



HABITAT CONSERVATION
TRUST FOUNDATION

Investing for the future

of British Columbia's fish and
wildlife, and their habitats.

2024-2025

Impact Report



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Message from our CEO and Board Chair

Welcome

As we reflect on the past year, we are deeply grateful to the funders and the HCTF community who make our work possible to fund conservation across British Columbia.

Our core funding—anchored by the conservation surcharge paid by hunters, anglers, guide outfitters, and trappers—complements revenue from the Province of B.C., Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the B.C. Parks Foundation, court awards, and investment income. Collectively, these sources funded over \$10 million in grants and programs this year.

After engaging with many members of our community, we heard a clear message: HCTF is valued to execute conservation initiatives and a focus on the future. But there's a growing need for deeper engagement and supporting collaboration. We are stepping up our efforts to connect, convene, and support.

We responded by supporting and sponsoring several collaborative gatherings, including the Healing the Land Conference hosted by the Saulteau First Nations, a Community of Practice habitat restoration workshop, a marsh restoration symposium and a watershed forum. We engaged with many First Nations and communities to better understand priorities and begin adapting our granting programs to support their work.

Our engagement reinforced the work we initiated last year to reduce barriers and improve access and support for grant-making by updating and creating new guidance documents, holding our first webinar on choosing the right grant, simplifying applications for grants, and moving additional grants online to ease the application and review process.

We welcomed two new board members, Kate Hewitt and Eric Taylor, who bring more Indigenous and fisheries perspectives, and published our first Impact Report.

To our funders, partners, and community - thank you. Your support fuels our mission and helps build a more resilient future for fish, wildlife, and habitats across B.C.



Dan Buffett – CEO



Greg Anderson
Chair of the Board

Highlights

19k

Students
Learning About
BC Biodiversity

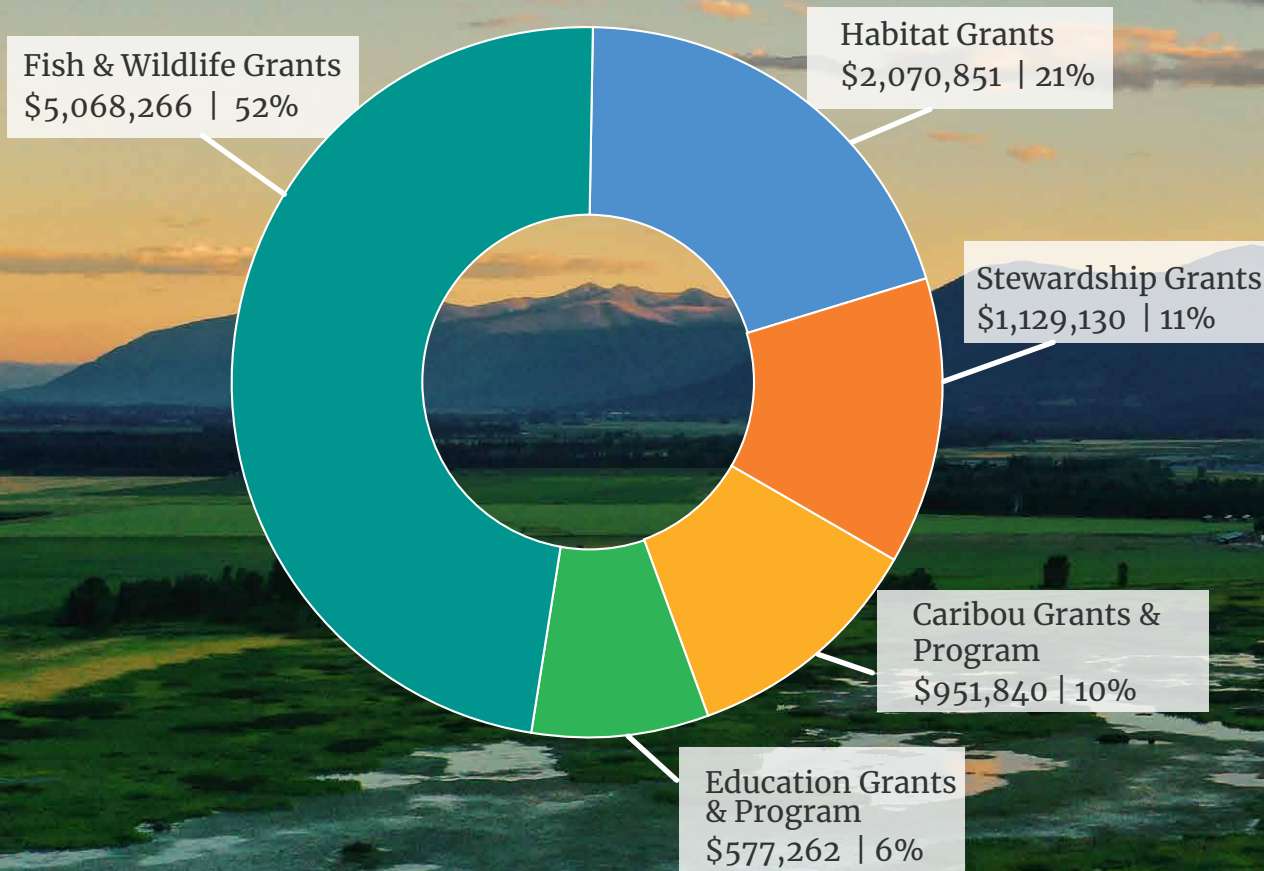
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Conservation and
Stewardship
Projects Funded

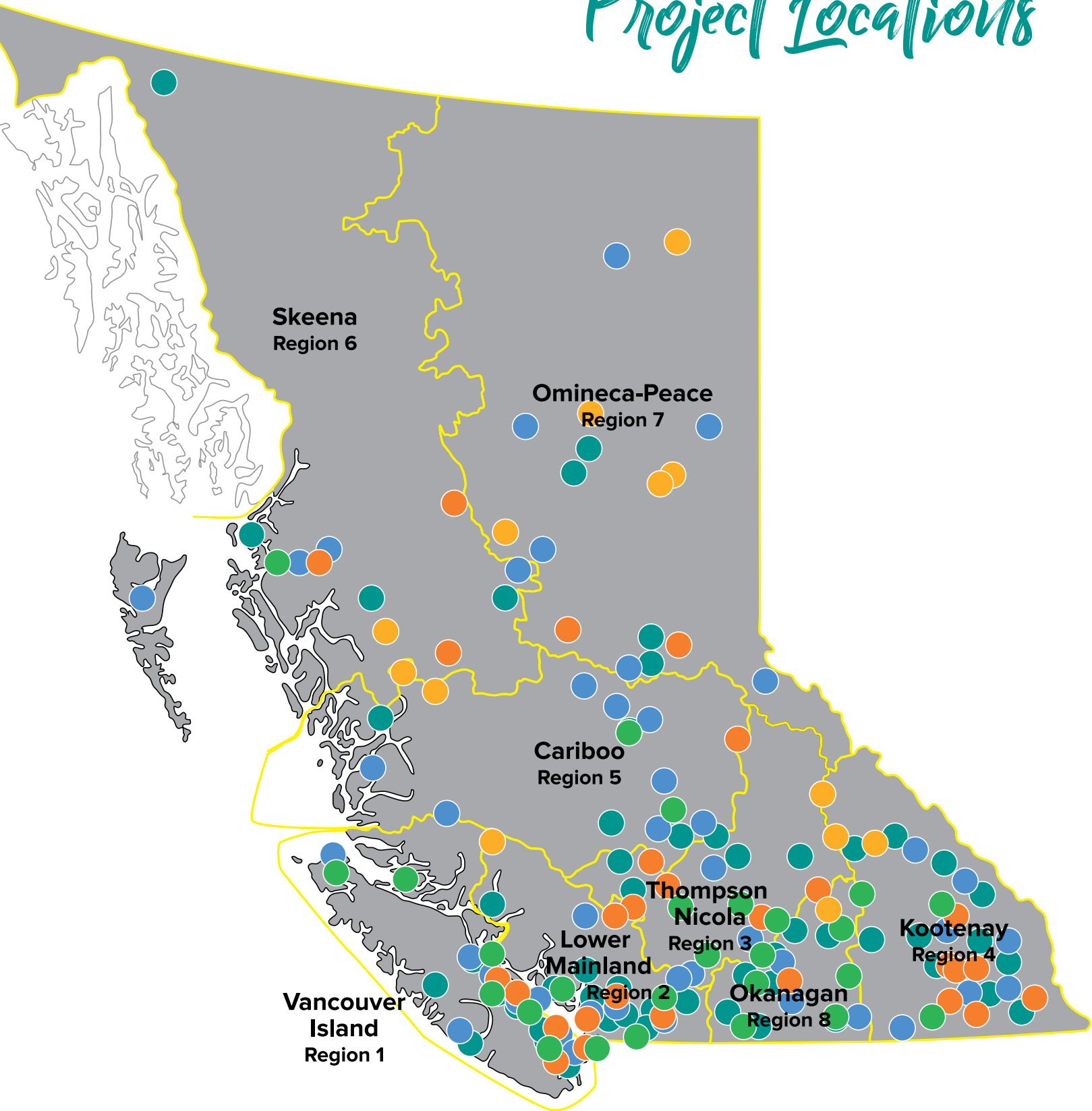
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Hectares of Land
Acquired

Funding by Grant Program 2024-2025



Project Locations



- Fish & Wildlife Projects
- Stewardship Projects
- Caribou Projects

- Habitat Projects
- Education

Fish and Wildlife Grants

184

kilometres
of roads restored

79

waterbodies sampled
for invasive mussels
with zero detections

2,450

hectares of habitat
treated

2,849

animals tagged
for tracking

42

species studied

Project Stories



Skeena Fish Passage

Society for Ecosystem Restoration in Northern BC

Over five years, completing in 2025, this project assessed 408 stream crossings and conducted habitat confirmation at 85 high-priority sites to support actionable restoration planning. Field efforts included electrofishing, passive integrated transponder (PIT) tagging, drone mapping, and effectiveness monitoring at dozens of sites. These efforts have directly supported or informed 12 crossing replacement designs, reconnected over 84,000 m² of fish habitat, and enhanced more than 11,000 m² of riparian habitat, with multiple culvert replacements already completed through partner-led efforts that SERNbc helped initiate and design.

Swannell River Valley Chu Cho Environmental

In 2024-25, the Chase Caribou Road Restoration Program restored 2.5 km of in-block forest service roads in the Swannell River Valley, within Tsay Keh Dene Nation Core Territory and the Wədzih Yinè' Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA). The Wədzih Yinè' IPCA is an area of cultural importance to the Tsay Keh Dene, and the nation has reached agreements with the major forest licensees operating in the area that they will not carry out forest harvest within the IPCA.



Juvenile White Sturgeon Critical Habitat in the Pitt River Watershed

InStream Fisheries Research

This five-year telemetry study is using PIT and acoustic methods to address uncertainties regarding the movement behaviour and habitat use of juvenile white sturgeon. In 2024-25, data from 887 PIT tags and 95 fin ray samples were recorded, mobile surveys were conducted, and the fixed telemetry network was refined and expanded to improve coverage and monitoring performance. Preliminary study findings support and build on Indigenous knowledge of juvenile white sturgeon habitat use, and final analyses will provide greater insights for management recommendations.

Restoring Whitebark Pine Ecosystems to Enhance Subalpine Bear Habitat

Bulkley Valley Centre for Natural Resource Research and Management

Whitebark pine is a keystone species in subalpine forests of North America, providing a vital food source for grizzly and black bears. In 2024-25, over 26 kg of seeds from 58 parent trees were collected across seven sites, including North Tweedsmuir, Burnie-Shea and Nanika-Kidprice Provincial Parks, more than doubling the seed supply to support ongoing whitebark pine restoration. Maintaining a supply of whitebark pine seed from trees known and believed to be highly resistant to white pine blister rust supports Skeena region restoration plantings and B.C.'s whitebark pine seed orchard.



Habitat Grants

128

sites managed
under Conservation
Lands O&M

24

aerators and dams operated
under Fisheries O&M

14

rivers actively
managed
under Quality Waters

681

hectares of habitat
stewarded by NGOs

21

species at risk with
habitat protected
under Habitat Acquisitions

Project Stories



Gates Creek Expansion Nature Conservancy of Canada

The Gates Creek Conservation Area protects a vital movement corridor for grizzly bears, as well as crucial salmon habitat in the creek and associated wetlands. In November 2024, the Nature Conservancy of Canada completed the purchase of an expansion parcel with the help of HCTF's Habitat Acquisition Grant, adding another 20 ha to the conservation area. This will bring another 474 metres of the creek and more than 5 ha of riparian habitat under protection and will offer even more natural buffer for grizzly bears moving through the valley. Read more [here](#).

Kootenay Region River Guardian Program Province of BC

With support from Quality Waters, this Guardian Program covers angler education, habitat evaluations and stream temperature monitoring, along with compliance checks in 8 Classified Waters in the Kootenay region. The data compiled from this work is shared with the public, allowing for education on the benefits of long-term management objectives to support both fish species viability and angler opportunity. These components come together to form a vital part of informing proactive management decisions which balance diverse and sustained quality angler opportunities and long-term conservation of wild stock fisheries. Read more [here](#).



Millard Learning Centre Galiano Conservancy Association

HCTF's Land Stewardship Grant funds operations and management work on conservation lands over a 3-year cycle. In its second year of funding, the Galiano Conservancy Association (GCA) celebrated the completion of the final stage of the Chrystal Creek watershed restoration project. Within these newly constructed wetland habitats, egg masses from northern red-legged frogs, a species of special concern, and Pacific tree frogs have already been found. GCA is also protecting rare coastal bluff ecosystems through scotch broom removal, alongside other conservation activities across the property, with the support of weekly volunteers. Read more [here](#).

Fisheries O&M –Cariboo Province of BC

2024-25 was also the second year of the Fisheries O&M 3-year cycle, including the operation and maintenance of 8 waterbodies across the Cariboo region. This work is critical to fisheries, especially those with rainbow trout, through maintaining aerators to prevent winterkill and removing migration and streamflow barriers to create healthy spawning, incubating and rearing areas within creeks. This program also includes advancing public safety around waterbodies through maintenance of warning fences and signs, and monitoring waterbody health by checking berms for deficiencies, spilling, and leaks.



Stewardship Grants

52k

people engaged
through
Stewardship projects

9,335

volunteer hours
under Community
Grants

12

organizations
supported with
Capacity Grants

16

new HCTF proponents
across Action,
Capacity, and
Community Grants



Project Stories



Nature is for Everyone Free the Fern Society

Launched in 2024 with the help of a Community Grant, Nature is For Everyone is an innovative program in South Vancouver, welcoming those who may face barriers to participation in stewardship. With a focus on connecting children, youth, and families with nature in its first year, Free the Fern Society hosted monthly invasive species pulls and conducted information sessions that support habitat improvement while centering equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Vanier Nature Park Garry Oak Grove Restoration Comox Valley Naturalists

Vanier Nature Park in the Comox Valley is home to an endangered, rare example of a wetland Garry oak ecosystem. Comox Valley Naturalists Society began a multi-year Community Grant project in 2024 to restore this oak grove by “releasing” the Garry oaks to sun and improving health by removing invasive plants and reducing over-topping firs to wildlife snags. Volunteer involvement was crucial to successful restoration efforts and to finding longer-term solutions to continue supporting the restoration work via a 5-year agreement of support from the local government.



Province Wide Workshops to Control Yellow Flag Iris Agrowest Consulting Scientists Ltd

This five-year project under HCTF’s previous iteration of “Stewardship Grants” was completed in 2024-25. Agrowest Consulting hosted training workshops for land managers on how to effectively use benthic barriers, who then trained their own staff, volunteer groups, and neighbours, leading to wider adoption of effective removal of invasive yellow flag iris. In its final year, 92 participants went on to lead the treatment of 790 m²; over five years, the project trained 562 people and led to the treatment of over 13,000 m² of wetland habitat.

Enhancing Upland Farmland for Wildlife in the Fraser River Delta Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust

An ongoing “Stewardship Grant” project has been working to improve the capacity of the lower Fraser River delta to support wildlife, particularly birds, through the annual enhancement of approximately 1,300 ha of upland agricultural habitat. Through stewardship agreements with DFWT, farmers in Metro Vancouver are provided with a cost-share to enhance their farmland with grassland habitats. In 2024-25, over 1,800 ha of winter cover crops and grassland set-asides were established, improving critical migratory habitat for waterfowl, raptors, wading birds, and songbirds.



Education Grants

9,842

students engaged in
outdoor learning through
GO Grants

264

high school students
engaged in
conservation projects
through LEAP grants

50k+

hours of outdoor
learning

“This project fostered a sense of curiosity, respect for nature, and inclusive learning. It was a memorable and meaningful experience that our class will carry forward.” – Reflection from GO Grant teacher

“They say you protect what you love, and you love what you know, so it was important that students fall more in love with our area so that they would be inspired to protect it.” – Reflection from LEAP Grant teacher

Project Stories



Estuary Adventure GO Grant

After weeks of learning about birds on their outdoor walks, a grade 1 class from Campbell River was able to apply their knowledge with a field trip to an estuary using GO Grant funds. A local Knowledge Keeper and his son taught the students about the area's pre-contact landscape and the incredible biodiversity that once thrived and is now being restored, and shared culturally significant songs from the Nuu-chah-nulth people. Students were then able to observe and record bird species with a guided walk.

Creek Restoration Days GO Grant

A grade 10 class from Chilliwack used GO Grant funding to visit Chilliwack Creek, applying place-based, integrated learning to better connect with and understand curricular content. Students participated in restoration activities, surveyed the area to determine the biodiversity and health of the watershed, and worked alongside neighbours in the S.A.Y. Lands (Sq'ewqéyl [Skowkale], Áthelets [Aitchelitz], and Yeqwyeqwi:ws [Yakweakwioose]) communities to remove invasive species, plant native species, and re-create a complex forest ecosystem to create habitats and resiliency in the restored area.



Waterbody Health Learning LEAP Grant

Throughout the school year, grade 7-9 students at École les Aiglons participated in conservation activities centered on the theme of water. The grade 7 students focused on freshwater, analyzing the health of a nearby stream, and the grade 8 and 9 students explored saltwater, conducting ocean water testing. Transportation costs to parks and lakes, project materials such as microscopes and water testing equipment, and training costs for an Ocean Ambassador Canada workshop for all students were supported with LEAP Grant funds, enabling deeper learning and connection.

Environmental Monitoring Project LEAP Grant

LEAP Grant funds supported Awaken Inquiry and Adventure Okanagan's Environmental Monitoring Project, engaging 40 students (Grades 7-12) in hands-on conservation work in North Okanagan. Students conducted soil and water testing, biodiversity surveys, and invasive species removal using tools like drones, pH meters, and GPS units. They also collaborated with Indigenous knowledge holders and local experts. The project helped restore native habitats, build real-world science skills, and foster student leadership in environmental stewardship. It was a powerful example of place-based learning in action.



Education Programs

751

workshop
participants

269

Professional
Development
hours

7,558

students participating
in Wild Schools

23

post-secondary
scholarships awarded

1,046

students participating
in Exchange Boxes



Project Stories



Beyond Four Walls Wild School

HCTF Education's Wild Schools program is a free, 3-year initiative for K-8 schools supporting environmental teaching and learning. With the program's support, École Isabella Dicken Elementary School has started turning an unused gravel patch into an outdoor classroom for its students. The "Beyond Four Walls" project was launched in response to a growing need for place-based, outdoor learning spaces close to or on school grounds. At the heart of the project are new garden beds, designed with both biodiversity and student engagement in mind.

Kimberley to Victoria Exchange Box

An elementary class in Victoria was paired with a Kimberley school under the Exchange Box program for the students to share about biodiversity in their local places. Both classes shared photos and art of plants and wildlife in their areas, with some really creative undertakings: The Victoria class collected fallen leaves to create self-portraits, sending them along with dried leaves so their partner class could do the same. The Kimberley class shared an animal tracks association game, including a homemade guide and plaster casts of animal tracks!



Together for Wildlife Scholarship Megan Roxby

Megan is a master's student from Simon Fraser University and a 2024 recipient of a \$20,000 Together for Wildlife (T4W) scholarship. She is researching how to identify various governance mechanisms that can be used to create an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area in the Skagit Headwaters. Megan's project employs methods from the Collaborative Stewardship Forum's S'ólh Téméxw Integrity Analysis to ensure that it remains Indigenous-led and aligned with Stó:lō principles. It takes a holistic, interconnected, intergenerational approach to relationships, reflecting the Stó:lō worldview and operating within a watershed-based perspective. Read about Megan and the other T4W scholarship recipients [here](#).

Al Martin Fellowship Adam Kanigan

Adam is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of British Columbia, researching predator-prey interactions between bull trout and sockeye salmon and how such interactions between these species may be influenced by climate change. Understanding the factors that will influence bull trout persistence is crucial to their conservation; managers in B.C. (and elsewhere) will be able to use Adam's research to prioritize conservation actions for bull trout that may take advantage of salmon migrations. He was awarded \$10,000 for his studies in 2024 through the Al Martin HCTF Conservation Fellowship. Read about Adam and the other Al Martin Fellowship recipients [here](#).





Progress on the Strategic Plan: 2022-2027

Since 2022, HCTF has pursued five key strategies to guide investments in projects that conserve B.C.'s fish, wildlife, and habitats. Highlights from this reporting period include:

Supporting Projects Addressing Climate Change Impacts

- Developing opportunities to invest in projects that focus on wildfire and silviculture.

Securing Funding for Grant Programs

- Renewed continued funding from external funders for several grants, including invasive mussels lake monitoring (Fisheries and Oceans Canada), ecological connectivity (Province of B.C.), caribou habitat restoration and fish and wildlife (Environment and Climate Change Canada, Province of B.C.), and GO Grants (BC Parks Foundation).
- Renewed funding with the Province of B.C. (through Together for Wildlife strategy) to support scholarships for master's and PhD students studying fish and wildlife and habitat.
- Funded the final year of projects under a long-term partnership with the **Forest Enhancement Society of B.C.**

Ensuring Project Benefits Endure Over Time

- Completed the final year of a three-year realignment to better target our grant programs. We launched a new Action Grant, along with revised grant applications and reporting for the Conservation Lands O&M Grant and Wild Schools program.

Expanding Collaborations

- We made new connections with over 25 First Nation communities, and our Board met with First Nations in several regions to gather perspectives, priorities, and challenges to understand how HCTF can better support and fund conservation.

Enhancing Organizational Effectiveness

- Updated internal policies, including conflict of interest procedures and data management.
- Improved and streamlined the technical review committee process of applications and updated grant applications to reduce barriers to proposal completion.



Community of Practice Workshop

As part of expanding collaborations, in June 2024, HCTF, in partnership with the Society for Ecosystem Restoration in Northern BC, Fuse Consulting, and supported by the Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program and Pacific Salmon Foundation, hosted a two-day workshop titled “Launching a Restoration Community for Practitioners in Northern B.C.: Sharing learnings, building our future.” The workshop, attended by representatives from many First Nation communities, NGOs, and the government, provided an opportunity for leaders in restoration to share knowledge and experiences with new practitioners and discuss ideas to foster a restoration Community of Practice in B.C.

“Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.” – Etienne Wenger

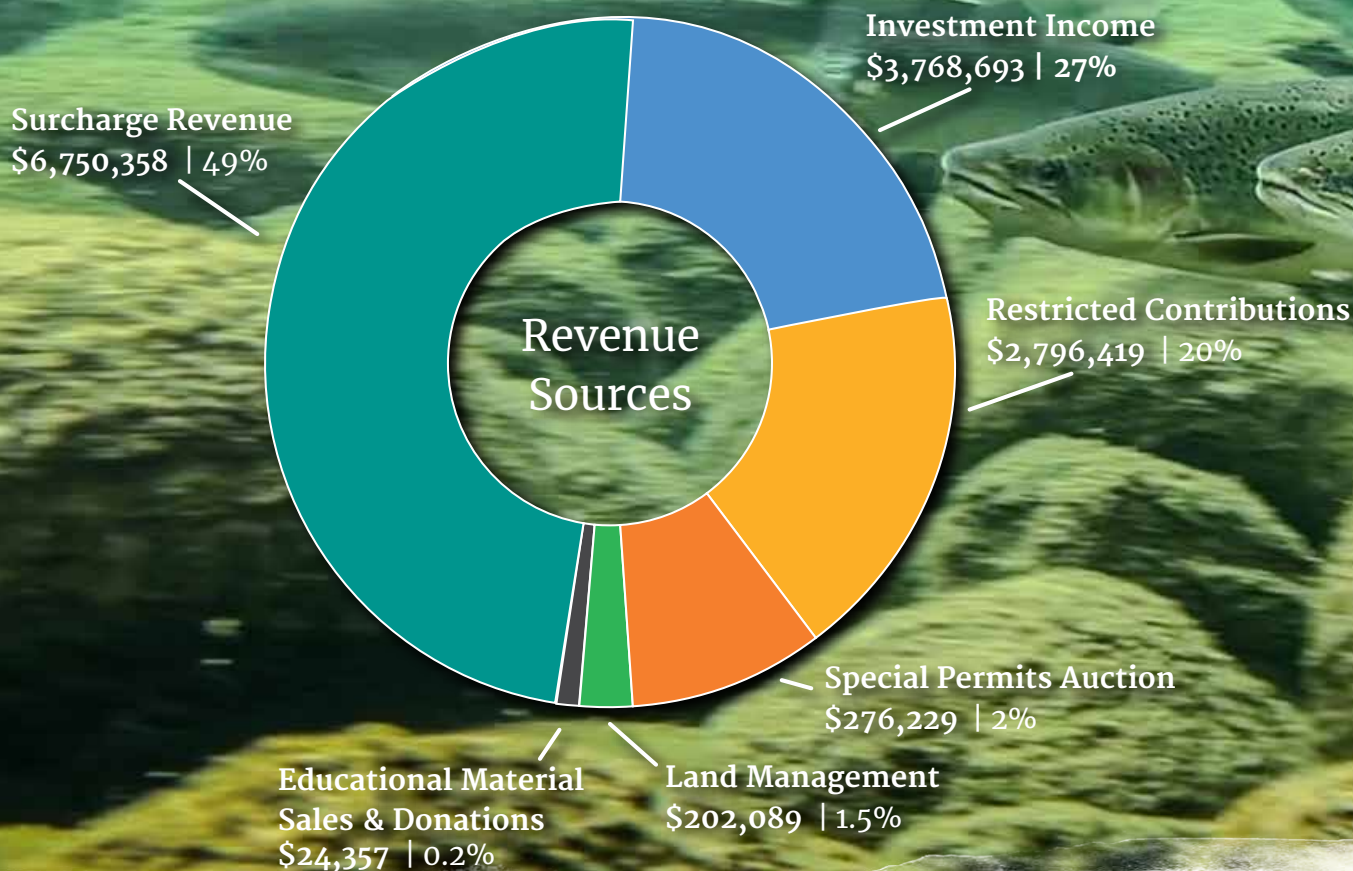
New Action Grant

We redesigned our Stewardship Grants program, implementing Capacity Grants (spring 2023) and Action Grants (spring 2024). Action Grants target behaviour changes to reduce the impact on ecosystems or species. This grant supports conservation actions that involve people and communities to change behaviours and/or practices that lead to measurable conservation outcomes. The grant allows for 2 years of work, up to \$50,000 per grant. In our inaugural year, we received 55 applications but could fund only 10 projects with the available funding.

Together for Wildlife

HCTF partnered with the Province of B.C. to support implementation of the Together for Wildlife (T4W) strategy, which included:

- \$2.44M funded 59 multi-year projects, supporting on-the-ground stewardship, including habitat restoration and management, data and knowledge, applied research, conservation land management, and habitat acquisitions. Funding also focused on Indigenous-led projects and strengthening the capacity of First Nations.
- Three contributions of \$230,000 each in 2023, 2024, and 2025 to deliver the T4W scholarship program, funding 10 graduate students each year on applied research on priority wildlife and habitats.



Financial Overview

Williamson's Sapsucker Habitat Restoration – a Restricted Contribution

When BC Hydro was constructing the Interior-to-Lower Mainland Transmission Line, at least one active Williamson's Sapsucker (WISA) nest was affected. In 2013, BC Hydro and HCTF signed the WISA Habitat Protection Contribution Agreement.

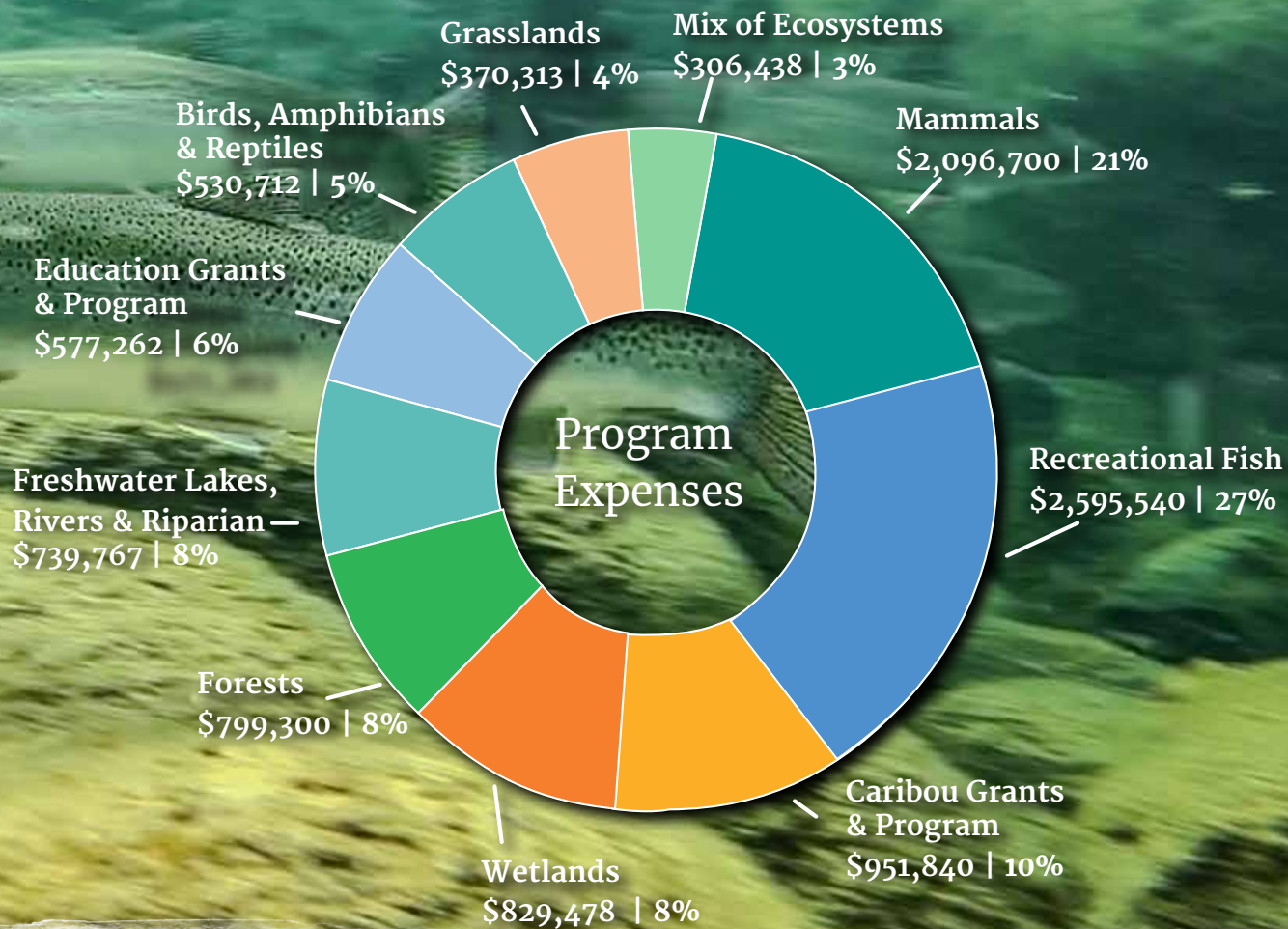
A mitigation plan was developed with the participation of the Upper Nicola Band and the Okanagan Nation Alliance to address the impacts on WISA habitat. A \$250,000 compensation payment became due from BC Hydro, directed to HCTF, establishing the WISA Fund - a fund restricted to enhancing WISA habitat in the defined mitigation area.

Following a call for proposals, the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) was the successful applicant with their proposal to increase the density of potential nest trees in the Merritt area, Syilx traditional territory.

Over the past 5 years, ONA has created 290 new wildlife trees and facilitated the transfer of knowledge from biologists and community members, who have been critical to the project's success.

HCTF is honoured to have been able to support this project. Through our responsible investing practices, we generated an additional 5.5% to go towards this project, for a total of \$263,500.

Read more [here](#).



Court Awards and the Conservation Officer Service

In 2024-25, \$289,000 in court-awarded revenue was allocated to 20 different projects, representing 29 different environmental infractions, ranging from \$500 to \$285,000.

A project in the Peace region received funding from three separate court awards:

- In November 2020, an individual hunted a mule deer without a license, out of season, near Dawson Creek. They were ordered to pay \$1,750 to HCTF in August 2022.
- In June 2020, an individual hunted wildlife not within season near Mackenzie. They were ordered to pay \$8,000 to HCTF in November 2023.

- In August 2021, an individual failed to remove edible portions of a thimhorn sheep carcass while hunting near Muncho Lake. They were ordered to pay \$1,900 to HCTF in December 2023.

While none of the court awards were restricted to either a region or for a specific purpose, HCTF felt funds would be best allocated to an ungulate project in northern B.C.

In 2024, these three court awards were allocated to project 7-600, Saik'uz Road Rehabilitation for Moose Habitat Enhancement. Building on previous successful work, this project rehabilitated an additional 14 km of roads in the Prince George area, reducing the road density to better support the moose population. Read more [here](#).

See the full audited financial statements [here](#).



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