

## Habitat Conservation Trust Fund Projects Announced

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FORT ST. JOHN - A total of \$5 million will be spent this year on 113 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 projects while attending the British Columbia Wildlife Federation annual general meeting in Fort St. John today.

"These projects cover the broad spectrum of fish and wildlife issues across the province," said McGregor, who is the sole trustee for the HCTF. "They include everything from the co-ordinated data collection and monitoring needed before effective action can be taken, to educational programs and stewardship opportunities.

"Each project has been carefully reviewed and evaluated for its scientific merit and adherence to the objectives of the trust fund," she said. "All of these projects, many of which are several years from completion, have clearly demonstrated the benefits they will provide to the restoration, preservation and protection of fish and wildlife species and their habitats."

"The health of fish and fisheries habitat is a high priority for British Columbians and I am pleased to see the large number of projects dedicated to fisheries enhancement," said Streifel. "The fact that the largest part of the funds are contributed by hunters, trappers, anglers and guides, is a demonstration that they have a serious concern for all wildlife."

Some new projects of particular interest this year include:

- 4a \$530,000 study of the threatened white sturgeon throughout the Fraser watershed and the Columbia Basin to determine habitat requirements and population dynamics;
- an intensive steelhead stock assessment program, as part of a steelhead recovery plan, in 20 watersheds on the east coast of Vancouver Island, and operation of the Keogh River fence, costing \$126,000;
- the captive breeding component of the initiative to save the endangered Vancouver Island marmot, at a cost of \$28,100;
- an \$80,000 project to inventory and map sensitive habitat (stream, riparian and wetland) in urban areas of the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley;
- re-establishment of fisher, a mammal on the province's threatened species

list, into suitable habitat south of Cranbrook.

To qualify for funding through the HCTF, projects must demonstrate at least one of the following objectives:

- conserve or enhance biological diversity, fish, fish habitat, wildlife or wildlife habitat;
- acquire or manage lands for the conservation or enhancement of a population of a species of fish or wildlife and its habitat;
- increase understanding, knowledge and awareness of fish or wildlife and their habitat or 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 \$43 million have been provided to more than 1,600 projects through the HCTF and its predecessor, the Habitat Conservation Fund.

## **Backgrounder**

*Habitat Conservation Trust Fund  
Approved Projects for 1998/99 - Highlights*

### **Province-Wide**

#### **Fisheries**

- Study effectiveness of low-level fertilization for enhancing wild fish in infertile streams with abundant fish habitat on the Big Silver and Adams rivers
- Examine distribution and habitat requirements of chiselmouth in selected low elevation streams, lakes and rivers in southern and central Interior.
- Support fish conservation efforts through co-ordinated data collections, educational programs and monitoring angler use on quality rivers mainly in the Cariboo and Skeena.
- Partnership between the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund and the Public Conservation Assistance Fund to fund more volunteer conservation projects.
- Study threatened white sturgeon throughout the Fraser watershed.
- Production of educational fish species brochures and fact sheets.
- Protecting BC's native fish stocks from illegal movement of native or exotic fish species.

## Wildlife

- Hold community greenways workshops to introduce greenways concept to local communities and develop greenways tool kit.
- Ongoing promotion of the Naturescape program, production of educational materials.
- Identify and pursue provincewide land securement opportunities, including potential wildlife management area designations..
- Enhancement, rehabilitation and stewardship of land securement activities under the Pacific Estuary Conservation Program.
- Support Project WILD, which provides educational materials on fish, wildlife and their habitats to teachers, scout/guide leaders, park interpreters and youth.
- Prepare public information materials on selected wildlife species at risk.
- Co-ordination and expansion of fish and wildlife viewing program - BC Wildlife Watch - through partnerships and co-operative projects in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island.
- Co-operative project to produce a poster of all bat species of the Pacific northwest.
- Ongoing planning, co-ordination and implementation of a strategy to protect grizzly bears and their habitat.
- Support for a mountain caribou conservation strategy.
- Heron stewardship program to preserve key habitats for the threatened great blue heron on the British Columbia coast.

## Vancouver Island

### Fisheries

- Restoration of intertidal estuary habitat in the Campbell River.
- Large woody debris structures will be installed in pools in the Big Qualicum River to improve rearing habitat for steelhead and coho salmon.
- Research potential ecological and genetic impacts of escaped Atlantic salmon on wild steelhead stocks.
- Undertake an intensive steelhead assessment program in 20 watershed on the east coast of Vancouver Island to determine conservation requirements, sport fishery openings/closures, habitat restoration priorities, and hatchery program response.
- Operation of the Keogh River fence to collect important steelhead information.
- Placement of gravel at selected sites to enhance spawning success in the Campbell River.

- Landowner contact program and demonstration site on Hagan Creek.
- Operation and maintenance of existing projects.

## **Wildlife**

- Develop and implement management, protection and enhancement plans for 25+ critical wetlands along coastal Vancouver Island.
- Examine the effects of modern forest silviculture practices on the breeding ecology of "coastal" northern goshawks north of Campbell River.
- Strategy to identify priority sites and implement a landowner contact program in the Cowichan estuary area.
- Project to protect 600ha of fish and wildlife habitat on private land on Denman Island through stewardship commitments.
- Study of bat hibernation reproduction and habitat requirements new Tahsis to develop bat/cave management and protection recommendations.
- Determine nest densities and habitats of marbles murrelet in coast forests.
- Investigate species composition and habitat requirements of bats in managed forest ecosystems south of Port McNeill.
- Establish Vancouver Island marmot captive breeding colony at Toronto Zoo and assess the role of disease in population regulation.
- Continue a conservation strategy to develop awareness and local government protective measure for sensitive ecosystems identified between Victoria and Campbell River.

## **Lower Mainland**

### **Fisheries**

- Review data and develop plans for wild steelhead conservation in key Lower Mainland watersheds.
- Fertilize Big Silver River to assess fish response.
- Inventory and mapping of sensitive habitat (stream, riparian and wetland) for urban areas in the Lower Mainland.

### **Wildlife**

- Study the populations persistence of the Pacific giant salamander in the streams in the Chilliwack River drainage.
- Evaluate the effects of riparian harvest treatments on amphibian populations near Maple Ridge.
- Operation and maintenance funding for wildlife areas.

## Thompson-Nicola

### Fisheries

- Research into genetics, productivity, migration challenges and selective harvesting techniques of wild steelhead stocks on the Thompson River.
- Develop alternative water use strategies at several lakes in the Kamloops area to prevent fish kills and loss of habitat.
- Monitor and enumerate steelhead escapement through the Bonaparte fishway.
- Develop burbot life history information.
- Operation and maintenance funding of existing projects.

### Wildlife

- Re-introduce burrowing owls near Kamloops and Quilchena.
- Assessment and demonstration of controlled livestock grazing in a riparian pasture near Okanagan Falls.
- Inventory for "Columbia" sharp-tailed grouse leks.

## Kootenay

### Fisheries

- Conduct studies on imperiled populations of the Columbia Basin white sturgeon.
- Conduct stock monitoring on the harvest of kokanee in the west arm of Kootenay Lake.
- Undertake studies to determine status of the Wigwam River bull trout, and develop conservation and management strategies.
- Studies to determine the life history of the Kootenay Lake burbot.
- Operation and maintenance of existing projects.

### Wildlife

- Assess and increase populations and determine seasonal habitat preferences of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep in the East Kootenay Trench.
- Inventory breeding populations and habitats of the Lewis' woodpecker in the East Kootenay.
- Study of population and habitat use of the wolverine and provide conservation recommendations.

- Use prescribed burning to enhance the winter habitats of ungulates.
- Habitat selection and suitability assessment of East Kootenay lynx and its relationship to the snowshoe hare.
- Transplant fisher into available habitat south of Cranbrook.
- Cleanup and protection of mine adit habitat for the Coeur d'Alene salamander population.
- Determine the value of various types of avalanche chutes to grizzly bears in the Golden area.
- Assess factors affecting and undertake enhancement of western grebe nesting at Creston.

## Cariboo

### Fisheries

- Operation and maintenance of existing projects.
- Evaluated the abundance of anadromous juvenile trout on the Bella Coola and Dean rivers.

### Wildlife

- Monitor lamb recruitment and radio collared bighorn sheep on Churn Creek to identify key wintering habitats and opportunities for enhancement.
- Replace 13 km of fencing around Junction Sheep Range Park to protect California bighorn sheep and significant grassland.
- Maintain fences and signs on three wildlife properties.
- Inventory mountain goat populations and map key winter ranges southeast of Williams Lake.

## Skeena

### Fisheries

- Quantify genetic diversity for steelhead stocks and establish relationship between rainbow trout and steelhead in the Skeena River system.
- Operate weirs on the Skeena River watershed to enumerate summer run steelhead.

### Wildlife

- Determine raccoon access and conduct control in areas of the Queen Charlotte Islands and other areas where it is required to protect nesting

seabird colonies.

- Introduce caribou to supplement the Telkwa Mountain herd and monitor habitat use, productivity, mortality, etc.
- Construct deer enclosures in selected wetland sites near Masset and Port Clements to determine habitat impacts from deer.
- Conduct a prescribed burn to enhance habitat for Stone's sheep in Spatsizi Park.

## Onineca/Peace

### Fisheries

- Rehabilitate and enhance wetland habitat at the outlet of Charlie Lake.
- Establish a fish passage around a water control weir at the Swan Lake outlet.
- Identification of critical habitat, habitat assessment and enhancement opportunities of adult bull trout near Valemount.
- Operation and maintenance of ongoing projects.

### Wildlife

- Undertake prescribed fires to enhance critical ungulate winter range.
- Monitor the effects of operational aspen clear cutting, near Fort St. John on breeding birds and small mammals, relative to important habitat parameters.
- Remove and dispose of fencing materials on Luckhurst Mountain and the Dunlevy property.
- Assess critical habitats and travel corridors of grizzly bears in recreationally important sites in the Kechika.
- Produce land management plans, including habitat enhancement opportunities for three wildlife reserves in the Prince George and Vanderhoof forest districts.

## Okanagan

### Fisheries

- Ongoing operations and maintenance of fisheries projects.
- Undertake studies and activities to rebuild and maintain stocks of kokanee in Okanagan Lake.
- Provide fish passage over a vertical barrier at Vaseux Creek to allow salmonid access to four kilometres of quality rearing/spawning habitat.

- Construct an earthfill dam at Saunier Lake to increase lake productivity.

## **Wildlife**

- Undertake riparian restoration of oxbows near Oliver.
- Reconstruct the Jacks Lake dam and replace the water control structure with a steel weir to enhance the wetland.
- Restore shrub-steppe habitat near Osoyoos.
- Conduct breeding surveys of sagebrush songbirds in south Okanagan and Similkameen valleys.
- Undertake surveys to determine the habitat requirements of the tiger salamander and to evaluate the effects to various land use practices between Osoyoos and Penticton.
- Assist in installation of deer fence along Highway 97 between Summerland and Peachland.
- Ongoing operations and maintenance of wildlife projects.