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Regional Summary Reports

Conservation Lands O&M Grants

Year 2, 2023-2026 Funding Cycle

HCTF Project #0-451

Conservation Lands O&M

Introduction

Conservation Lands Operations and Management (O&M) Program provides funding to the Conservation Lands Program of the Province of British Columbia for the management of ministry-administered conservation lands. The program is delivered in partnership with the Nature Trust of British Columbia (NTBC) and Ducks Unlimited Canada (in the South Coast region), including work undertaken on lands leased to the Province from NTBC. Funding for this program is provided primarily through endowment funds given to HCTF by the Province of British Columbia. This program is limited to a specific set of eligible sites and activities.

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West Coast Region

Region: West Coast

Ecological Significance of the Region:

The Vancouver Island West Coast Region contains some of the most diverse and rarest ecosystems in British Columbia and supports internationally significant populations of fish and wildlife as well as some of the rarest species found in the Province.

Estuaries, wetlands and riparian areas are among the most diverse and productive ecosystems in the world. The importance of protecting and managing these habitats cannot be understated given their substantial life history functions and benefits not only to fish and wildlife but to the human population as well (e.g. clean water supplies, flood protection, mitigating impacts from climate change). It is estimated that more than 50% of wildlife species in North America rely on access to wetland habitat for at least part of their life-cycles, and almost 35% of all rare, threatened, and endangered wildlife species are dependent on wetland ecosystems (Wetland Action Plan for British Columbia, 2010).

In British Columbia, estuaries and coastal wetlands comprise less than 3% of BC's coastline, while providing habitat to over 80% of all coastal fish and wildlife species. Approximately 500 species of named plants and animals are associated with wetlands and estuaries, and 70 of those species are federally listed as endangered or threatened. Vancouver Island and the Central contain significantly higher ranked estuaries than any other eco-region in the province (CWS Technical Report Series #476, 2007). Of the 8 Class 1 estuaries in BC, 4 are located on Vancouver Island.

Key Property Complexes

Baynes Sound	Buttertubs Marsh
Cluxewe Estuary	Cowichan Estuary
Dudley Marsh	Filberg Marsh
Kingcome Estuary	Lazo Marsh
Nanaimo Estuary	Orel Lake
Englishman River (PQWMA)	Salmon River Elk Reserve
Salmon River Estuary	Asseek Estuary
Somenos Marsh	Kumdis Slough
Willow Creek	Bella Coola Estuary
Koeye Estuary	Quatse WMA
Tofino Mudflats WMA	

Despite their importance and rarity, approximately 43% of the province's estuaries are threatened by coastal development, modification, and pollution; approximately 60% of marsh habitats along the estuaries of the Salish Sea have been lost.

Since 1976, The Nature Trust of BC and the Province of British Columbia has worked together with several partner agencies to secure these critical habitats on Vancouver Island and the Central Coast. From the Cowichan Estuary to the Kumdis Estuary more than 110 conservation properties have been secured protecting over 15,000ha of critical fish and wildlife habitat along with rare ecosystems.

Summary Statement of Regional Investment:

In 2023-2024, $141,745 was invested by HCTF in the West Coast Region. This funding was matched by over $5 million dollars in partner cash contributions as well as $120,000 in in-kind contributions by volunteer groups, local governments and First Nations.

Project Highlights:

- $7,950 at Buttertubs Marsh Conservation Area was invested to support restoration efforts with partners and volunteers completing invasive plant surveys and removals, planting and monitoring. Seven (7) events were held with the Nanaimo District Secondary School Eco. Club targeting the removal and restoration of specified/identified sites to benefit the riparian habitat surrounding the marsh and Species At Risk (Western Painted Turtles). This resulted in over 1,700m² restored. NDSS Eco Club provided the plants at a cost of $1,000 that was matched by WCCLMP through soil, fertilizer and plant cages. Work was also completed to support the Western Painted Turtle monitoring program Nanaimo Area Land Trust, invasive plant removals with Nature Nanaimo, and ongoing trail maintenance and land management projects with the City of Nanaimo.

- $20,468 was invested at Lazo Marsh NE Woods Wildlife Management Area to address public safety and recreation use of the area along with a focus on invasive plant removal. This included infrastructure removal, danger tree assessments and mitigations, trail upgrades, invasive species surveys and treatments. In addition, the Management Direction Statement along with updated maps and eco-sensitivity reporting was completed.

- $10,382 was invested at the S'amunu Wildlife Management Area to address the ongoing challenges of homeless encampments and invasive species surveys, treatments and removals. The implementation of the cultural restoration plan at Ye'yumnuts continued in partnership with Cowichan Tribes. Homeless encampments began early with a dry winter/spring with several clean-up efforts over the season, estimated 30,000lbs of debris removed with support from NTBC and Municipality of North Cowichan. Invasive Species collaboration with the Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society targeting yellow flag iris, a volunteer event held to install benthic barriers. Ongoing support for Cowichan Tribes and Ye'yumnuts interpretive site with outdoor classroom, completion scheduled for summer 2024.

- $11,695 at Willow Creek Conservation Area to support partnerships with the Discovery Greenways Land Trust and ongoing efforts to limit public disturbance to riparian areas and re-planting impacted areas. Trail maintenance with the replacement of x2 boardwalks within trail

systems and annual inspections of all other infrastructure including bridges, boardwalks, signs, kiosks, trails and boundaries. Danger Tree removals along trails and adjacent to residents completed. .

- $15,466 at the Parksville Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area for ongoing land management operations and maintenance of the multiple restoration sites within the Englishman River Estuary. Invasive plant treatments continued on species like scotch broom, daphne, knapweed, lamium, ivy, and thistles with continued collaboration and efforts with volunteers running for over 20 years. Signs throughout the WMA and all beach accesses inventoried with replacements installed as required. Signs also support ongoing efforts from Vancouver Island University RMOT program with patrols during beach closures for all dogs through brant migration. Monitoring and removal of homeless encampments and increased signage to inform and notify the public of sensitive ecosystems and regulations remains ongoing.

Conservation Outcomes:

Key conservation outcomes for the West Coast region include:

- Invasive species control measures taken on approximately 34 property parcels with over 34ha surveyed and 2.5ha with mechanical treatments and 0.61ha treated with herbicide (knotweed).

- 7 different volunteer events held targeting both invasive plant removals and/or planting within the PQBWMA (Englishman River Estuary), S'amunu WMA, Buttertubs Marsh, Baynes Sound (Millard Creek), and Willow Creek.

- Planting of over 2,300 native trees, plants and shrubs in estuarine and riparian habitat within the Nanaimo River Estuary, Englishman River Estuary, Buttertubs Marsh, Willow Creek, and Salmon River Estuaries. Plating work part of WCCLMP's major restoration projects and regular operational workplans.

- Large infrastructure replacement in Willow Creek (x3 kiosks), Dudley Marsh (bridge), Willow Creek (boardwalk), Lazo Marsh WMA (observation platform)

- Increasing monitoring and inventory work at several conservation areas with focus on estuary resiliency, water quality, migratory and breeding birds, invertebrates, and salmonids.

- On-going partnerships with First Nations, Local Governments, Stewardship Groups, and Fish and Game Clubs

Photographs

Please include some photographs highlighting project work in your region.

<table>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Buttertubs Marsh: Planting Project with NDSS Eco Club</td><td>Buttertubs Marsh: Western Painted Turtle hauling-out on basking logs installed 2023</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td>Lazo WMA: Dilapidated Observation Platform removed</td><td>Lazo WMA: Danger Tree removals</td></tr>
</table>

	
S’amunu WMA: Homeless Encampment **Before**	S’amunu WMA: Homeless Encampment **After**
	
Willow Creek: Volunteer planting event with the Greenways land trust	Willow Creek: Boardwalk replacement

	
PQBWMA: Volunteer Event maintaining planting site with Arrowsmith Naturalists	PQBWMA: Volunteer Event planting estuarine habitat and restoration site (canal)
	
Cluxewe WMA: Wildlife Camera Traps within the estuary	Salmon River: Monitoring and maintenance of Western Screech Owl nest boxes

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South Coast Region

The following template is to provide a summary of activities in each region. A pdf of last year's report is available for reference: 2021-22 BC/TNT Joint Conservation Land Management Summary Report.

For 2023-24 reporting, list Project Highlights for 5 Property with a focus on the most significant and relevant conservation activities in your region

Once you have completed this form, please submit ensure it is saved to your Regions One Drive **2023-24 Reporting** folder along with the Annual Activity Report spreadsheet. HCTF staff will combine the regional components into a Provincial Summary Report. This report will be made available to the public on HCTF's website.

Region: South Coast

Ecological Significance of the Region:

Most of the Lower Mainland region conservation projects focus on the Fraser River and its tributaries. The Fraser River, one of the largest rivers in the world, flows for the Rocky Mountains south and west to the Fraser-Puget lowland and into the Pacific Ocean through the Strait of Georgia. The Fraser River delta is highly productive from an agricultural perspective due to the sand and silt that is carried down the river and deposited in the Strait of Georgia. As a result, this area has been heavily altered due to human development and is the socio-economic centre of the province.

The Fraser River delta supports an incredible level of diversity for fish and wildlife. The Fraser River is the world's largest salmon-producing river, and the estuaries provide critical resting areas for juvenile salmon migrating from fresh to saltwater. This area also provides important year-round habitat for many bird species and is a vital link in the Pacific Flyway, which supports over 1.5 million birds from three continents and 20 countries. The Boundary Bay, Sturgeon Bank, Roberts Bank, and South Arm Marshes Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) have been designated as Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network sites. The Fraser River estuary supports the largest wintering shorebird and waterfowl populations in Canada. Also, the area provides habitat for significant numbers of raptors and marine mammals.

The South Coast Region contains 23 Conservation Land complexes, administered regionally, including several properties owned by the Nature Trust of British Columbia (NTBC).

Summary Statement of Regional Investment:

In 2023-2024 $120,431 was invested in 19 conservation land complexes in the South Coast region, to assist regional staff and partners in achieving management objectives. Significant investments were made to eradicate invasive species, maintain infrastructure and public access, remove rubbish, and identify ecological restoration opportunities from these conservation lands.

In October 2017, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) partnered with Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), NTBC, and the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment and Climate Change Canada to initiate the South Coast Conservation Land Management Program (SCCLMP). Modelled off the successful West Coast Conservation Land Management Program (WCCLMP), the goal of the SCCLMP is to provide a more collaborative and integrated approach to the management of conservation lands for the benefit of fish, wildlife, species at risk, and their habitats. In 2023/2024 this program continued to leverage resources to apply a strategic focus to the management of Wildlife Management Areas in the South Coast. A full-time Coordinator leads the partnership, including overseeing the South Coast HCTF Conservation Lands O&M budget and expanding the capacity of the program by soliciting additional funds and promote community stewardship throughout conservation lands. HCTF O&M funding continues to support the activities of the SCCLMP partnership program.

In 2021 the federal and provincial governments selected the Fraser River Estuary Salmon Habitat (FRESH) Restoration Projects to receive $5 million from the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund over a three-year period. These projects are led by DUC in partnership with Raincoast Conservation Foundation, Tsawwassen First Nation, and the Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance. These projects include the Sturgeon Bank Sediment Enhancement Pilot Project and North Arm Jetty Breaches, which will restore habitat and access to habitat for wild Pacific salmon throughout the Sturgeon Bank WMA. In March 2022 and December 2023, Raincoast Conservation Foundation completed the construction of two breaches in the North Arm Jetty to facilitate fish passage and transportation of freshwater and sediments to the Sturgeon Bank WMA foreshore; within days of construction works, juvenile salmon were using the breaches to access the foreshore marshes of the Sturgeon Bank WMA! In February 2023 and 2024 DUC oversaw the first two rounds of sediment addition in Sturgeon Bank WMA. Within days, sediment had already begun being redistributed towards the shore providing area for tidal marsh plants to begin to grow. Ongoing monitoring will provide information on how sediments settled throughout the foreshore and if vegetation begins to propagate in areas of marsh recession.

In the spring of 2023, the City of Surrey working with Semiahmoo First Nation and the City of Delta constructed two pilot studies of the “living dike” concept in the Boundary Bay WMA. The living dike aims to expand and raise the tidal marsh platform outside the dike to support coastal flood protection for the adjacent communities, while also providing sediment for tidal marshes to remain resilient with sea-level rise.

Project Highlights:

$10,729 invested in Boundary Bay WMA for property inspections, rubbish removal, invasive plant management, sign maintenance, and engagement with local stakeholders for integrated planning. Extensive rubbish was removed during shoreline clean up events with local stewardship groups. The first phase of the Living Dike project was completed, with the second phase scheduled to begin in the spring of 2024.

$5,790 invested in Camp Slough Conservation Area for property inspection, invasive species management, and rubbish removal. Former agricultural areas and previous invasive species sites were planted with native plants during planting events with local stewardship groups. Previously planted areas were maintained and kept free of invasive species.

$3,483 invested in Forslund-Watson Conservation Area, in addition to funding from the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund, to control invasive species and work with BCIT students to create an ephemeral wetland to support at-risk amphibians and other native wildlife.

$11,769 invested in Lhá:lt/Harrison-Chehalis WMA for property inspection, invasive species management, and rubbish removal. SCCLMP staff worked with Sts'ailes to make significant progress on drafting a new WMA management plan.

$15,239 invested in the Pitt-Addington Marsh WMA to maintain and clear water control structures, assess land management needs and ecological values, maintain informational signage, and maintenance of public access trails. Invasive species were removed through manual cutting and smothering followed by planting and staking of native species.

Conservation Outcomes:

Restoration and enhancement of conservation lands for habitat values ensures that these lands are optimal for use by fish and wildlife that depend on them; approximately 25 hectares of conservation lands were directly restored or enhanced in 2023/2024. Informational signage, indicating property ownership and management partners, serves to demarcate boundaries and to provide the public with the means to contact a land manager to discuss management concerns and issues. Maintenance of access points and facilities on conservation lands ensures that public access will be safe.

Significant progress was made on the Lhá:lt/Harrison-Chehalis WMA management plan. A completed draft was presented to Sts'ailes for review and comment, with the intention to incorporate an Indigenous voice into the plan. Meetings were held with the Lil'wat First Nation to discuss the Pemberton Wetland WMA and the Nation's priorities for the site. These discussions included provincial Crown land of interest to add to the WMA and the desire of the

Nation to be involved in management decisions. Working closely with the SCCLMP, the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship implemented regional manager's orders under section 7(4) of the Wildlife Act prohibiting the public from disturbing or harassing wildlife or entering with a motor vehicle in all 11 South Coast Region WMAs.

Photographs

1. Chilliwack River – removal of squatter camps and rubbish clean-up.



2. Pitt-Addington Marsh Wildlife Management Area – smothering cut blackberry patches with benthic mats, and replanting with native willow stakes.



3. Camp Slough – Native planting in area cleared of invasive plants, with volunteers.


4. Boundary Bay Wildlife Management Area – conducting shoreline cleanup with volunteers from the Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (top) and Nature Force (bottom).

5. Forslund-Watson Conservation Area – BCIT Wetland Restoration course with students designing the new wetland habitat, surveying, and planting native vegetation.

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Thompson Okanagan Region

Region: Thompson Okanagan

Ecological Significance of the Region:

The Thompson Okanagan Region has a dry, continental climate, as it lies in the rain shadow of the Coast and Cascade Mountain ranges. Vegetation varies from Engelmann spruce and lodgepole pine at subalpine elevations, Douglas-fir at lower elevations, and ponderosa pine, bunchgrass, and sagebrush at the valley bottom. These vegetation zones are in relatively close proximity to one another, resulting in extremely rich biological diversity in a small area.

The Thompson and Nicola landscapes in the north and east of the region vary from the Cariboo Mountains in Wells Gray Provincial Park to rolling grasslands and the river valleys of the North and South Thompson Rivers that merge in Kamloops and reach the Fraser River in Lytton. The region also extends beyond into Lillooet and the surrounding Coast Mountains through the Bridge River valley which flows from snowfields in the Coastal Mountains and joins the Fraser River near Lillooet. The landscape has more than 300 lakes, sage-dressed hills, rolling grasslands, looming mountains and alpine valleys. The grassland areas north of Kamloops Lake are recognized for their importance to wildlife, primarily California bighorn sheep, mule deer and many species at risk.

The Okanagan portion of the region, especially in the south, contains large numbers of unique flora and fauna, as it is the northern extension of the Columbia Plateau. Analysis has shown that the South Okanagan is both the top biotic rarity hotspot and the top species richness hotspot in British Columbia. It has more federally listed species at risk than any other area of the province, and more provincially Red-listed and Blue-listed species than elsewhere. Furthermore, with some 303 species of birds recorded from the Okanagan, and similar richness in other animals and plants, many species are found here and nowhere else in Canada (Scudder 2006).

Human development over the past century has resulted in dramatic reductions in native habitat. Grasslands, and the antelope-brush ecosystem in particular, have been greatly impacted. Over the past 15 years, the antelope-brush ecosystem has been reduced in area by over 65%, with current loss estimated at 2% per year. Channelization of the Okanagan River for flood control in the 1950s reduced its associated marshland by 85 to 90%, seriously impacting riparian habitat viability in the region. With population expected to double in the next 25 years, habitat in the Okanagan will become increasingly endangered over time.

The Nature Trust of British Columbia (NTBC) has been working in the Okanagan area since 1971. To date, 25 properties have been secured with the help of many funding partners, totalling over 5,247 hectares. These conservation holdings are particularly contiguous, providing habitat corridors on a landscape scale.

Summary Statement of Regional Investment:

A total of **$132,165** of Conservation Lands O&M funding was invested in the Thompson Okanagan Region in the 2023-2024 fiscal year, and this greatly assisted the conservation partners in addressing key land management objectives. In addition, $232,000 in partner funding and in-kind support was invested on TOR conservation lands.

Project Highlights:

- **$30,000** was invested at Swan Lake Wildlife Management Area (through Together for Wildlife funding allocation). This funding was used to support collaborative management actions and community engagement with Okanagan Indian Band as well as to clean up a large homeless encampment within the WMA.
- **$30,000** was invested at Skull Mountain Complex. This funding was used to complete hazardous materials abatement at the existing residence as well as for a well inspection as part of reducing public safety risks and liabilities associated with the site, which has seen unauthorized human occupation in the past.
- **$8,000** was invested at Menzies Lake Acquisition. This funding was used to reduce public safety risks and liabilities associated with the site following the departure of the long-term caretaker of the site.
- **$6,000** was invested at White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch (WLBBR). This funding was used for site visits and invasive species management, which included IP surveys and mechanical and chemical treatments; monitoring wildlife cameras to understand movement corridors; managing riparian and boundary fences; collecting snake species at risk data to understand population fluctuations, movement patterns, and the impact of road mortality; supplementary feeding of released burrowing owls, monitoring for White Nose Syndrome in bat roosts; and continuing the photographic monitoring program. Additional funding from partners has been used to leverage the beginning of several large wetland initiatives. Beaver Dam Analogues and Post Assisted Log Structures will be installed in Park Rill Creek at WLBBR – DL1995 to create stream and floodplain complexity. The project is coined 10,000 wetlands and is a cost effective approach to creating wetland habitat. Preliminary surveys have been completed to begin the workings of a full Wetland Restoration at WLBBR-Lot 280. The Wetland Restoration will focus on providing habitat for species at risk such as the tiger salamander and the Great Basin spadefoot.
- **$4,688** was invested at Salmon Arm Bay (LEA). This funding was used for site visits and invasive species management, which included IP surveys and mechanical treatments partnered with the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society (CSISS), holding a one-day community invasive weed pull and shoreline cleanup, managing trail signage, and conducting species at risk surveys.

- **$4,300** was invested at Vaseux Lake – Emery and Franmar. This funding was used for site visits and invasive species management, which included IP surveys and mechanical and chemical treatments, monitoring wildlife cameras to understand movement corridors, managing boundary fences, conducting population surveys for endangered Behr's hairstreak (butterfly species), continuing the Antelope-brush Restoration Program with SD53 & SD67, and continuing the photographic monitoring program.
- **$4,125** was invested at Vaseux Lake (LEA8) – Schneider. This funding was used for site visits and invasive species management, which included IP surveys and mechanical treatments, conducting Behr's Hairstreak surveys, installing new boundary gates to prevent horse trespass, and continuing the photographic monitoring program. HCTF and partner contributions were leveraged to continue implementing the conifer thinning prescription to improve and restore movement corridors for bighorn sheep, assist in reducing wildfire risk, and enhance the antelope-brush/needle-and-thread grass community.

Conservation Outcomes:

Each of the conservation lands in the Thompson Okanagan Region has distinct management needs and objectives that reflect the unique landscape and ecology of the area. Numerous conservation outcomes were achieved on these lands in 2023-2024 using Conservation Lands O&M funding. Partner contributions to conservation land management continued to be high in 2023-2024, which speaks to the importance of these lands in the regional context. These funds facilitated collaborative management and planning projects with Indigenous communities, particularly with snpink'tn (Penticton) Indian Band and Okanagan Indian Band.

Operations and maintenance activities to address public safety and liability concerns was a significant focus for 2023-24. Addressing impacts from human occupation and dumping on conservation lands has become an increasing expense, with $18,700 of the regional Conservation Lands O&M (14%) plus an additional $6,000 in partnership funding and in-kind support used to address this issue. Unfortunately, these are reoccurring issues despite enforcement support and implementing measures to limit access. An additional $38,500 of the regional Conservation Lands O&M (29%) plus an additional $37,000 in partnership funding and in-kind support was used this year to address long-term liabilities associated with residential structures and other buildings on acquisitions that have or may be subject to future unauthorized human occupation and dumping. In all, over $100,000 was spent in 2023-24 managing human use and impacts to conservation lands, an unfortunate reality of land management in turbulent socio-economic times.

The Nature Trust of BC land management staff worked with various partners to maximize Conservation Lansd O&M funding at eligible conservation sites. On-the-ground, restoration and

enhancement work continued to play a key role in NTBC's land management efforts in 2023-24. Invasive plant management focused on mechanical control of target species at high priority sites as well as targeted surveys. Mechanical treatments occurred at over individual 50 sites across 90% of NTBC eligible O&M conservation lands improving approximately **25 ha** of conservation land, while target surveys occurred at approximately 150 individuals sites over an estimated 500 ha. Working with School District 53 and 67 along with other partners approximately 1.5 ha of antelope-brush habitat was planted at two NTBC conservation properties, seeing more than 500 individual antelope-brush seedlings planting by approximately 160 students. HCTF and partner contributions were leveraged to create a successful space for students to be involved in place-based learning while actively contributing to Antelope-brush restoration. Each year the program solidifies and becomes more sophisticated in its restoration outcomes.

Photographs

1. White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch: (a) searching snake dens for tagged western rattlesnakes with Thompson Rivers University students, (b) assessing Park Rill Creek for potential beaver dam analogue and post-assisted log structure locations with BC Wildlife Federation, (c) banding burrowing owls with snpink'tn Indian Band Guardians and Burrowing Owl Conservation Society.

2. Vaseux Lake-Emery and Franmar: (a) setting up a photo-monitoring plot, (b) a beautiful antelope-brush thriving from our initial school group restoration planting, (c) NTBC staff explaining safety, properly planting antelope-brush plants, and the history of the NTBC.

3. Salmon Arm Bay (LEA): (a) NTBC Crew and CSISS staff on the lookout for shorebirds, (b) NTBC staff after removing 770 kg of invasive plants, (c) group photo of NTBC staff, CSISS staff and a few volunteers.

4. Vaseux Lake (LEA8) – Schneider: (a) crew members installing a post to replace a fence, (b, c) limbing ponderosa pine up to 2 m to improve bighorn sheep habitat and reduce wildfire risk.

5. Keremeos Creek (LEA) – Wainright: (a) conducting surveys in snow buckwheat patches for endangered Mormon metalmark, (b) wildlife camera data with a coyote carrying a young pup, (c) wildlife camera data with a mother bear and her cub on a 41°C day.

6. Menzies Lake ACQ: (a) new gate and property boundary signage installed at entrance to site with boarded up building shown in background, (b) new public safety signage installed at lake.

7. South Okanagan Wildlife Management Area: (a, b) photos of human encampment site with abandoned trailer before and after clean-up.

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Kootenay Boundary Region

Region: Kootenay Boundary

Ecological Significance of the Region:

The Kootenay region is world renowned for its scenic beauty and biological diversity. Forest, shrub, grassland and wetland ecosystems provide habitat for a wide variety of plant and animal species, including many species at risk.

From the heights of the Rocky Mountain Range, there are vantage points where you can overlook the entire expanse of the East Kootenay region of south-eastern British Columbia. The western horizon, viewed from these vantage points, is profiled by the Purcell Mountain range which is separated from the Rocky Mountains by an enormous valley known as the Rocky Mountain Trench. Two great rivers begin here; the Kootenay flowing south through dry grasslands, with signs of historic wildfires, and the Columbia flowing north through a series of long valley-bottom lakes and lush wetlands. This great river eventually swings south at Boat Encampment and continues south between the Monashee and Selkirk Mountain ranges in the West Kootenay and into the state of Washington at Waneta. Another important river, the Elk, begins its journey in the eastern Rocky Mountains and winds its way along towering cottonwoods to join the Kootenay immediately south of the small community of Baynes Lake.

The geographic diversity of the Kootenay landscape along with wide variations in climate has created conditions and habitats that support rare plant life, productive aquatic systems, and important populations of elk, deer, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, mountain goat and moose. Such abundant wildlife naturally attracts predators and consequently, wide-ranging carnivores are still common in the Kootenay's. Additionally, over 270 species of birds make use of the region, many on their migratory travels along the Pacific flyway.

From a rare species perspective, the grasslands, dry forests, montane forests, scattered wetlands, and cottonwood habitats in the Kootenay region provide unique habitats that support rare species such as the American badger, Swainson's hawk, Northern leopard frog and Lewis' woodpecker.

However, the low elevation valleys of the Kootenays, which provide some of the most important habitat for a wide spectrum of wildlife, continue to be developed and attract increased levels of human settlement. In turn, this creates additional pressures on the landscape and impacts wildlife habitat and biodiversity values. Fortunately, the Ministry of Water Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) along with The Nature Trust of British Columbia (NTBC) have worked for decades to conserve ecologically significant habitats within the region. As a result, dozens of properties have been secured and, when combined with properties

conserved by other land trusts and agencies, have resulted in a significant area of the Kootenay landscape being conserved in perpetuity.

Summary Statement of Regional Investment:

In 2023-24, $141,395 of HCTF funding was invested into 22 NTBC and WLRS conservation area complexes in the Kootenay/Boundary region, to assist regional staff and partners in achieving management objectives.

The funding was used for a wide variety of operations and maintenance activities, highlights of which are outlined below.

Project Highlights:

Project highlights for the Kootenay/Boundary region during the 2023-24 year, include:

- $6,500 of HCTF funding was directed to the **Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area** in the 2023-24 season. HCTF O&M contributions went towards the mowing/control of vegetation along water control dikes, management of water levels, invasive species removal, annual inspections, management of problem wildlife, and maintenance/management of water control structures.
- $18,591.55 of HCTF funding was invested into the **Grave Prairie (Big Ranch)** Conservation Complex in 2023-24. HCTF financial contributions supported the large 5-year Big Ranch Ecosystem Enhancement Project (BREEP), which is primarily funded through a Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) Ecosystem Enhancement Program grant. The project proponents are the Sparwood and District Fish and Wildlife Association (SDFWA), who are working closely with NTBC and WLRS for project guidance, approval and professional support. Project highlights from 2023-24 BREEP were preparation of prescriptions for additional tree thinning areas, tree planting alongside the wetland basins enhanced in 2022, as well as in upland sites, invasive plants treatments, and monitoring of results from past projects. The overall contribution from the BREEP project was approximately $30,000 in 2023-24. Additional work in 2023-24 included fertilizer application for grassland enhancement, maintaining exclosure fencing around aspen stands, boundary fence repair, and inventory of infrastructure.
- $31,520 of HCTF funding was invested into the **Bummers Flats** Conservation Complex in 2023-24. Funding, inclusive of $10,000 from T4W, was used to begin a wetland restoration project in partnership with WLRS, NTBC, DUC, and ʔaq̓am, focused on removal

of ditches and water control infrastructure to restore floodplain connectivity to the Kootenay River, by contributing to the costs for preparation of a prescription by a contractor. Within the Cherry Creek (western) portion of the complex, ten wildlife tree recruits were created by a contractor, enhancements of particular benefit to birds and bats. Additionally, NTBC and WLRS lands in the complex were impacted by the St. Mary's wildfire in 2023. Recovery efforts undertaken in 2023-2024 included installation of replacement fencing, application of seed to fire guards, roadsides, and new fencelines, and hazardous tree removal.

- $3,477 was invested into the **Elizabeth Lake** Conservation Area in 2023-24. HCTF funding continued to support a large riparian restoration project, led by the Rocky Mountain Naturalists and Keefer Ecological Services, in partnership with the Province. This project has a focus on planting riparian vegetation around Elizabeth Lake, to enhance structure and stabilize the shoreline. In 2023, additional plantings and fenced exclosures were installed, and monitoring was conducted on past plantings. Additionally, HCTF funding contributed towards invasive plant treatments and continued assessments of infrastructure removal on the property.

- $15,817 of HCTF funding was invested into the **Columbia Lake Eastside** Conservation Complex in 2023-24. Funding, inclusive of $10,000 from T4W, supported the initiation of a multi-faceted and multi-year habitat enhancement initiative, in partnership with Ktunaxa Nation Council. This project will protect the exceptional ecological and cultural values in this conservation complex through management of invasive species, based on the preparation of an invasive species inventory and treatment plan, cultural and prescribed burning (including tree thinning and burn plan development), and recreation strategy implementation, in collaboration with the KNC Guardian program. Ongoing activities included updating signage, invasive plant treatment, and inventory of habitat features. Additionally, combustible debris remaining from the demolition of an old water tower was removed from the property, preparing the site for the final phase of cleanup and revegetation to be conducted in year 3.

Conservation Outcomes:

The 2023-24 season led to the continuation and completion of many on-the-ground operation and maintenance activities on Kootenay region conservation lands. These activities included, but were not limited to; infrastructure inventory and maintenance, repair and replacement of range fencing, development of prescriptions/plans, as well as habitat restoration, monitoring and inventory activities.

Approximately 37.5km of fenceline was assessed/repaired/replaced by either the NTBC conservation crew or a contractor to reduce trespass of livestock and unauthorized motor vehicle use on sensitive conservation properties in 2023-24. Conservation complex boundary signage was installed in key locations throughout the region to inform the public of land ownership and protect the important conservation values unique to each property.

NTBC and WLRS staff continue to apply for funding to supplement HCTF O&M funding on conservation lands in the Kootenay Region. 2023-24 was a very busy season, as the region continued on with two large multi-year projects, inclusive of multiple partners (Wycliffe and Grave Prairie). Additional to these ongoing projects, the Kootenay region was also successful in securing funding for ongoing restoration work Wasa Slough, Columbia Lake Eastside, in partnership with Ktunaxa Nation Council, and began a major wetland restoration project at Bummers Flats, in partnership with ʔaq̓am and Ducks Unlimited Canada. The $30,000 T4W funding was instrumental in the success of these projects.

Mechanical and chemical invasive plant treatments and re-seeding efforts were undertaken on many properties (approximately 11.5 ha), intended to restore compromised ecosystems to native vegetative conditions. NTBC and WLRS continue to trial and assess innovative approaches to invasive plant management in region, including projects such as the Bummers Flats Pollinator Project, Wasa Slough Pollinator Project, and the conveyor belting trials at Bummers and Wasa.

Funding also supported future conservation through the undertaking of important planning activities, including property assessments, infrastructure inventory, and invasive plant inventories. Results will assist in adapting work plans over the 3-year HCTF cycle on Kootenay/Boundary conservation areas, and ensuring management activities are meaningful and effective.

A partnership with the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) continued in 2023-24, with a focus on the restoration of Waldie Island, with particular attention to invasive plant treatment and bank stabilization through revegetation with native plants. ONA staff have taken the lead on project planning, and we are working together to gain a true sense of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge and First Nations significance of the site before finalizing any restoration plans. This has been a valuable partnership, and may very likely lead to other partnership projects on conservation lands, specifically in the West Kootenays.

Photographs

Figure 1: NTBC and Wildsight Youth Climate Corps crew planting large spruce stock alongside restored wetlands at Big Ranch Conservation Area.

Figure 2: Installing property complex signage at Marsden Face Conservation Area

Figure 3: Installing benthic matting for yellow flag iris control with FWCP staff at Walter Clough Wildlife Sanctuary.

Figure 4: Replacing outdated signs at Columbia Lake Eastside with accurate, high-visibility signage indicating a motor vehicle closure.

Figure 5: Vegetation monitoring at Sun Creek wetland restoration site (Columbia Lake Westside)

Figure 6: Replacing staples in a fenceline which protects the Sun Creek wetland restoration site from cattle and recreational trespass.

Figure 7: Treating invasive species alongside George's Pond, Cherry Creek (Bummer's Flats) Conservation Area.

Figure 8: Hand pulling knapweed along creekside at Cherry Creek (Bummer's Flats) Conservation Area.

Figure 9: One of two boot brush stations installed at key public entrances at Wycliffe Wildlife Corridor to raise awareness about invasive species.

Figure 10: Saplings loaded in canoe to transport to Walter Clough Wildlife Sanctuary for restoration planting.

Figure 11: Installing a 4x4’ sign kiosk at Wasa Slough Conservation Area.

Columbia Lake Eastside – Lemaster Conservation Area.

Figure 13: Discussions were conducted on-site at Bummers Flats between WLRS, NTBC, DUC, and ʔaq̓am staff, as a multi-year wetland restoration project began.

Figures 14-15: Large tree removal along the Creston Valley WMA Duck Lake cross-dike, a provincial flood protection dike, before (left) on 13 April 2023 and after (right) on 16 November 2023.

Figures 16-19: At Creston Valley WMA, eroded dike access to the Leach Lake wetland unit (top left) on 26 June 2023. Temporary dike access to Leach Lake being built around the eroded dike on 6 July 2023 (top right) and completed access (bottom left and right) on 6 July 2023.

Figure 20: Mowing of Leach Lake dike at Creston Valley WMA on 7 July 2023 after access was restored.

Figure 21: Tender viewing with contractors for thinning work at Wasa Slough Conservation Area as part of a multi-year restoration project. Similar thinning treatments were conducted this winter at the adjacent Wasa Slough Map Reserve.

HABITAT CONSERVATION TRUST FOUNDATION

NATURE TRUST BRITISH COLUMBIA

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Cariboo Region

The following template is to provide a summary of activities in each region. A pdf of last year's report is available for reference: 2021-22 BC/TNT Joint Conservation Land Management Summary Report.

For 2023-24 reporting, list Project Highlights for 5 Property with a focus on the most significant and relevant conservation activities in your region

Once you have completed this form, please submit ensure it is saved to your Regions One Drive **2023-24 Reporting** folder along with the Annual Activity Report spreadsheet. HCTF staff will combine the regional components into a Provincial Summary Report. This report will be made available to the public on HCTF's website.

Region: Cariboo

Ecological Significance of the Region:

The Cariboo Region is a diverse landscape, ranging from the Coastal Mountains, to the vast dry grasslands of the Chilcotin Plateau, to the interior rainforest of the Cariboo Mountains. There are three main rivers within the region include the Fraser, Chilcotin, and Quesnel Rivers. These varied terrains and conditions result in an equally varied diversity of fish and wildlife.

The Cariboo Region contains 7 Conservation Land complexes, administered regionally, including several properties owned by The Nature Trust of British Columbia (NTBC).

Summary Statement of Regional Investment:

In 2023-24, $9,080 was allocated to 5 conservation land properties in the Cariboo, to assist regional staff and partners in achieving management objectives, including assessments, maintenance for safety and ecological integrity, and wildlife surveys. An additional $30,000 was contributed by in-kind work by additional government staff.

Project Highlights:

$ 1577 was invested in the Chilcotin Lake & Marsh conservation area to complete maintenance along the perimeter fence and to assess the property for safety and ecological concerns. Property information signs were installed or repaired as needed. A helicopter flight enabled us to assess a beaver dam blocking a creek, and a spring fixed-wing flight allowed us to confirm that the fences were intact, gates were closed, and livestock were not present, before livestock are turned out in May. $5350 of in-kind time was contributed.

$ 500 invested in the Dale Lake conservation area to conduct property assessments for safety and ecological concerns, and maintenance of property information signage.

$ 500 invested in the Tautri Creek conservation area to conduct a property assessment for safety and ecological concerns, and to maintain property information signage. $8,500 of in-kind work was contributed.

$ 3450 in-kind contribution was invested in working with the Tsilhqot'in National Government (TNG) and Lands to establish and set up a pilot fish hatchery at the Hanceville conservation area.

$ 2,635 was invested in the Knife Creek conservation area to complete fence maintenance on the perimeter fence.

Conservation Outcomes:

Please include a summary paragraph on the conservation outcomes you have achieved within your region in 2023-24 with Conservation Lands O&M funding. Provide an estimate of the **hectares of land restored or enhanced** with O&M funding in your region. This will not apply to all sites, as not all activities include an enhancement or restoration component. If sites do have enhancement and restoration activities please provide a **rough estimate**, e.g. if invasive species were controlled on roughly a quarter of a given property, then include a quarter of the total hectares. The type of activities that could be included are invasive species control, planting with native species, thinning to create open forest, area of wetland restored/created, etc. Include discussion on any of these outcomes that created, built on, and/or were achieved in partnership with First Nations.

The 2023-24 field season included several land management activities on Conservation Lands within the Cariboo Region.

Fence maintenance at Chilcotin Lake & Marshes, Chilanko Marsh WMA, and Knife Creek serves to protect sensitive habitat areas from inappropriate use. There is ~4.5 km of fence at Chilanko Marsh, ~21 km of fence at Chilcotin Lake & Marshes, and ~5 km at Knife Creek to maintain. Assessments of the ecological attributes and issues specific to each property form the basis for activity planning for the following field seasons.

Informational signage, indicating property ownership and management partners, with contact information was posted on properties where appropriate. This serves to demarcate boundaries and to provide the public with the means to contact a land manager to discuss management concerns and issues.

Photographs

Please include some photographs highlighting project work in your region.

1. Chilanko Marsh – Fences assessed and maintained to prevent livestock access. Signs installed and repaired. Note grassland condition from livestock exclusion on right side of fence.

2. Chilcotin Lake and Marsh –Fences inspected and repaired for livestock exclusion. Signs repaired as needed.




3. Tautri Creek – Infrastructure and property inspected. Forest understory continues to recover, post-wildfire.

4. Hanceville pilot hatchery, hayfield, and pasture.

HABITAT CONSERVATION TRUST FOUNDATION

NATURE TRUST BRITISH COLUMBIA

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Skeena Region

Regional Component of Conservation Lands O&M Provincial Summary Report | 2023-24

The following template is to provide a summary of activities in each region. A pdf of last year's report is available for reference: 2021-22 BC/TNT Joint Conservation Land Management Summary Report.

For 2023-24 reporting, list Project Highlights for 5 Property with a focus on the most significant and relevant conservation activities in your region

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Region: Skeena

Ecological Significance of the Region:

The Skeena Region covers approximately one third of the province of British Columbia. It is a highly varied landscape, characterised by mountainous terrain, interspersed with large plateaus, a multitude of lakes and several of the province's largest rivers including the Skeena, the Nass and the Stikine.

The Skeena Region includes BC's North Coast from the Coast Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. This area is rich in biological diversity and noted for the Pacific Flyway, an important migration corridor for birds. Large rivers, such as the Nass and the Skeena, flow into the Pacific Ocean, providing critical estuarine habitats. The Skeena Region's extensive wilderness areas provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Both Black and Grizzly Bears occur here, and salmon are abundant in the major rivers and tributaries.

The Skeena Region contains 8 Conservation Land complexes, administered regionally, including a number of properties owned by The Nature Trust of British Columbia, a Wildlife Management Area, and a Wildlife Habitat Management Area.

Summary Statement of Regional Investment:

In 2023-24, $18,680 was allocated to 8 properties in the Skeena, to assist regional staff and partners in achieving management objectives.

Project Highlights:

$1,662 invested in the Smith Island conservation area for property inspection and rubbish removal.

$3,020 invested in the Kitsumkalum Lake – Nelson River conservation area for property inspection, access and safety evaluation, installation of property signage, garbage removal, and survey of vegetation, including invasive plants.

$1,900 invested in the Lakelse Lake – Mullers Bay conservation area for property inspection, access and safety evaluation, boundary sign maintenance, shoreline rubbish removal, and botanical survey contract.

$2,368 invested in the Lakelse River conservation area for property inspection, maintenance of trail signs, garbage removal, and survey of vegetation, including invasive plants.

$1,425 invested in the Nadina River Valley – Owen Lake conservation area for property inspection, garbage removal, invasive plan assessments, and sign maintenance.

$2,000.00 invested in the Hubert Hill conservation area for invasive plant removal and monitoring, fence and Kiosk sign maintenance, and habitat monitoring.

$4,800.00 invested in the Todagin Wildlife Management Area to establish pre and post fire monitoring protocols to assess desired fire effects for use with prescribed burns.

Conservation Outcomes:

The 2023-24 field season resulted in management of a number of Conservation Lands within the Skeena Region Activities included evaluation of ecological attributes and safety concerns, which guide activity planning for ongoing land management.

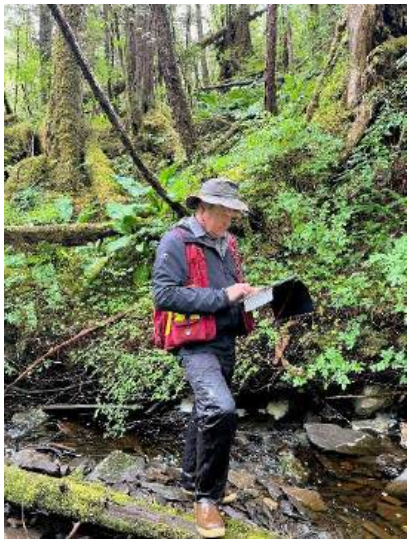
Informational signage, indicating property ownership and management partners, with contact information, was posted and maintained on properties where appropriate. This serves to demarcate boundaries to protect habitat values from inappropriate public usage, and to provide the public with the means to contact a land manager to discuss management concerns and issues.

Site restoration of Hubert Hill, near Telkwa, is ongoing. Success is being achieved with removal of invasive plants and re-introduction of native species.

In 2023-2024, approximately 4 hectares of conservation land was enhanced through rubbish removal in the Skeena Region.

Photographs

1. Smith Island – property assessed for land management needs and removal of rubbish.




2. Lakelse Lake – Mullers Bay – Rubbish removed from shoreline. Signs maintained.


3. Kitsumkalum Lake – Nelson River –Property assessed for ecological and safety concerns. Garbage removed. Signs installed. Extensive logging has occurred on adjacent land.


4. Nadina River Valley – Site inspected for safety and ecological concerns. Garbage removed. Signs maintained.


HABITAT CONSERVATION TRUST FOUNDATION

NATURE TRUST BRITISH COLUMBIA

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Omineca Region

The following template is to provide a summary of activities in each region. A pdf of last year's report is available for reference: 2021-22 BC/TNT Joint Conservation Land Management Summary Report.

For 2023-24 reporting, list Project Highlights for 5 Property with a focus on the most significant and relevant conservation activities in your region.

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Region: Omineca

Ecological Significance of the Region:

The Omineca Region encompasses a large portion of northern British Columbia, with a diversity of landscapes ranging from the broad flat pine forests of the Central Plateau to the rugged peaks of the central Rocky Mountains. This Region includes the highest mountain in the Canadian Rockies, Mount Robson (3954 m).

The Omineca Region encompasses the headwaters, or portions of the headwaters, of several provincially important rivers, including the: Frazer, Nechako, Pine, Finlay, Parsnip and Stuart. Within the drainages of these rivers lie several regionally important lakes and the province's largest reservoir, Williston Lake, which lies behind the W.A.C. Bennett Dam. The rivers and their tributaries provide spawning grounds for Chinook, Coho, and Sockeye Salmon. Arctic Grayling, White Sturgeon, Rainbow Trout, Bull Trout and Lake Trout, as well as several species of whitefish, suckers, minnows and Burbot, all live within the Omineca Regions lakes and streams. One of the highest valued recreational rainbow trout fisheries is the Stellako River, which became the Omineca Region's first Wildlife Management Area in 2013.

Regionally important wetlands, such as those on the Hominka and in the Cranberry Marsh / Starratt WMA, provide much needed rest and refueling stops for migratory birds. Populations of American White Pelicans forage on some of the region's lakes and White Swans winter on several rivers. The northern extent of Sharptailed Grouse range occurs on southwest facing meadows in the southern portion of the region and in the agricultural lands local breeding groups of Long-billed Curlews and Sandhill cranes can be found in the spring.

The largest herds of Mountain Caribou left in the province reside in the mountains on the eastern side of the region, and in the north populations of Northern Caribou still roam. Throughout the Omineca Region there are Moose, Grizzly bear, Black bear, Fisher, Marten, Lynx, Wolf, Mountain goat, and Mule deer, with local populations of Stone sheep, Elk, White-tailed deer, and Cougar where snowpacks are thinner. Rare

plant associations, ecosystems and habitats are scattered across the Omineca bolstering regional biological diversity, including the northern extent of Whitebark pine and Douglas fir, and the largest population of Haller's Apple Moss in the world, as well as most known locations of Crumpled Tar Paper Lichen.

Given the highly diverse and geographically large area that the Omineca Region covers it contains relatively few Conservation Lands. Six conservation land are administered regionally, and they cover a small selection of the habitats that can be found in the region.

Summary Statement of Regional Investment:

In 2023-24 **$20,029** was allocated to 6 conservation properties in the Omineca region, to assist regional staff and partners in achieving management objectives.

Project Highlights:

$11,959.00 invested in the Cranberry Marsh / Starratt WMA. Ongoing activities include boundary identification, maintenance of signs, community and partner engagement, management planning, trail assessment, minor repair of trail infrastructure, invasive plant management, and seasonal inspections. The footbridge manufactured in 2022, was installed by WLRS in fall 2023.

WLRS and NTBC hosted a meeting in March with conservation partners, including Simpcw Resources Group, to discuss WMA management planning and 2024 operational, educational, and enhancement activities.

$3,635.00 invested in the Stellako River WMA for property inspections, garbage removal from public access points, invasive species management, and continued review of transmission line project alignment and construction methodology.

$1,036.00 invested in the Joanne Lloyd property for invasive species control, infrastructure maintenance and seasonal inspection. Garbage was removed from public access points. Communication with Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) about highway upgrades and highway failure stabilization adjacent to property will continue as needed.

$713.00 invested in the North Nechako Tyee conservation property, to conduct management and safety inspections, monitor for invasive species, and maintain informational signage.

$2,636.00 invested in the Mount Robson Ranch property to assess property condition, needs, and public usage. Perimeter signage was maintained. Wildlife cameras were monitored to assess wildlife usage.

$50.00 invested in the Natasha Boyd property for property and signage inspection. Minor brushing activities conducted around site sign to maintain good visibility from highway 16.

Conservation Outcomes:

Maintenance of infrastructure, installation of signage, site inspections/visits and trail maintenance were undertaken by the NTBC and WLRS staff. WLRS installed a previously manufactured footbridge along the southern section of the cranberry marsh trail, which was assisted by support staff from the Omineca Landbase Stewardship team. Fisheries management continues to be a priority at the Stellako River WMA.

Invasive plant management is ongoing at Cranberry Marsh WMA, Stellako WMA, and Joanne Lloyd. Implementing invasive plant management plans is completed in conjunction with the NorthWest Invasive Plant Council (NWIPC). In 2023-24 the cumulative area surveyed at the three sites was 4 ha, with mechanical removals covering 59 m^2.

Simpcw Resources Group, in discussion with WLRS, conducted baseline inventory surveys for marsh and forest birds, reptiles and amphibians, and bats at Cranberry Marsh WMA to inform future habitat enhancement opportunities. In March 2023, a was held with conservation partners (WLRS, NTBC, Simpcw First Nation and Valemount community members) meeting at the marsh to facilitate collaboration on management and restoration / enhancement activities in the WMA in 2024 and beyond.

Photographs

1. Cranberry / Starratt Marsh WMA – Trails and habitat assessed for safety and ecological integrity. Minor trail upgrades were completed. Onsite meeting with conservation partners to discuss management planning and 2024 operational, educational, and enhancement activities.




2. Cranberry / Starratt Marsh – A footbridge was replaced along the southern portion of the cranberry marsh trail.


3. Stellako River Wildlife Management Area – Boundary signs installed and maintained. Rubbish removed from access points. Property inspected for safety and ecological issues.


4. Mount Robson Ranch –Property assessed for safety and ecological concerns. Property monitored for wildlife usage. Boundary signs maintained.



5. North Nechako Tyee –Property assessed for safety and ecological concerns. Boundary signs maintained.

HABITAT CONSERVATION TRUST FOUNDATION

NATURE TRUST BRITISH COLUMBIA

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Northeast Region

The following template is to provide a summary of activities in each region. A pdf of last year's report is available for reference: 2021-22 BC/TNT Joint Conservation Land Management Summary Report.

For 2023-24 reporting, list Project Highlights for 5 Property with a focus on the most significant and relevant conservation activities in your region

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Region:

Ecological Significance of the Region:

The Northeast Region of British Columbia is located between the Rocky Mountain foothills and the Alberta Plains.

This region consists of the Peace River and Liard River drainages of the Arctic watershed, featuring plateaus, plains, prairies, and lowlands lying east of the Rocky Mountains. Areas at higher altitudes are poorly drained, resulting in extensive muskeg areas. The region is characterised by boreal forest with critical wetlands and lakes interspersed throughout.

Since the 1950's, the Northern Region has experienced rapid development of oil and natural gas resources, resulting in increased fragmentation of this landscape. A number of Class 1 wetlands provide critical habitat for numerous waterfowl.

Summary Statement of Regional Investment:

Please provide a statement about the total amount of Conservation Lands O&M money invested in this region in 2023-24. You can use this statement to introduce the Project Highlights section below.

In 2023-24 $37,700 was spent on 6 project areas in the Northeast, to assist regional conservation partners in achieving management objectives.

Project Highlights:

Please summarize the expenditures and activities for at least five of the property complexes from your region. For regions with less than 5 property complexes included in their application, please include all sites.

$6,483 invested in the Boundary Lake conservation area for property assessment, maintenance and inspection of water control structures, review of industrial plans and activities on site, and control of invasive plants.

$5,150 invested in the Comstock Marsh conservation area for property assessment and maintenance and inspection of water control structures. Boundary signs were produced, and rubbish was removed.

$4,049 invested in the Dunlevy Creek conservation area. The property was assessed for safety and ecological issues. Signage was produced and maintained on site. Conifer seedling ingrowth was removed on 21 hectares of former hayfield, to maintain ungulate foraging habitat.

$6,150 invested in the Fort St. John Potholes conservation area for property assessments, maintenance and inspection of water control structures, fence inspections, and property boundary signage.

$7,506 invested in the McQueen Slough conservation area. The property was monitored for site security, safety and ecological issues. Water control structures were managed and maintained for optimal water levels. Invasive plants were monitored and treated as needed.

$3,650 invested in the Worth Marsh conservation area for property inspections, production and maintenance of property signage, maintenance and inspections of the water control structure, and review of oil and gas industry activities adjacent to the conservation area. Invasive plants were removed from the water control structure area.

Conservation Outcomes:

The 2023-24 field season included a number of important land management activities on conservation lands in the Northeast Region, working to ensure that habitat values are maintained or enhanced, and that public access to these conservation lands is safe and appropriate.

Informational signage, indicating property ownership and management partners, with contact information, was posted and maintained where appropriate and required. This serves to demarcate boundaries to protect habitat values from inappropriate usage, and to provide the public with the means to contact a land manager to discuss management concerns and issues. Property assessments, including evaluation of the ecological attributes and issues specific to each property, form the basis for activity planning for the following field seasons.

Over 21 hectares of land at the Dunlevy Creek Conservation Area was enhanced for wildlife values by clearing conifer seedlings. This is an annual activity, to maintain ungulate foraging habitat. Between the 6 conservation lands, approximately 3 hectares had invasive plant management this year.

Photographs

Please include some photographs highlighting project work in your region.

1. Worth Marsh – Water control structure inspected and beaver debris removed (Example of debris below). Invasive plants manually removed.

2. Dunlevy Creek –Conifer seedlings removed from 21 hectares to prevent ingrowth in ungulate forage area. Note area without control in picture on left.

3. Comstock Slough –Former dumping area remains clean this year.


4. Fort St. John Potholes – Water control structures inspected and maintained. Perimeter fences inspected to prevent livestock encroachment.