



Forest Enhancement
Society of British Columbia



HABITAT CONSERVATION
TRUST FOUNDATION

NEWS RELEASE

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Forest Restoration for Marten and Weasels Receives Part of \$9.3 Million in Funding

Kelowna, BC: For 40 years, the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF) has helped fund conservation groups, government, Indigenous Nations, and local communities to implement projects that protect B.C.'s wildlife, freshwater fish, and the habitats they need to survive and thrive. This year, HCTF awarded \$9.3 million in funding for 175 individual conservation projects throughout British Columbia.

HCTF's CEO Dan Buffett is pleased to report that the 2021/22 grant season represents the Foundation's highest record annual investment and reflects the financial contributions and hard work of many British Columbians that fund and implement these projects. To date, HCTF has funded 3,230 conservation projects and granted over \$195 million in funds across the length and breadth of this ecologically diverse province.

One such project being led by the Applied Mammal Research Institute aims to improve habitat for B.C.'s native mustelid species. The project, which received \$31,500 in funding from HCTF and the Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC), will conduct an array of forest management techniques to restore understory cover and accelerate forest regeneration in stands affected by Mountain Pine Beetle infestation.

The Mustelidae family includes martens, weasels, and ermine. As furbearers and important predator species in forest ecosystems, they have long been a priority for conservation efforts in B.C. Marten and weasel species occupy a mosaic of forest landscapes including 80+ year old conifer stands, and although some level of habitat disturbance is a natural and healthy occurrence in B.C.'s forests, we are increasingly seeing large scale disturbance events like those created by infestations species such as Mountain Pine Beetle. After such events, forest regeneration and eventual restoration can take many decades and even centuries. This project seeks to investigate what forest management techniques might increase the speed and effectiveness of forest recovery in order to improve habitat for mustelid and other small mammal species.

"This research project asks if there are ways to significantly accelerate restoration activities that grow new mature forest environments in reduced lengths of time that will provide both economic (ie. timber and non-timber products) as well as environmental, wildlife habitat, and biodiversity benefits," said project lead Thomas Sullivan. "Structural attributes, such as woody debris piles, may constitute an adequate surrogate for large overstory trees lost to Mountain Pine Beetle disturbance and help to retain and improve forest biodiversity and wildlife habitats."

Other HCTF-funded projects taking place in the Okanagan Region include:

- \$91,000 for research into the response of mule deer to wildlife activity in the Boundary region, West Okanagan and Bonaparte Plateau areas, co-funded by FESBC.
- \$71,000 for research into the effects of climate change on aquatic ecosystems within Bessette and Duteau Creek.
- \$54,000 to assess the status of the bull trout population in the Upper Shuswap River.
- \$52,000 for stewardship efforts engaging residence of the Kettle River Watershed to restore and maintain riverside Black Cottonwood forests in the area.
- \$20,000 for naturalization efforts designed to return 10 acres along the Similkameen river to riverside forest habitat, co-funded by FESBC.

Funding and support for these projects and others across the province come from a wide variety of sources including public groups such as the British Columbia Wildlife Federation (BCWF), partner organizations like FESBC, provincial government contributions, court fines, and endowments. A significant source of funding comes from the conservation surcharge paid by B.C.'s anglers, hunters, trappers, and guide outfitters.

"Over 40 years ago, a group of concerned hunters and anglers, lobbied for a surcharge on hunting and fishing licenses to fund wildlife and fish habitat improvement projects throughout the province," said BCWF president Chuck Zuckerman. "The result of this impassioned call from B.C.'s hunters, anglers, trappers and sport shooters formed a new fund in 1981 that subsequently evolved into the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation."

Steve Kozuki, executive director of FESBC, has been pleased to be a partner with HCTF.

"We are proud to partner with HCTF and local experts on the ground throughout British Columbia to improve wildlife habitat," said Kozuki. "HCTF combines wildlife biology expertise with their excellent management of funds to deliver outstanding benefits for wildlife. With all the pressures on the land base, the good work HCTF does is more important than ever."

Each project funded by HCTF goes through a multi-level, objective and technical review process prior to final Board review and decision. HCTF's Board of Directors ensure that species important to B.C. anglers and hunters are supported but also place a great deal of importance on conserving whole ecosystems, species-at-risk, and investing in environmental education across the province.

To see the complete list of HCTF funded projects or explore the conservation work being done near you, view the [2021-22 Approved Project List](#).

For Interviews:

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HCTF Quick Facts

It is the mission of HCTF to improve the conservation outcomes of B.C.'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 B.C.'s natural assets. 2021 marks HCTF's 40th anniversary of helping conservation groups and individuals secure funding for conservation projects and providing education to the general public about B.C.'s important natural assets. Since 1981, HCTF has provided over \$195 million in grants for 3,230 conservation projects across B.C. HCTF began as an initiative by B.C. anglers, hunters, trappers, and guide outfitters.

FESBC Quick Facts

The purposes of FESBC are to advance environmental and resource stewardship of B.C.'s forests by: preventing and mitigating the impact of wildfires; improving damaged or low value forests; improving habitat for wildlife; supporting the use of fibre from damaged and low value forests; and treating forests to improve the management of greenhouse gases. As of March 2021, FESBC has supported 269 projects valued at \$238 million, in partnership with governments of B.C. and Canada.