HABITAT CONSERVATION TRUST FOUNDATION

2025–2026

Impact Report

Investing for the future of British Columbia's fish and wildlife, and their habitats.

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A Year of Conservation and Progress

Message from our CEO and Board Chair

This year, HCTF continued to strengthen the partnerships, programs and systems that increase our conservation impact across B.C. Our funding supports the people and organizations conserving fish, wildlife and their habitats through applied research, restoration, stewardship and education.

Throughout this report, you will see their work, their results, and the difference they make in communities across the province. This year, that collective work received broader recognition with the American Fisheries Society's ***#TomorrowsCatch*** series highlighting HCTF as one of four Canadian organizations helping to secure the future of aquatic resources.

The achievements shared throughout this report reflect the collective efforts of our funders, project leaders, volunteers, educators, facilitators, review committee members, staff and Board. As we look ahead, we will strengthen these partnerships and build capacity to support effective, enduring conservation.

Thank you for turning investments into conservation action for B.C.'s fish, wildlife, and habitats.

Dan Buffett, CEO | Greg Anderson, Board Chair

Advancing our Strategic Plan Progress in 2025–26

1 SUPPORTING CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Updated grant criteria to select projects that are more climate resilient

Expanded funding for conservation projects enhancing wetlands and forests

2 SECURING CONSERVATION FUNDING

Generated more than $2M in new revenue to enhance wetlands, grasslands, and forests for wildlife habitat

3 ENSURING LASTING BENEFITS

Revised the Habitat Acquisition Grant to select more resilient projects

Completed evaluation of the Quality Waters Fund with stakeholders to inform grant revisions in 2026

4 EXPANDING COLLABORATION

Engaged with grantees to refine the Land Stewardship Grant in 2026

Supported expansion of the Ecosystem Restoration Community of Practice

5 IMPROVING HOW WE WORK

Established a new Habitat Restoration Technical Review Committee

Clarified guidance in several grants, including direction for fish and wildlife diseases

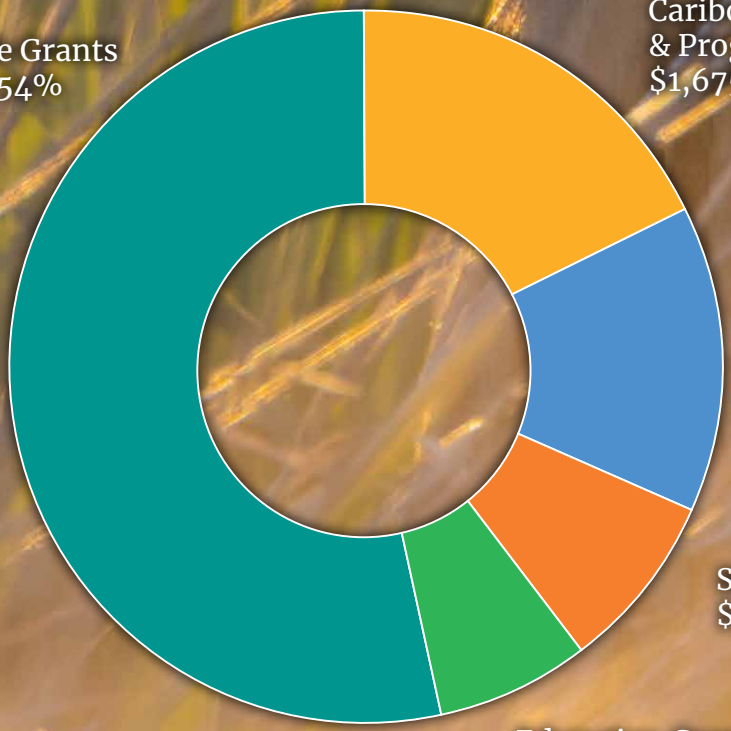
Highlights

14k
students learning about B.C. biodiversity

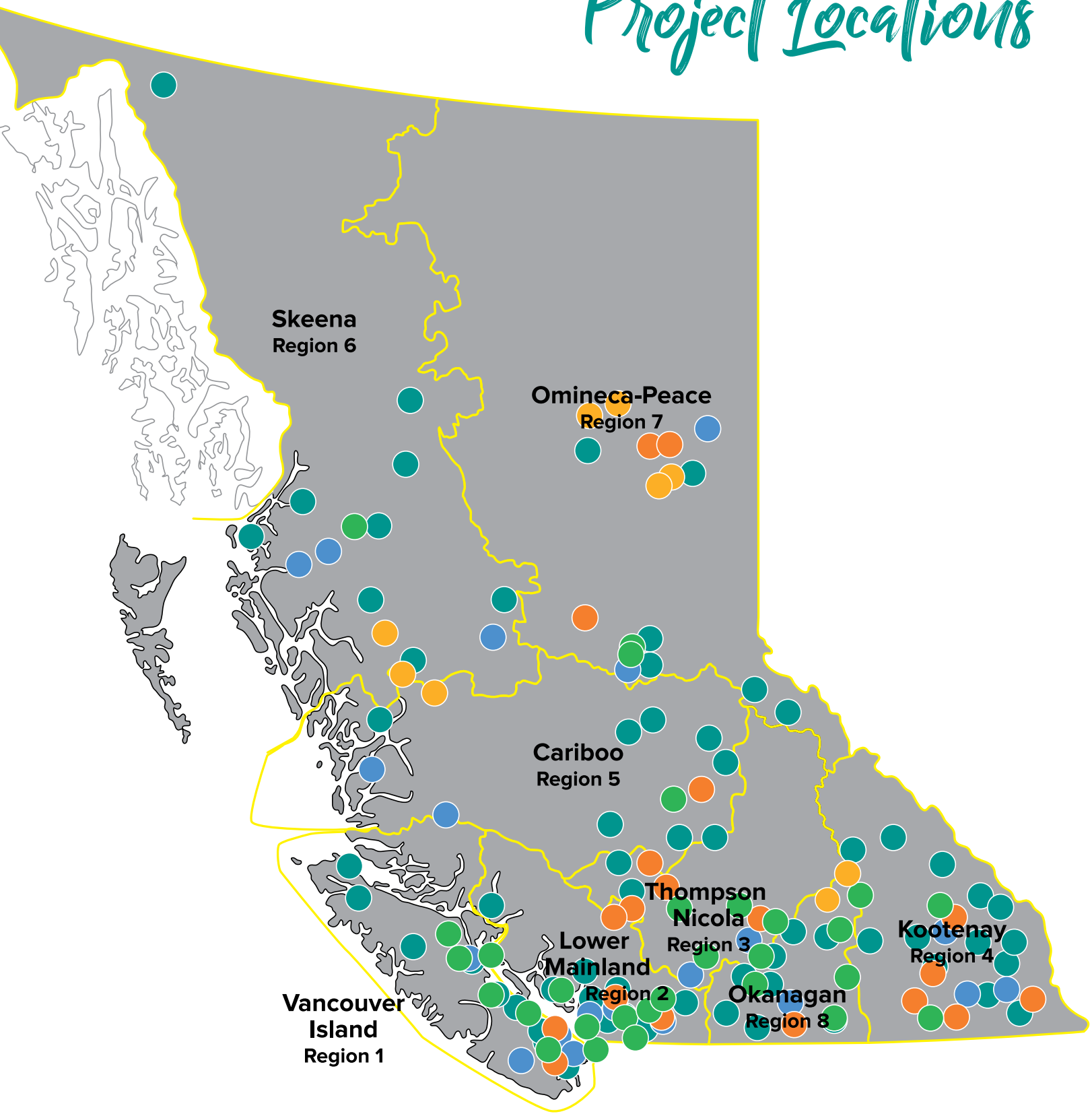
194
conservation and stewardship projects supported

171
hectares of land acquired

Funding by Grant Program 2025-2026



Project Locations



- Fish & Wildlife Projects
- Habitat Projects
- Stewardship Projects
- Education
- Caribou Projects

Year in Review

$56M
managed

$3.6M
of responsible investment income generated

26
funds managed
endowments, restricted contributions, program funds

17
grant programs administered

We gratefully acknowledge the hunters, anglers, guide outfitters, and trappers who contribute through the conservation surcharge, along with the Province of B.C., Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the B.C. Parks Foundation, and court award funding through the Conservation Officer Service. Their support helps turn conservation priorities into action across B.C.

$9.3M

invested in conservation

103 funding recipients including:

- **62** NGOs
- **16** First Nations
- **6** Academic Institutions
- **2** Provincial Ministries

220 schools supported with grants and progams

Fish and Wildlife Grants

495
hectares of habitat enhanced or restored

0
invasive mussels detected
from sampling at 77 waterbodies

62
species studied

97
structures enhanced or installed

95
reports and datasets shared

8k
animals tagged for tracking

- Turns field observations into actionable conservation knowledge
- Better decisions informed by evidence rather than assumptions
- Improve understanding of wildlife movements and habitat use
- Helps guide conservation and management decisions

Project Stories

Whitesail Canfor

From 2021-2026, the Whitesail Caribou Road Restoration project restored caribou habitat in the Bulkley-Nechako area. By removing 78 kilometres of unneeded logging roads within critical summer range of the Tweedsmuir caribou herd, over 7,000 hectares of near-contiguous habitat were created from the shore of Whitesail Lake to the alpine area. Post-restoration, predator sightlines decreased, reducing predation on caribou, and trees planted had near-100 % survival, which will increase the project's benefit to caribou habitat over time.

Alouette Reservoir Bull Trout Assessment Province of B.C.

Bull trout are blue-listed in B.C., a species of "Special Concern," and highly valued by anglers across the province. The Alouette Reservoir, identified as habitat of a priority population, is a nutrient-poor lake, even with nutrient restoration efforts. This study is providing valuable information and addressing data gaps for the conservation and management of bull trout within the Lower Fraser Ecological Drainage Unit and building long-term datasets to inform understanding of bull trout populations at low abundance near conservation thresholds.

Determining Mechanisms of Decline of the Robson Valley Mountain Goats Province of B.C.

Mountain goats are an iconic species in B.C. but declines have been detected across much of their range over the last decade. This project aims to understand survival, health, and movement of the Robson Valley goat population. In the first two years, 22 goats were collared and are being monitored; in 2025-26, two mortality investigations were conducted, health sampling and the first kid production survey were completed, and all the goats tested negative for *M. ovi*. Data continues to be collected to develop management plans to support mountain goat recovery.

Enhancement of Winter Range Habitat for Mule Deer in Douglas-fir Forests Applied Mammal Research Institute

Mule deer populations have been declining in B.C., largely due to poor forage conditions on their winter ranges. Closed-canopy forests can limit forage, so some harvesting in fir forests is needed to provide openings for understory forage enhancement. From 2020-2026, Applied Mammal Research, working with the Penticton Indian Band, Province of B.C., and other partners, tested a range of harvesting options in a 900-hectare area near Summerland and monitored vegetation and deer response. Results will help demonstrate how forests can be better managed for wildlife.

Kus-kus-sum – Unpaving Paradise

Comox Valley Project Watershed Society

This high-profile, multi-year project, completed in 2026, restored a former industrial sawmill site along the Courtenay River in the K'ómoks Estuary back into functioning fish and wildlife habitat. Read more **here**.

Habitat Grants

681

hectares of habitat
stewarded by NGOs

25

aerators and
dams operated
under Fisheries O&M

16

rivers managed
under Quality Waters

Generates good information for management

Maintains resilient fish populations and improves angler experience

128

sites managed
under Conservation Lands O&M

237 hectares of wetland enhanced

108 hectares of conservation area expanded

335 km of fencing and trails maintained

Project Stories

Bummers Flats

Nature Trust of BC

In 2024*, The Nature Trust of BC (NTBC) finalized the purchase of 171 hectares in the East Kootenay, in the unceded and traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation, with support from the Habitat Acquisition Grant. Known as Bummers Flats – MapleCross Benchlands, the area is primarily dry, open forest and grassland, and offers habitat connectivity for elk, grizzly bears, mule deer, and more wildlife. The acquisition expanded the existing conservation complex, bringing the total area of wildlife habitat protected and managed by NTBC (as well as the Province and Ducks Unlimited Canada) to 1,995 hectares. Read more **here**.

*Reporting and funding were finalized in fall 2025.

Horsefly River

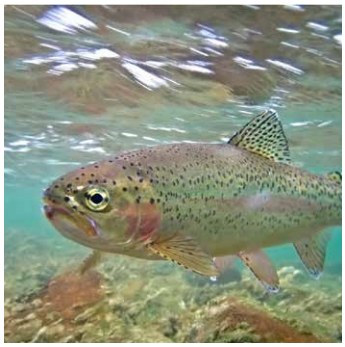
Nature Conservancy of Canada

In the third and final year of their Land Stewardship Grant, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) continued work at the Horsefly River Riparian Conservation Area to enhance shoreline condition and riparian habitat. The Horsefly River represents valuable salmon and trout spawning and rearing habitat in the Cariboo region, and the watershed and riparian area are important habitat for grizzly bears, songbirds, waterfowl, moose, and more. By working with neighbours and licence holders on the installation of 2,155m of fencing, NCC can support cattle grazing while reducing impact to sensitive wildlife areas. Read more **here**.

Conservation Lands O&M – South Coast

Province of B.C.

The South Coast region of the Province's Conservation Lands Program provides a wide variety of habitat values and ecosystem diversity, despite extreme pressures from development and human activity. Maintenance of these conservation lands is critical to retain or improve ecosystem integrity for the wildlife that depend on these habitats. Through HCTF's Conservation Lands O&M program, regular land management (such as invasive plant treatment and rubbish removal) and restoration and enhancement, including improvements to painted turtle habitat, are supported. In 2025-26, the South Coast team partnered with BCIT to restore a wetland in Forslund-Watson Conservation Area; BCIT received a Community Grant to support equipment costs, and students gained valuable hands-on restoration experience.



Fisheries O&M – Okanagan

Province of B.C.

Also in its final year of a 3-year cycle is the Fisheries O&M program. In the Okanagan region in 2025-26, the program supported the operation and maintenance of 9 aerators in 5 lakes, maintenance of spawning platforms in Peachland Creek, as well as spawning channel maintenance, kokanee enumeration, and flow monitoring in Mission Creek. Aeration and other activities funded by the program are crucial for preventing winter kill, supplementing summer lake oxygen levels, and supporting healthy spawning and rearing habitat for fish.

Stewardship Grants

69k

people engaged

19k

volunteer hours

13

new HCTF project leaders

10

Capacity Grants completed

- Increased conservation capacity through training, partnerships, and planning
- More impactful conservation activities or projects initiated

Project Stories

Got Bats? BC Conservation Foundation

This project completed its final year under HCTF's previous iteration of "Stewardship Grants" in 2025-26, surpassing its goals of bat stewardship and citizen science. Led by the BC Conservation Foundation but involving many partners, the BC Community Bat Program supported 20 regions with trained program coordinators, increasing awareness and stewardship through media, presentations, "bat packs" in libraries, community engagement in volunteer bat counts, homeowner education, assisting in roost reporting, building hundreds of bat boxes, and more. Learn more about the program's bat-friendly communities initiatives **here** and results of the 2012-2025 BC Annual Bat Count **here**.

Help Us Help Ducks

Spruce City Wildlife Association

A 2025 Community Grant enabled the Spruce City Wildlife Association to support cavity-nesting waterfowl through installing nesting boxes and hen houses. Read about how volunteers came together to enhance habitat and steward wetlands **here**.

Capacity Grants

HCTF launched the Capacity Grant program in 2023. Recipients have two years to complete their project, and reporting for the first cohort took place in the 2025-26 year.

Among the project leaders supported in the grant's first year was Simpcw First Nation, which undertook a supplemental feeding program for the Wells Gray South and Groundhog southern mountain caribou herds to evaluate whether supplemental feeding contributes to improved health, survival, and/or population growth. In addition to benefiting caribou, the Capacity Grant allowed Simpcw to collaborate with Provincial and NGO biologists to enhance their understanding of conservation project methods and protocols, to continue improving and implementing their own projects.

Noostel Keyoh - Takla First Nation, used Capacity Grant funding to assess how a 12,000+ hectare wildfire in the Wolverine mountain range in 2021 influenced caribou use, and determine the appropriate silviculture approach to maximize biodiversity and caribou recovery.

"*The support from this grant allowed us to train members on how to collect baseline data, which included classroom training, field sessions and office data entry. These skills and data collected will be used to monitor the effectiveness of future habitat restoration projects and have helped build capacity within Takla Nation's Stewardship Department.*"
Learn more **here**.

Education Grants

8,557

students engaged in outdoor learning through GO Grants

205

high school students engaged in conservation projects through LEAP Grants

44k+

hours of outdoor learning

Project Stories

Shuswap Exploration
GO Grant

With a GO Grant to fund transportation and materials costs, three kindergarten classes from a Salmon Arm school got to explore Margaret Falls and Herald Provincial Park. A total of 55 students participated, using magnifiers to explore vegetation along trails and learning about the importance of environmental stewardship before visiting a waterfall. “We have continued to hike weekly at the nearby trails… but this particular outing is special, and sticks in the hearts of my students in a long-lasting way,” said a teacher. “It makes the Shuswap region feel bigger and grander, and helps the students feel a deep connection to place. This connection helps their capacity to care. I have noticed students being more mindful in their actions throughout the year, and our GO Grant trip was part of this. Thank you.”

Kus-kus-sum Adventure
GO Grant

Project Watershed visited grade 6 and 7 students at a Comox Valley school to teach them about watersheds and estuaries ahead of a GO Grant-supported field trip to Kus-kus-sum, the Courtenay Estuary. At the site, students participated in water experiments, a site tour to learn about how the site is being restored into a healthy watershed*, and planting sedges in the intertidal zone.

*The restoration work was supported for several years with a Fish & Wildlife Grant; learn more **here**.

Cheakamus Salmon Stewards LEAP Grant

With LEAP Grant support, the Cheakamus Centre’s Cheakamus Salmon Stewards pilot project offered two immersive programs for Indigenous high school students from North Vancouver and Squamish. In fall 2025, students participated in a two-day field experience that included juvenile fish trapping, habitat assessment, and restoration site visits, led by DFO staff and supported by Indigenous cultural educators, integrating scientific environmental learning and Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being into conservation and land stewardship. In spring 2026, students were engaged in ecological restoration, developing foundational field botany skills while exploring the role of riparian ecosystems in supporting salmon and broader biodiversity. The project leader reflected:

> *“One of the highlights of the project was seeing students actively engaged in field-based learning and responding positively to the opportunity to work directly within salmon restoration environments. The integration of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being throughout the programs added important cultural and place-based context to the learning experience. Students benefited from learning that connected ecological science with relationships to land, water, and stewardship responsibilities. The involvement of Indigenous educators and mentors helped create a supportive and culturally grounded environment for Indigenous youth participants.”*

Education Programs

881
workshop participants

197
Professional Development hours through Wild Schools

4,612
students participating in Wild Schools

21
post-secondary scholarships awarded

781
students participating in Exchange Boxes

Project Stories

Revelstoke and Victoria Environmental Exchange Box

Grade 5 classrooms from Revelstoke and Victoria schools were paired up under the Environmental Exchange Box program for the students to gain appreciation of and connection with their local biodiversity. Both classes chose to learn about the plants and trees in their areas to share with their pen pals. The Victoria students created posters with the description, classification, and uses of their plants, and wrote letters to each Revelstoke student to quiz them on plant stewardship. The Revelstoke class made bookmarks and created games for their partner class, such as “Plant Uno” and “Tree Memory”!

Learning About Water Wild School

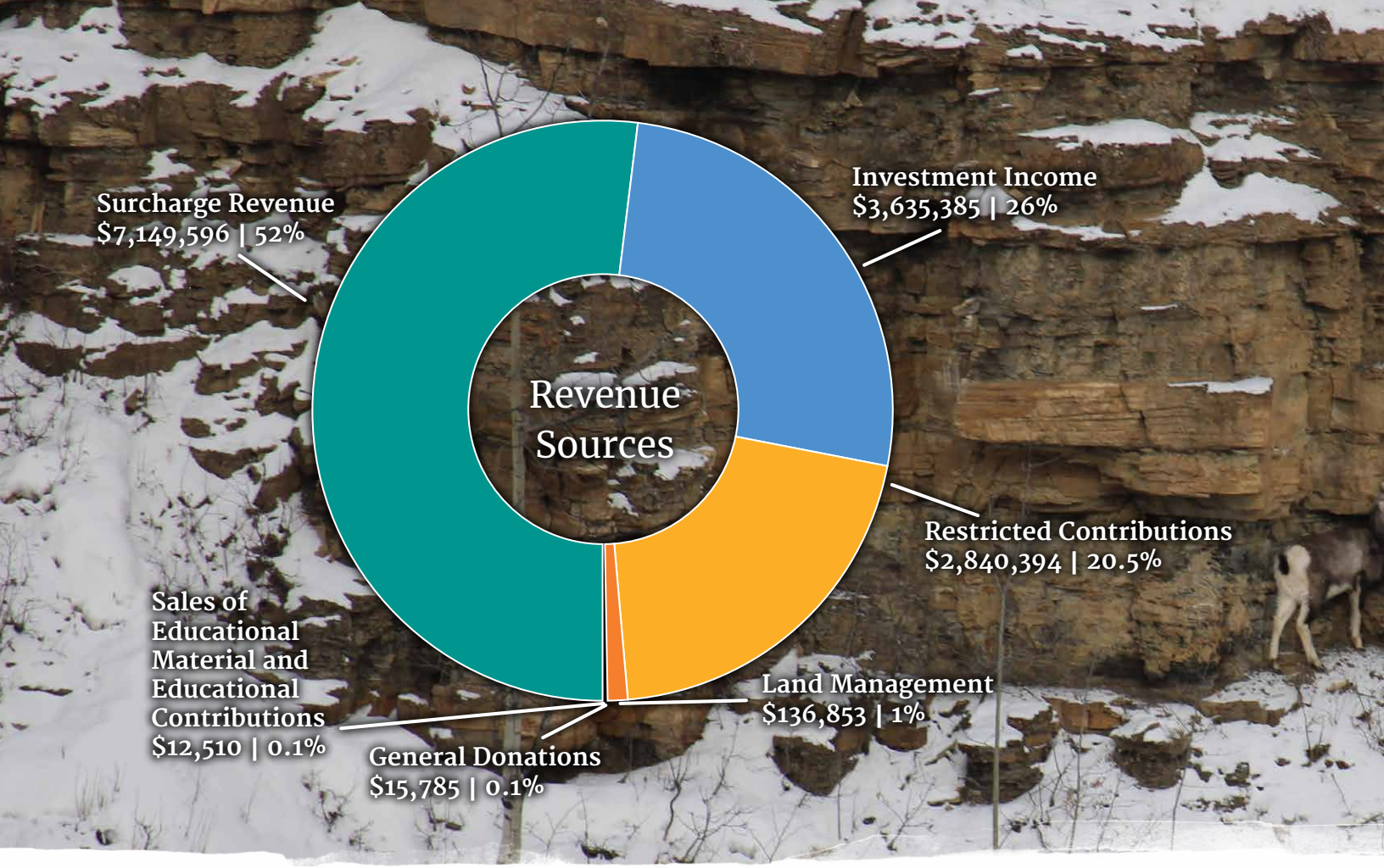
In their second year of the 3-year Wild School program, an elementary school in the Boundary region focused on exploring water through outdoor and place-based learning. Students explored local waterways, seasonal changes, aquatic ecosystems, and the interconnectedness of water with the natural world. With support and resources provided by the program, the confidence and capacity of school staff to take learning outdoors has grown, helping to create a foundation for continued environmental learning, and students are becoming increasingly curious about their local environment and developing a sense of responsibility and belonging within their community.

Together for Wildlife Scholarship Zoe Konaz

Zoe is a master’s student at the University of British Columbia and a 2025 Together for Wildlife (T4W) scholarship recipient. Her work is in collaboration with the Yunesit’in Qwen (Fire) Stewardship program, where fire stewards are working on restoring ‘good fire’ to their territory and improving habitat conditions for key harvest. Zoe is investigating how mus (moose) and nists’i (deer) forage responds to cultural burns and how wildlife habitat use changes following treatment, integrating scientific tools with Indigenous-led knowledge and priorities to support Yunesit’in stewardship goals while contributing to a broader understanding of Indigenous fire stewardship and its role in shaping ecosystems. Read more about Zoe and the other T4W scholarship recipients **here**.

Al Martin Conservation Scholarship Noa Mayer

Noa is a PhD candidate at the University of British Columbia studying how climate change is reshaping the future of Pacific salmon, with a focus on Kokanee. Rapidly warming rivers and lakes are pushing many salmon populations to their thermal limits; while numerous wild sockeye populations are declining, Kokanee remain comparatively abundant, suggesting they may possess unique biological traits that improve resilience to heat stress. Noa is combining physiology, genomics, and predictive modelling to better understand how salmon respond to environmental stress and how climate warming may affect their survival in the decades ahead. Read more about Noa, and the other Al Martin scholarship recipients **here**, and Al Martin **here**.



Financial Overview

Thank You to Our Generous Donors and Contributors

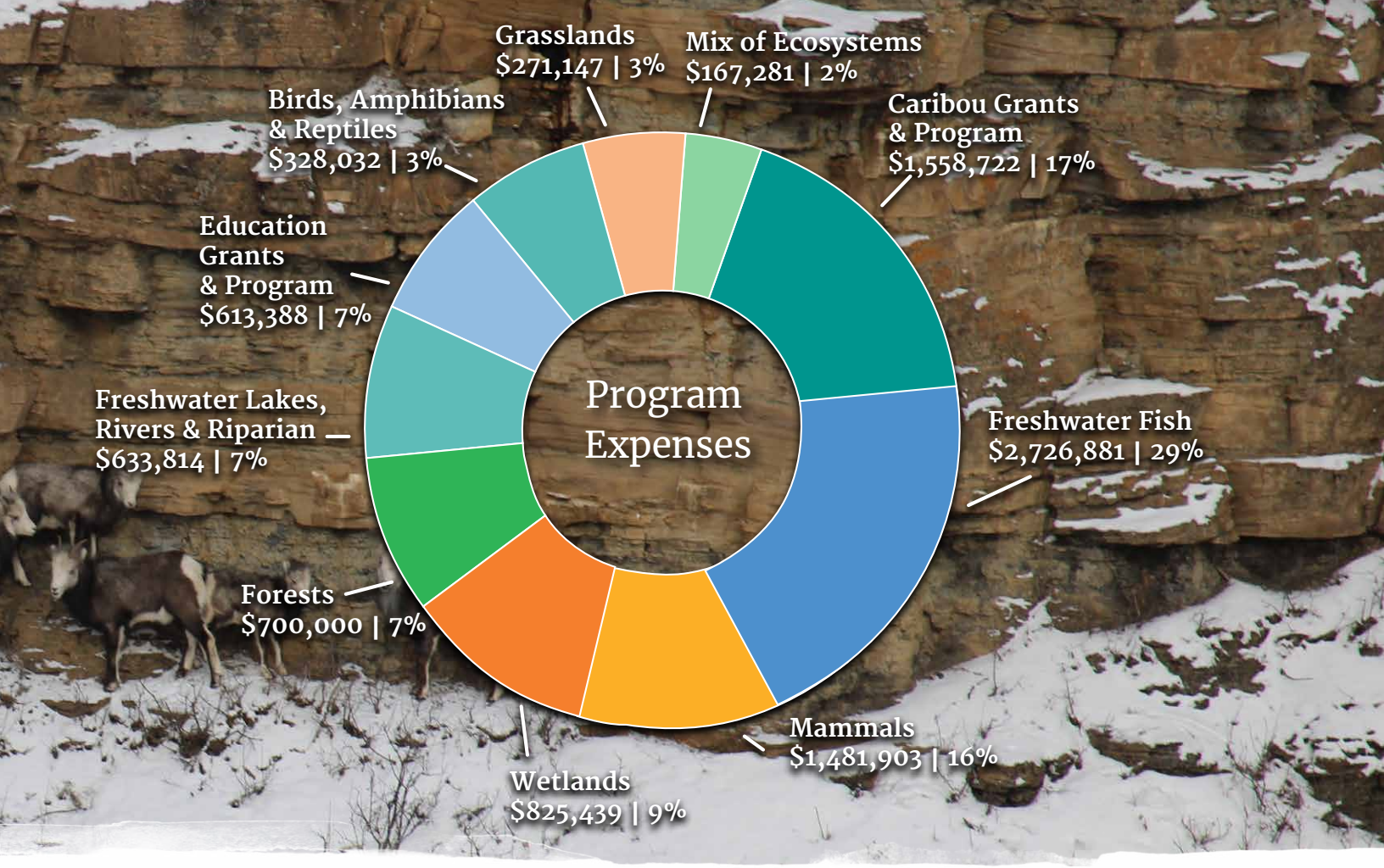
HCTF came into existence in 1981 because hunters, anglers, guide outfitters, and trappers were willing to pay for conservation work above and beyond what is expected of the Provincial government.

This year, over half of HCTF's revenue was provided from licence surcharges and serves as our foundational funding, enabling HCTF to leverage and attract additional investments, resulting in more than $250 million invested into conserving B.C.'s freshwater fish, wildlife, and the habitats in which they live.

HCTF is also a registered charity, and we are incredibly fortunate to have a passionate, dedicated donor base. Thank you to the generous individuals and organizations who selected HCTF for your charitable giving this year.

With the impacts of climate change and other ecological threats, we are seeing an increased demand to support conservation work. Funding applications have been increasing in recent years, and HCTF is unable to fund all of the worthwhile and impactful projects that apply to our Foundation. We are committed to exploring new opportunities and working with our dedicated network of partners to keep this important conservation work moving forward.

We believe that a sustainable future is possible, but only through collective dedication. HCTF would like to express a very sincere thank you to our donors and supporters for joining us in our mission to conserve B.C.'s freshwater fish, wildlife, and their habitats today for generations.



Ecological Corridors – a Restricted Contribution

In 2024, HCTF received funding to improve habitat connectivity in nationally recognized corridors in B.C.

The funding opportunity stemmed from a collaboration between the Parks Canada National Program for Ecological Corridors and the B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. As a restricted funding opportunity, proposals had to meet the criteria of the funding contribution and the technical requirements of the Fish & Wildlife Grant.

One of the projects receiving Ecological Corridors funding was Sməlqmí Endangered Wildlife (ḱiṅḱiṅt i? tmix^{w}) Recovery, led by the Lower Similkameen Indian Band (LSIB). The project's overall goal is to enhance the Ashnola River Corridor ecosystem health and resiliency to benefit species at risk and other wildlife, and ensure the wellbeing of sməlqmíx, the Syilx people of the Similkameen Valley.

The LSIB is restoring habitat lost to logging and 2023 wildfires by planting whitebark pine and other native plants, stabilizing riparian banks, and building structures such as bird houses, bat boxes, and snake hibernacula. In addition to the 80 hectares restored through the project to date, public outreach and volunteer engagement are getting the community involved and conveying the importance of land stewardship in protecting this vital habitat.

See the full audited financial statements here.

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