool water temperatures, stabilize streambanks and provide fish habitat. The fund's contribution is \$5,000.
- The fund is contributing \$530,000 toward evaluating habitat conservation and population structure of white sturgeon throughout the Fraser River watershed and the Columbia River basin.

- To qualify for funding through the trust fund, projects must demonstrate at least one of the following objectives:
- conserve or enhance biological diversity, fish and its habitat, or wildlife and its habitat;
- acquire or manage lands to conserve or enhance a population or a species of fish or its habitat, or a species of wildlife and its habitat; or
- increase understanding, knowledge and awareness of fish or wildlife and their habitats, or that of the trust fund, through promotions, education or other programs.

The Habitat Conservation Trust Fund is supported primarily by surcharges on angling, hunting, trapping and guide-outfitting licence fees. Since 1981, more than \$48 million has been provided to more than 1700 projects through the trust fund and its predecessor, the Habitat Conservation Fund.

*(Editors note: A backgrounder is available with details on approved projects for 1999-2000.)*

## BACKGROUND

### **Habitat Conservation Trust Fund Approved Projects for 1999-2000**

**-Highlights- (April 6, 1999)**

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#### **PROVINCE WIDE**

- Partnership between the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund and the Public Conservation Assistance Fund to fund small, community-based volunteer conservation projects.
- Support for Wild B.C., which provides educational materials on fish, wildlife and their habitats to teachers, Scout and Guide leaders, park interpreters and youth.
- Co-ordination and expansion of a fish and wildlife viewing network - B.C. Wildlife Watch - through partnerships and co-operative projects.

#### **Fisheries**

- Support for fish conservation efforts through co-ordinated data collection, educational programs and the amount of sport fishing on quality rivers mainly in the Cariboo and Skeena.
- Study of threatened white sturgeon populations throughout the Fraser watershed and Columbia Basin.
- Development of a co-ordinated plan for native cutthroat trout conservation.

#### **Wildlife**

- Enhancement, rehabilitation and stewardship on lands secured through the award-winning Pacific estuary conservation program, a partnership between government and non-government organizations to secure important coastal wetlands.
- Support for provincewide land securement opportunities, including potential wildlife management area designations.
- Production of management guidelines for furbearers in British Columbia.
- Production of fact sheets on the deer family, carnivores and furbearers.
- Establishment of a network of volunteers around the province to collect distribution and population information on amphibian species.
- Ongoing planning, co-ordination and implementation of a conservation strategy to protect grizzly bears and their habitat.
- Continued support for a mountain caribou conservation strategy.
- Continued support for a heron stewardship program to preserve key habitats for the threatened great blue heron on the coast of British Columbia.
- Initial development of an inventory of arthropods in hot and warm springs of British Columbia.
- Support for Naturescape British Columbia through production of regionally specific educational materials.

## **VANCOUVER ISLAND**

### **Fisheries**

- Operation of the Keogh River fish fence that collects critical steelhead information.
- Continuation of steelhead stock monitoring on 31 watersheds on the east coast of Vancouver Island to determine conservation requirements, sport fishing catch limits, habitat restoration priorities and hatchery program response.
- Continued support for studies on the ecological and genetic impacts of escaped Atlantic salmon on wild steelhead stocks and for monitoring of selected streams for indications of Atlantic salmon spawning.
- Development of a restoration plan for lower Bings Creek.
- Removal of an abandoned and failing dam on Whiskey Creek that is blocking a fish passage.
- Support for a study to determine the feasibility of rerouting Dry Creek in the Alberni Valley back to its original location.

### **Wildlife**

- Development and implementation of management, protection and enhancement plans for more than 25 critical wetlands along coastal Vancouver Island.
- Continued study of the effects of silvicultural practices on the ecology of the "coastal" northern goshawk on northern Vancouver Island.
- Assessment of marbled murrelet habitat in the coastal Douglas fir zone.
- Study of bat hibernation and habitat near Tahsis to develop bat/cave management and protection recommendations.

- Development of a research proposal to identify factors causing a decline in populations of double-crested cormorants on the east coast of Vancouver Island.
- Continued activities to develop awareness and local government protective measures for sensitive ecosystems identified on the east coast of Vancouver Island between Victoria and Campbell River.
- Monitoring of the distribution of bullfrogs on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands and expansion of the education program to curtail further colonization of this introduced species.
- Development of a management plan for the Tofino Flats wildlife management area.
- Design of an experimental study that examines the effects of salvage operations on biodiversity and wildlife habitat in Clayoquot and northern Barkley sounds.
- Stewardship project to provide landowners in the Comox Valley with information on their properties and how to protect habitats on the properties.
- Operation and maintenance funding for key parcels of land that are intensively managed for their high wildlife habitat values.

## **LOWER MAINLAND**

### **Fisheries**

- Continued support for a restoration and management plan for the endangered Salish sucker and Nooksack dace.
- Continued wild steelhead conservation activities: habitat capacity estimates for six key streams in the Lower Mainland and index techniques for annual monitoring programs.
- Fertilization of Big Silver River to assess fish response.
- Restoration of large woody debris in the Alouette River.
- Support for an inventory, assessment, mapping and development of management priorities and operational guidelines for pump stations and flood boxes that are restricting salmon and trout migration throughout the lower Fraser Valley.
- Support for an enhancement project on Bertrand Creek that includes fencing and creek bank planting.

### **Wildlife**

- Study of the population persistence of the Pacific giant salamander in the streams of the Chilliwack River drainage.
- Evaluation of the effects of river bank harvest treatments on amphibian populations near Maple Ridge.
- Operation and maintenance funding for key parcels of land that are intensively managed for their high wildlife habitat values.

## **THOMPSON-NICOLA**

### **Fisheries**

- Monitoring and enumeration of steelhead escapement through the Bonaparte fishway.
- Continued development of alternative water use strategies at several lakes in the Kamloops area to prevent fish kills and loss of fish habitat.
- Completion of wild steelhead stock composition and migration studies.
- Gathering of baseline information for effective management of wild bull trout in Adams Lake.
- Conservation of fish populations by putting screens on irrigation intakes on Guichon Creek.
- Installation of trees and large woody debris to provide stability on an eroded streambank along Deadman River.
- Operation and maintenance funding of existing lake aeration and other projects.
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## **Wildlife**

- Gathering of basic information on forage use of disturbed sites by grizzly bears.
- Development of a proposal to test mule deer winter habitat capability and suitability maps developed for the Merritt forest district.
- Development of conservation strategies for the Thompson-Okanagan badger.
- Identification of critical habitats of the western rattlesnake and great basin gopher snake in Thompson-Nicola.
- Assessment of selected blue grouse habitats in Thompson-Nicola and the Okanagan.

## **KOOTENAY**

### **Fisheries**

- Continued studies on the life history of the Kootenay Lake burbot.
- Stock monitoring on the harvest of kokanee in the west arm of Kootenay Lake.
- Continued study of the status of bull trout in the Wigwam River.
- Determination of the current use of Joseph Creek as a spawning stream for cutthroat trout.
- Operation and maintenance funding of existing spawning channel and other projects.

### **Wildlife**

- Study of wolverine populations and habitat use to provide conservation recommendations.
- Use of prescribed burning to enhance the winter habitats of ungulates.
- Study of cougar movements and distribution relative to ungulate habitats in the South Selkirks.
- Inventory of dragonflies of conservation concern in the Kootenays.

- Habitat selection and suitability assessment of East Kootenay lynx and its relationship to the snowshoe hare.
- Habitat and population assessments of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep in the East Kootenay Trench to determine habitat preferences, study range conditions and create plans to enhance habitat and populations.
- Document options for the protection and enhancement of mountain goat winter habitat in the Purcell and Rocky Mountains.
- Habitat use, risk assessment and enhancement options for American white pelican at Creston.
- Operation and maintenance funding for key parcels of land that are intensively managed for their high wildlife habitat values.

## **CARIBOO**

### **Fisheries**

- Continued study of the population status of Bella Coola steelhead and searun cutthroat trout.
- Operation and maintenance funding of lake aeration and other projects.

### **Wildlife**

- Monitoring of radio-collared California bighorn sheep on Churn Creek to determine disease and other mortality factors.
- Study of the foraging habits of American white pelican on 20 lakes near Stum Lake.
- Assessment of the status and success of several ungulate transplants within the Cariboo region.

## **SKEENA**

### **Fisheries**

- Dam construction at the Borel Lake outlet of Nithi River to release water during low flows to reduce juvenile rainbow trout losses.
- Assessment of juvenile steelhead abundance in five Skeena River tributaries after the largest steelhead escapement in recent years.
- Operation of weirs at two sites on the Skeena River watershed to enumerate summer run steelhead.

### **Wildlife**

- Monitoring and control of raccoons to ensure they are not attacking breeding colonies of seabirds on the Queen Charlotte Islands.

- Recovery of the Telkwa caribou herd through transplants, and monitoring of radio-collared caribou to determine movement, distribution, habitat use and mortality.
- Management of a Bulkley Valley Savanna Steppe ecosystem to include soil and vegetation restoration, motorized access control, trails and signs.

## **OMINECA-PEACE**

### **Fisheries**

- Spawning assessment and habitat enhancement for bull trout in Hugh Allen Creek.
- Rehabilitation and enhancement of wetland habitat at the outlet of Charlie Lake.
- Assessment of the new fish ladder that established fish passage between Swan Lake and Tupper River.
- Monitoring of movements of bull trout and Arctic grayling in the Halfway Watershed and Peace River mainstem.
- Operation and maintenance funding of lake aeration and other projects.

### **Wildlife**

- Use of prescribed burning to enhance the winter habitats of ungulates.
- Study on roosting behaviour of forest-dwelling bats in naturally disturbed habitats.
- Completion of a butterfly and moth inventory of the Peace River Valley.
- Construction of a paddock to contain the Eththithun wood bison herd before release in the wild.
- Development of a land management plan for the lower Beaton River for designation as a wildlife management area.
- Study of the habitat requirements of boreal caribou.
- Study on the response of marten to alternative forest practices in mixed wood boreal forests of northeastern British Columbia.
- Operation and maintenance funding for key parcels of land that are intensively managed for their high wildlife habitat values.

## **OKANAGAN**

### **Fisheries**

- Continued studies and activities to rebuild and maintain kokanee stocks in Okanagan Lake.
- Planting along Fortune Creek to cool water temperatures, stabilize streambanks and provide fish habitat.
- Operation and maintenance funding of lake aeration, spawning channel and other projects.

## Wildlife

- Restoration and habitat renewal of shrub-steppe habitat near Osoyoos.
- Conservation and enhancement of threatened plant communities and wildlife species on private land in the south Okanagan-Similkameen.
- Continued study of the habitat requirements of sagebrush songbirds in the south Okanagan.
- Continued activities to encourage river bank restoration of oxbows in the south Okanagan.
- Demonstration of the effects of improved livestock control on river banks south of Penticton.
- Continued study on the effects of various land use practices on habitat use and population ecology of tiger salamander between Osoyoos and Penticton.
- Use of prescribed burning to enhance the winter habitats of ungulates.
- Study on using a new systematic planning approach - "irreplaceability" - to identify priority areas for conservation in the south Okanagan.
- Survey of the levels of human and habitat disturbance on two Western grebe colonies (Okanagan Lake and Salmon Arm) to compare with a former site at Swan Lake.
- Operation and maintenance funding for key parcels of land that are intensively managed for their high wildlife habitat values.