



HABITAT
CONSERVATION TRUST
FOUNDATION

HCTF Project Evaluation Workshop 2010-11

INFORMATION, EDUCATION, STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS

February 11, 2011
Richmond, BC

HCTF IES Project Evaluation Workshop: February 11, 2011

Background:

In an ongoing effort to evaluate the outcomes of investments, HCTF uses several vehicles:

1. Technical committee review: annual technical evaluation of continuing projects.
2. On site visit: HCTF staff and Board of Directors on-the-ground evaluations of individual projects.
3. Detailed project evaluations: evaluations of specific projects including on-the-ground and financial audits.
4. Project evaluation workshops: project leaders present their results for peer review.

This report summarizes the first HCTF IES Evaluation Workshop, held in Richmond, February 11, 2011.

Workshop Objectives:

The goal of this workshop was to allow project leaders to discuss their projects in a mutually respectful atmosphere, so that HCTF representatives and other project leaders could learn from each other's experiences.

Specific workshop objectives were to:

1. Review and evaluate the results of HCTF investments in Information / Education / Stewardship projects; and
2. Provide a forum for organizations, resource managers and scientists to share information and ideas on how to further fish, wildlife and habitat information / education / stewardship programs and activities in BC.

Project Selection:

A blend of the following criteria was used to select projects to be presented:

Multi-year projects that are at or near the end of their project life;

- High dollar projects;
- Mix of small, site-specific and larger, wider ranging projects;
- Mix of 1-year and multi-year projects;
- Geographic spread throughout BC;
- Blend of proponent types by organization.

Based on the criteria above, HCTF selected 13 projects and sent a letter to the project leaders inviting them to make presentations on their projects. 10 presentations were made:

two from the provincial government, one from municipal government and seven from non-government organizations (Table 1).

Table 1. IES Presentations at the February 11th 2011 HCTF Workshop.

Organization	Presenter	Project	Years Funded	HCTF Amount
City of Surrey	Liana Ayach	City of Surrey's Salmon Habitat Restoration Program (SHaRP) (2-337)	2007-2010	\$67,428
Min. of Environment	Purnima Govindarajulu	Region-specific Amphibian Public Education for Northern BC (0-374)	2009-2010	\$15,000
Min. of Natural Resource Oper.	Sylvia von Schuckmann	Biodiversity Plans Lead to Action on BC Farms & Ranches (0-376)	2009	\$40,000
Langley Environmental Partners	Nichole Marples	The Brookwood/ Fernridge Urban Wildlife Monitoring Project (2-387)	2007, 2009	\$39,978
Habitat Acquisition Trust	Adam Taylor	Millstream Watershed Good Neighbours (1-475)	2009	\$15,000
The Land Conservancy of BC	Michael Bezener	South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (8-90)	2006-2010	\$225,000
Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC	Mike Gass	Learn to Fish Program (2-390)	2007-2010	\$135,000
East Kootenay Conservation Program	Wayne Stetski	East Kootenay Conservation Program(4-345)	2006-2010	\$120,000
BC Wildlife Federation	Neil Fletcher	Wetlands Institute (3-272)	2009-2010	\$44,650
The Nature Trust of BC	Tim Clermont	Crown Land Securement Pilot Project (0-339)	2006-2010	\$130,000

Additional participants included six HCTF Board members and three HCTF staff.

Participant Requirements:

Participants were required to:

1. Make a 15- to 20-minute presentation with the following mandatory elements:
 - Project summary
 - Project objectives
 - Methodologies / Activities (including communication and outreach)
 - Outcomes achieved to date and linkage to HCTF Strategic Objectives
 - Budget summary
 - Lessons learned (e.g., meeting timelines, identifying target audiences, ensuring activities / methods reach the target audience, measuring the effectiveness of the methods / activities used and whether outcomes have been reached)
2. Complete an evaluation sheet (anonymously, if desired) for each project presentation.

HCTF Board members in attendance were also encouraged to participate in the review and evaluation of each of the projects.

Methods:

Workshop participants were asked to fill out a project feedback form after each presentation, evaluating the project itself rather than the presentation. They were asked to give a score out of 10 for each section of the project and also provide written comments in response to questions that were included on the form.

Fourteen participants submitted project feedback forms for each presentation. Not all circled a score for each section but for those that did, a range of scores and the mean score for each section were calculated. For all forms submitted, the comments provided were recorded. The scores and all comments on their project were sent only to the individual presenter.

Participants were also asked to fill out a general feedback form for HCTF. They were asked to score the evaluation workshop (out of 10), provide any comments on the workshop and on HCTF projects and/or process. A range of scores and a mean score for the workshop were calculated and all the comments were recorded

Results

1) Feedback on Individual IES Projects

Details of scores and specific comments for each project were supplied to the proponent of that project.

Generally, the scores and comments on each of the projects were very positive. The total scores for each project ranged from 36.5 to 45 out of a possible 50. Most comments were suggestions to “tweak” the project and / or the reporting out. Many participants commented on making better links to HCTF strategic objectives. There were very few negative comments, and these tended to be about better quantifying objectives and / or developing clearer, more focused objectives.

2) General Feedback – Common themes regarding the IES workshop and HCTF

a) Participant comments on the IES projects in general:

Some common themes about IES projects emerged during the day.

Focus on Private Lands

- People, fish and wildlife tend to like to live in the same types of habitats, e.g., valley bottoms. As urban development continues, critical habitats and corridors are lost. Many stewardship organizations work with and direct their communications / outreach to private landowners and local governments to help conserve remaining critical habitats and maintain connectivity in fragmented landscapes.

Volunteers

- Most organizations rely on an active core of volunteers to undertake conservation activities;
- In-kind support is essential for projects to succeed;
- Project leaders need to be flexible and adjust schedules and activities as required when working with volunteers;
- Project leaders must put a lot of effort into overseeing volunteers involved in “citizen science” to ensure the data are actually entered in the database and that data entry is accurate and consistent.

Partnerships

- All programs depended on partnerships; projects appeared to be better with multiple partners.
- Successful partnerships require good communication and coordination among partners.

Finances

- HCTF funds appear to be critical for success of many projects or to leverage funds from other sources;
- HCTF appears to play a key role in private land stewardship of critical fish and wildlife habitats;
- Some organizations find it difficult to access funds during critical field seasons – most funds are needed in early spring or late fall, which may not fit into the schedules of the funders and require some organizations to risk manage until funds are received;
- It is a constant struggle to find funds to keep many of the programs and organizations going for the long-term and to initiate new activities.

Communications / Outreach

- All stewardship programs rely on direct contact through workshops and events to train their volunteers and to increase awareness of fish, wildlife and habitats in their community;
- Most of the IES programs have brochures, newsletters and websites to disseminate their information;
- Most stewardship organizations with landowner contact programs directly contact each private landowner in the target areas and only provide information to those landowners that are interested;
- All programs have an outreach component designed to increase public awareness of fish and wildlife values in their area and to lessen the growing disconnect between people and nature;
- The basis of many Information / Education / Stewardship activities is to change people's attitudes and behaviours – this requires long-term activities; initial contacts with private landowners and local government may not have immediate or direct results but over time may have far-reaching impacts on fish, wildlife and habitat conservation.

b) Participant comments about the workshop:

Overall, participants enjoyed the workshop and rated it positively. The main negative comments were regarding time, i.e., lack of time to network, to make comments and to cover all the points required in the presentations, particularly for the larger, more complex and diverse projects.

Some participants also made some suggestions to improve future workshops:

- Provide more project summaries in advance of the workshop;
- Highlight more what HCTF expects from the workshops;
- Extend the workshop to 1½ days, and
- Allocate more time to allow a general discussion / feedback on HCTF.

c) Participant comments about HCTF projects and process in general:

- Question about HCTF policy of not funding workshops or creation of databases / website/ sharing tools – sometimes these can be very effective in facilitating networking and improving effectiveness of a whole group of related projects.
- The funding provided by HCTF is critical to conservation in BC and is essential for leveraging other money. Thanks!

Conclusions:

HCTF had two objectives for the Information / Education / Stewardship project evaluation workshop:

1. Review and evaluate the results of HCTF investments in Information/Education/Stewardship projects; and
2. Provide a forum for organizations to share information and ideas on how to further fish, wildlife and habitat information / education / stewardship programs and activities in BC.

Based on the comments received from the participants, Objective 2 was clearly met by the workshop, though most expressed a need for more time for networking and presentations. As for the Fisheries workshop, all participants found attending the workshop to be a very positive and beneficial experience.

Whether Objective 1 has been met is more problematic. The Project Feedback Form provided qualitative / subjective feedback but was not very quantitative. Generally, participants seem to think each project was good value for the HCTF dollars invested, but it is unclear if the scores for each section are a sufficient evaluation measure to state Objective 1 has been met. Further discussion is probably required to ascertain if the workshop met Board & staff expectations using the current project feedback form.

Specific Recommendation from the IES Workshop

HCTF should plan a specific “social” event for IES workshop participants to encourage networking among the myriad organizations involved in stewardship activities, e.g., poster session.

