MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

British Columbia offers some of the most incredible recreational fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing in North America. From steelhead to grizzly bears, BC’s spectacular fish, wildlife and habitats have become part of the identity of this province.

These invaluable natural assets are under increasing pressure, but organizations such as the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF) are working to minimize these impacts through partnerships with an increasing diversity of individuals and organizations. HCTF exists to invest in projects that maintain and enhance the health and biological diversity of BC’s fish, wildlife and habitats, and because of the vision of our BC anglers, hunters, trappers and guide-outfitters. Historically, the majority of HCTF’s funding has come from these users via surcharges on every freshwater angling, hunting, trapping or guiding licence purchased in BC. These user groups helped to create HCTF, have worked with the government to establish it in legislation, and continue to play a significant role in directing its operations and investments. As HCTF continues to expand its conservation efforts, other contributor groups are emerging and the role of HCTF partners and the general public is becoming more important to our success.

HCTF’s initial strategic plan guided us through our first 5 years as an independent, non-profit society. During those five years, the conservation landscape in BC changed significantly. Despite growing awareness from all sectors, the conservation status of some native species and their habitats has continued to decline. The economic downturn appeared to shift public expenditure priorities away from fish, wildlife and habitat conservation. At the same time, social responsibility has become a major theme for corporate citizens as businesses take an increasingly active role to engage the community and reduce or offset some of the negative environmental consequences of their operations. In addition, our own expectations for organizational effectiveness continue to evolve and mature. This new plan seeks to respond to these changes over the next five years (2015-2020).

We will use this plan as a roadmap in helping us achieve our vision: a future where fish, wildlife and their habitats are healthy and valued by British Columbians. It will guide the HCTF Board, staff and technical committees in operational decisions and provide current and prospective partners with a clear vision of what HCTF stands for and how it will achieve its goals.

My sincere thanks to HCTF staff and Board members for their enthusiasm and commitment in developing this plan. I would also like to acknowledge our project leaders and technical committee members, whose hard work and commitment enables HCTF to fulfill its mandate.

Thanks also to the provincial government for its ongoing support of HCTF: since 1981, governments of all political stripes have sustained and refined our visionary legislation, and government continues to play a critical role in our success.

Lastly, let me extend my gratitude to our current partners and contributors, whose dedication will hopefully inspire future partners to join us in ensuring a brighter future for BC’s fish, wildlife and habitats.

Ross Peck
Chair, HCTF Board of Directors

BC: A SNAPSHOT

From oceans to mountains, deserts to rainforests, and every ecosystem in between, British Columbia is the most biologically diverse of Canada’s provinces and territories.

Over 500 species of birds breed each year in BC - more than any other province in Canada.

The endangered Vancouver Island Marmot and over 100 species of insects are only found in BC.

Most of the world’s Mountain Caribou and more than half of the world’s Mountain Goats reside in BC.

BC’s population has more than doubled since 1971 and is expected to grow by 1.4 million people over the next 20 years.
INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

The Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation is an environmental granting organization, inviting proposals from individuals or groups who have good ideas to help BC’s fish, wildlife and habitats.

We use a rigorous process based on the best available science to evaluate proposals, and we provide grants to individuals and organizations to undertake projects which benefit native fish and wildlife species and their habitats. We also invest in education and engagement programs to connect British Columbians to the natural world.

From an economic perspective, ecotourism, angling, hunting, guiding, and trapping provide an estimated $2 Billion annually to BC's economy. These activities sustain small businesses and provide families with income and food. The previous downturn in fishing and hunting licence sales shows signs of reversing, and these activities are attracting a far more diverse demographic. In 2014, almost half a million angling and hunting licences were purchased. Via HCTF, the surcharges on these licences are invested back into essential fish and wildlife management activities, conservation of habitats, environmental education and enhancement of recreational pursuits involving fish and wildlife.

As a whole, British Columbia’s fish and wildlife resources remain plentiful and diverse, but some populations and habitats are in decline. Habitat loss, along with the spread of invasive species, growing human populations, resource development, and climate change are key contributors to these declines.

Over the next twenty years, BC's population is expected to grow by 30%, or an additional 1.4 million people. Unfortunately, the areas of densest human settlement also tend to be biodiversity hotspots: increasingly rare areas of high species diversity that are heavily impacted by development. Effective and sustained conservation efforts are required to mitigate these impacts and to sustain the health and productivity of British Columbia’s fish, wildlife and habitats for future generations. This plan aims to improve HCTF’s conservation outcomes by increasing investment in projects that maintain and enhance ecosystem health and biological diversity of the province’s fish, wildlife and their habitats. HCTF will focus its efforts on priority conservation actions while simultaneously encouraging collaboration among partners, including resource users, government, First Nations, industry, academia and BC’s public at large.

OUR ORGANIZATION

HISTORY

The Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF) was initiated in 1981 by visionary hunters, anglers, trappers and guide outfitters in British Columbia. Realizing the benefits that additional conservation work would bring to the province, they requested that the BC government impose a surcharge on their angling, hunting, trapping and guiding licences. These “user groups” set two simple conditions for their voluntary contributions:

1. The funds would be used for conservation work above and beyond the basic government responsibilities; and
2. The contributors would have a say in how the money would be invested.

Originally created through an amendment to the Wildlife Act, HCF was subsequently set up as a trust within government to provide grants for enhancement, restoration, and land acquisition projects that benefited fish and wildlife.

For the first 25 years of HCTF’s history, government was trustee and made all final funding decisions. In 2008, HCTF’s governance was changed to install a new independent not-for-profit society as trustee – the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation. Funding decisions are now made by the HCTF Board, composed of leaders in science and conservation who represent the BC Wildlife Federation (BCWF), Guide Outfitters Association of BC (GOABC), BC Trappers Association (BCTA), the Province of BC, and up to 5 additional individuals appointed by the Board for their expertise.

As we continue to evolve as an independent entity, HCTF has progressed in terms of investment strategy and expectations of performance management. The initiatives found in the latter part of this plan are indicative of HCTF’s maturation into a more sophisticated granting organization capable of advancing enhanced conservation outcomes across BC.
HCTF is privileged to deliver conservation projects in concert with numerous organizations across BC, including government, non-government organizations, rod & gun clubs, naturalist groups, First Nations, universities and citizen groups. Their broad expertise is reflected in the wide range of conservation work HCTF supports.

To date, HCTF has invested more than $150 million in over 2500 conservation and environmental education projects, providing substantial benefits to BC residents and visitors. As requests for HCTF funding far exceed supply, grant recipients are encouraged to use HCTF’s funding commitment to leverage additional support from external funding sources to maximize conservation results. To date, HCTF estimates that its investments have leveraged over $450 million in additional funding to the benefit of fish, wildlife and their habitats.

HCTF takes pride in being highly accountable to its partners and contributor groups, ensuring that funds are managed to the highest standards. All funding proposals are subject to rigorous peer review by scientific experts. Their evaluations of technical soundness are used by the Board to make informed project funding decisions. Successful grant recipients enter into accountability agreements with HCTF to ensure that projects are delivered as specified in their proposals.

A future where freshwater fish, wildlife and their habitats are healthy and valued by all British Columbians.

It is the mission of HCTF to improve the conservation outcomes of BC’s fish and wildlife, and the habitats in which they live. We make a difference by funding conservation projects and by educating and engaging the public about BC’s natural assets.

To successfully realize our vision, HCTF has identified three main goals supported by 6 strategic initiatives. These goals and initiatives highlight important areas of focus for HCTF over the next 5 years (from 2015 - 2020), as they will provide specific direction for HCTF’s core operations. Our current capabilities and processes will be leveraged to support these strategic initiatives to the greatest extent possible.
British Columbia’s conservation challenges have become increasingly complex. At the same time, provincial government spending on conservation has decreased. Keeping pace will require HCTF to both maximize the results of investments from current revenue sources and attract additional funding from new sources and partnerships. To increase conservation outcomes, we will identify priority focus areas where our finite resources can have the greatest impact, and rigorously measure outcomes to ensure accountability, promote continuous improvement and maximize our return on investment.

**FOCUS AREAS**

- Habitat restoration, enhancement, maintenance and land acquisition projects which align with HCTF’s priority conservation actions
- Keeping common species common: we will prioritize projects that directly aim to prevent species common to British Columbia from becoming endangered
- Investing in select research, monitoring and inventory projects that improve our understanding of population baselines and the conservation status of priority species. This information will be used to identify key opportunities for HCTF-supported restoration, enhancement, and acquisition projects

**SUCCESS FACTORS**

- A process to ensure that all projects selected for funding have a sound scientific basis, align with HCTF core values, and can efficiently achieve the intended results with a high degree of impact and in a sustainable way
- Maximizing co-investments
- Ability to measure performance outcomes and success using tangible performance indicators
- Sustained, long-term support for our investments

**REQUIRED ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES**

- Assessment and prioritization of specific focus areas (species, geographies, etc.) based on necessity and our ability to effect change
- Ability to connect proponents with additional partners to maximize the impact of every dollar invested
- Establishment of project-level key performance indicators and an ability to measure and track conservation outcomes
- Ability to engage a wide group of partners and stakeholders in order to inform policy at all levels of government (municipal, provincial, federal) so that our investments are protected and sustained for the long term
- Increase our role as facilitator and catalyst in bringing grant recipients together to ultimately achieve greater conservation outcomes
Increase British Columbians’ participation in environmental stewardship, education and responsible use

**GOAL 2**

People care for things they know about and are connected to.

For fish and wildlife to thrive, more people need to be educated about - and feel connected to - BC’s natural assets, its diversity, and conservation challenges. Education of British Columbians, both in schools and through community conservation and environmental education initiatives, should foster increased knowledge and environmental stewardship.

**FOCUS AREAS**

- Education of young British Columbians in elementary, middle and secondary schools to raise awareness of BC’s fish, wildlife and habitat diversity and conservation challenges
- Working with high school and college/university students to promote an understanding of opportunities and careers in fish and wildlife conservation
- Community programs that encourage environmental learning and create opportunities for active public involvement in conservation projects and initiatives
- Community efforts that support the responsible and sustainable use of fish and wildlife

**SUCCESS FACTORS**

- Availability of professionally designed educational programs and curricula targeted to the appropriate age groups/audiences
- Availability of conservation projects and activities that are accessible to the public through community groups and education programs

**REQUIRED ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES**

- Access to professional educators, experts and practitioners with the skills and ability to design and implement education programs that align with our goal
- Collaboration with grant recipients to share their work with the broader community
HCTF has a demonstrated capability to engage networks of partners in executing priority conservation projects with utmost transparency, impartiality and integrity.

As other entities look for avenues to invest financial resources to achieve conservation outcomes in British Columbia, they will turn to HCTF as a leader and a trusted partner.

FOCUS AREAS
- Management and investment of third-party funds toward fish, wildlife and habitat conservation outcomes in British Columbia

SUCCESS FACTORS
- HCTF is seen as a trusted, transparent and impartial organization with a strong performance capability and ability to maximize conservation outcomes for every dollar invested
- Standardized and well-defined performance management system to ensure effective use of funds and continuous improvement of our investment process

REQUIRED ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITIES
- Professional and data-driven investment approach and decision making process
- Continual improvement of HCTF business processes
- Continuous measurement and reporting on investment efforts and outcomes
As illustrated in the graphic below, we have identified six strategic initiatives to support the three goals of our organization and our core values. Using the strategic direction outlined in this plan, we will continue to refine these initiatives and develop detailed operational plans that will be necessary to achieve our goals.

GOAL 1
Increased conservation outcomes for fish, wildlife and habitats

GOAL 2
Increase British Columbians’ participation in environmental stewardship, education and responsible use

GOAL 3
Expand HCTF’s role as a Trusted Partner in managing and administering conservation funding

SUMMARY & NEXT STEPS

For over 30 years, the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation has been a key source of conservation investments in BC.

CONCLUSION

In the eight years since HCTF became an independent organization, we have increased our investments in conservation projects and programs, introduced new grant opportunities, developed innovative outdoor education programs and created evaluation tools to inform future project funding decisions. As our organization has grown, so have our expectations for organizational excellence and our commitment to do even more to promote conservation of BC’s fish, wildlife and their habitats.

This plan provides a roadmap for HCTF’s continued evolution in the face of a changing conservation landscape. At its core is our ambition to grow the amount of funding and resources available for conservation and environmental education, and to become increasingly effective and innovative in our business practices in order to accomplish the greatest amount possible with our contributors’ investments. The plan’s increased emphasis on partnerships stems from our recognition that the threats facing BC’s fish and wildlife are far greater than any one organization can tackle on their own. Our collective future will depend on increasing the level of collaboration between both traditional and non-traditional partners to accelerate our progress towards common conservation goals.

Over the next five years, this plan will guide us in developing strategies that move us towards our vision of a future where freshwater fish, wildlife and their habitats are healthy and valued by British Columbians. The strategic direction of this plan represents the next stage in HCTF’s development as a conservation leader, and we hope it lays the foundation for many successful years ahead.

CONCLUSION