



Annual Report to the Conservation Officer Service

\$289k

in court award
funding allocated

20

conservation projects
supported

HCTF would like to extend a huge thank you to the B.C. Conservation Officer Service for all your hard work and dedication to environmental prosecutions.

HCTF is honoured to be a trusted partner of the CO Service, and we strive to maintain the high level of accountability and transparency that has been a cornerstone of that partnership. To that end, we are pleased to share that through the BCCOS's efforts to direct funds to HCTF under creative sentencing, HCTF was able to allocate over \$289,000 to 20 different conservation projects in 2024-25¹. This represents 29 different environmental infractions, ranging from \$500 to \$285,000².

¹ Note that some projects do not spend all their grant funding in the fiscal year it was awarded, so amounts allocated may differ from final expenditures in HCTF's audited financial statements.

² Large awards such as this often support projects over multiple years. In 2024-25, \$77K of this large award funded two HCTF projects.

HCTF always allocates court-awarded funding back to the region where the offence occurred. Our next consideration is to find a project match in that region that best fits with the infraction, while balancing the desire to invest funds back into projects quickly and efficiently. For example, if an infraction were related to hunting moose, we would invest funds back into a project benefiting moose or their habitat. If there are no direct matches in a given year, we will consider other wildlife projects in the region that may have secondary benefits to moose, or benefit ecosystems and biodiversity more broadly.

This ensures HCTF can direct funds into fish, wildlife, and habitat efficiently and ensure high-value conservation outcomes are achieved.

When there is a restriction set by the courts, HCTF will often advertise the funding opportunity on our website to receive dedicated proposals that meet that need, such as fisheries work in a specific watershed.

Since inception in 1981, HCTF has received over \$6M in court awarded revenue. We allocate an average of \$293,000 to around 21 projects each year, from an average of 29 unique infractions³.

³ Averages from 2014 to 2024

A summary of the 2024-25 fiscal year is as follows:

2024-25 Fiscal Year	
Amount Allocated	\$289,038
Projects Funded	20
Environmental Infractions	29
10-Year Averages	
Amount Allocated	\$293,000
Projects Funded	21
Environmental Infractions	29
Funding received since inception	\$6M

The projects that received court-awarded funding in 2024-25 are below. For additional information on individual projects, feel free to reach out to HCTF or explore our [interactive project map with descriptions and locations](#).

Project #	Project Title	Lead Organization
3-453	Grassland Small Mammal Communities: Historic Trends and Future Prospects	Thompson Rivers University
3-471	Simpchw Ské'mcis (Grizzly Bear) Monitoring and Connectivity Study	Estsek' Environmental LLP
4-611	Elk Valley West Bighorn Sheep Population Dynamics and Habitat Condition	Sparwood and District Fish & Wildlife Association
4-618	Upper Elk Valley Invasive Plant Management	East Kootenay Invasive Species Council
4-636	Elk Valley Cottonwood Restoration	Elk River Watershed Alliance
4-64	Operations & Management - (Fish) - Kootenay Region	Province of BC
4-685	East Kootenay Burbot Population Assessments	Province of BC
4-688	DUC Restoration and Stewardship Partnership Program	Ducks Unlimited Canada
4-700	Enhancement of Western Painted Turtle Basking Log Habitat at Erie Lake	Salmo Watershed Streamkeepers Society
5-196	Mid Fraser River Sturgeon Assessment	Province of BC
5-332	Big Bar Slide Sturgeon Assessment	Province of BC
6-288	Skeena Fish Passage Restoration	Society for Ecosystem Restoration in Northern BC
7-508	Mule Deer Monitoring in Vanderhoof Area	Nechako Valley Sporting Association - Vanderhoof Fish and Game Club
7-588	Effects of Landscape Change on Moose Health in Central BC	University of Northern British Columbia
7-598	Sitlika Creek Fish Passage Monitoring and Channel Repairs	Canadian Wildlife Federation
7-600	Saik'uz Road Rehabilitation for Moose Habitat Enhancement	Society for Ecosystem Restoration in Northern BC
8-320	Mission Creek Restoration Initiative – Restoration Implementation and Effectiveness Monitoring	BC Conservation Foundation
8-452	Enhancement of Winter Range Habitat for Mule Deer in Douglas-fir Forests - Phase 2	Applied Mammal Research Institute
8-498	Upper Shuswap Resistivity Counter to Estimate Bull Trout Abundance	Instream Fisheries Research Inc.
8-519	Similkameen River culturally significant fish habitat assessment	Province of BC

Project Spotlights

In January 2023, Teck Metals was ordered to pay \$80,000 to HCTF for offences under the *Fisheries Act* and *Environmental Management Act*. The offence, which took place near Trail, B.C., involved introducing waste into the environment in and around the Columbia River, which had the potential to negatively impact fish habitat. The funding was restricted for the purposes of conservation or enhancement of fish or fish habitat in the Kootenay River or Columbia River watersheds, with a preference for projects in the lower Columbia region (south of Nelson, B.C.).

In 2024, HCTF directed these funds to two projects: \$40,000 to Fisheries O&M in the Kootenays (4-64), which supports two West Kootenay kokanee spawning channels, and \$40,000 to East Kootenay Burbot Population Assessments (4-685), which seeks to better understand burbot population limiters in the Upper Kootenay and Upper Columbia watersheds. Understanding current status, spawning locations, migrations, and genetic diversity will inform recovery actions of these declining populations.



A Columbia Lake Burbot, 4-485
credit: Heather Lamson, Province of BC



Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep
Stock Photo

In an earlier sentencing, in 2017 Teck Coal was ordered to pay \$285,000 to HCTF for three offences under the *Environmental Management Act*. The offences took place in 2012 near Sparwood and involved introducing sediment-laden water into the environment and failing to report a spill. While not restricted to a certain species or habitat type, it was preferred the funds go towards projects in the Elk Valley of B.C. Funding from this award, along with multiple other large infractions that were restricted to the Kootenays, was distributed over several years.

In 2024, the final \$77,120 was allocated to two projects: \$40,000 to Elk Valley West Bighorn Sheep Population Dynamics and Habitat Condition (4-611), which is identifying survival rates and causes of mortality of bighorn sheep to inform management decisions, and \$37,120 to Upper Elk Valley Invasive Plant Management (4-618), which successfully reduced the spread of invasive species and enhanced biodiversity through targeted management strategies, ensuring high-quality forage remains for bighorn sheep and other ungulates.



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 thinhorn 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.

Between September and November 2017, a company diverted streams for agricultural purposes without permission, negatively impacting riparian and aquatic habitats. Charged under the *Water Sustainability Act*, the company was ordered to pay \$49,000, and one of its directors an additional \$9,500 to HCTF in January 2023. The funds were restricted to be used in the Chilcotin area of the Cariboo region, for projects involving fish and/or other aquatic assessments or habitat initiatives.

In 2024, the \$58,000 funded two projects: Mid Fraser River Sturgeon Assessment (5-196) and Big Bar Slide Sturgeon Assessment (5-332). The former completed a 5-year study focused on filling knowledge gaps of white sturgeon habitat use and behaviour in the mid-Fraser, and the latter is evaluating white sturgeon movement patterns to inform fish passage structure design.

