



Habitat Acquisition Grant Application Guidelines 2026-27

Introduction

To date, HCTF has contributed over \$20 million toward the purchase of more than 150 conservation properties, helping secure and manage approximately 24,000 hectares of valuable habitat.

Habitat Acquisition Grants provide funding for direct acquisition costs and may also include a request for initial management costs and/or property management endowment contribution.

The HCTF Board sets aside a budget of \$500,000 for this program each year and generally funds 2-3 projects. There is currently no matched-funding requirement, but HCTF prefers to see other funders contributing to an acquisition project.

Project Priorities

Starting in 2026, Habitat Acquisition project priorities are lands that:

1. Provide public access for fishing, hunting, and other forms of non-motorized outdoor recreation.
2. Contribute to the conservation of wetland or grassland habitats.
3. Represent large properties that contain important ecological values for a variety of fish and wildlife species, including areas identified for their importance, such as ungulate winter range.
4. Strengthen landscape-level connectivity by linking to nearby and adjacent protected areas, conservation areas or Wildlife Management Areas (WMA).

Eligibility

Habitat Acquisition Grants provide funds to secure land for the long-term conservation of fish and wildlife habitat in B.C. Properties must be located within British Columbia, Canada.

- **Eligible Sites**
 - Fee simple land purchase only
- **Ineligible Sites**
 - Crown and public land, including all tenures such as trapping and guide outfitting
 - Conservation Covenants are **no longer eligible**
- **Habitat Acquisition applications should include:**
 - Public access for fishing, hunting, and other forms of non-motorized outdoor recreation.

- Conservation of wetland or grassland wildlife habitat.
- Large properties that provide important ecological values for a variety of fish and wildlife species, including areas identified for their importance such as ungulate winter range.
- Landscape-level connectivity by linking to nearby and adjacent protected areas, conservation areas or Wildlife Management Areas (WMA).
- Intact ecosystems requiring minimal restoration.
- Very limited to no infrastructure. Proposals that include infrastructure should:
 - clearly demonstrate how the priority will be on managing conservation values of the land rather than infrastructure.
 - articulate the conservation benefits of maintaining infrastructure or plans for the removal of infrastructure.

Organization Eligibility

HCTF accepts Habitat Acquisition Grant proposals from many types of organizations including First Nations, land trusts, and community organizations.

Provincial, Regional, and Municipal governments are no longer eligible for this grant.

HCTF prefers to receive proposals directly from the organization that will hold title and manage the property, but we recognize that sometimes multiple organizations are involved at different stages of an acquisition project—for example, a local community group might coordinate the acquisition of a property, but a larger land trust will ultimately hold title. If the organization submitting the proposal will not be the one holding title or managing the property, be sure to include information on **both** the applicant organization and the intended title holder and/or manager. Please note that if the applicant is not going to be managing the land, the applicant may still apply for land management/endowment funding; however, HCTF may grant the management funds directly to the organization incurring costs to manage the land.

HCTF will not fund property acquisitions where the proponent organization is already the owner of the property and is looking to finance debt recovery or pay off the mortgage.

Eligible Expenditures

The Habitat Acquisition Grant can only be used to cover the following eligible costs and related activities:

- Direct Acquisition Costs (such as purchase price, appraisal fees, taxes, legal fees)
- Initial Management Costs and/or Property Endowment contribution up to a maximum of 10% of the amount provided for Direct Acquisition Costs. For instance, if you are requesting \$100k for Direct Acquisition costs, you may request up to an additional \$10k for initial management costs and/or an endowment contribution, e.g., \$100,000 + \$10,000 = \$110,000 requested from HCTF.
 - Initial management costs include activities that will be undertaken within the first two years of purchase to safeguard the features/habitats/populations being protected by this purchase, and may include conducting baseline surveys and mapping, legal surveys, developing management plans, urgent fencing and/or gate installation. Activities must comply with the eligible activities list included as Appendix 1.
 - The property endowment contribution must be held in an investment, and the investment income gained from the endowment must be used for operation and maintenance activities on the subject property.

Proposal Amendments

Habitat Acquisition Grant proposals are reviewed by the HCTF Board annually in June. If there are any relevant changes to the acquisition project between proposal submission and Board review in June, applicants are required to apprise HCTF and submit a revised proposal and/or budget.

For example, if any unconfirmed funding is denied, or if funding becomes confirmed, the budget spreadsheet should be updated and resubmitted near the end of May. This includes any updated information regarding any ecological gift component.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals are evaluated against the following criteria:

- **Public access:**
 - Public access, which may include fishing, hunting, and other forms of non-motorized outdoor recreation*
- **Significance:**
 - Presence of grassland or wetland habitat*
 - Property size and habitat values*
 - Connectivity to other protected areas, conservation areas or Wildlife Management Areas (WMA)*
 - Conservation priority (identified in a conservation plan for the area)
 - Species richness
 - Details of the fish and wildlife species present, including species or habitats at risk
 - Climate change adaptation
- **Threat:**
 - Protection urgency/threat
- **Security of Investment:**
 - Financial Management of organization(s)*
 - Community support
 - Likelihood of long-term security and stewardship
 - Value for money

*These criteria have been identified as the most important by the HCTF Board of Directors and carry the highest weight in our proposal ranking.

HCTF staff may also contact local biologists regarding the significance of the conservation values on the property. Please let us know if there are any confidentiality issues around the purchase, e.g., sensitive negotiations with the landowner that may preclude us from contacting others about the proposed property acquisition.

Financial Information

- HCTF only funds acquisition projects with a purchase price supported by a current appraisal. As a condition of funding, a copy of the current appraisal must be provided for approved projects.
- If all unconfirmed funding is received, and funding secured is more than your TOTAL PROJECT COSTS, HCTF would anticipate a revised funding request at a lower amount.

Notes for Budget Spreadsheet

The HCTF Acquisition Proposal Budget spreadsheet is locked except for the green-shaded cells where you may enter information.

Date last updated: This field is included since we require an updated budget if the overall funding scenario changes between the time of proposal submission and Board review in June (e.g., a funder is confirmed). If you submit an update, include the date. Initially use the date the proposal is submitted.

PROJECT COSTS

Direct Acquisition Costs

Purchase Price: The amount you expect to pay for the property, including any donation by the landowner. This amount must be supported by a property appraisal before any funding is granted. If there is an ecological gift component, this amount should be equal to the Fair Market Value. This amount should be the same as noted in the Financial Information section of the application form.

Appraisal fees: The amount paid to complete an appraisal of the fair market value of the property.

Closing costs: These include legal fees and taxes. Please indicate in the notes section at the bottom of the spreadsheet if costs other than legal fees and taxes are included here.

Other (specify): If any costs are included here, specify and provide details in the notes section at the bottom of the spreadsheet.

Initial Management Costs/Endowment Contribution (optional)

HCTF will fund up to 10% of the amount requested for direct acquisition costs to cover initial management costs and/or an endowment contribution benefiting the subject property. Note that the spreadsheet will automatically calculate the percentage for this request, which should not exceed 10%.

Initial management costs: Please include any initial management costs for the first two years post-acquisition. Examples are included in Appendix 1. There are two fields: one for total project costs and one for any of these costs for which you are requesting HCTF funding.

Endowment contribution: If you are fundraising to include an endowment contribution to cover land management costs for the property, please include the fundraising target under **Total Project Costs** and any request from HCTF under **Contribution requested from HCTF**.

PROJECT FUNDING

Other confirmed funding: List all confirmed funders and the amount committed, including both cash and in-kind donations, such as an ecological gift.

Other unconfirmed funding: List all unconfirmed funders and the amount requested, including both potential cash and in-kind donations, such as an ecological gift.

- Please ensure only one major funding partner is included per row. Smaller donations (<\$1,000 each) can be lumped as “other donations.” Include a line for larger donations by private citizens as “individual donors.” If you need more rows, please contact HCTF and we can provide an unlocked version of the form.

Proposal Approvals and Reporting

Successful proponents will be notified by late JULY. Notification of successful proposals will include a standard list of Funding Conditions which include:

- Copy of completed appraisal
- Copy of signed purchase agreement
- Written confirmation of other funding partners
- Written agreement that non-mechanized public access will be allowed on the subject property for recreational activities, including, but not limited to, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing
- A 1-2 page communication plan for HCTF's review and approval
- Written confirmation that any subsequent lease (or property interest) to the Province of B.C. or other entity will not compromise the conservation values of the property as outlined in the funding proposal to HCTF
- A listing of water licences associated with the property and a description of plans to manage those licences for conservation benefit after purchase of the lands

Once funding conditions have been met, funds will be released upon HCTF's receipt of a signed Conditional Grant Agreement (CGA). The CGA typically includes 90% payment of funds, with a 10% holdback upon completion of the acquisition project.

The acquisition is considered complete once an Acquisition Report Form is submitted to HCTF. The report form can be found on the Habitat Acquisition Grants [Reporting tab](#). The following documents need to be included along with the grant report:

- Copy of the Land Title(s)
- Copy of the management plan/management direction statement (if completed)
- Copy of the press release announcing the acquisition
- Copies of any newspaper clippings or other print media
- Copies of any related documents (covenants, leases, etc.), if applicable
- Photographs as .jpeg files
- Invoice for 10% holdback

Questions

Please contact grants@hctf.ca if you have any questions about the application process or any technical issues with the forms.

Appendix 1: Habitat Acquisition Grant Eligible and Ineligible Activities

Eligible Activities and Expenses

Direct Acquisition Costs

- Purchase price
- Appraisal Fees
- Taxes, including transfer taxes
- Legal fees

Initial Management Expenses

These eligible activities are intended to help safeguard the features/habitats/populations being protected by the purchase and should provide direct conservation benefit.

Operations

Those land activities that involve the management and administration of lands and waters, including:

- Addressing immediate site issues and needs
- Mapping and boundary delineation including legal surveys
- Baseline surveys and mapping
- Management planning, specifically high-priority management plans, resource conservation plans, enhancement, or restoration plans
- Species and ecosystem inventory, mapping and analysis including SAR
- Undertaking resource inventory and analysis
- Develop programs and project plans for staff and volunteer management activities
- Managing human activities on the lands, including activities associated with restoration, maintenance, and community education regarding the purpose of the lands and the value of the natural assets
- Provide operational oversight of the maintenance activities taking place on the lands

Maintenance

Those activities that involve maintaining, repairing, and restoring land, including:

- Restoring and maintaining site-specific natural habitats such as planting eroded slopes and riparian zones
- Repairing and maintaining built assets (e.g., fences, shelters, dams, culverts) if they provide a demonstrable conservation benefit
- Building new assets required for conservation (e.g., exclusion zones, information shelters, new fencing)
- Removing invasive species

Property Endowment Contribution

- This contribution must be added to an investment and the interest derived from the investment must be used to benefit the subject property only.¹

¹ HCTF and successful proponents will discuss how reasonable assurance can be provided that the endowment contribution will be made to benefit the subject property only.

Ineligible Activities & Expenses

The following activities are ineligible for Habitat Acquisition Grant funding, including revenue from an endowment contribution:

Acquisition Costs

- Fundraising costs
- Labour costs for coordinating an acquisition project

Initial Management Expenses

- Conservation covenant monitoring
- Legal fees (post acquisition)
- Insurance costs
- Strategic/higher-level land use planning or ecosystem planning
- Residential tenancy agreements/rentals
- General festivals/tours/events that do not directly pertain to the operations and maintenance of the properties
- General patrols
- General lease and administration of other property interests (e.g., right-of-way, lease modifications, tax exemptions)
- Organizational fundraising
- Cultural, heritage, historical or architectural operations and maintenance activities

In addition to the items above, in accordance with HCTF's general corporate guidelines, the following are also ineligible:

- Non-applied research (note that research focused on understanding population baselines and conservation status of species, and/or research that identifies key opportunities for restoration, enhancement, maintenance, or acquisition is eligible for HCTF funding)
- Training costs for project personnel
- Law enforcement activities
- Fish rearing, farming, stocking, or hatchery projects
- Wildlife rescue or rehabilitation centres
- Captive breeding and rearing, except for activities or circumstances that will result in clear and positive outcomes for the recovery of native species populations
- Feeding of wildlife species, with the exception of activities that are part of population recovery projects
- Control of native wildlife
- Salaries for regular Provincial government employees
- Salmon-only projects that do not also benefit provincially managed fish species or their habitats
- Marine projects, except for activities that occur in estuary habitat
- Development or production of curriculum guidebooks or publication materials for fishing and hunting, tour activities
- Hosting or organizing conferences (note that presenting/speaking at conferences may be an eligible activity if it is clearly tied to the management of the species/habitat in your project, and it is a cost-effective way to share project results)
- Production or sponsorship of commercial programs
- Stand-alone interpretative materials, signs and services that are not part of a larger, eligible HCTF project
- Creation or management of stand-alone electronic databases, websites, or file systems