



Annual Report to the Conservation Officer Service

\$183k

in court award
funding allocated

23

conservation projects
supported

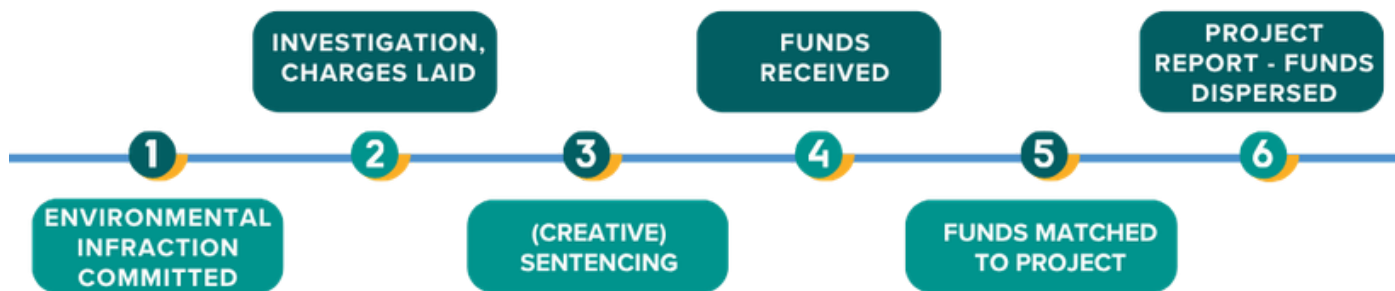
HCTF would like to thank the BC Conservation Officer Service for your continuing commitment to environmental stewardship and prosecutions.

As part of HCTF's commitment to accountability and transparency, we are proud to share our creative sentencing overview of projects supported in the 2025-26 grant year. Thanks to the COS's efforts, 23 conservation projects received a total of \$183,188¹ in financial support. This represents 34 different infractions, ranging from \$500 to \$60,000.

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.

Court Award Process

From an infraction to an organization receiving funding for a conservation project often takes several years. Some funding allocated in the 2025-26 year came from infractions that took place over five years ago; see the “Spotlights” on pages 4 and 5 for examples of the timeline below:



While there may be delays in payment by the offender, once HCTF receives the funds, we try to match them to a project in the next grant intake cycle. Funds are always allocated back into the region in which the offence took place, and in line with restrictions around habitat or species type, where applicable. Where there are specific restrictions, such as a certain watershed or small geographic area, we will advertise the funding opportunity to receive proposals that meet the need.

Summary

2025-26 Fiscal Year	
Amount Allocated	\$183,188
Projects Supported	23
Environmental Infractions	34
10-Year Averages	
Amount Allocated	\$287,000
Projects Funded	20
Environmental Infractions	28
Funding received since inception	\$6.1M

The projects that received court-awarded funding in 2025-26 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
2-349	Enhancing Upland Farmland for Wildlife in the Fraser River Delta	Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust
2-794	Lil'wat Cultural Burns to Increase Biodiversity/Vigour, Mount Currie BC	Lil'wat Forestry Ventures LP
2-796	Enhancing Bat Roosting Habitat Within Stanley Park	Stanley Park Ecology Society
4-345	Kootenay Conservation Program: Fostering a Collaborative Landscape Approach	The Nature Trust of British Columbia
4-686	Galton Range Invasive Plant Management	East Kootenay Invasive Species Council
4-688	Ducks Unlimited Canada Wetland Conservation Partnership	Ducks Unlimited Canada
4-717	Elk Valley Bighorn Sheep Habitat Enhancement Project	Cirque Ecological
4-722	Native Crayfish Assessment and Invasive Monitoring	Okanagan Nation Alliance
4-725	Ungulate Winter Range Habitat Enhancement Project	Wildsight
5-327	Dean River Steelhead Stock Assessment	Province of BC
5-332	Big Bar Slide Sturgeon Assessment	Province of BC
5-349	Identifying Habitat Factors Affecting Fisher Reproductive Output in B.C.	Thompson Rivers University
5-358	Predator-Prey Dynamics of Cougars, Caribou, and Feral Horses	University of Northern BC
5-359	Understanding the Diet of the Columbian Fisher Through Isotopic Analysis	Thompson Rivers University
6-227	Restoring Whitebark Pine Ecosystems to Enhance Subalpine Bear Habitat	The Bulkley Valley Centre For Natural Resources Research & Management
7-508	Mule Deer Monitoring in Vanderhoof Area	Nechako Valley Sporting Association
7-570	Stone's Sheep Seasonal Range Use in the Omineca Region	Wild Sheep Society of BC
7-588	Effects of Landscape Change on Moose Health	University of Northern BC
7-597	Habitat Selection and Survival of Porcupines in Northcentral BC	Wildex Consulting Ltd.
7-612	Motus Wildlife Tracking System: South Peace Expansion Feasibility Project	Birds Canada
8-452	Enhancement of Winter Range Habitat for Mule Deer in Douglas-fir Forests	Applied Mammal Research Institute
8-515	Cherry Ridge Habitat Enhancement Project	Cherry Ridge Management Committee
COM-151	Elk River Alliance Cuttings Nursery	Elk River Watershed Alliance

Project Spotlights

Elk Valley Restoration

After a tip from the public, BC Conservation Officers launched an investigation into a man hunting bears using bait near the community of Elkford in the spring of 2020. In 2024, he was found guilty of hunting a grizzly bear in a closed season and sentenced to pay a fine of \$500 as well as \$9,500 to the HCTF. The sum to HCTF was to be used “where possible in the area of Fernie, Sparwood, and Elkford.”

In 2025, \$4,000 of the court award funded an entire Community Grant, *Elk River Alliance Cuttings Nursery*. The project is establishing a cutting nursery, allowing tree cuttings to develop over the summer for fall planting. With substantial help from volunteers, cuttings of local native trees such as Cottonwood, Red Osier Dogwood, Willow, and Trembling Aspen are being collected for later planting as part of the Elk River Alliance’s related project to restore riparian and floodplain areas of the Elk River.



A cottonwood livestake, 4-636
Credit: Elk River Alliance



Porcupines in the Peace

In the 2025-26 funding year, there were several unrestricted court awards available from infractions that took place in the Omineca-Peace region. Ranging from \$650 to \$3,000, a total of five awards were allocated to the second year of project 7-597, *Habitat Selection and Survival of Porcupines in Northcentral BC*.

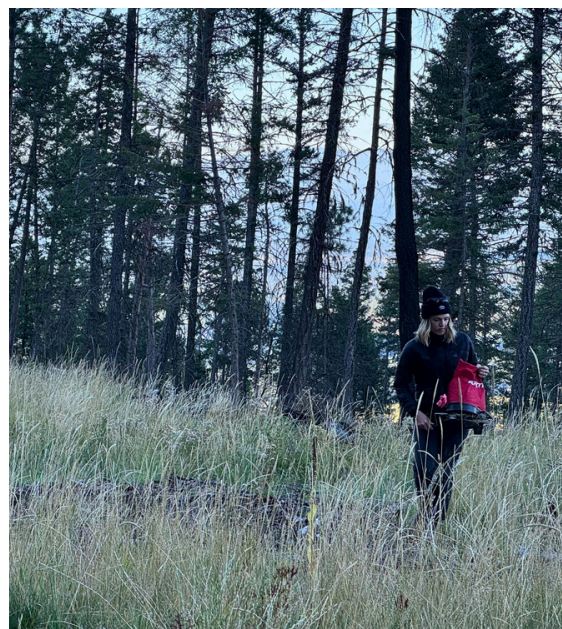
The project has been working to fill knowledge gaps about the species, which act as ecosystem engineers, by using GPS collars and collecting health and genetic samples. This information will provide valuable insights into forest ecology in northcentral B.C., and will likely have implications for fishers, a primary predator of porcupines that are red-listed in the region.

To the left: A collared porcupine, 7-597
Credit: Wildex Consulting Ltd.

Sheep Habitat in the Elk Valley

Another project in the Elk Valley region received funding from court awards, *Galton Range Invasive Plant Management (4-686)*. A total of \$16,424 from three court awards supported the project: two were from related individuals, whose \$4,500 and \$500 awards were to be put toward “fish, wildlife or habitat initiatives in the East Kootenay region with consideration of restoration work on Mount Broadwood and where possible considering initiatives involving the Tobacco Plains Band,” and \$11,424 from a large 2017 Teck Metals award (being distributed over several years) to be used in the Elk Valley.

The project has been reducing the introduction and spread of invasive species in high-value sheep habitat through a variety of treatment methods, public outreach, and education. East Kootenay Invasive Species Council has been collaborating with Yaq̓it ʔa·knuq̓i’it First Nation (Tobacco Plains Indian Band) to deliver the project.



Applying native grass seeds in the Galton Range, 4-686
Credit: East Kootenay Invasive Species Council

Cariboo Fisheries

In 2024, an individual was sentenced to pay \$60,000 to HCTF for an offence under the Water Sustainability Act. Between June and August, 2017, the individual unlawfully made changes in and about a stream near Quesnel. In addition to a fine, the \$60,000 paid to HCTF was to “be directed to the Cariboo Region, for projects involving fish and/or other aquatic assessments or habitat initiatives.” In 2025, the entire amount was allocated to project 5-327, *Dean River Steelhead Stock Assessment*.

This project supported a new approach to better understand how many adult steelhead return to the Dean River each winter. Researchers used underwater snorkel surveys and compared those results with traditional methods, such as counting fish and tracking reports from anglers. Early findings show that snorkel

surveys are especially useful in years when river levels are low, giving a clearer and more reliable picture of how many fish are present.

The Dean River hosts one of the world’s most popular steelhead sport fisheries and plays a key role in how fisheries are managed in the province of B.C. This work is part of the ongoing efforts to better understand both the steelhead population and sport fishery. By improving how we measure fish numbers, it informs better decisions so the population can thrive for future generations.

Wildlife in the Cariboo

In 2016, the BCCOS initiated an investigation near Williams Lake after receiving information about illegal guiding services. An individual was found guilty of acting as a guide for game without holding a guide outfitter licence in 2023 and was sentenced to pay \$14,500 to the HCTF. The funding was to “be directed towards fish, wildlife and habitat initiatives in the Cariboo region.”

Unrestricted to a specific habitat type or species, the funds were allocated toward the second and final year of *Predator-Prey Dynamics of Cougars, Caribou, and Feral Horses*, project 5-358. Through collaring cougars and caribou and monitoring feral horses, the organizations partnering on the project are addressing knowledge gaps about caribou decline and cougar ecology.



Staff from the Province of BC and Tsilhqot'in National Government fitting a male cougar with a collar, 5-358
Credit: Julie Thomas, PhD candidate at UNBC