



Regional Summary Reports

Conservation Lands O&M Grants
Year 1, 2025-2028 Funding Cycle

HCTF Project #0-451



Conservation Lands O&M

Introduction

Conservation Lands Operations and Management (O&M) Program provides funding to the Conservation Lands Program of the Province of British Columbia for the management of ministry-administered conservation lands. The program is delivered in partnership with the Nature Trust of British Columbia (NTBC) and Ducks Unlimited Canada (in the South Coast region), including work undertaken on lands leased to the Province from NTBC. Funding for this program is provided primarily through endowment funds given to HCTF by the Province of British Columbia. This program is limited to a specific set of eligible sites and activities.



West Coast Region



Conservation Lands O&M Program Annual Summary Report

Year 1, 2025-2028 Funding Cycle

Region: West Coast

Regional Value

The Vancouver Island West Coast Region contains some of the most diverse and rarest ecosystems in British Columbia and supports internationally significant populations of fish and wildlife as well as some of the rarest species found in the Province.

Estuaries, wetlands and riparian areas are among the most diverse and productive ecosystems in the world. The importance of protecting and managing these habitats cannot be understated given their substantial life history functions and benefits not only to fish and wildlife but to the human population as well (e.g. clean water supplies, flood protection, mitigating impacts from climate change). It is estimated that more than 50% of wildlife species in North America rely on access to wetland habitat for at least part of their life-cycles, and almost 35% of all rare, threatened, and endangered wildlife species are dependent on wetland ecosystems (Wetland Action Plan for British Columbia, 2010).

In British Columbia, estuaries and coastal wetlands comprise less than 3% of BC's coastline, while providing habitat to over 80% of all coastal fish and wildlife species. Approximately 500 species of named plants and animals are associated with wetlands and estuaries, and 70 of those species are federally listed as endangered or threatened. Vancouver Island and the Central contain significantly higher ranked estuaries than any other eco-region in the province (CWS Technical Report Series #476, 2007). Of the 8 Class 1 estuaries in BC, 4 are located on Vancouver Island.

Despite their importance and rarity, approximately 43% of the province's estuaries are threatened by coastal development, modification, and pollution; approximately 60% of marsh habitats along the estuaries of the Salish Sea have been lost.

Since 1976, The Nature Trust of BC and the Province of British Columbia has worked together with several partner agencies to secure these critical habitats on Vancouver Island and the

Central Coast. From the Cowichan Estuary to the Kumdis Estuary more than 110 conservation properties have been secured protecting over 15,000ha of critical fish and wildlife habitat along with rare ecosystems.

Results/Outcomes

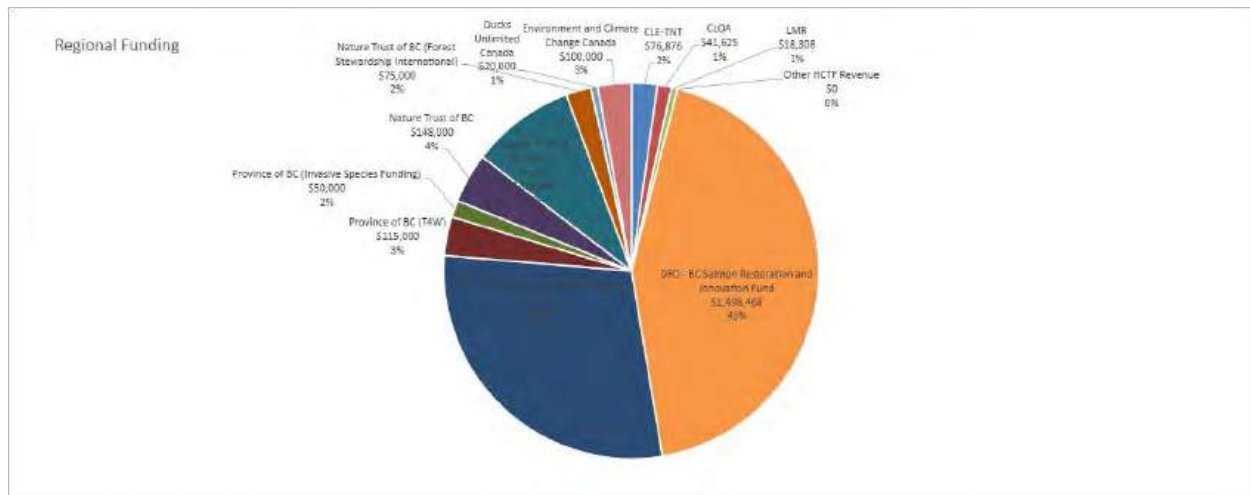


Figure 1 West Coast Region, Year 1 (2025-26), Regional Funding Results

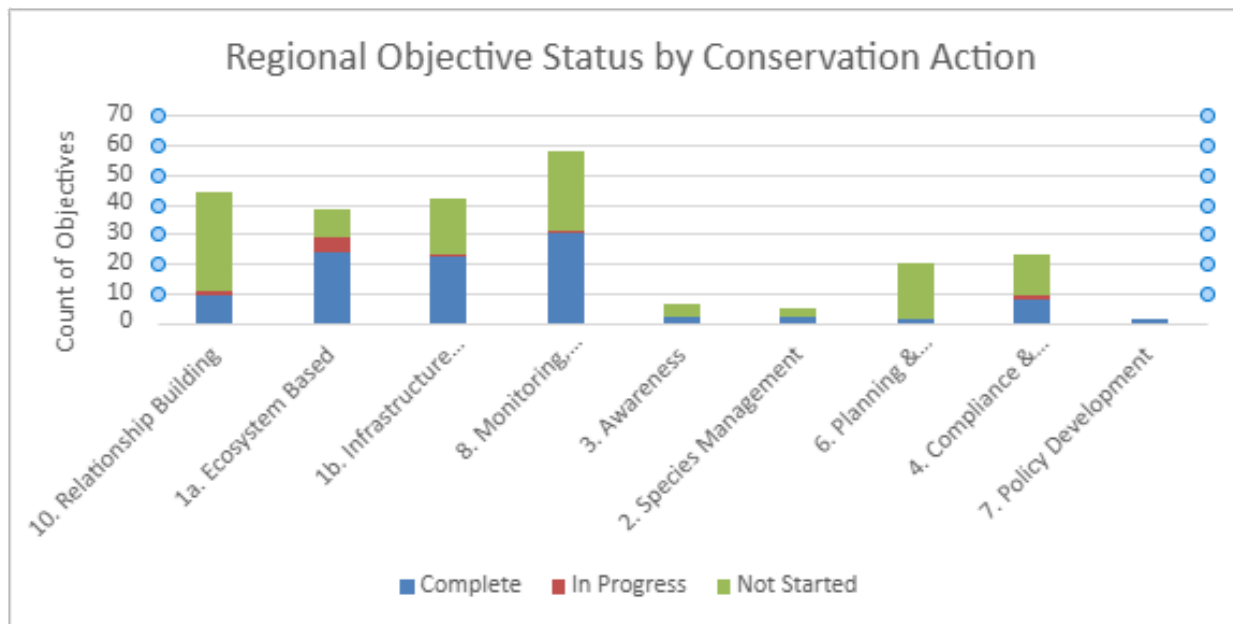


Figure 2 West Coast Region, Year 1 (2025-26), Regional Objective Status by Conservation Action

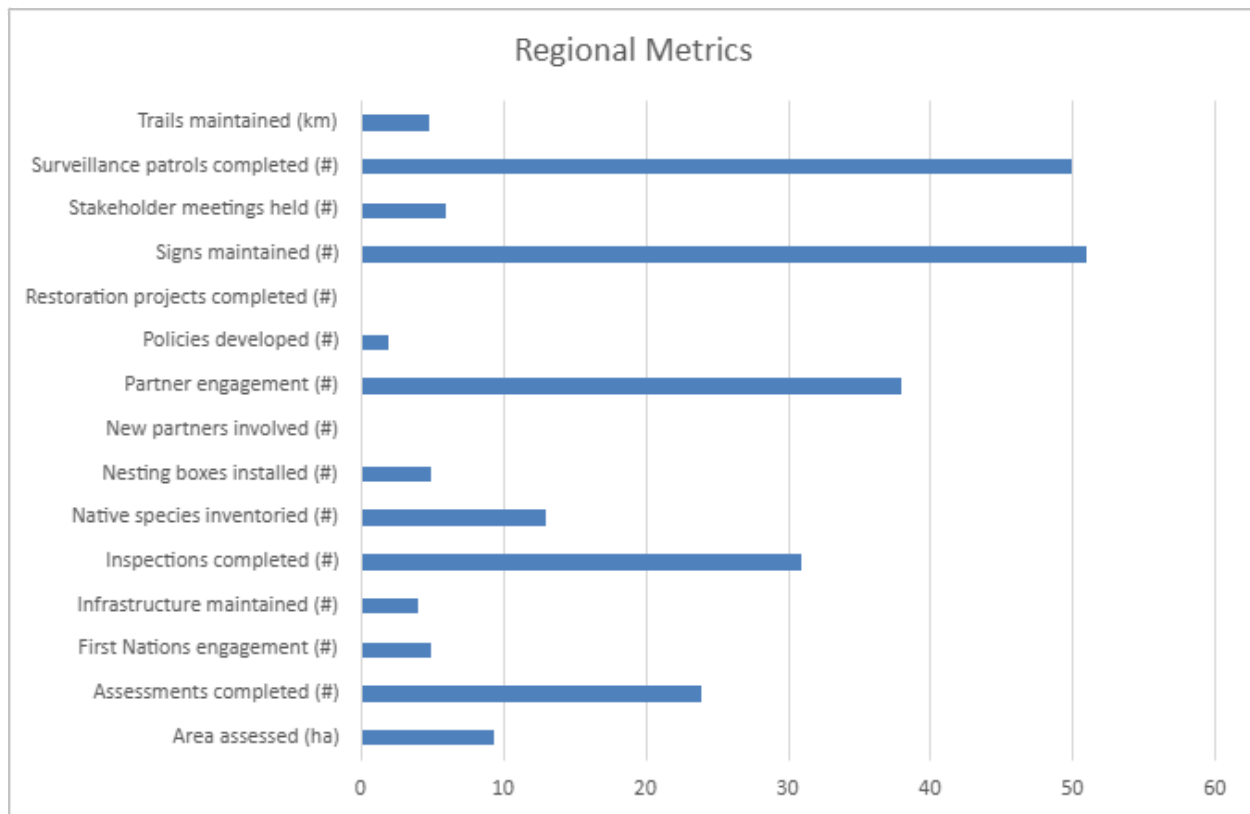


Figure 3 West Coast Region, Year 1 (2025-26), Regional Metrics – Note: Invasive Plant Removals (63,506m²), and Area Monitored (1,417.18ha), and Other categories skewed results of this table and have been removed to better reflect all other regional metrics.

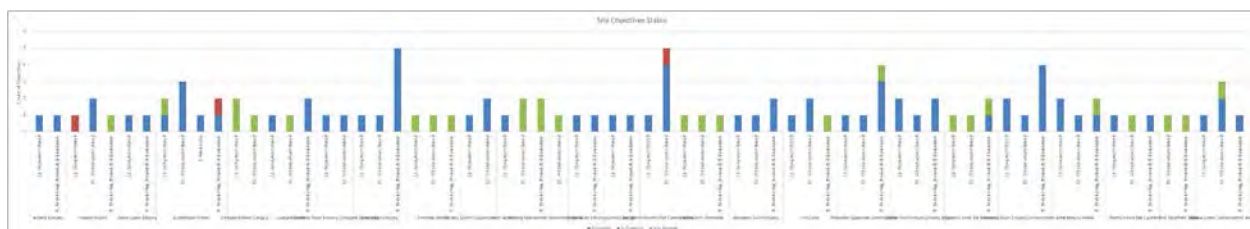


Figure 4 West Coast Region, Year 1 (2025-26), Site Objective Status

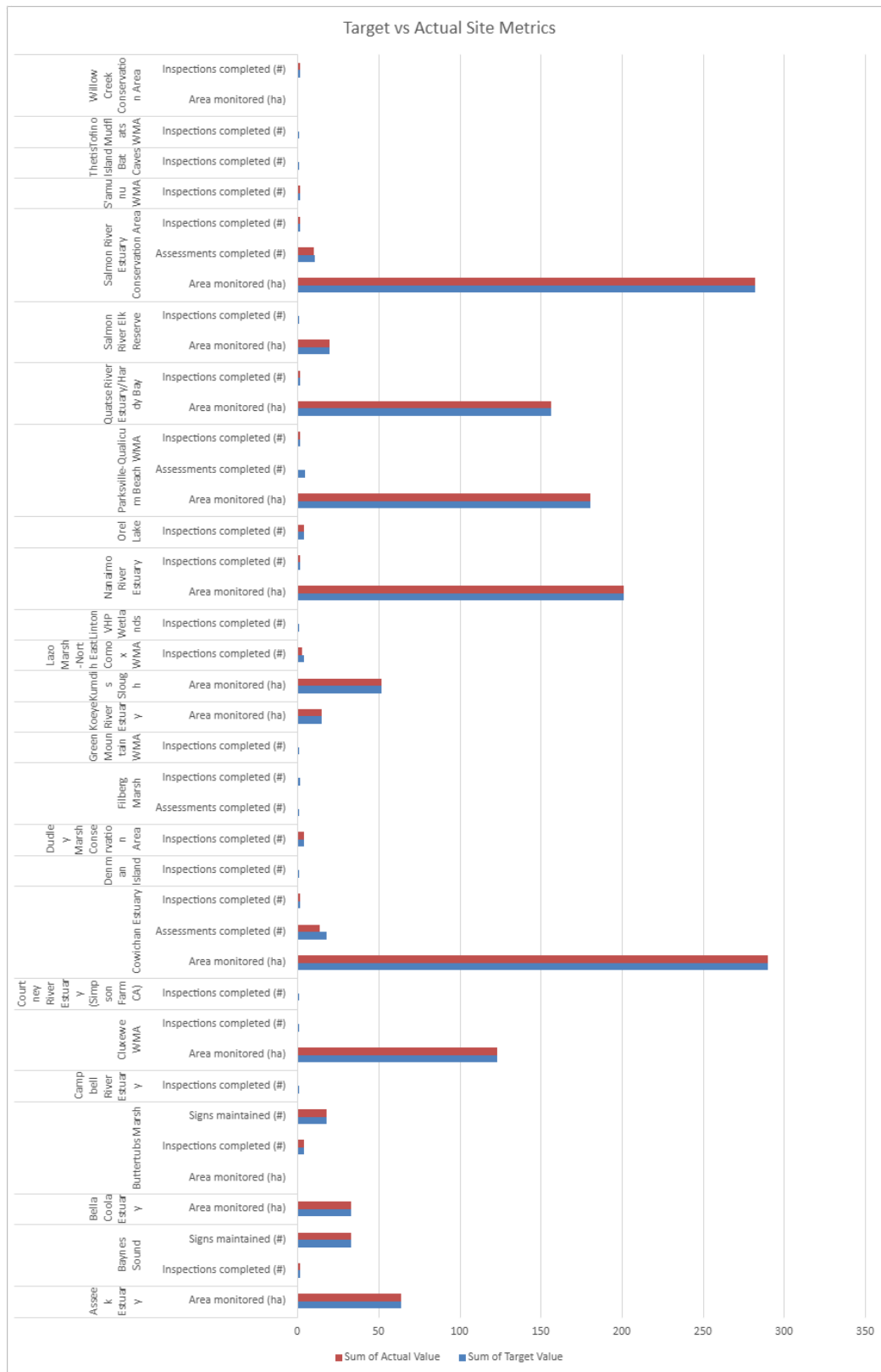


Figure 5 West Coast Region, Year 1 (2025-26), Target vs Actual Site Metrics

Highlights

Cowichan River Estuary Conservation Area Restoration Project

One of the largest restoration/revitalization projects on the BC coast, this project encompasses over 70 hectares with the removal of approximately 1,700 meters of dike that currently isolates farmlands resulting in the reconnection of estuarine channels and revitalize Indigenous food systems. This vast and complex project requires close partnership and support from Cowichan Tribes and a multitude of program partners including Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (Figure 6).

As part of the restoration process, the Hulutun Spulhxun/Tumuhw (Nurturing Gardens or nurse) was constructed within the Cowichan River Estuary Conservation Area. This 1.8 hectare nursery was planted with over 20,000 native plants for the purpose of propagating and establishing native vegetation throughout the restoration process. During the fall of 2025, staff and field crew of the West Coast Region completed phase 2 of the nursery expansion by constructing approximately 0.6 hectares, roughly 1/3 of the total nurse, of additional nurse beds and rows with mulch that were subsequently planted with native plants, grasses, shrubs, and trees (Figure 7). Additionally, a part-time coordinator was hired to oversee maintenance and coordinate events with the community and Cowichan Tribes for the nursery.

In February 2026, Phase 1 of restoration construction began onsite with one of several flood mitigation features to prepare for the dike removal. This feature includes a drainage swale to protect public roads/infrastructure as well as excavating a limited network of tidal channels across a portion of the site (Figure 8). Phase 1 is expected to continue into May 2026.

A story map with additional information, maps and photos can be found here:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/bca99120b6b54b0badcec58b23a6ea4e?item=5>



Figure 6 Cowichan Estuary restoration site with perimeter dike and isolated fields within



Figure 7 Hulitun Spulhxun/Tumuhw (Nurturing Gardens or nursey) phase 2



Figure 6 Cowichan Estuary with Phase 1 construction in foreground underway



South Coast Region



Conservation Lands O&M Program Annual Summary Report

Year 1, 2025-2028 Funding Cycle

Region: South Coast

Regional Value

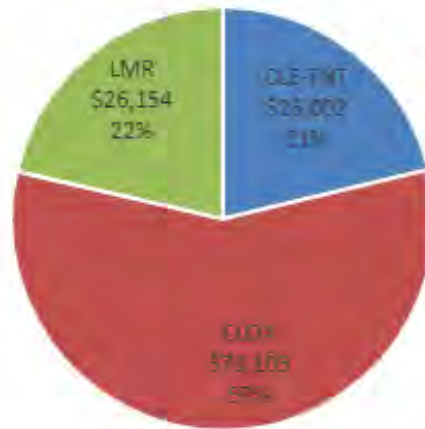
Most of the Lower Mainland region conservation projects focus on the Fraser River and its tributaries. The Fraser River, one of the largest rivers in the world, flows for the Rocky Mountains south and west to the Fraser-Puget lowland and into the Pacific Ocean through the Strait of Georgia. The Fraser River delta is highly productive from an agricultural perspective due to the sand and silt that is carried down the river and deposited in the Strait of Georgia. As a result, this area has been heavily altered due to human development and is the socio-economic centre of the province.

The Fraser River delta supports an incredible level of diversity for fish and wildlife. The Fraser River is the world's largest salmon-producing river, and the estuaries provide critical resting areas for juvenile salmon migrating from fresh to saltwater. This area also provides important year-round habitat for many bird species and is a vital link in the Pacific Flyway, which supports over 1.5 million birds from three continents and 20 countries. The Boundary Bay, Sturgeon Bank, Roberts Bank, and South Arm Marshes Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) have been designated as Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network sites. The Fraser River estuary supports the largest wintering shorebird and waterfowl populations in Canada. Also, the area provides habitat for significant numbers of raptors and marine mammals.

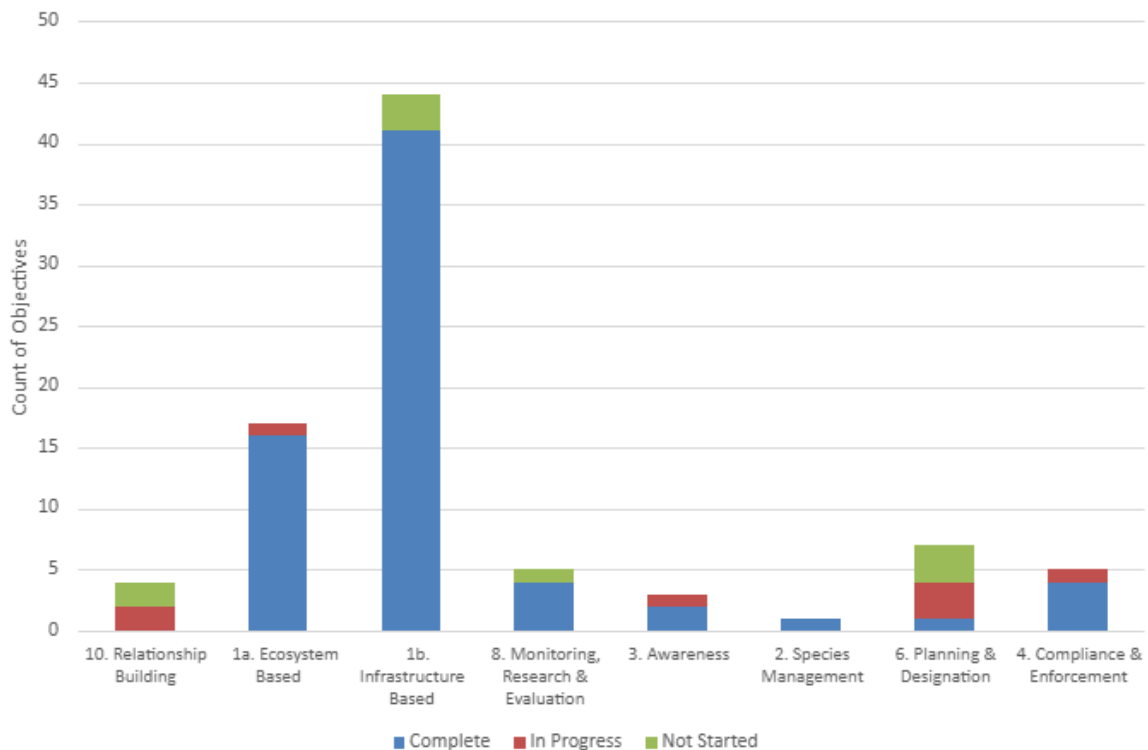
The South Coast Region contains 23 Conservation Land complexes, administered regionally, including several properties owned by the Nature Trust of British Columbia (NTBC).

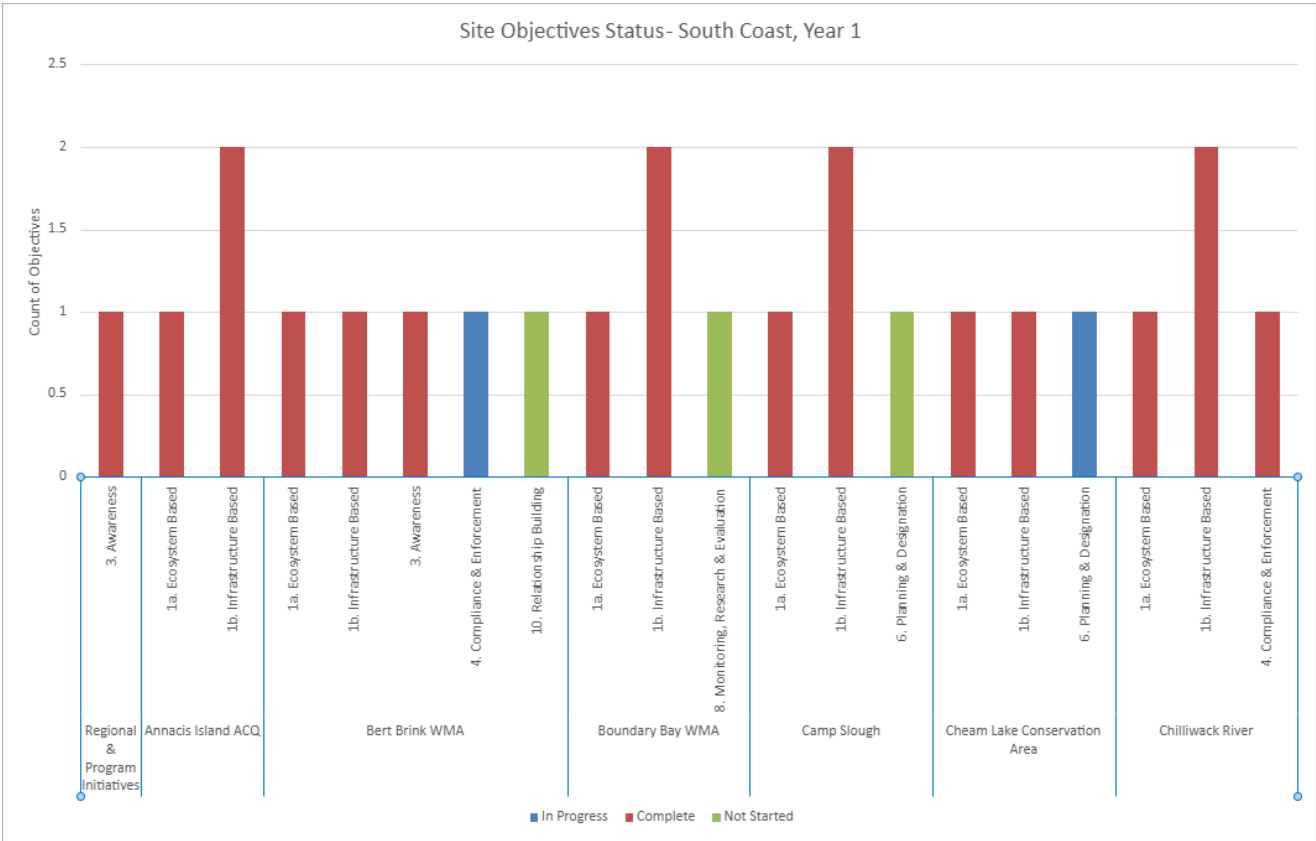
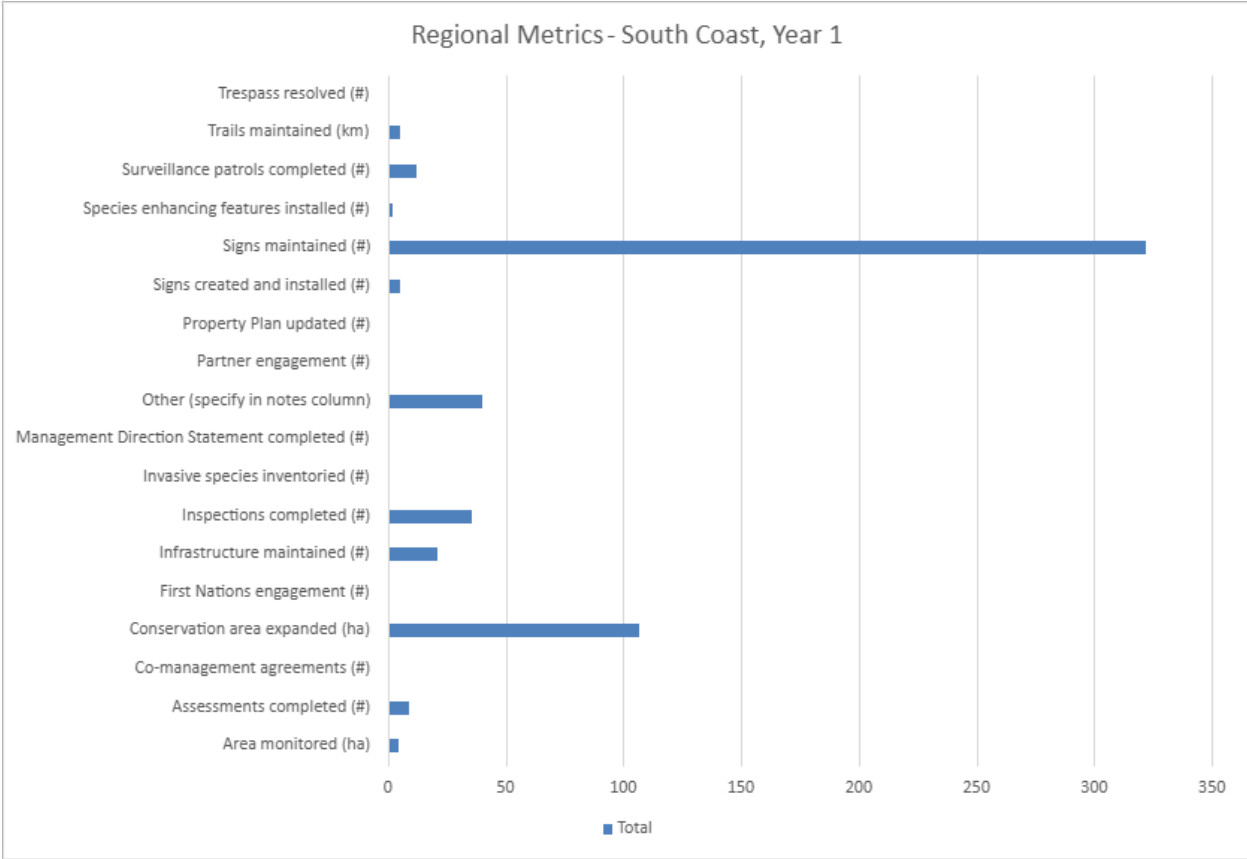
Results/Outcomes

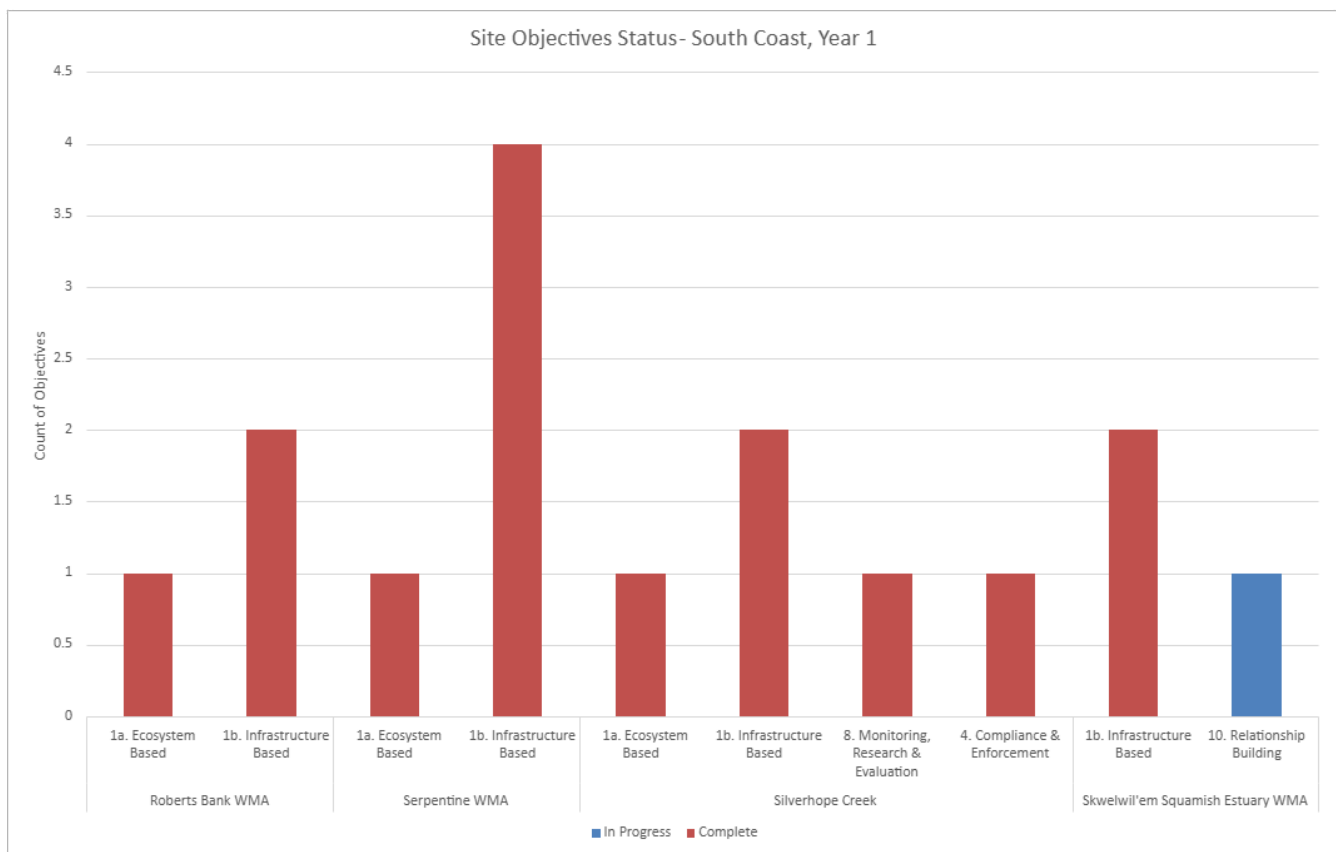
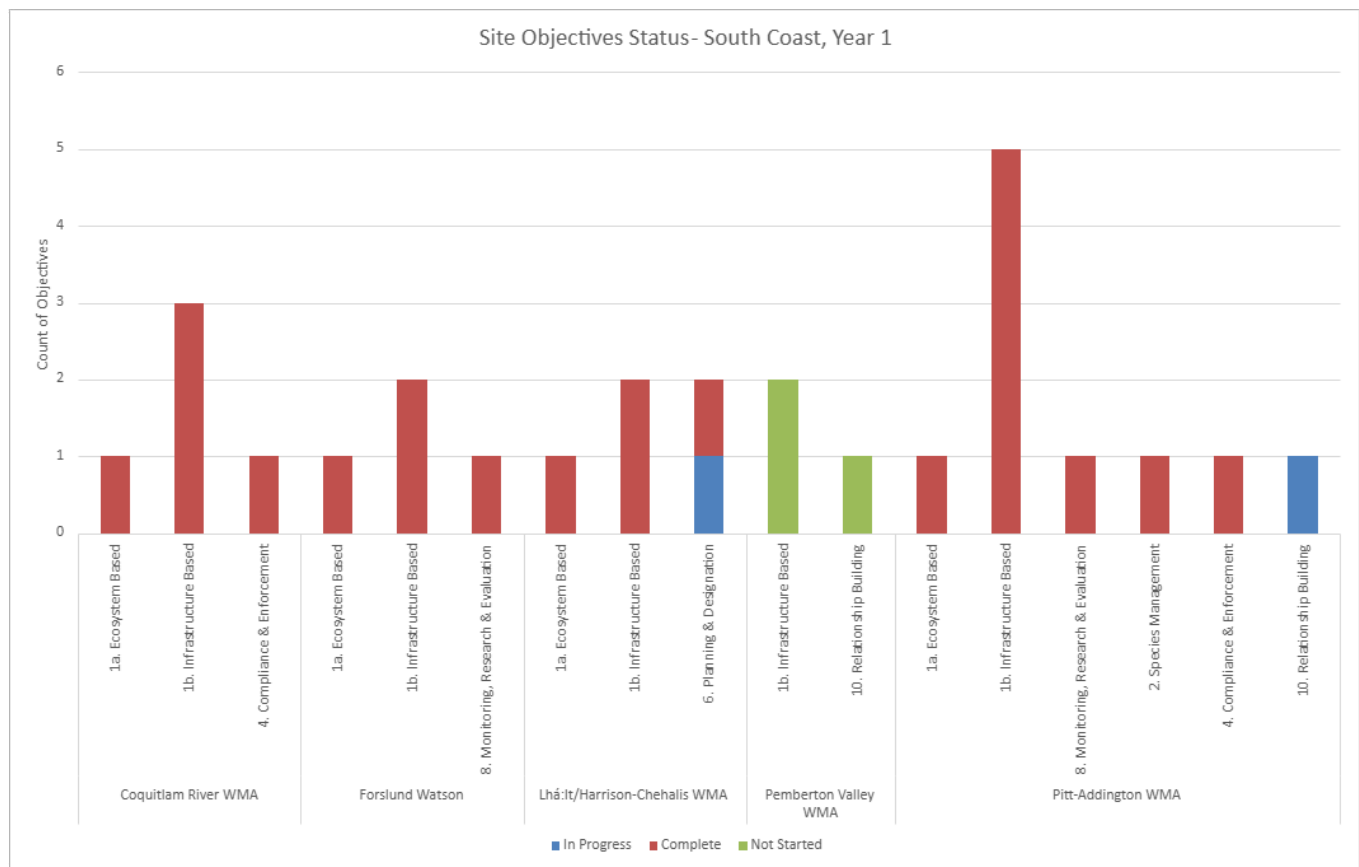
Regional Funding - South Coast, Year 1

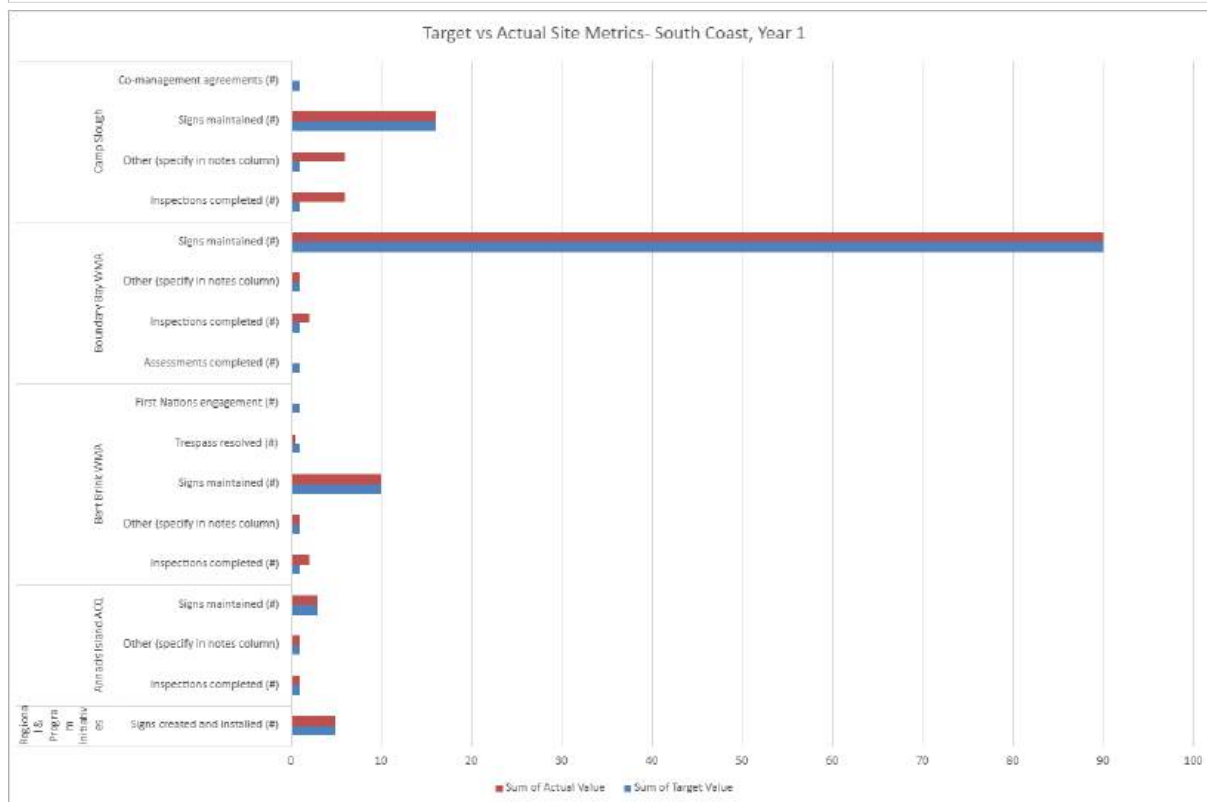
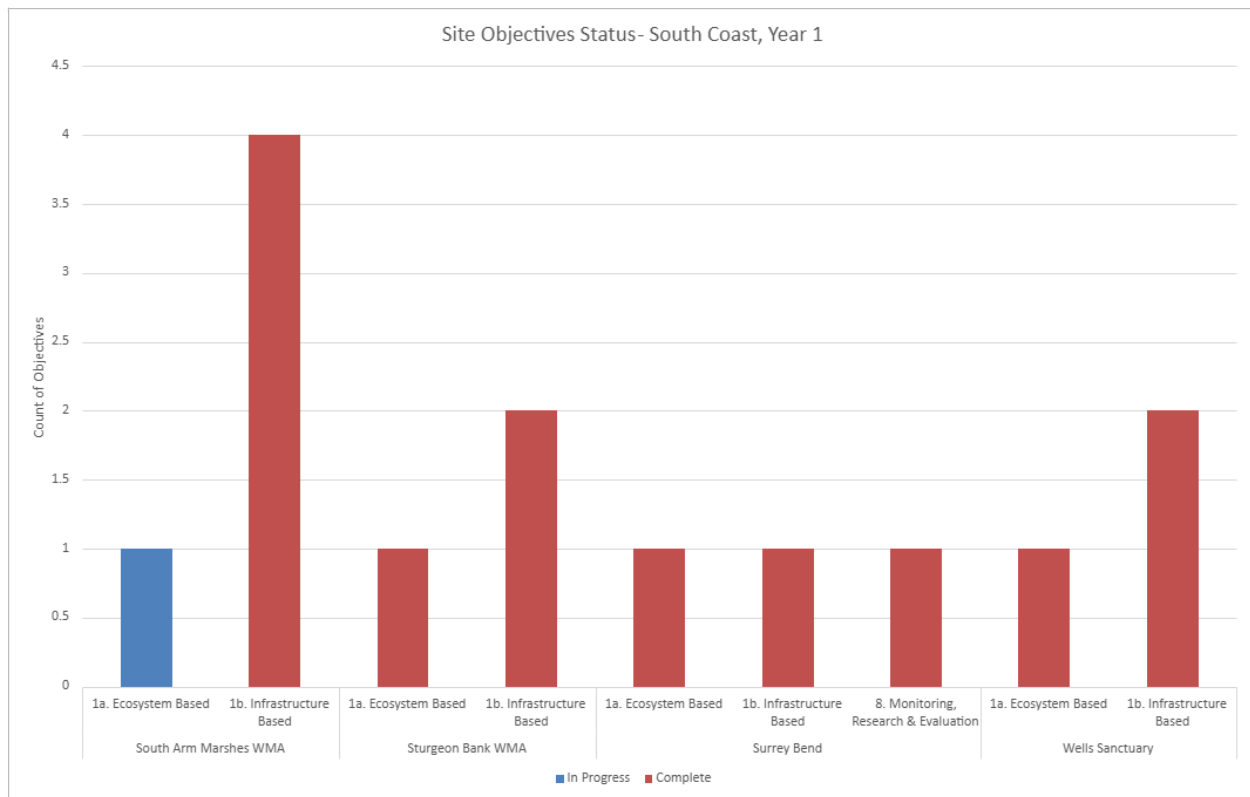


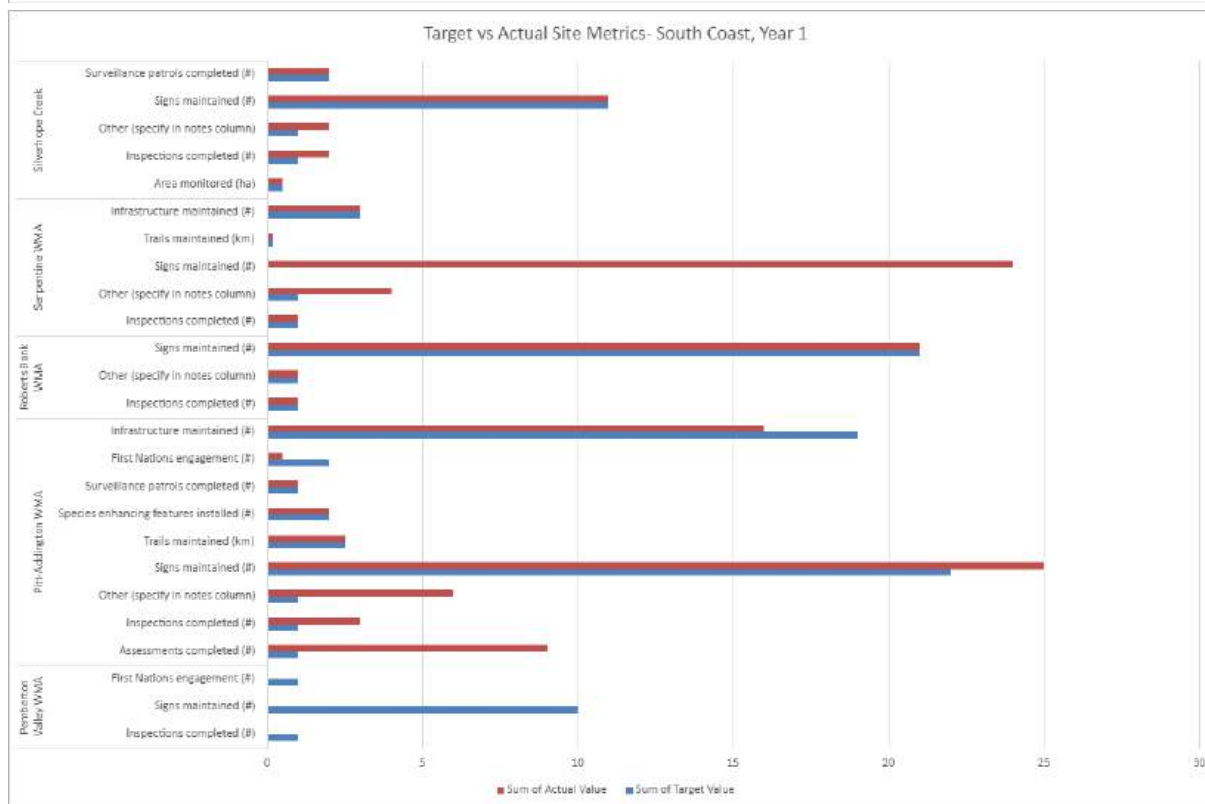
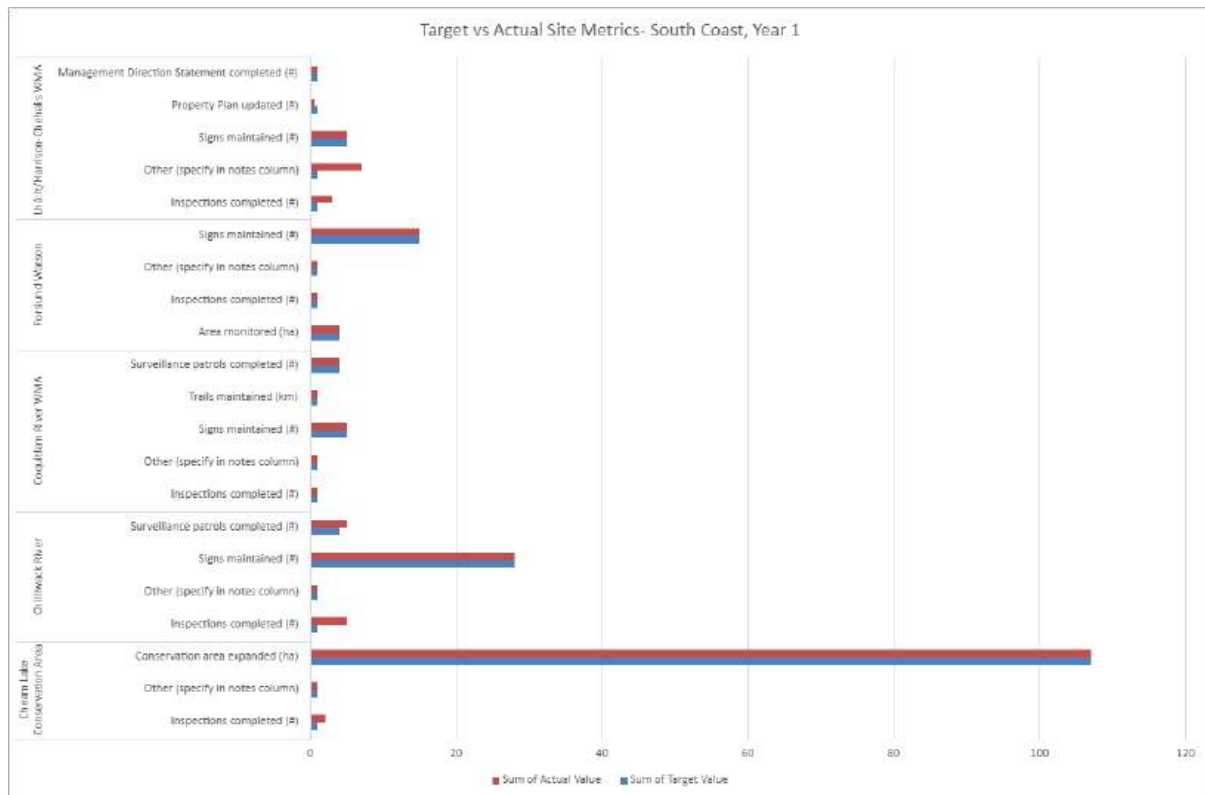
Regional Objective Status by Conservation Action- South Coast, Year 1

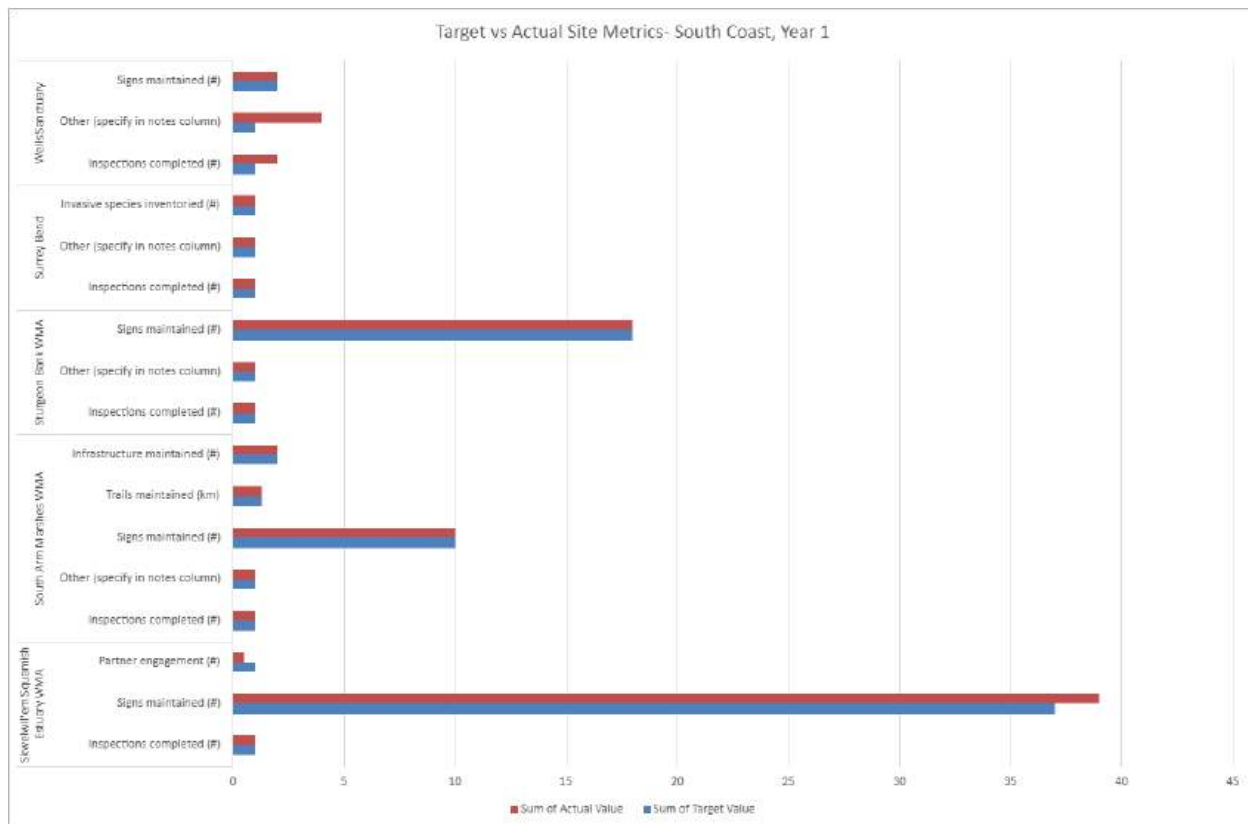












Highlights

The Conservation Lands in the South Coast region provide a wide variety of habitat values and ecosystem diversity, despite extreme pressures from development and human activity in the area. Maintenance of these conservation lands is critical to retain or improve ecosystem integrity for the wildlife that depend on these habitats. Regular assessment and maintenance support ecosystem resilience and help ensure that these properties are safe for public access. Regular land management activities include monitoring and treatment of invasive plants; assessment of ecological values; removal of rubbish from public access areas; and maintenance of signage for public information. Restoration and enhancement of Conservation Lands for habitat values ensures that these lands are optimal for use by the fish and wildlife that depend on them. This work includes invasive species management, planting of native species, western painted turtle beach maintenance at Pitt-Addington Marsh WMA, and wetland restoration at the Forslund-Watson Conservation Area in partnership with British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT).



The field crew removing dumped rubbish from Bert Brink WMA (left) and Lhá:lt/Harrison-Chehalis WMA (right)



The field crew installing solar tarp to control Butterfly bush at the Chilliwack River Conservation Area.



Wetland construction at Forslund-Watson Conservation Area in partnership with BCIT (Photo on left: during construction; right: Photo on right: three months post-construction).



The field crew clearing vegetation from the Western painted turtle beach at Pitt-Addington Marsh WMA.





Thompson Okanagan Region



Conservation Lands O&M Program Annual Summary Report

Year 1, 2025-2028 Funding Cycle

Region: Thompson Okanagan

Regional Value

The Thompson Okanagan Region has a dry, continental climate, as it lies in the rain shadow of the Coast and Cascade Mountain ranges. Vegetation varies from Engelmann spruce and lodgepole pine at subalpine elevations, Douglas-fir at lower elevations, and ponderosa pine, bunchgrass, and sagebrush at the valley bottom. These vegetation zones are in relatively close proximity to one another, resulting in extremely rich biological diversity in a small area.

The Thompson and Nicola landscapes in the north and east of the region vary from the Cariboo Mountains in Wells Gray Provincial Park to rolling grasslands and the river valleys of the North and South Thompson Rivers that merge in Kamloops and reach the Fraser River in Lytton. The region also extends beyond into Lillooet and the surrounding Coast Mountains through the Bridge River valley which flows from snowfields in the Coastal Mountains and joins the Fraser River near Lillooet. The landscape has more than 300 lakes, sage-dressed hills, rolling grasslands, looming mountains and alpine valleys. The grassland areas north of Kamloops Lake are recognized for their importance to wildlife, primarily California bighorn sheep, mule deer and many species at risk.

The Okanagan portion of the region, especially in the south, contains large numbers of unique flora and fauna, as it is the northern extension of the Columbia Plateau. Analysis has shown that the South Okanagan is both the top biotic rarity hotspot and the top species richness hotspot in British Columbia. It has more federally listed species at risk than any other area of the province, and more provincially Red-listed and Blue-listed species than elsewhere. Furthermore, with some 303 species of birds recorded from the Okanagan, and similar richness in other animals and plants, many species are found here and nowhere else in Canada (Scudder 2006).

Human development over the past century has resulted in dramatic reductions in native habitat. Grasslands, and the antelope-brush ecosystem in particular, have been greatly

impacted. Over the past 15 years, the antelope-brush ecosystem has been reduced in area by over 65%, with current loss estimated at 2% per year. Channelization of the Okanagan River for flood control in the 1950s reduced its associated marshland by 85 to 90%, seriously impacting riparian habitat viability in the region. With population expected to double in the next 25 years, habitat in the Okanagan will become increasingly endangered over time.

The Nature Trust of British Columbia (NTBC) has been working in the Okanagan area since 1971. To date, 25 properties have been secured with the help of many funding partners, totaling over 5,247 hectares. These conservation holdings are particularly contiguous, providing habitat corridors on a landscape scale.

Results/Outcomes

- Pivot Tables & Charts

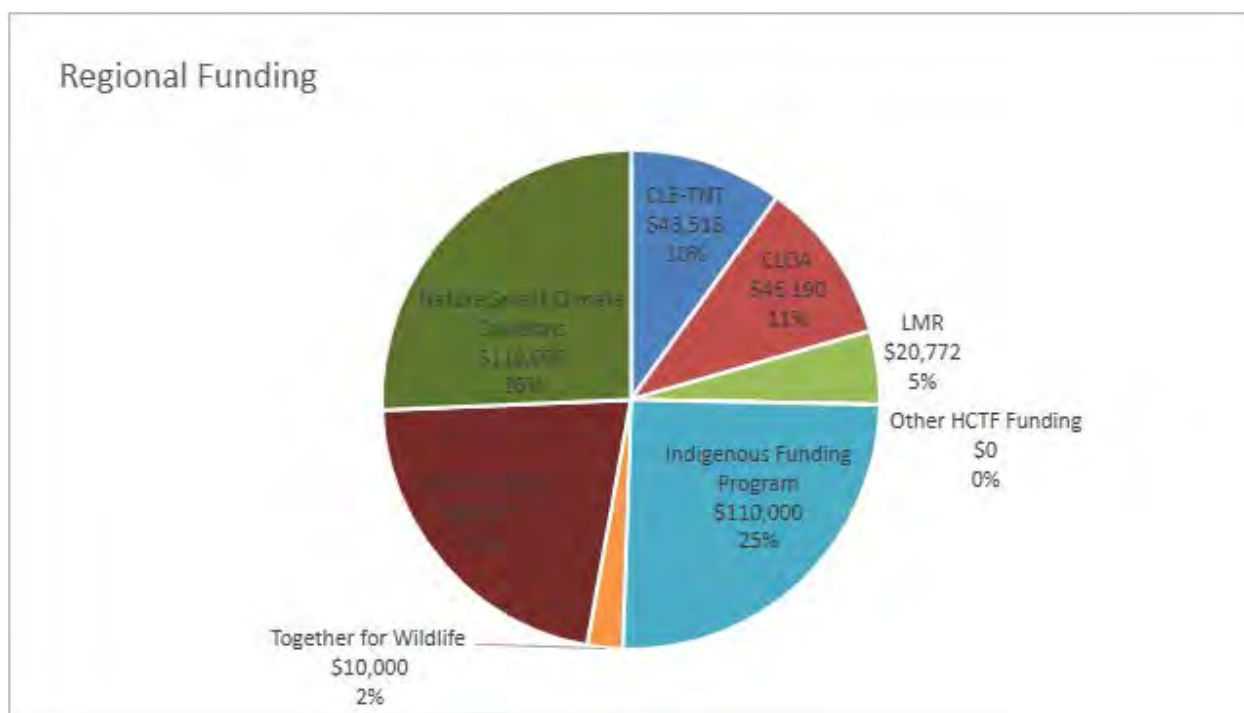


Figure 1. Regional Funding, Thompson Okanagan Region, 2025-26, Year 1 of HCTF O&M Funding

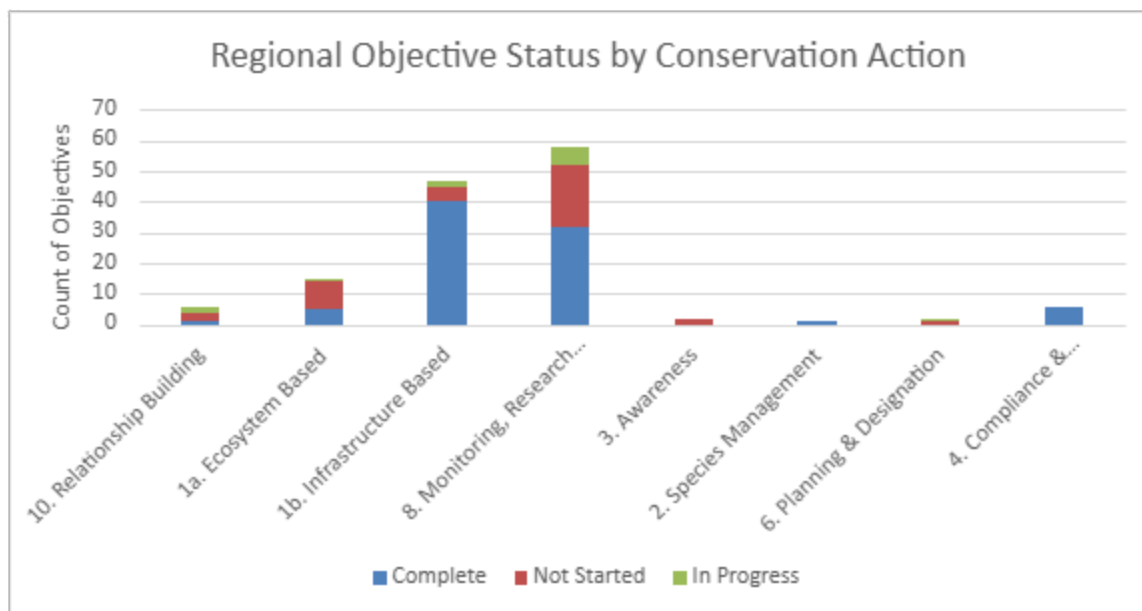


Figure 2. Regional Objective Status, Thompson Okanagan Region, 2025-26, Year 1 of HCTF O&M Funding

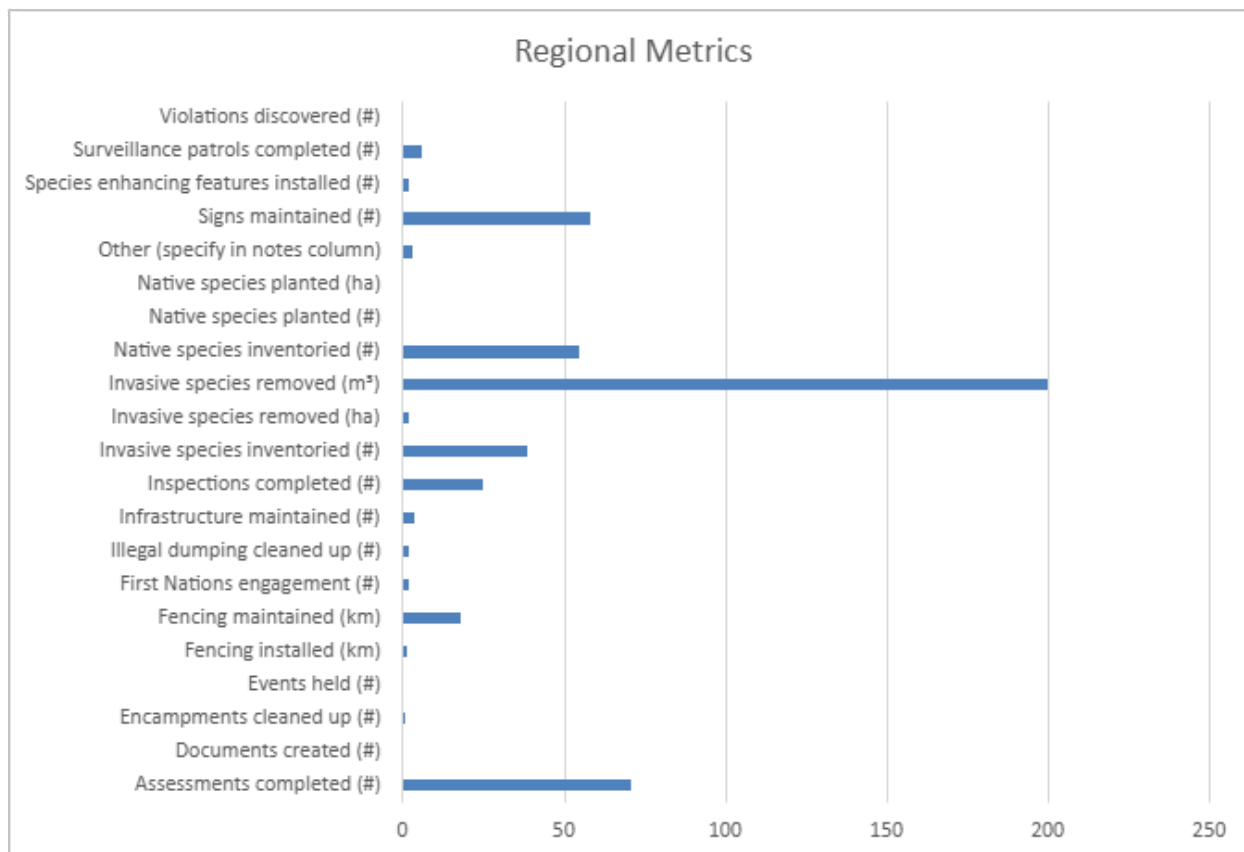


Figure 3. Regional Metrics, Thompson Okanagan Region, 2025-26, Year 1 of HCTF O&M Funding

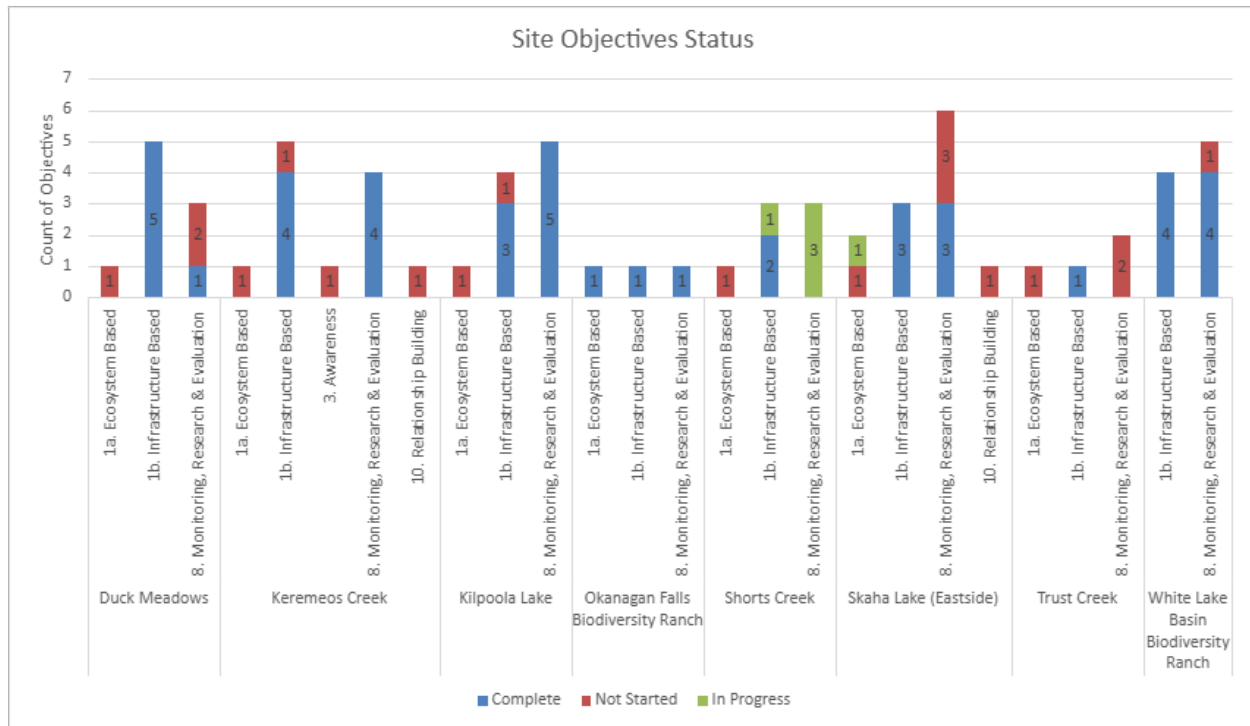


Figure 4. Site Objective Status, Conservation Lands managed by NTBC Thompson Okanagan Region excluding Vaseux Lake, 2025-26, Year 1 of HCTF O&M Funding

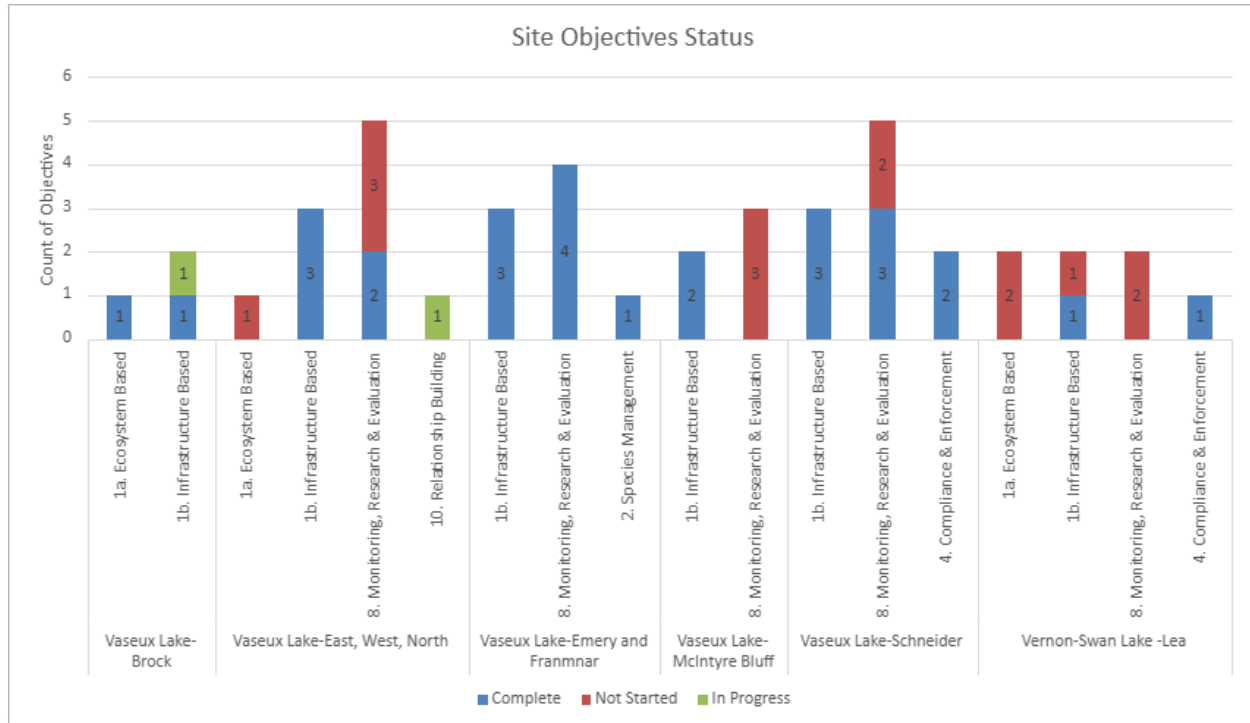


Figure 5. Site Objective Status, Conservation Lands managed by NTBC at Vaseux Lake, 2025-26, Year 1 of HCTF O&M Funding

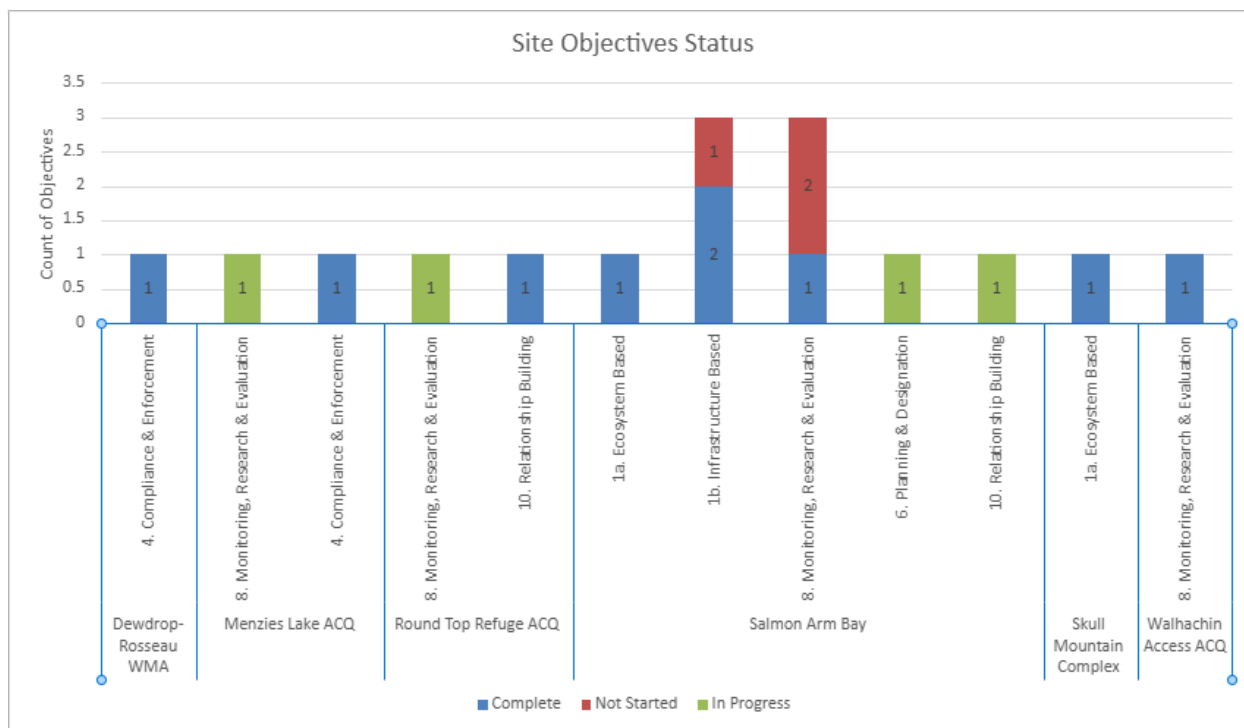


Figure 6. Site Objective Status, Conservation Lands managed by WLRs, Thompson Region, 2025-26, Year 1 of HCTF O&M Funding

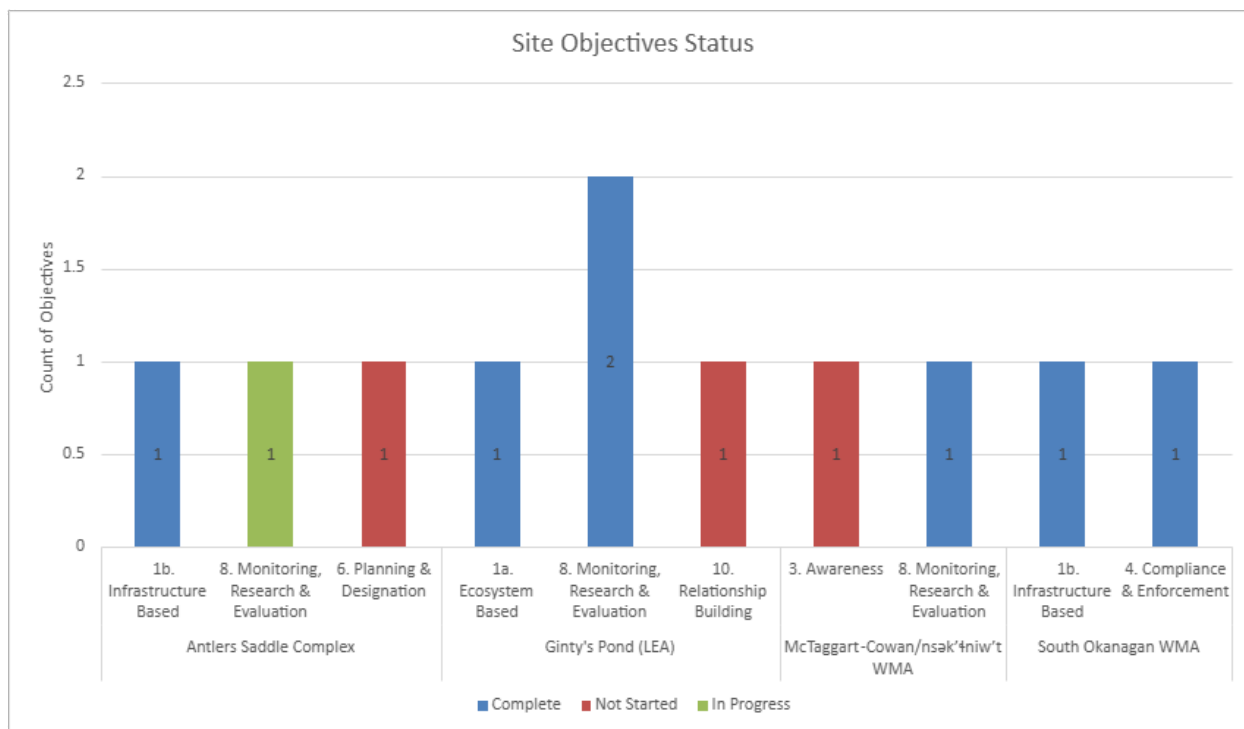


Figure 7. Site Objective Status, Conservation Lands managed by WLRs, Okanagan Region, 2025-26, Year 1 of HCTF O&M Funding

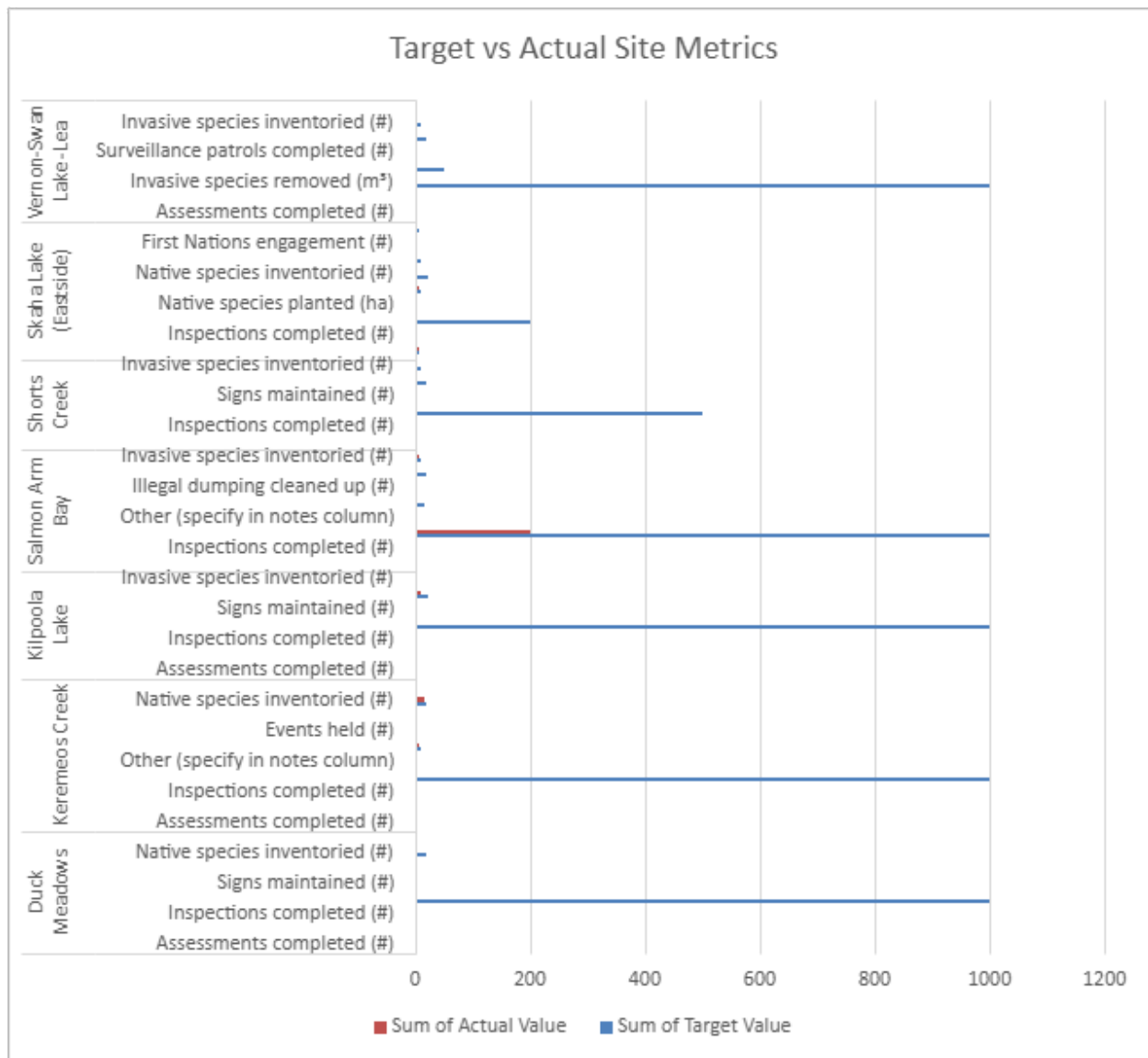


Figure 8. Site Metrics, Thompson Okanagan Region NTBC properties, Vernon-Swan Lake LEA, Shorts Creek, Skaha Eastside, Kilpoola Lake, Keremeos Creek, Duck Meadows, and Salmon Arm Bay, 2025-26, Year 1 of HCTF O&M Funding

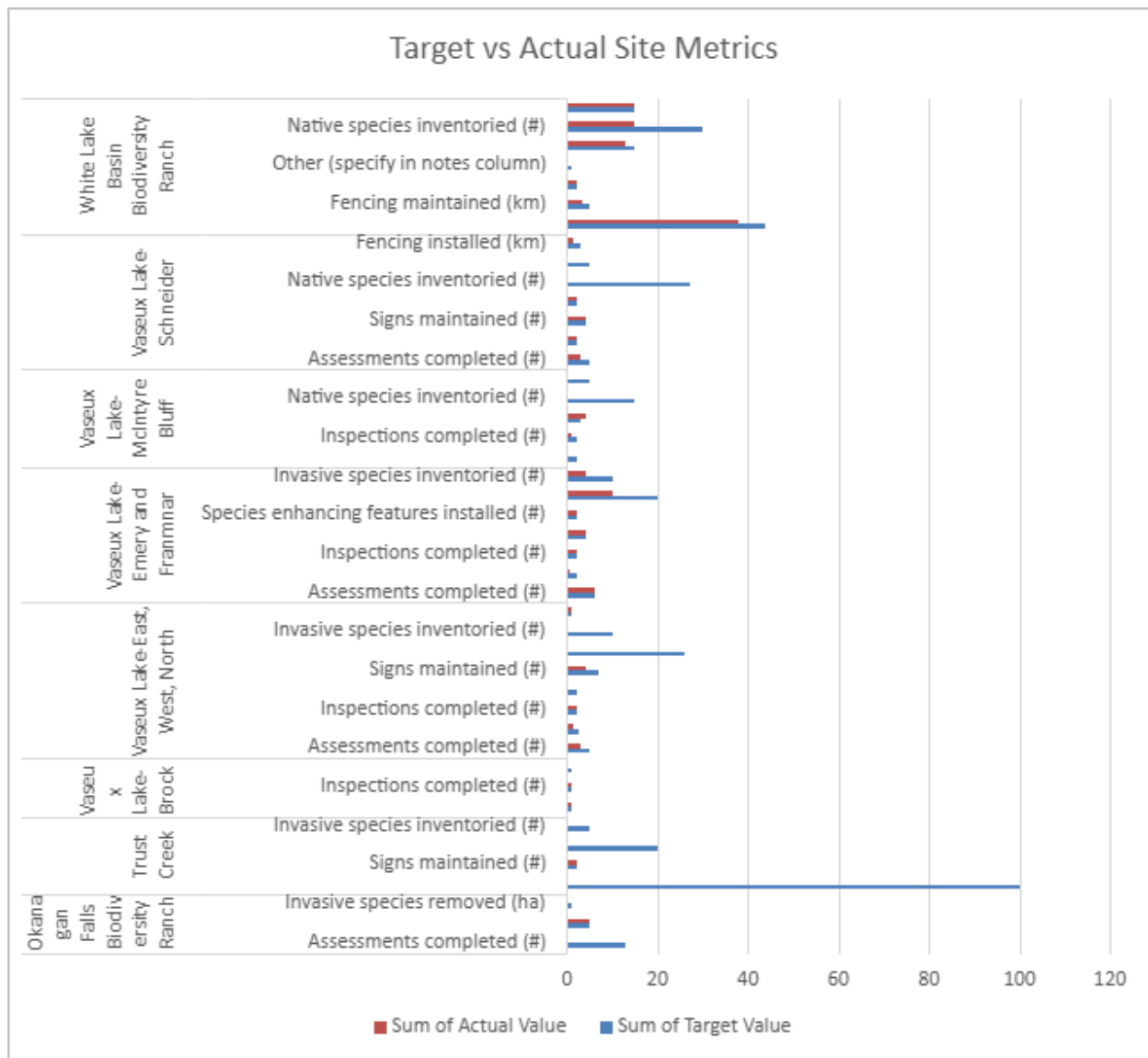


Figure 9. Site Metrics, Thompson Okanagan Region NTBC properties, excluding Vernon-Swan Lake LEA, Shorts Creek, Skaha Eastside, Kilpoola Lake, Keremeos Creek, Duck Meadows, 2025-26, Year 1 of HCTF O&M Funding



Figure 10. Site Metrics, Thompson Okanagan Region WLRS properties, 2025-26, Year 1 of HCTF O&M Funding

Highlights

nʔaʕṣ̓w̓t Ginty's Pond (LEA)

nʔaʕṣ̓w̓t Ginty's Pond (LEA) is a 6.3 ha wetland, an old oxbow of the Similkameen River. Southern Interior Land Trust (SILT) acquired this property in 1990 from the family of Ginty Cawston, a local pioneer in Cawston, BC along the Similkameen River. SILT leased the property to the Province of BC for management. The property is within smelqmix (Lower Similkameen Indian Band – LSIB) territory. Together with the British Columbia Wildlife Federation (BCWF) this group has engaged in collaborative wetland restoration planning and implementation since 2021 to return the near monoculture of cattail (*Typha latifolia*) with little open water, to a pond of mostly open water, with cattail fringe. Phase 1 was completed in fall of 2022, re-establishing about 1.2 ha of open-water and 0.8 ha of newly planted riparian shrub-thicket habitat. Phase 2 was completed in fall of 2024, creating open-water and shrub-thicket habitat in a further 1.7 ha. During the 2024 works, the planning team noticed cattail encroaching into the restored areas and developed a strategy to mow cattail from the fringe of the open water habitat while the other planted shrubs and cottonwood establish themselves.

In September 2025, cattail below the high-water level of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 restoration areas were mowed using brush saws. About 2 ha was treated in 2025 with the densest cattail located in a 3-4 m fringe below the high-water mark. In addition to cattail removal, 20 kg of clipped Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) and Yellow-flag Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) seed pods were removed and were disposed of in a Regional District of Okanagan - Similkameen landfill.

Western Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*), Columbia Spotted Frog (*Rana luteiventris*), Pacific Tree Frog (*Pseudacris regilla*), and Terrestrial Gartersnake (*Thamnophis elegans*) have all been observed in the Phase 1 and 2 areas since restoration, and in 2025, a Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*) was observed at the Phase 2 pool.



Figure 11. Cattail mowed area 2025 overlain on fall 2024 image (higher water).



Cattail encroachment, June 2023



Abundant Carex in Phase 1, Sept. 2025

Figure 12. Similar view of Phase 1 in June 2023, and September 2025 showing the impact of cattail management actions.

Walhachin Access ACQ

Walhachin Access ACQ is a small 5.07 ha property located on the northern bank of Thompson River between the river and the Canadian National Railway (CNR) right-of-way. This ACQ was purchased from the current adjacent landowner in 1987 by the Habitat Conservation Fund using

the Highland Valley Enhancement Account. Walhachin Access ACQ is within the unceded traditional territory of the Secwepemc Nation.

The purpose of this ACQ is (i) achieve parks and outdoor recreation management goals, (ii) maintain public access to Thompson River fishery at Walhachin Crossing, and (iii) preserve riparian habitat in an arid environment. At the time of acquisition there were limited public access opportunities to the regionally significant river trout angling experiences in Thompson River downstream of Savona to Ashcroft.

In 2025 BC Conservation Foundation crew was contracted to intensively survey the site for puncturevine (*Tribulus terrestris*) and other invasive species. Puncturevine is well known in the South Okanagan but was only recently detected in two locations in the Thompson Region, Steelhead Provincial Park and the Skeetchestn Rodeo Grounds.

These locations are only 12 km and 6 km from Walhachin, so an intensive invasive plant survey was completed in 2025. Fortunately, no puncturevine was found at this time and regular surveys will continue to be completed in the future.

The 2025 survey found some roadside garbage and yard waste dumping, some metal dumping and dense growth of goji berries / matrimony vine (*Lycium barbarum*) runs the length of the conservation land. It is found throughout but forms dense walls along the dirt road.

Leafy spurge is forming dense patches from the bridge west to the boat launch, then found sporadically throughout.



Figure 13: Walhachin Access ACQ, West of Savona, BC.



Figure 14: View from the shoreline (left) and leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) on site.

South Okanagan Wildlife Management Area

South Okanagan Wildlife Management Area (SOWMA) consists of multiple discrete parcels covering 461 hectares between Vaseux Lake to Osoyoos in the south. Habitat protected within this WMA includes riparian habitat along the Okanagan River, as well as upland habitat including antelope-brush dominated benchlands. In 2025-26, a BCCF crew visited 25 of the SOWMA parcels, focusing on parcels less likely to be visited by government staff. This work identified trespass issues and provided signage and fencing recommendations to be addressed in the future.

One SOWMA parcel in particular has had a history of unauthorized camping and garbage dumping. Work was done in 2026 to improve the fence and gate at the main access point to this parcel at Oliver Mountain. This work was done in partnership with Osoyoos Indian Band's forest management company, Nk'mip Forestry LLP. This threat abatement work is the first step in a longer collaboration with the Conservation Lands program, Osoyoos Indian Band, and the BC Ministry of Forest's Range program working towards restoration of priority shrub-steppe habitats within SOWMA.



Figure 15. New vehicle access from landfill road that was discovered through the SOWMA parcel near the Oliver Landfill during the BCCF work, 2026.



Figure 16. New fence and sign installed in 2026 blocking the unauthorized access at the SOWMA parcel near the Oliver Landfill.



Figure 17. Upgraded fenceline at Oliver Mountain. Work was done in 2026 to prevent unauthorized access to this South Okanagan Wildlife Management Area parcel.

Vaseux Lake Emery Franmar

Over 100 school kids from School District 67 joined NTBC staff at Vaseux Lake – Emery Franmar. Students aided in the planting of 170 antelope-brush, helping to improve and restore approximately 0.75 hectares of this threatened ecosystem. While on site students learned about NTBC and what we do to protect and conserve sensitive habitats like the Antelope-brush needle and thread grass ecosystem as well as other land management tools staff use such as wildlife cameras to monitor conservation lands.



Figure 18: SD 67 School groups at Vaseux Lake Emery learning about the Antelope-brush ecosystem they are about to restore!



Figure 19: SD 67 school kids and NTBC staff installing a wildlife camera at Vaseux Lake - Emery

White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch

Staff from The Nature Trust of BC and Burrowing Owl Conservation Society co-led a Meadowlark Festival tour: *Working Together, Burrowing Owls and The Nature Trust of BC*. The sold-out tour took place at The White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch, and showcased the partnership between BOCS and NTBC to help restore burrowing owl populations in BC. Tour participants learned about NTBC's conservation efforts in the Okanagan, and how we partner with various organizations such as the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society to help restore habitat and re-introduce this charismatic owl back to the landscape. The tour guests were able to see burrowing owls utilizing the artificial burrows and meet 'Pluto' the demonstration owl. A few lucky tour participants also spotted a badger, however no one got a picture and we will have to keep this sighting as unconfirmed!

NTBC regional staff continue to monitor and collect wildlife camera data at various wildlife camera traps across the region, including assisting Thompson Rivers University and The Province of BC in their effort to collate underpass camera data along White Lake and Willowbrook roads that bisect the White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch (WLBBR). A total of 8 culvert style underpasses have been installed in the White Lake area; NTBC continues to assist with the monitoring of wildlife cameras and were lucky to find a badger on one of the cameras in 2025!



Figure 20: Wildlife Camera Photo of a Badger utilizing under pass at White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch



Figure 21: MeadowLark Festival tour participants spotting burrowing owls



Figure 22: Burrowing owl utilizing artificial burrows at White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch



Kootenay Boundary Region



Conservation Lands O&M Program Annual Summary Report

Year 1, 2025-2028 Funding Cycle

Region: Kootenay Boundary

Regional Value

The Kootenay region is world renowned for its scenic beauty and biological diversity. Forest, shrub, grassland and wetland ecosystems provide habitat for a wide variety of plant and animal species, including many species at risk.

From the heights of the Rocky Mountain Range, there are vantage points where you can overlook the entire expanse of the East Kootenay region of south-eastern British Columbia. The western horizon, viewed from these vantage points, is profiled by the Purcell Mountain range which is separated from the Rocky Mountains by an enormous valley known as the Rocky Mountain Trench. Two great rivers begin here; the Kootenay flowing south through dry grasslands, with signs of historic wildfires, and the Columbia flowing north through a series of long valley-bottom lakes and lush wetlands. This great river eventually swings south at Boat Encampment and continues south between the Monashee and Selkirk Mountain ranges in the West Kootenay and into the state of Washington at Waneta. Another important river, the Elk, begins its journey in the eastern Rocky Mountains and winds its way along towering cottonwoods to join the Kootenay immediately south of the small community of Baynes Lake.

The geographic diversity of the Kootenay landscape along with wide variations in climate has created conditions and habitats that support rare plant life, productive aquatic systems, and important populations of elk, deer, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, mountain goat and moose. Such abundant wildlife naturally attracts predators and consequently, wide-ranging carnivores are still common in the Kootenay's. Additionally, over 270 species of birds make use of the region, many on their migratory travels along the Pacific flyway.

From a rare species perspective, the grasslands, dry forests, montane forests, scattered wetlands, and cottonwood habitats in the Kootenay region provide unique habitats that support

rare species such as the American badger, Swainson's hawk, Northern leopard frog and Lewis' woodpecker.

However, the low elevation valleys of the Kootenays, which provide some of the most important habitat for a wide spectrum of wildlife, continue to be developed and attract increased levels of human settlement. In turn, this creates additional pressures on the landscape and impacts wildlife habitat and biodiversity values. Fortunately, the Ministry of Water Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) along with The Nature Trust of British Columbia (NTBC) have worked for decades to conserve ecologically significant habitats within the region. As a result, dozens of properties have been secured and, when combined with properties conserved by other land trusts and agencies, have resulted in a significant area of the Kootenay landscape being conserved in perpetuity.

Results/Outcomes

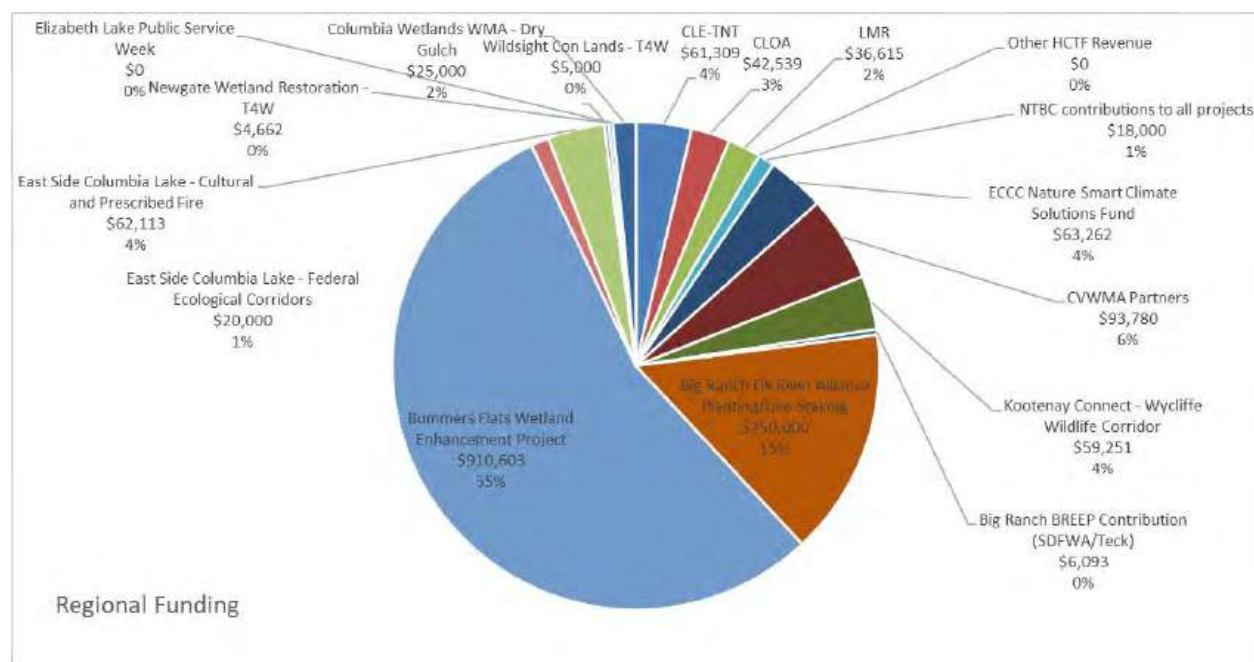


Figure 1. Year 1 Kootenay Region funding allocation.

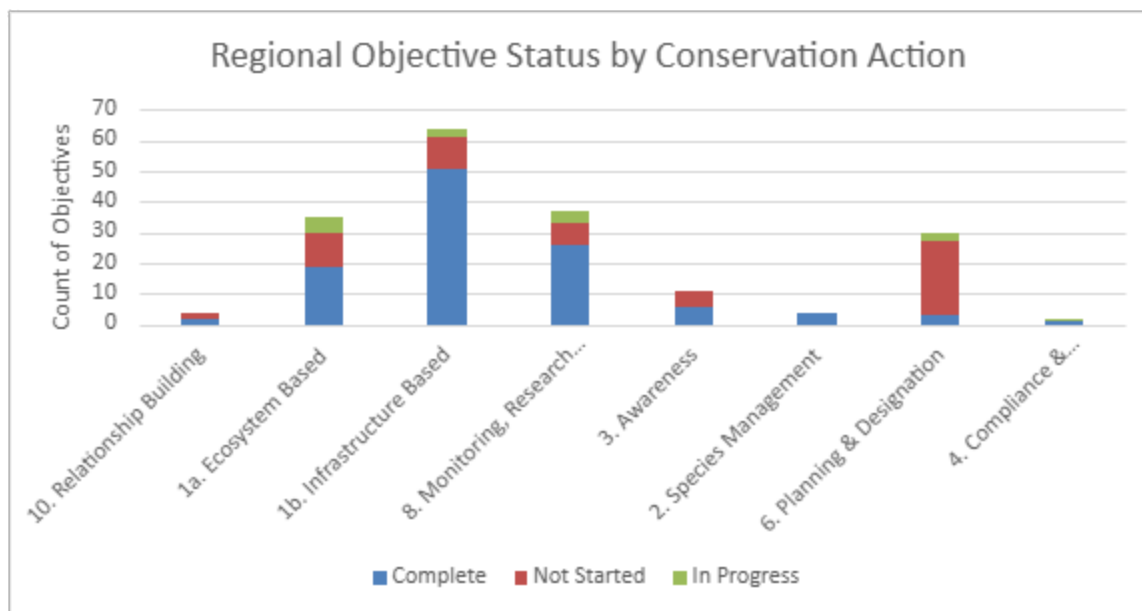


Figure 2. Kootenay Region Year 1 status of conservation objectives.

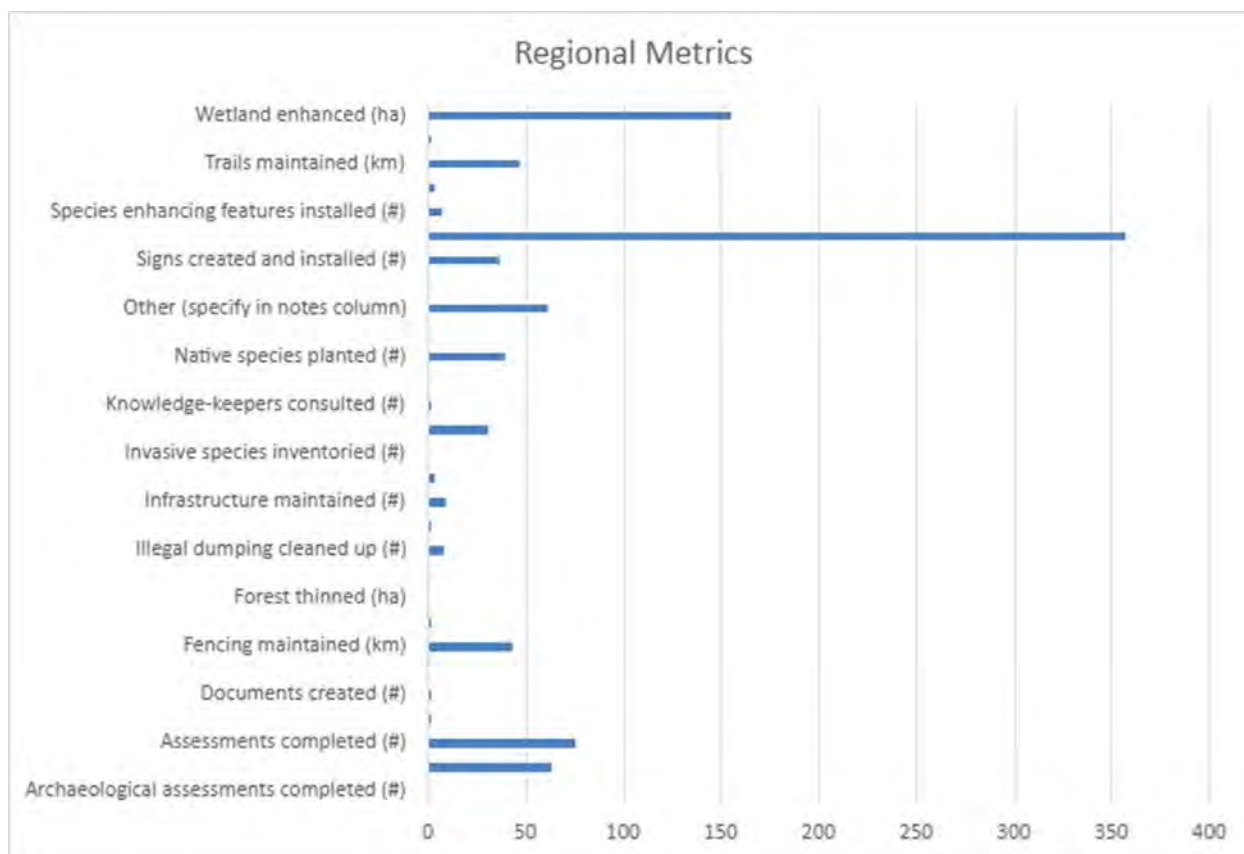
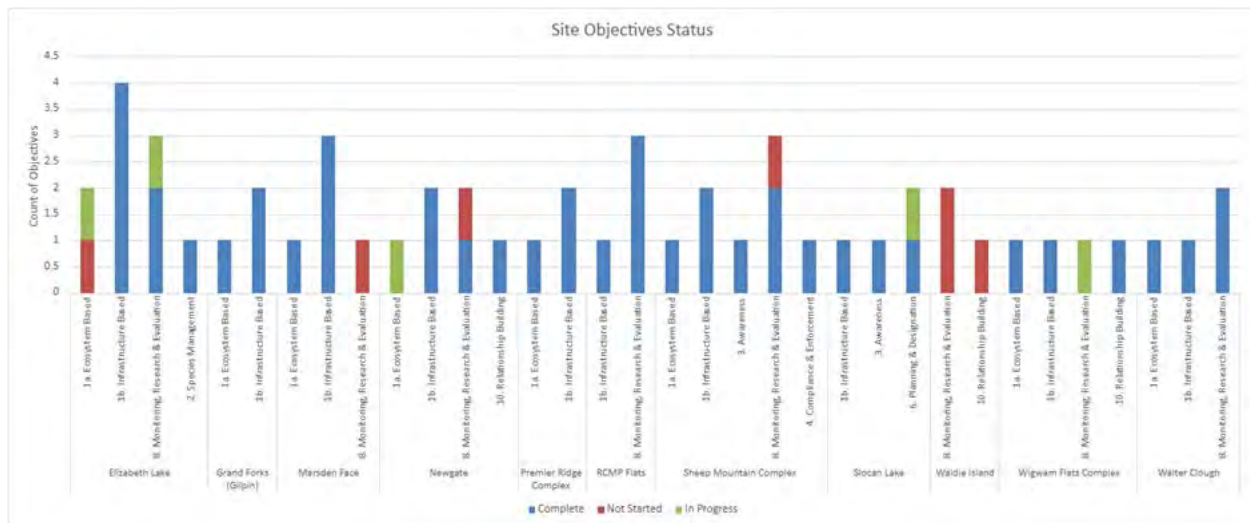
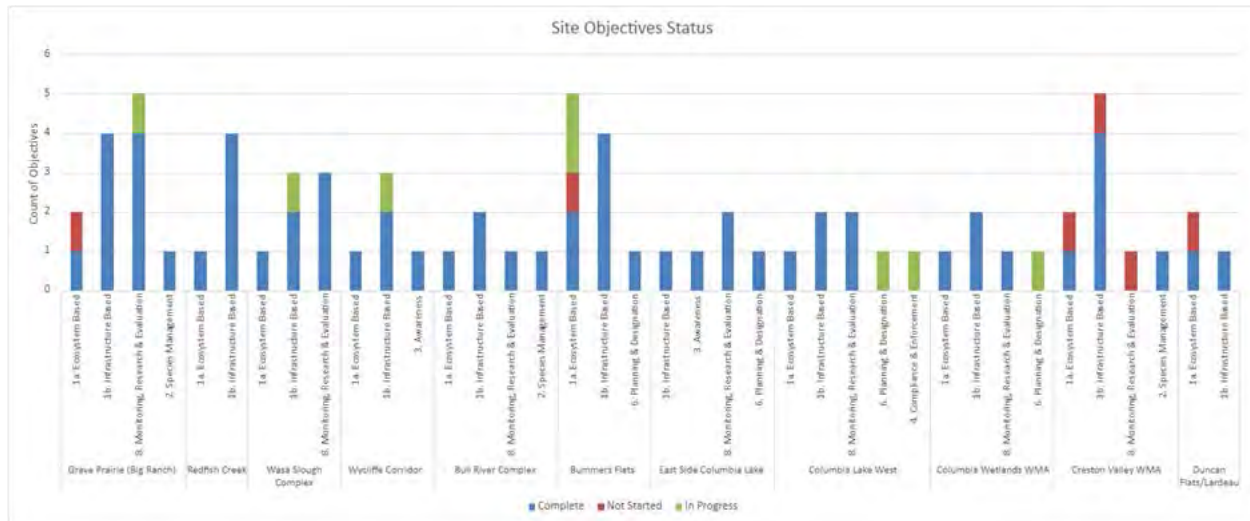
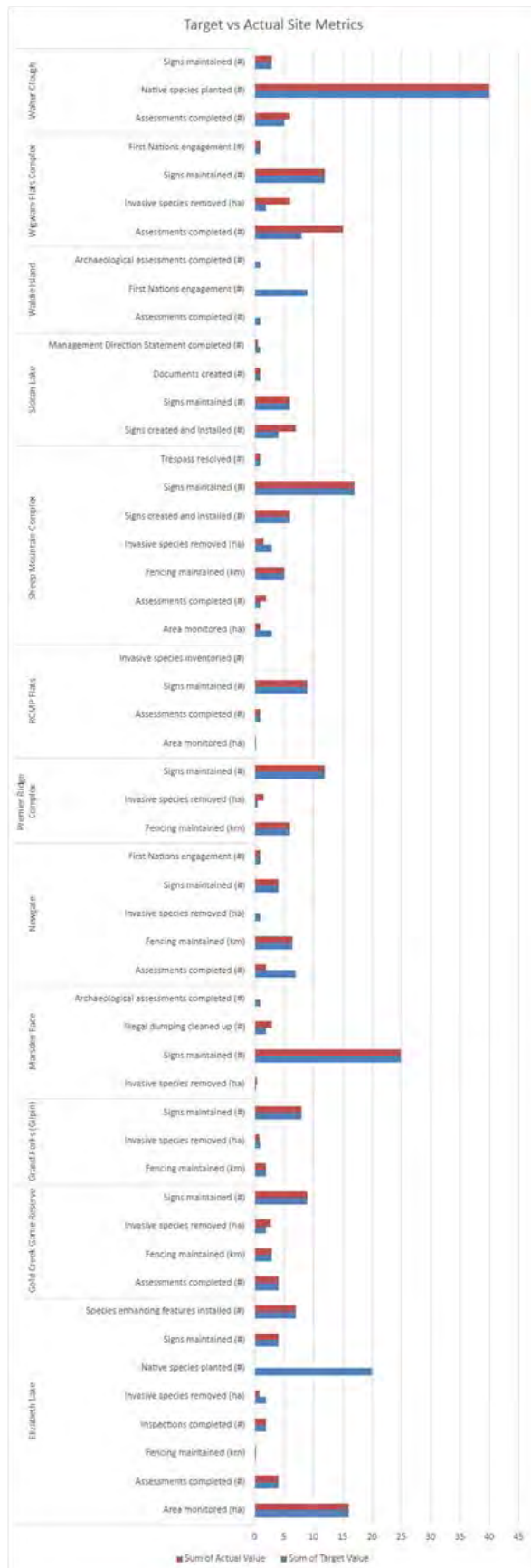
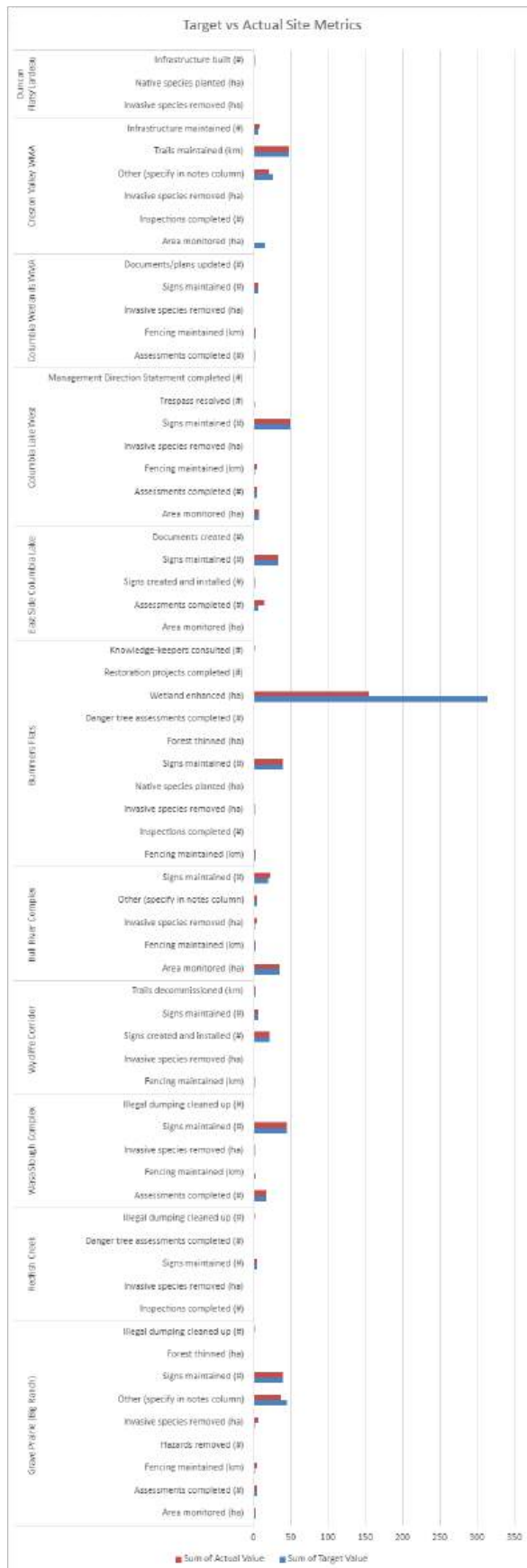


Figure 3. Year 1 Kootenay Region activity metrics.



Figures 4-5. Kootenay Region Year 1 status of conservation objectives by site.





of target and actual metrics by conservation action.

Highlights

\$6,184 was invested into the **Elizabeth Lake Conservation Area** in 2025-26. With high-density housing developments being built within a block of this conservation land, fencing was a high priority. HCTF funding went towards continuing the fencing from the parking lot to prevent further trail development, lessen the impact on recovering grassland species, and reduce spread of invasives. Wildlife habitat enhancement continued to take place in 2025 which included upkeep of nesting boxes, monitoring of live staking/native plantings, seeding of disturbed areas, and placement and anchoring of logs for turtles and waterfowl. Additionally, HCTF funding contributed towards invasive plant treatments. Public Service Week saw 20 staff from the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship volunteer their time to remove a dilapidated dock and barbed wire fencing. As this conservation area is in the city limits of Cranbrook, Elizabeth Lake presents a great opportunity for education and outreach. The annual Turtle Day occurred in April 2025, in which the Rocky Mountain Naturalists and the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program invite the public, including local schools, to learn about turtle conservation.



Figure 8. Public Service Week is an opportunity that the Ministry of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship takes to do projects around the local community. This year, 20 staff volunteered their morning to projects at Elizabeth Lake.



Figure 9. Removal of the dilapidated dock at Elizabeth Lake posed some logistical challenges that were overcome by a certified chainsaw operator from BC Wildfire Service who volunteered her time.



Figure 10. A new fence that extends from the Elizabeth Lake north end parking lot prevents further trail development and gives grassland species a chance to recover.

At **Bummers Flats Conservation Complex**, earthworks began on a major wetland restoration project in a partnership between ʔaąam, WLRS, NTBC, and Ducks Unlimited Canada. This five-year restoration project is working to return wetland and riparian habitat to a natural, self-sustaining state by removing failing infrastructure, breaching dikes and excavating deeper wetland areas to provide additional water storage and habitat. The breaches will allow water from the Kootenay River to enter and flood the area during spring snowmelt runoff in some years, on an anticipated area of up to 155 hectares. Extensive planning and design by experts including Kerr Wood Leidal Associates Ltd. was completed, including archaeological assessments, hydraulic modelling, monitoring and revegetation plans, and earthworks were conducted by Fiorentino Bros Contracting following a competitive bid process.

Financial support of the Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program, Columbia Basin Trust, Elk Valley Resources, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, The Province of B.C. and the B.C. Watersheds Grant, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and NTBC, as well as in-kind support from ʔaąam, NTBC and WLRS.



Figure 11. Heavy equipment mobilized to Bummers Flats - North in October 2025 to undertake the first phase of wetland basin excavation, removal of old water control infrastructure, and to implement breaches in dikes, all with the purpose of restoring a more natural flood cycle. Ducks Unlimited Canada Photo.



Figure 12. Basins were excavated to support a longer hydroperiod and contribute to a greater diversity of habitats. Photo by Kerr Wood Leidal Associates Ltd.



Figure 13. Tours were hosted with members of the ʔaḡam community, involving site visits, and mutual sharing of information and ideas related to the project.

In October 2025, staff from The Nature Trust of BC, alongside members of the Wildsight Youth Community Corps, undertook planting of native trees and shrubs adjacent to restored wetland basins at Bummers Flats – Cherry Creek Conservation Area and Big Ranch Conservation Area. At both of these sites, vegetation exclosures were installed in prior years as a temporary measure to protect young trees and shrubs from herbivory.

At Cherry Creek, building on the accomplishments of planting in 2024, 95 trees and shrubs were planted within three exclosures, consisting of 30 Bebb's willow, 30 Red-osier dogwood, 25 Black twinberry (honeysuckle), along with 5 Trembling Aspen and 5 Saskatoon berry. At Big Ranch, a total of 110 trees and shrubs were planted: 25 Chokecherry, 15 Snowberry, 15 Saskatoon berry, 15 Wood's rose, 15 Soap berry/Soopolallie, and 25 aspen. The diversity of trees and shrubs planted will provide a range of browse and forage sources for a variety of wildlife, as well as providing habitat and shade through the varied vertical structure of plants present. The benefits of these plantings to wildlife will continue to increase as the plants establish and the fencing surrounding them is able to be removed.



Figure 14. NTBC Field Operations Coordinator carrying native plants to enclosures at Cherry Creek Conservation Area.



Figure 15. Dense Reed Canary grass in the enclosures required whipper snipping to clear areas for digging and planting.



Figure 16. NTBC and Wildsight crew members digging and planting in an enclosure at Big Ranch Conservation Area.



Cariboo Region



Conservation Lands O&M Program Annual Summary Report

Year 1, 2025-2028 Funding Cycle

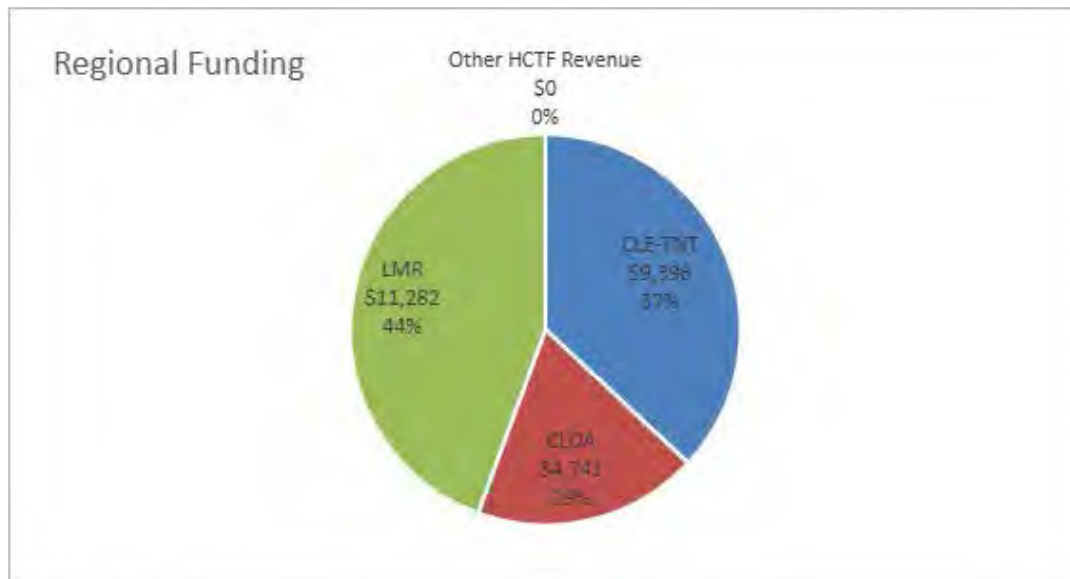
Region: Cariboo

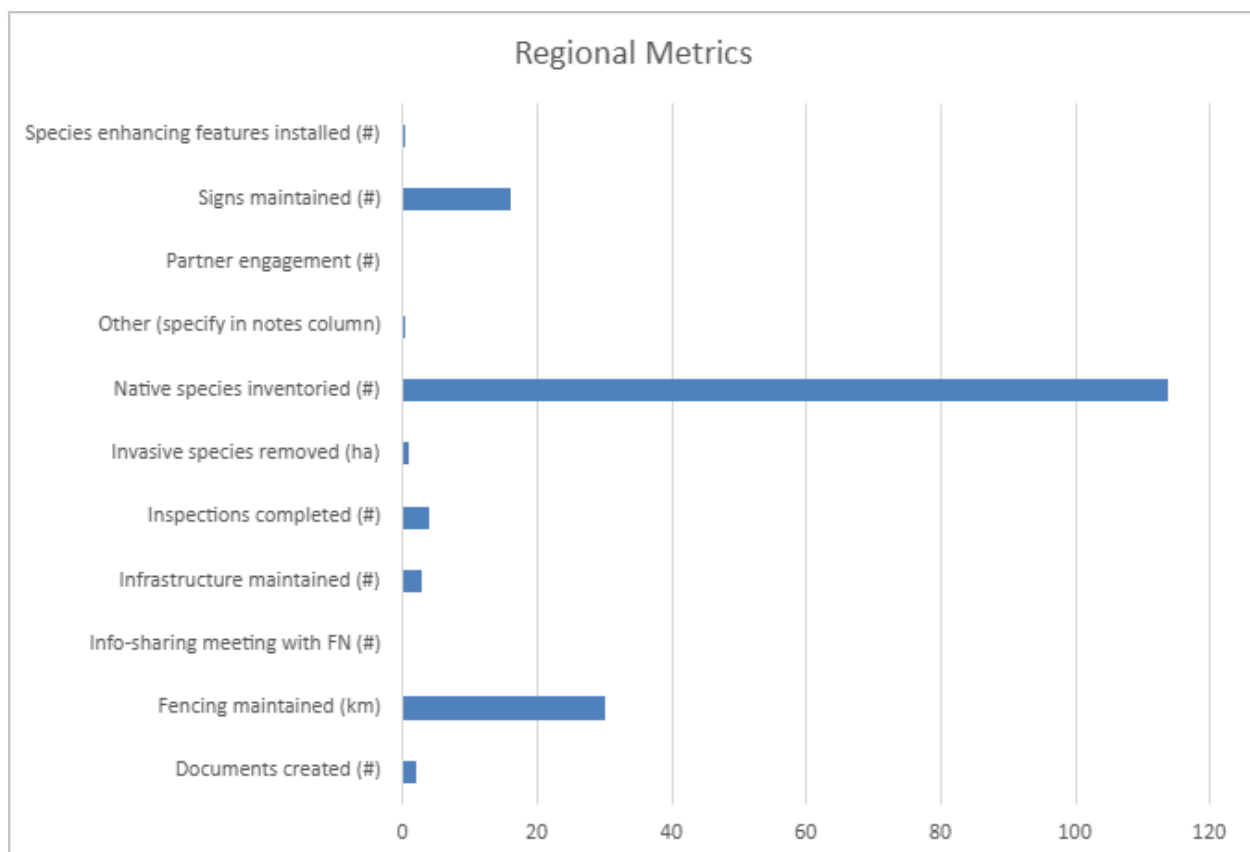
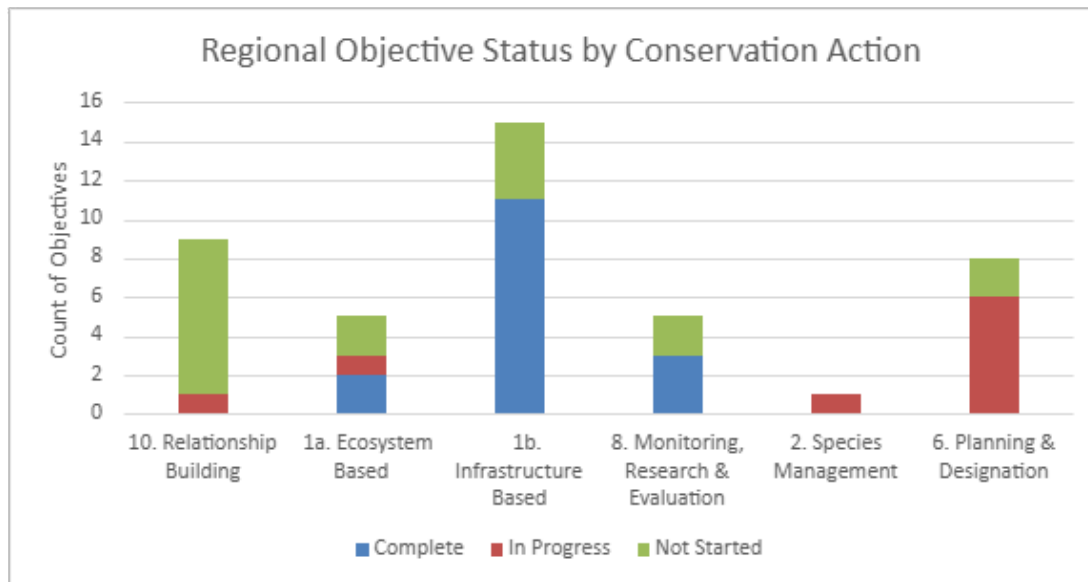
Regional Value

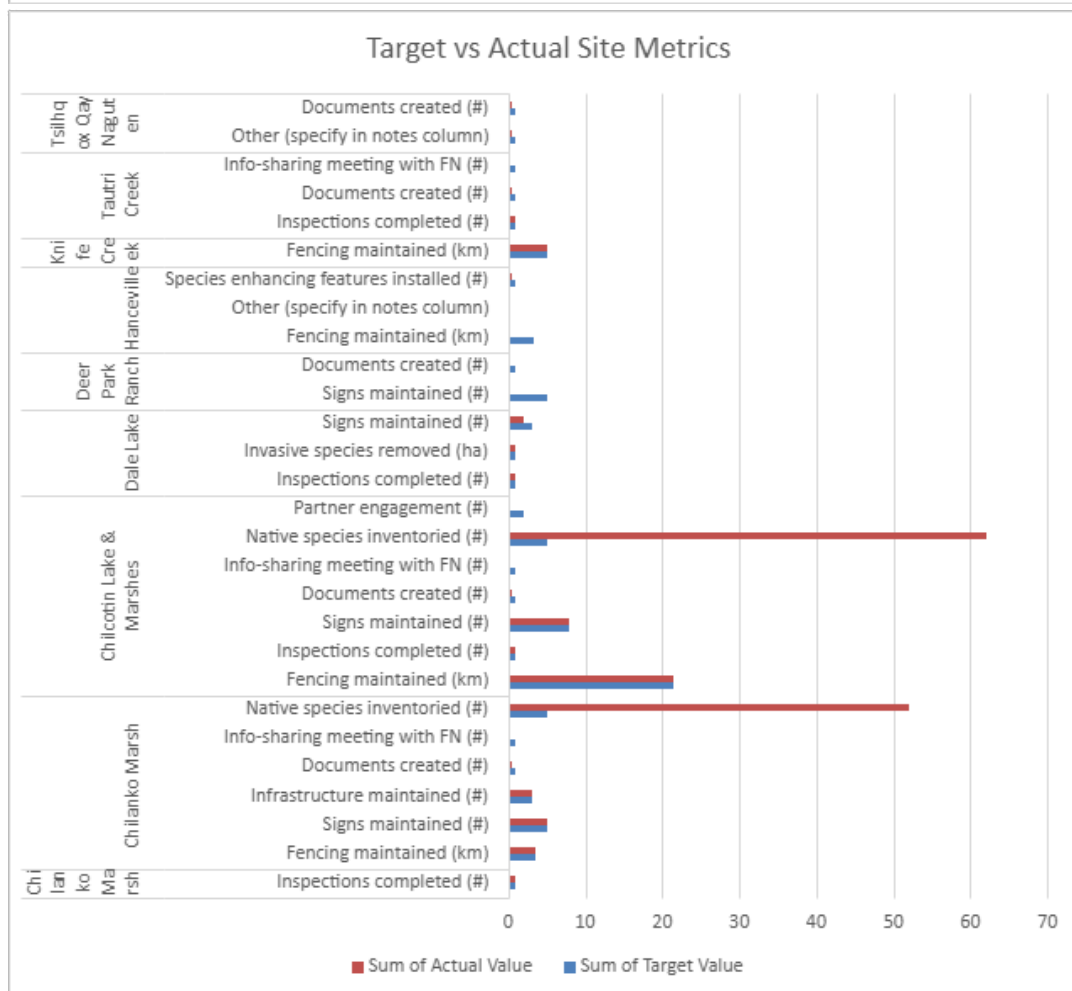
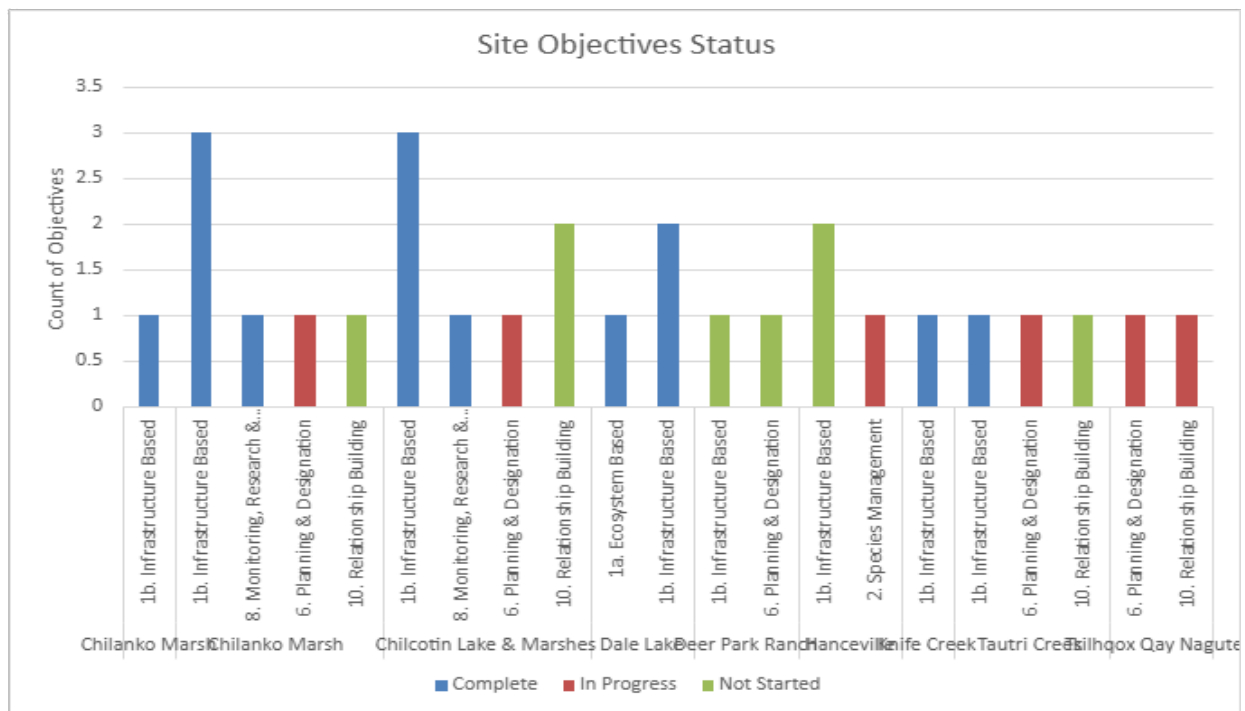
The Cariboo Region is a diverse landscape, ranging from the Coastal Mountains to the vast dry grasslands of the Chilcotin Plateau, to the interior rainforest of the Cariboo Mountains. There are three main rivers within the region including the Fraser, Chilcotin, and Quesnel Rivers. These varied terrains and conditions result in an equally varied diversity of fish and wildlife.

The Cariboo Region contains 7 Conservation Land complexes, administered regionally, including several properties owned by The Nature Trust of British Columbia (NTBC).

Results/Outcomes







Highlights

Infrastructure

Fencing infrastructure totals 33.5km for Chilanko Marsh, Chilcotin Lake & Marshes, Knife Creek, and Hanceville conservation lands. Annually 30.2km of fencing is assessed, problem areas identified, and fixed where necessary to prevent livestock access and damage to wildlife habitat.



Chilanko Marsh WMA livestock exclusion fencing



Chilanko Marsh WMA livestock exclusion fencing



Knife Creek conservation land fence and cattleguard.

Passive bird and amphibian surveys.

Seven acoustic recording devices (ARUs) were placed within four of our conservation lands, including Dale Lake (1), Knife Creek (1), Chilanko Marsh (3), and Chilcotin Lake & Marshes (2). These ARUs were set up to record amphibians and birds during the breeding season. The bird recordings were analyzed, and 96 bird species were identified. The amphibian recordings have not yet been analyzed.



*Conservation land acoustic recording devices for amphibians and birds.
Chilanko Marsh*



Chilcotin Lake & Marshes

Invasive Plant Species Treatment

Invasive plant species treatments were undertaken under contract at Knife Creek and Dale Lake conservation lands. In total, one and a half hectares were treated. At Dale Lake the prominent species treated were Canada Thistle, oxeye Daisy, and orange hawkweed. At Knife Creek spotted knapweed, goat's beard and mullien were treated.



Knife Creek conservation lands invasive plant species.



Dale Lake conservation area invasive plant species.

Chilcotin Lake and Marshes

- At Chilcotin Lake and Marsh, livestock exclusion fences were inspected and repaired to prevent cattle access. The conservation area was inspected for safety and ecological issues, and new signs were installed at access points, instructing visitors to stay on main roads, due to the sensitive ecosystem conditions.



New signage installed at access points in Chilcotin Lake & Marshes Conservation Area

Tautri Creek

- At Tautri Creek, the conservation area was inspected for infrastructure safety, signage, and ecological integrity. The forest understory continues to recover, post-wildfire.



Tautri Creek Conservation Area wetland



Skeena Region



Conservation Lands O&M Program Annual Summary Report

Year 1, 2025-2028 Funding Cycle

Region: Skeena

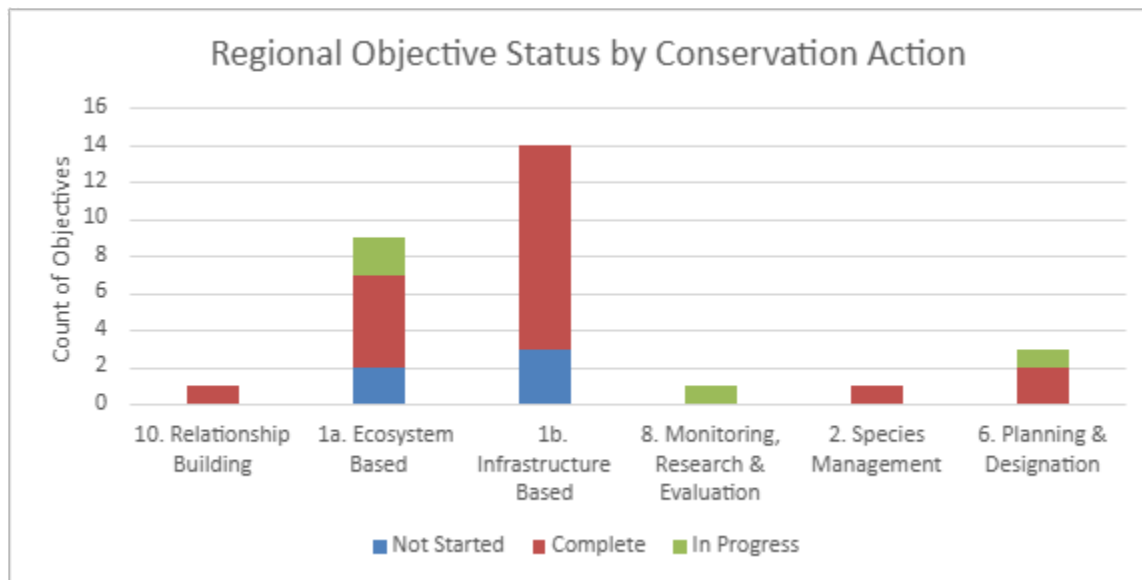
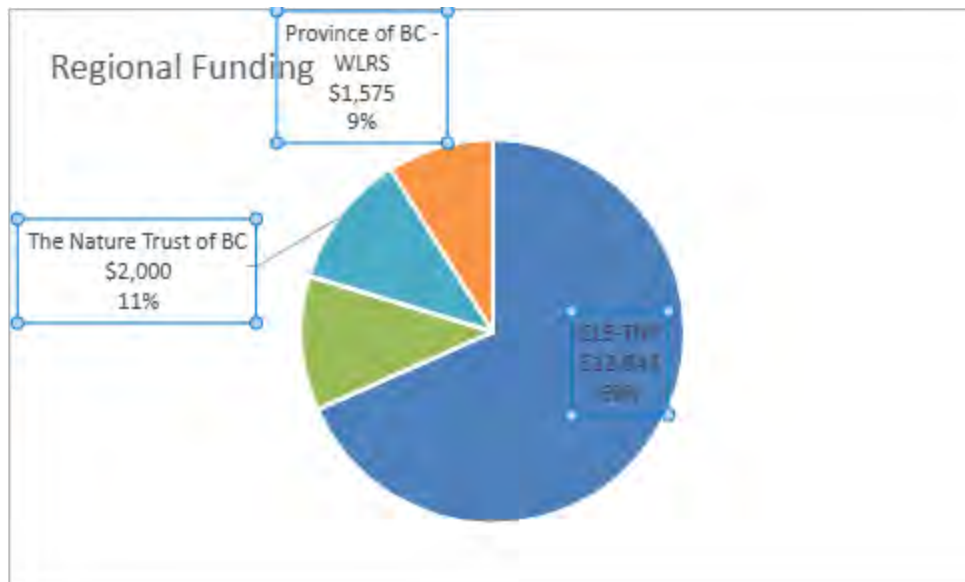
Regional Value

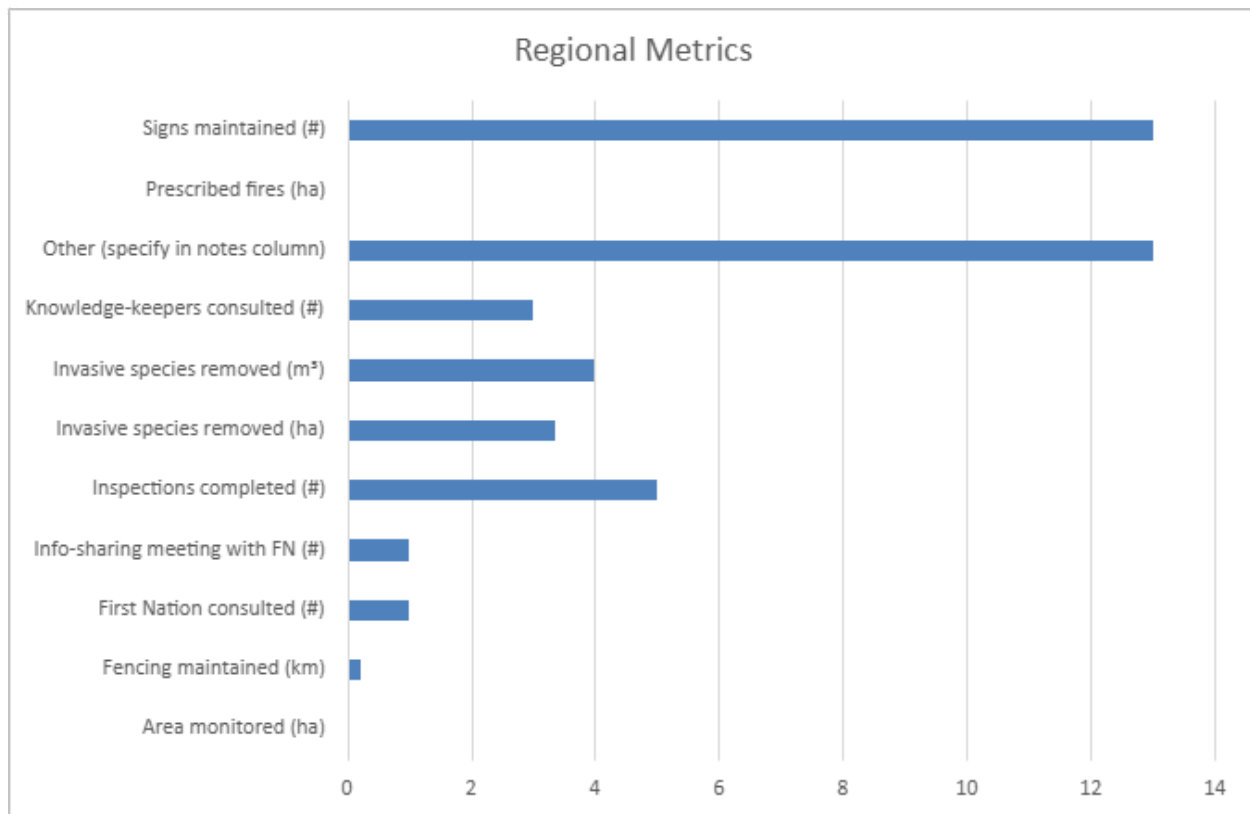
The Skeena Region covers approximately one third of the province of British Columbia. It is a highly varied landscape, characterised by mountainous terrain, interspersed with large plateaus, a multitude of lakes and several of the province's largest rivers including the Skeena, the Nass and the Stikine.

The Skeena Region includes BC's North Coast from the Coast Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. This area is rich in biological diversity and noted for the Pacific Flyway, an important migration corridor for birds. Large rivers, such as the Nass and the Skeena, flow into the Pacific Ocean, providing critical estuarine habitats. The Skeena Region's extensive wilderness areas provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Both Black and Grizzly Bears occur here, and salmon are abundant in the major rivers and tributaries.

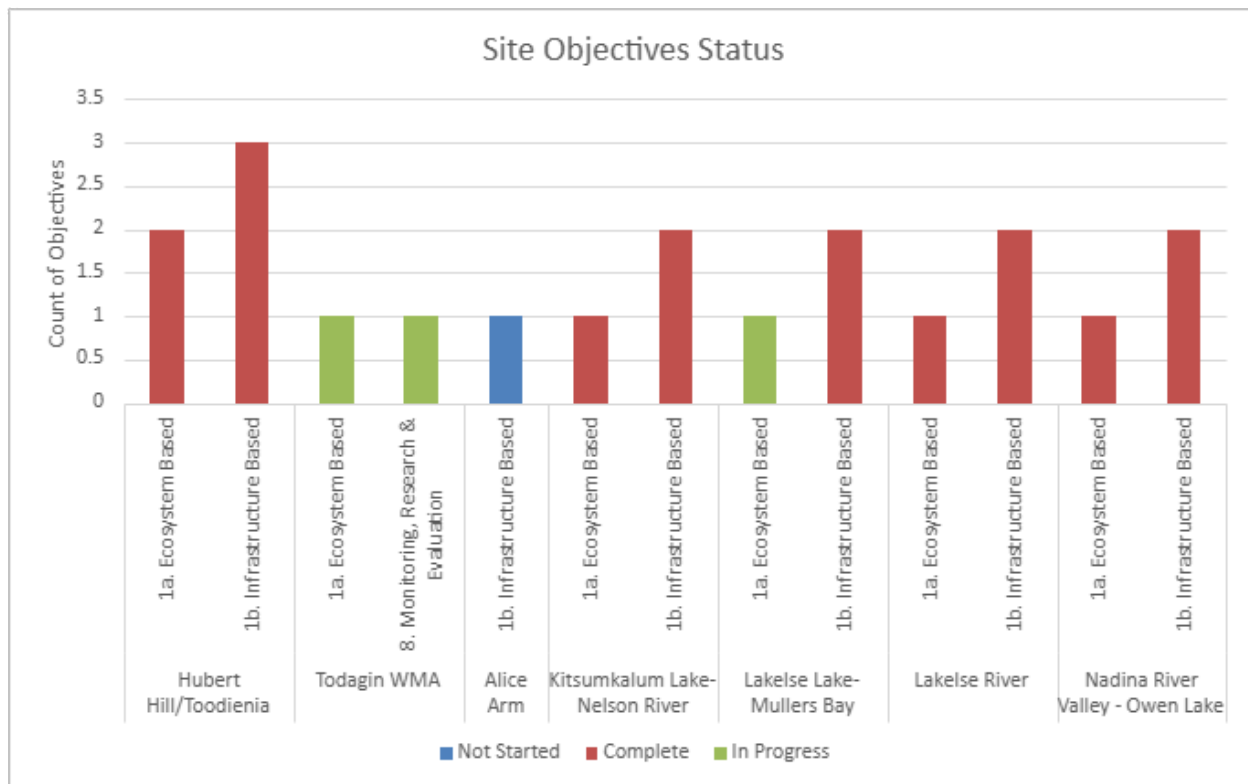
The Skeena Region contains 8 Conservation Land complexes, administered regionally, including a number of properties owned by The Nature Trust of British Columbia and the Todagin Wildlife Management Area.

Results/Outcomes









Highlights

The Conservation Lands in the Skeena region provide a wide array of habitat values and ecosystem diversity. Maintenance of these areas is critical to retain or improve ecosystem integrity for the wildlife that depend on these habitats. Regular assessment and maintenance support ecosystem resilience and help ensure that these properties are safe for public access. Regular land management activities include monitoring and treatment of invasive plants; assessment of ecological values; removal of rubbish from public access areas; and maintenance of signage for public information.



Working with volunteers to remove shoreline rubbish at Lakelse Lake – Mullers Bay



Multi-use trail etiquette sign at Lakelse River



Conducting vegetation assessments at Kitsumkalum Lake – Nelson River



Omineca Region



Conservation Lands O&M Program Annual Summary Report

Year 1, 2025-2028 Funding Cycle

Region: Omineca

Regional Value

The Omineca Region encompasses a large portion of northern British Columbia, with a diversity of landscapes ranging from the broad flat pine forests of the Central Plateau to the rugged peaks of the central Rocky Mountains. This Region includes the highest mountain in the Canadian Rockies, Mount Robson (3954 m).

The Omineca Region encompasses the headwaters, or portions of the headwaters, of several provincially important rivers, including the: Fraser, Nechako, Pine, Finlay, Parsnip and Stuart. Within the drainages of these rivers lie several regionally important lakes and the province's largest reservoir, Williston Lake, which lies behind the W.A.C. Bennett Dam. The rivers and their tributaries provide spawning grounds for Chinook, Coho, and Sockeye Salmon. Arctic Grayling, White Sturgeon, Rainbow Trout, Bull Trout and Lake Trout, as well as several species of whitefish, suckers, minnows and Burbot, all live within the Omineca Regions lakes and streams. One of the highest valued recreational rainbow trout fisheries is the Stellako River, which became the Omineca Region's first Wildlife Management Area in 2013.

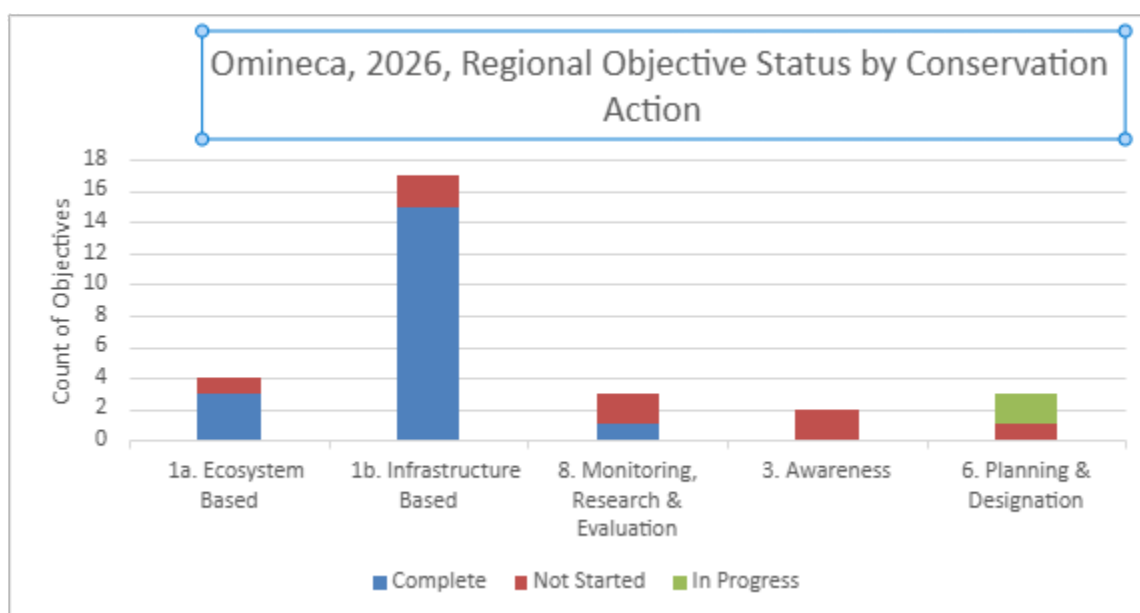
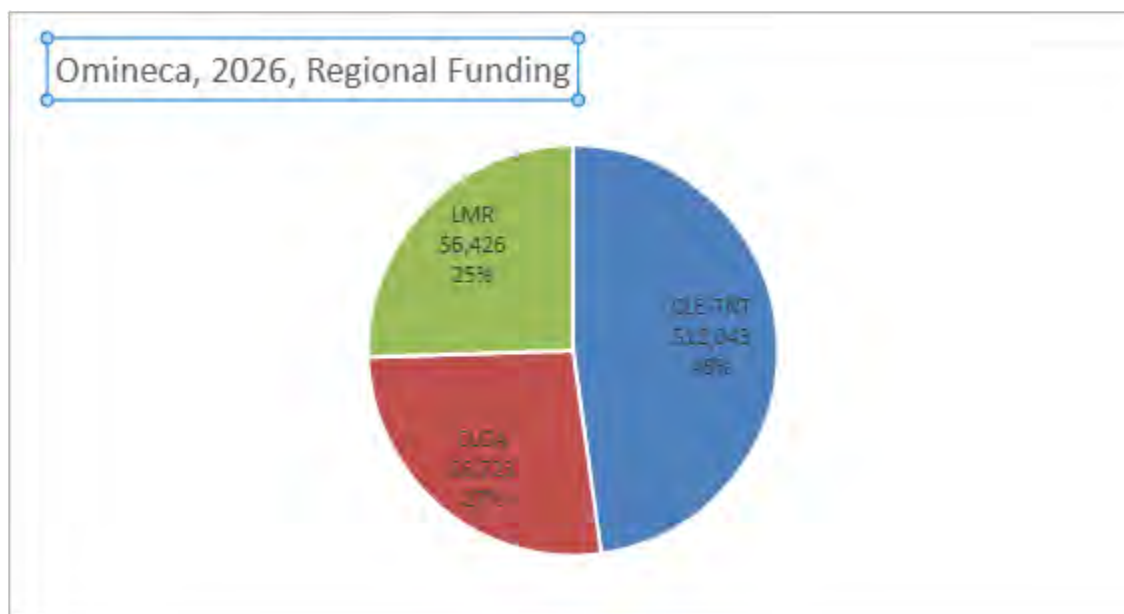
Regionally important wetlands, such as those on the Hominka and in the Cranberry Marsh / Starratt WMA, provide much needed rest and refueling stops for migratory birds. Populations of American White Pelicans forage on some of the region's lakes and Trumpeter Swans winter on several rivers. The northern extent of Sharptailed Grouse range occurs on southwest facing meadows in the southern portion of the region, and in the agricultural lands local breeding groups of Long-billed curlews and Sandhill cranes can be found in the spring.

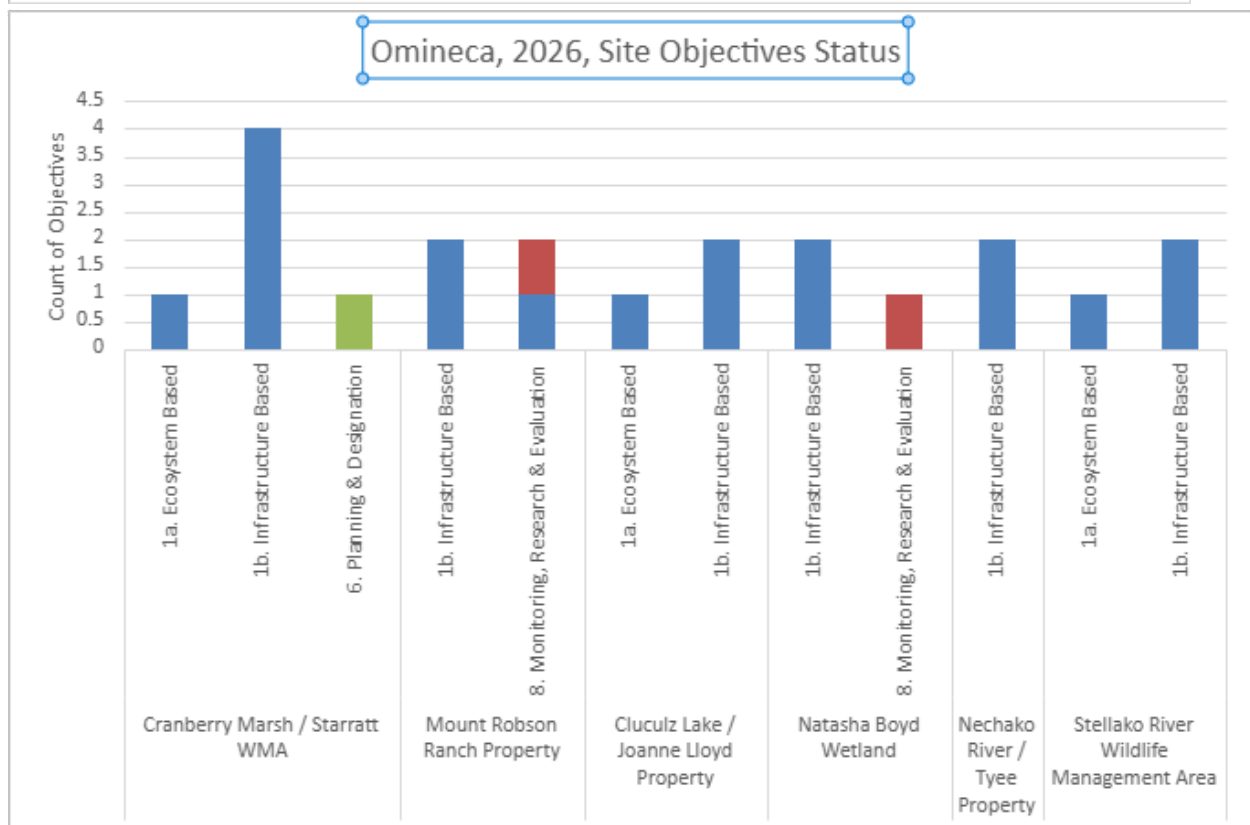
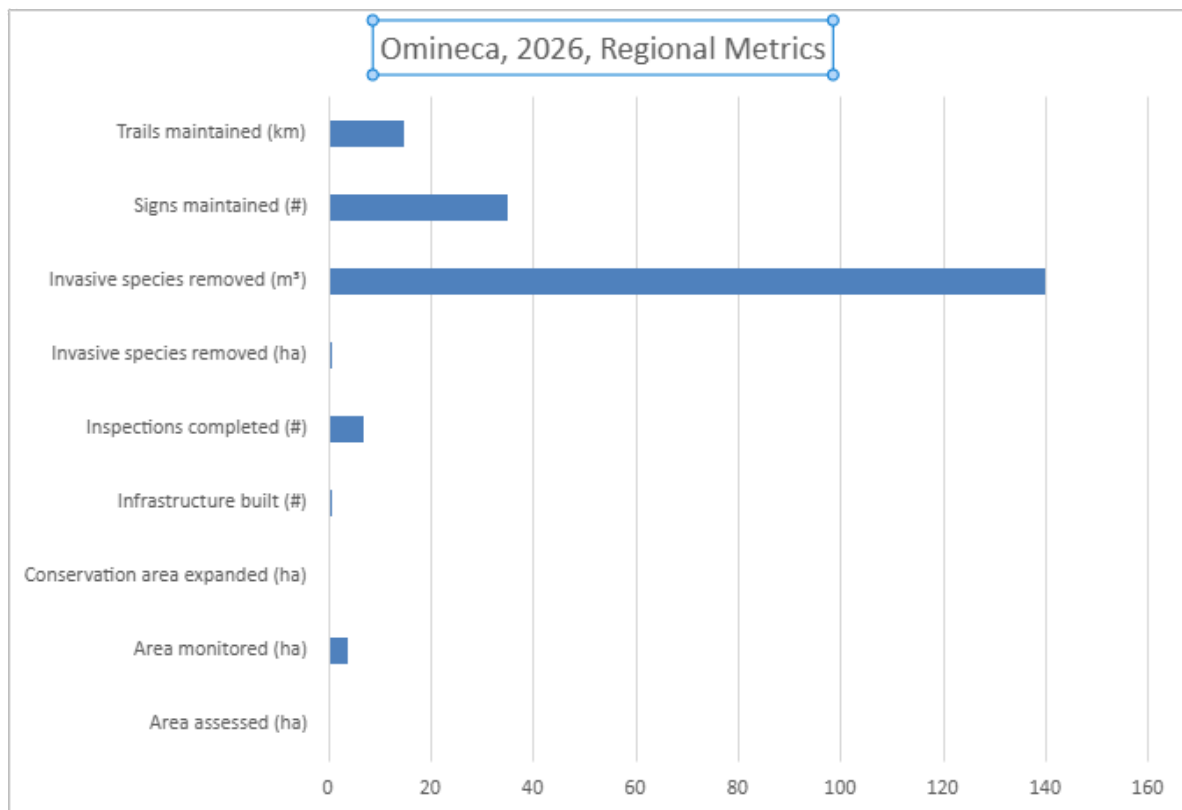
The largest herds of Mountain Caribou left in the province reside in the mountains on the eastern side of the region, and in the north populations of Northern Caribou still roam. Throughout the Omineca Region there are Moose, Grizzly bear, Black bear, Fisher, Marten, Lynx, Wolf, Mountain goat, and Mule deer, with local populations of Stone sheep, Elk, White-tailed deer, and Cougar

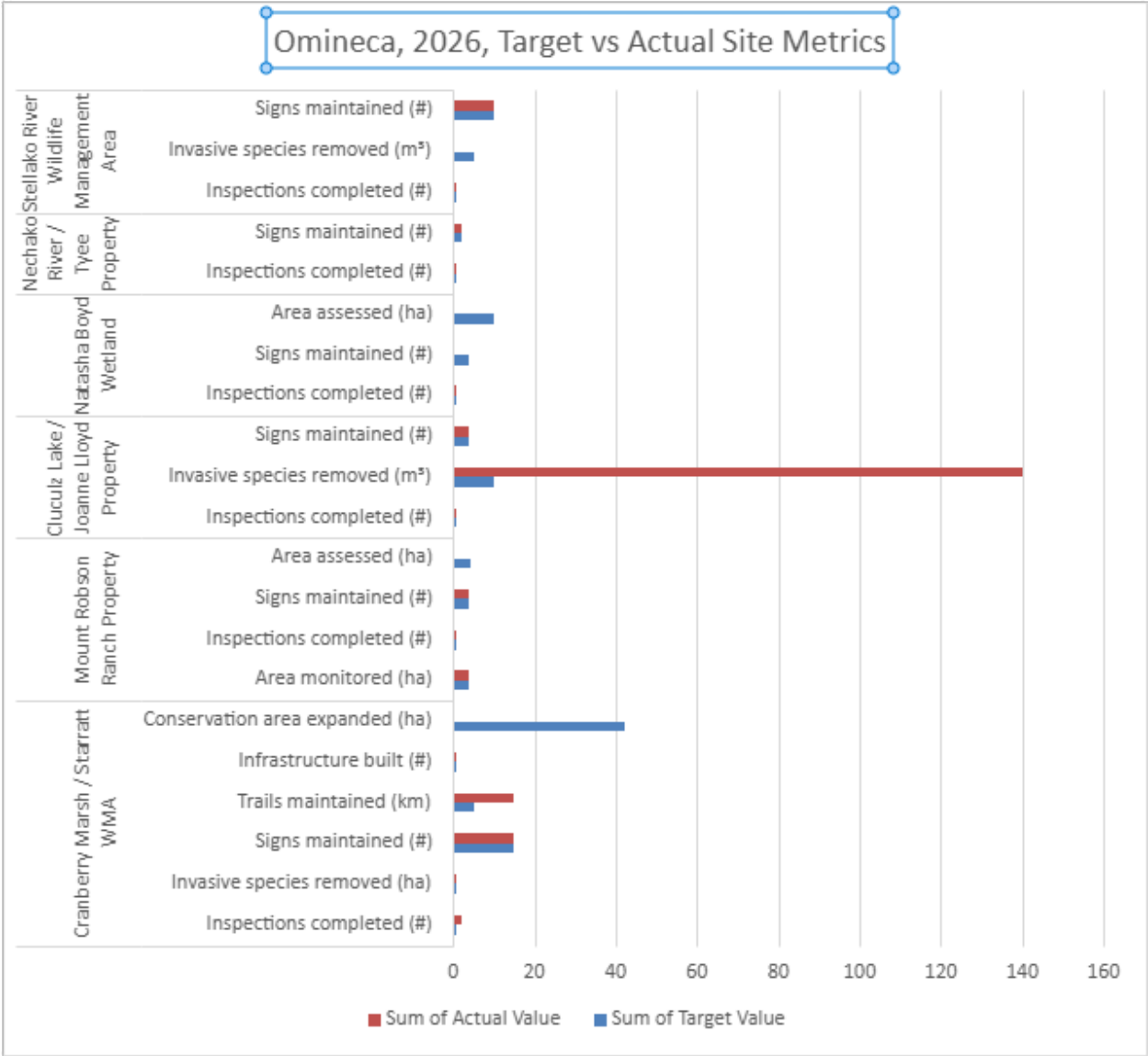
where snowpacks are thinner. Rare plant associations, ecosystems and habitats are scattered across the Omineca bolstering regional biodiversity, including the northern extent of Whitebark pine and Douglas fir, and the largest population of Haller's Apple Moss in the world, as well as most known locations of Crumpled Tar Paper Lichen.

Given the highly diverse and geographically large area that the Omineca Region covers it contains relatively few Conservation Lands. Six conservation lands are administered regionally, and they cover a small selection of the habitats that can be found in the region.

Results/Outcomes







Highlights

Mount Robson Ranch

Mount Robson Ranch includes a variety of sensitive ecosystems, including a calcareous cold seep wetland, on which we are monitoring wildlife usage through remote cameras. We have installed signage indicating that the property is not open to motor vehicles, to protect these ecological values.



Mount Robson Ranch calcareous seep (left), signage (middle), wildlife camera maintenance (right).

Cranberry Marsh / Starratt Wildlife Management Area

Cranberry Marsh / Starratt WMA is an important stop over and breeding ground for migratory birds (especially waterfowl) and is one of the best bird watching sites in the Robson Valley. The 6 km trail loop around Cranberry Marsh provides excellent wildlife viewing opportunities and is also an important recreational feature for the Village of Valemount. Recent beaver activity in the wetland has resulted in minor flooding of a section of the trail. A temporary, elevated plankway was installed through the flooded section of trail to maintain access while the design of a new boardwalk segment is pursued.



Cranberry Marsh WMA wooden plankway installation

The province and conservation partners of Cranberry Marsh / Starratt WMA are pursuing an expansion of the WMA under the *Wildlife Act* to incorporate additional wetland habitat and a primary access area of the WMA. Expanding the WMA boundary now will protect additional wetland habitat, support wetland restoration activities, and clarify management responsibility of historical developments. A decision on the expansion of the Wildlife Management Area is anticipated during the summer of 2026.



Public signage about the WMA expansion proposal installed at the canoe launch access area (left) and the trail access area near the Best Western (right)



Northeast Region



Conservation Lands O&M Program Annual Summary Report

Year 1, 2025-2028 Funding Cycle

Region: Northeast

Regional Value

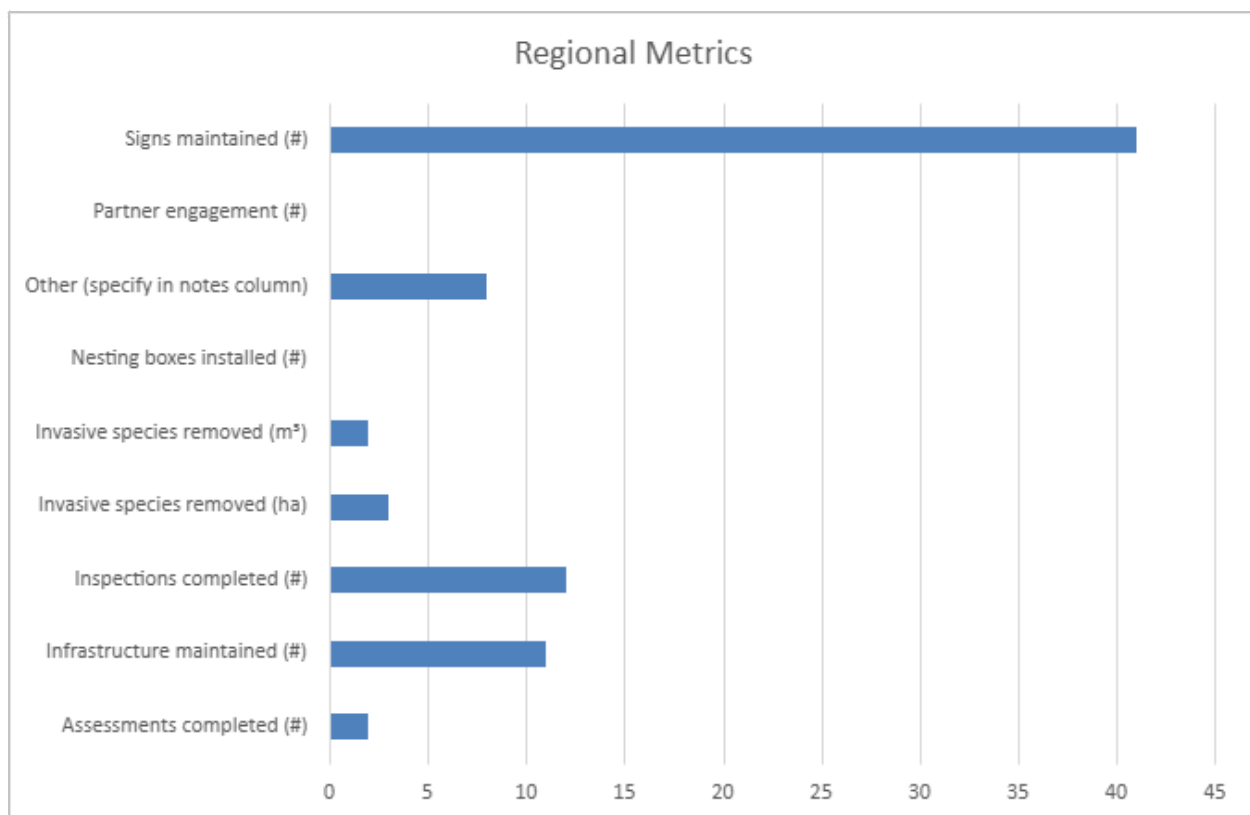
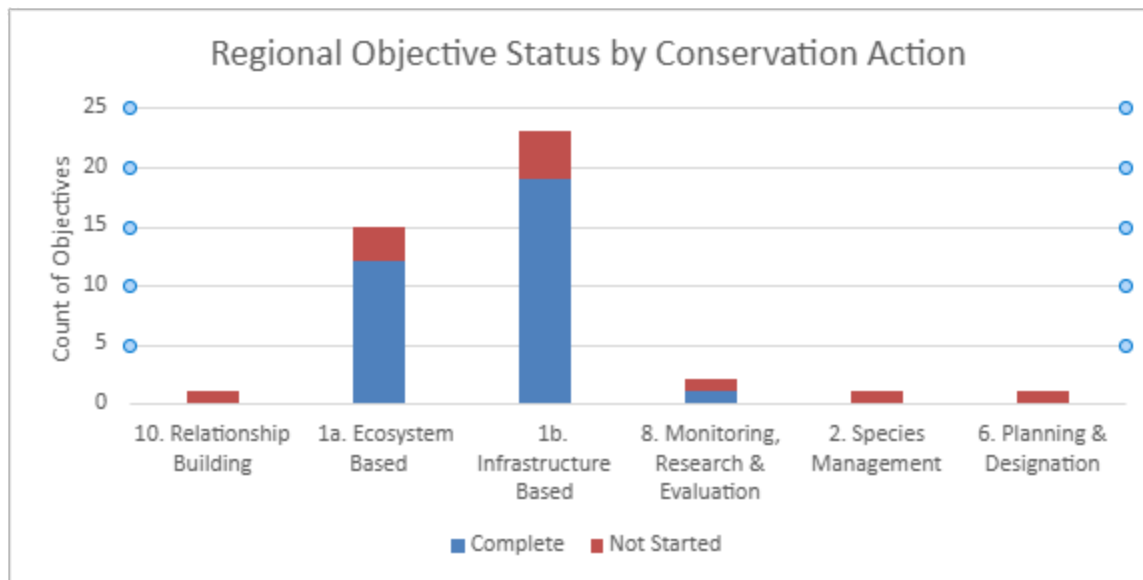
The Northeast Region of British Columbia is located between the Rocky Mountain foothills and the Alberta Plains.

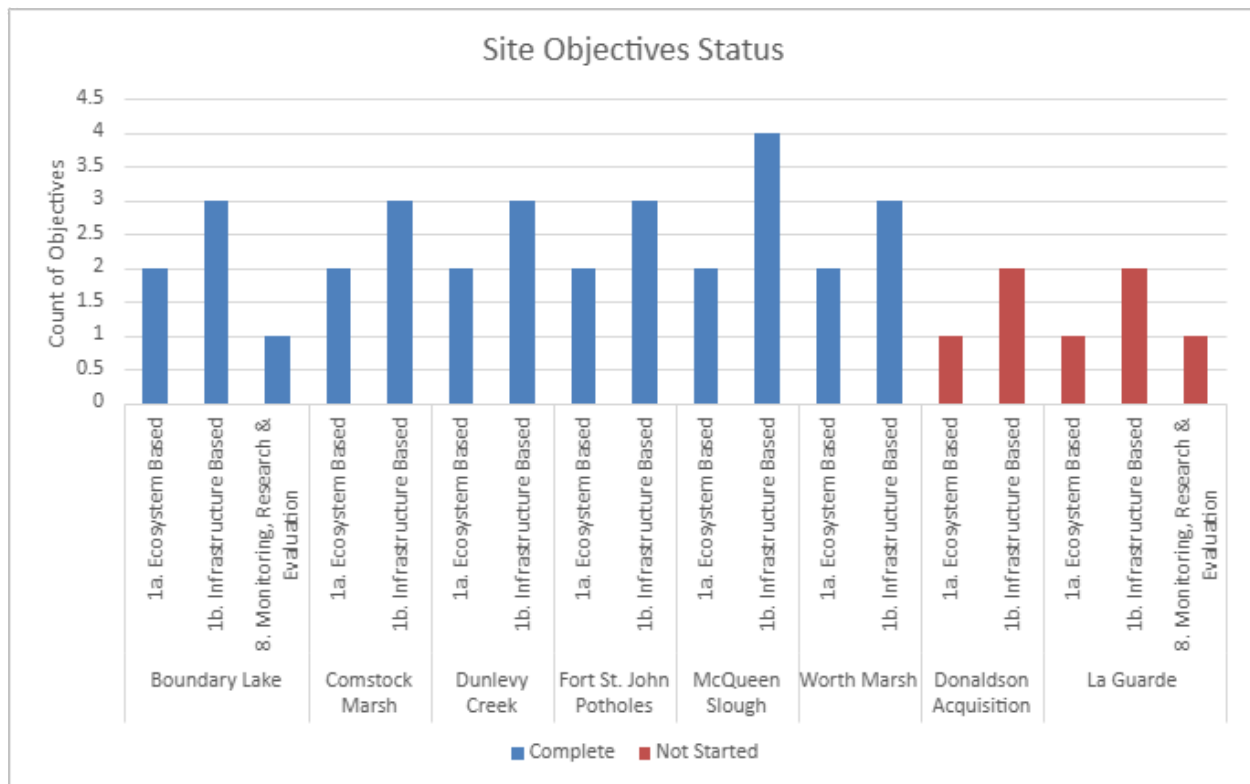
This region consists of the Peace River and Liard River drainages of the Arctic watershed, featuring plateaus, plains, prairies, and lowlands lying east of the Rocky Mountains. Areas at higher altitudes are poorly drained, resulting in extensive muskeg areas. The region is characterised by boreal forest with critical wetlands and lakes interspersed throughout.

Since the 1950's, the Northern Region has experienced rapid development of oil and natural gas resources, resulting in increased fragmentation of this landscape. A number of Class 1 wetlands provide critical habitat for numerous waterfowl.

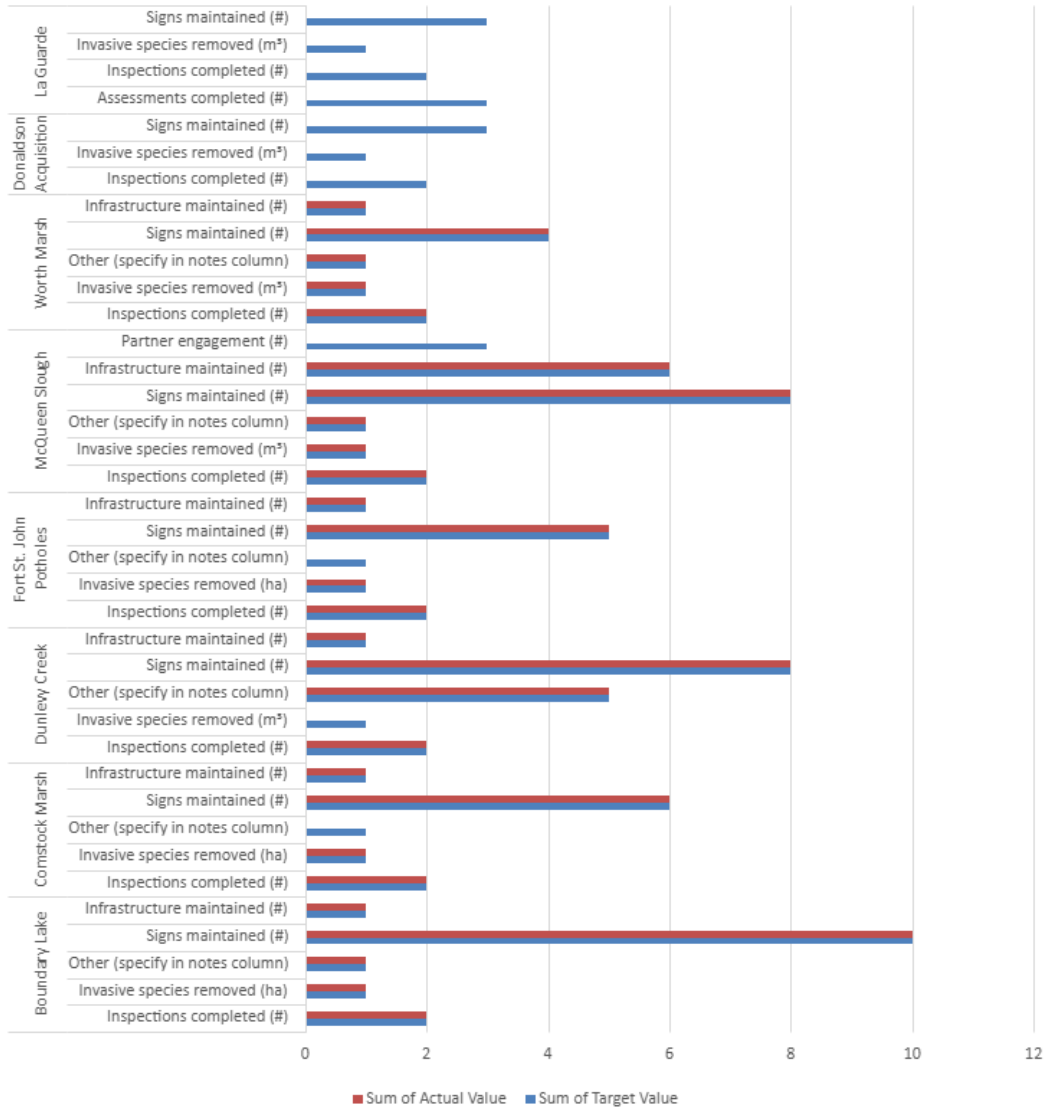
Results/Outcomes







Target vs Actual Site Metrics



Highlights

A primary activity in the Northeast Region is the maintenance of water control structures (dams and weirs) to maintain optimal water levels for waterfowl and other wildlife that use the conservation areas. Several conservation areas, co-owned by The Nature Trust of BC and Ducks Unlimited Canada, have such structures on them, including Boundary Lake, Comstock Slough, Fort St John Potholes, McQueen Slough, and Worth Marsh. These water control structures require regular inspections and maintenance to ensure that they are functioning properly, that beaver debris is removed, and that invasive plants do not become an issue.



Water weirs at Boundary Lake (left) and Worth Marsh (right). Note beaver debris for removal and overall low water levels in 2025.

Unauthorized use of conservation areas is an ongoing issue in the region, but we are making progress. Dunlevy Creek has experienced trespass camping in past years, which has improved with the installation of vehicle access barriers and improved signage. Motor vehicle incursions in natural areas at McQueen Slough have been curbed by the installation and maintenance of pedestrian access only fencing.



Vehicle access barrier at Dunlevy Creek (left) and fencing at McQueen Slough (right).