



Fund Profile

Highland Valley Enhancement Fund

Background

Highland Valley Copper Operations is a copper and molybdenum mine located in south-central British Columbia. It was established in 1983 by Cominco Inc. (now Teck). During the mine development phase, Cominco identified three lakes that it requested be closed and drained in order to become part of the mine site: Quiltanton Lake, Twenty-Four Mile Lake, and Big Divide Lake.

The company owned the land immediately surrounding the three lakes, and they had permitted public use of the lakes for access to fish and waterfowl habitat and recreation for many years. They recognized that by closing the lakes, the public would no longer have the opportunity to use the lakes for recreational activities like angling. There would also be a significant loss of fish and wildlife habitats.

Compensation Arrangement

An agreement was reached with the Ministry of Environment that Cominco would make a one-time payment of \$250,000 as compensation for the loss of habitat and associated recreation activities. The payment would establish the Highland Valley Enhancement Fund (HVEF), a fund that is still operational today.

\$250k

in compensation funds

40+

years of conservation projects

It was determined that the HVEF should be held and managed by the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF). HCTF established a restricted fund within the trust and set parameters so that the contribution and all future interest and income earned could only be allocated to projects that meet the requirements of the fund. Specifically, projects must meet the purpose of establishing or enhancing recreational fish and waterfowl habitat within a 60 km radius of the mine.

Fund Management

While the fund is financially managed by HCTF, it is administered jointly with the Province of BC and the BC Conservation Foundation. It also benefits from a dedicated and knowledgeable committee that reviews and makes recommendations regarding suitable sites and projects. This committee brings together multiple partners and stakeholders who contribute valuable insight and experience, including the Province of BC, BC Conservation Foundation, BC Wildlife Federation, Kamloops and District Fish & Game Club, Kamloops Fly Fishing Association, and Highland Valley Copper.

Through HCTF's responsible investment practices, the fund has grown to over \$335,000 (as of March 31, 2024). It currently averages approximately \$10,000 in project expenses each year, balanced with approximately \$10,000 in interest and investment income, though both amounts can fluctuate year-to-year.



3-459: A soil sample at wetland #6636 in the northeastern corner of the Mabel Creek sub-watershed. credit: LGL Limited

Projects

There are usually between 1-3 projects approved each year. Recent projects include:

3-459 Nlaka'pamux Environmental Management Program Clapperton Creek Sub-Watershed Wetland Investigation Project

This project was led by the Lower Nicola Indian Band (LNIB), working in partnership with LGL Ltd. It brought together western science researchers and LNIB community members to evaluate wetland habitats in the Nlaka'pamux Territory to ensure the persistence of these important habitats to support biodiversity, water conservation, and traditional hunting and gathering practices. This multi-year project sought to evaluate, monitor, maintain, and restore wetland habitats. The wetland evaluation provided baseline information on the condition, functions, and values within the wetland complex and within the Mabel Creek sub-watershed. The data collected will help inform threats and risks to wetland habitats and allow the identification of potential restoration or conservation actions, such as investments in water control infrastructure.



3-476, Renewing the Nature Interpretation Signs at Stake Lake credit: Alan Vyse, Overlander Ski Club



3-468: Concrete floor and footing poured around exposed power pole and electrical boxes.
credit: BC Conservation Foundation

3-468 Horseshoe Lake Aeration Shed

Horseshoe Lake is located just within the northwestern boundary of Roche Lake Provincial Park. There is an agricultural dam located at the creek outlet on the north end of the lake that significantly helps to maintain fish values in the lake. Lake productivity at Horseshoe, and in the Roche area in general, is considered eutrophic. This means great growing conditions for trout, but marginal conditions for overwintering survival. The lake is aerated to help promote trout survival during the winter season. Aeration equipment was previously attached to an exposed power pole, which led to safety and vandalism concerns. This project constructed a shed to house the aeration equipment to ensure trout populations would continue to survive the winter in Horseshoe Lake.



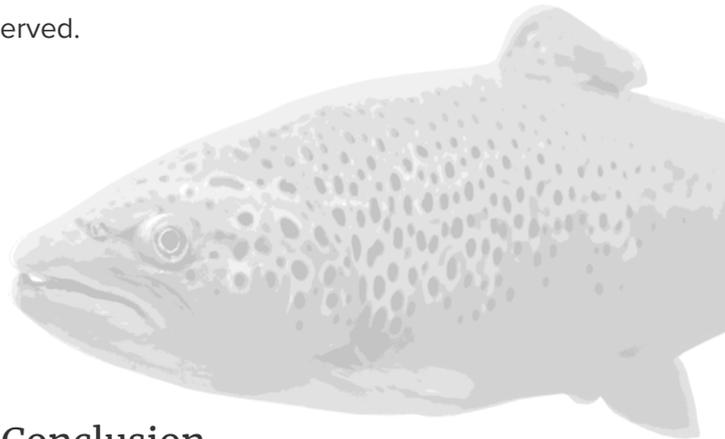
3-468: The completed shed.
credit: BC Conservation Foundation

3-477 Nicola Watershed Bull Trout Assessment

Bull trout in the Nicola watershed are a unique population inhabiting one of the warmest and driest climates in B.C. Streams in this watershed are prone to low flows and high water temperatures, which are becoming more extreme and variable with climate change. Bull trout require water temperatures below a critical temperature threshold of 15-16°C for all life stages and reproduction.

The goals of this project were to assess the current water temperatures in historically known migration and spawning tributaries for critical temperature thresholds, assess bull trout presence and utilization within these tributaries through adult spawner counts and redd surveys, and compare back to historical data collected on these systems to see if there has been a change in habitat conditions and bull trout presence. Current habitat conditions were assessed to document the quality and quantity of bull trout habitat within the selected tributaries.

Bull trout were confirmed present in two of the streams assessed, which is a successful result, and no significant concerns with the instream habitat were observed.



In Conclusion

HCTF is honoured to have managed this fund for over 40 years and supported so many high-value conservation projects. While it is always desirable to avoid or minimize the environmental impact of economic activity where possible, there are instances where offsets or compensation payments can play a role in reducing and mitigating those impacts. By investing in on-the-ground conservation work at a regional level and working collaboratively with dedicated partners, positive outcomes for fish, wildlife, and habitats can be achieved.