



Conserving Canada's Desert Country is Good for Nature, People, and Business

South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program

Newsletter

July 2010

Collaborations are hard work – but they DO WORK!

Last week, the District of Summerland Council unanimously voted for an amendment to the Official Community Plan that brings into effect a number of bylaw provisions and other tools that will consider ecological values during the development application and approval process, including Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Areas (ESDPAs).

This very positive result was the culmination of over ten months of collaboration and cooperation between local governments and conservation partners under the umbrella of SOSCP. Together, we have worked hard to establish the *South Okanagan Similkameen Local Government Ecological Standards and Practices Capacity Building Initiative*. This collaboration is supported by the Real Estate Foundation of BC Communities in Transition Program, the federal Habitat Stewardship Program and the communities themselves.

Highlights:

- SOSCP created a **regional environmental planning table** that brings together planners and resource people to learn, identify priority issues and needs for support, and a forum from which to advance sustainable land use planning;
- Small communities do not have **expertise or capacity** to address challenges around the use and conservation of land – including implementing and improving ecological standards and practices in their planning and land use decision making processes;
- SOSCP and communities **agreed that it was imperative that capacity be addressed** to be able to advance sustainable land use practices that protect wildlife, healthy ecosystems and the goods and services they provide human communities.
- SOSCP and communities **established a collaborative approach to capacity building** – they pooled existing funding resources and worked together to apply for external funds.
- This enabled the establishment of a **shared environmental planning contractor** that works within the communities to assist them in achieving their environmental planning objectives. In addition, other resource people and mentors within SOSCP work to support the communities. The SOSCP administers the contract and guides the work plan in concert with the communities according to their needs.

On July 12th, the Town of Oliver will be considering the adoption of ESDPAs for their community through a public hearing process.

Bryn White
SOSCP Program Manager

News

Nature Conservancy of Canada receives support from local winery

On June 24, 2010, Quail's Gate CEO Tony Stewart announced a commitment of \$75,000 over three years to support NCC initiatives. This is part of the winery's long-term strategy to incorporate sustainable practices that benefit the environment into the company. Okanagan Program Manager Barb Pryce thanked the Stewart family for their support for conservation work within the Okanagan Ecoregion.

BC Government Announces Endangered Species Task Force

Environment Minister Barry Penner announced the members of a task force that will provide recommendations for the continued protection and recovery of species at risk in British Columbia. The 10 members of the task force were selected to reflect a range of regions, backgrounds and sectors. They will be led by Bruce Fraser, past chair of the B.C. Forest Practices Board. [Link to details on the task force](#) and their terms of reference.

2010 Hot Year for Bear Calls

This year, bears are definitely making their presence known in the Okanagan. So far this season, there have been more bear complaint calls to the Conservation Officer Service than in all of 2009. Our cool, wet spring might be delaying natural food availability, there may simply be more young bears leaving the safety of their mothers, or humans may be getting complacent in dealing with bear-attracting items. Likely, the spike in bear-human problems this year is due to a combination of reasons, and residents only have the direct ability to influence one of them. "Properly storing garbage and dealing with other items that might attract bears to your property is one of the easiest things residents can do to reduce the likelihood of creating a bear problem", says Sergeant Jim Beck, Conservation Officer.

Improperly stored garbage is the most common source of non-natural food, followed by bird feeders, pet food and ripened fruit on the tree or the ground. Unfortunately, because there are few alternative control methods, Conservation Officers are usually forced to kill over 1000 "problem" bears each year in B.C. Not dealing with attractants can have more serious consequences for residents. "If cooperation with appropriate storage of attractants is not provided the Conservation Officer Service will be issuing Dangerous Wildlife Protection Orders that will require landowners to remove or store attractants as ordered within the indicated time frame order by the Officer", says Beck, "Failure to comply with that order will result in a \$ 575.00 fine under section 88.1 (7) of the Wildlife Act of BC."

Bighorn Sheep destroyed due to contact with domestic sheep

This spring a number of wild California Bighorn sheep were spotted within enclosed pastures alongside domestic sheep in Kelowna and the Similkameen Valley. Domestic sheep and goats can carry *Mannheimia* bacteria (formerly *Pasteurella*), and while not showing symptoms themselves, can pass along the devastating pneumonia-like illness to their wild cousins through a sneeze or nose-to-nose contact. This illness is 80-100% fatal to wild sheep. In 1999, Bighorns in the South Okanagan were decimated by an outbreak of this illness that spread like wildfire

amongst wild sheep herds. In a few months, the population of California Bighorns in the South Okanagan crashed, going from 450 to 150 animals. It has taken a decade, and a significant investment to recover the wild Bighorns of the South Okanagan. Wild sheep that come in close contact with domestic sheep are now destroyed before they can return to their herd and potentially pass along the bacteria. This was the case for a number of Bighorn sheep unlucky enough to venture into domestic pastures this spring. Between the loss of sheep habitat and other pressures, will there be a future for the Bighorn in the Okanagan –Similkameen?

Risks can be reduced by installing no-contact fencing (double or cantilevered) around domestic sheep pens in areas that are high for risk of contact between wild and domestic sheep. Other areas have found the use of true livestock guardian dogs in addition to fencing useful to discourage wild sheep from entering pens, and restricting domestic sheep grazing on rangeland used by wild sheep reduce risk of contact. Contact can occur at any time of year. Domestic sheep/goat owners should be vigilant for stray wild sheep.

If you are a sheep/goat producer and interested in reducing risk to wild sheep contact BC Ministry of Environment Biologist Brian Harris at 250-490-8254 for further information.

The public's assistance is required to prevent the decimation of wild herds as seen in 1999. If you spot wild sheep in domestic sheep or goat pasture – call the Conservation Officer Service (24 hours, toll free) 1-877-952-RAPP (7277).

Further information

Registered Professional Biology Kelowna Conference talks now on line

Powerpoint presentations from the May 5th Annual Applied Biology conference in Kelowna, are now on on the Association of Professional Biologists of BC web site. Scroll to the bottom of [this link](#) to see the presentation topics.

Proposed Okanagan-Similkameen National Park poll

Several readers of last month's newsletter requested further information on the Wilderness Committee's telephone poll on the proposed new National Park in the Okanagan Similkameen. Click here for complete [poll results](#).

Job opportunities

OSCA

The Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance is accepting resumes for people interested in contract opportunities with OSCA. Experience in conservation outreach and program planning is an asset. Send resumes to Sally Kilburg, Chair, OSCA, 113-437 Martin Street, Box 349, Penticton BC. V2A 5L1.

Gary Oak Recovery Team Conservation Specialist

Building partnerships and facilitating the protection and recovery of Garry oak and associate ecosystems and species at risk, the position works closely with GOERT's Recovery Implementation Groups. Anticipated start date is August 30, 2010. Qualified candidates are invited to apply by emailing [Shyanne Smith](#), Program Manager, by July 25th. [Further details](#)

Calendar of Events and Workshops

July 11 & 17th **The impact of invasive Bullfrogs on local amphibians.** 2 p.m. at Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre, Osoyoos.

July 13th **"DIRT" the movie**
Fresh Outlook Foundation and Penticton Green Drinks will be showing the award winning movie DIRT at Wholefoods Market, 1770 Main Street in Penticton from 5 – 7 p.m. The movie brings to life the environmental, economic, social and political impact of our soil.

July 15th **"Frogs Calling! Working together for frog-friendly travel"**
Local amphibian movements, barriers, and connectivity solutions will be discussed by researcher Jonquil Crosby at Osoyoos Desert Centre, 6:30 p.m.

July 24th **Romancing the Desert**
Each year under the Osoyoos Desert Centre is the site of a magical evening. On this special night, you can stroll along our mile-long boardwalk sipping fine BC wines and feasting on local culinary creations. This fundraising event benefits the Desert Centre's activities. 6pm until midnight.

Aug. 30 – Sept. 1st **BC Water Symposium**
Sponsored by the Ministry of Environment and partners, the purpose of the symposium is to engage researchers, governments, industry, communities, and First Nations to create a BC Water Strategy. For more information consult the [BC Water Symposium web site](#) . (Event will occur concurrently in Prince George, Kelowna and Victoria.)

Sept. 13 & 14 **Ecological Approaches to Invasive Plant Management**, Revelstoke
Taught by Dave Polster, the course will investigate vegetation management systems designed to work with natural successional processes. The first day is a classroom session, and the second is a field day with the participants evaluating sites. This is an intensive, content-heavy course. Details at [Columbia Mountains Institute of Applied Ecology](#).

November 15 – 18 **Building SustainAble Communities**, Kelowna
Hosted by the Fresh Outlook Foundation, [2010 conference details](#).

Upcoming Funding deadlines

Vancouver Foundation

Grants and Community Initiatives Program: Environment supports a broad range of environmental projects. **Letters of intent are due by July 23**, and if letter is accepted, grant applications are due September 15, 2010. For the goals and more information [go here](#).

MEC Community Contributions. **Application deadline is September 10, 2010** for applications for Land Acquisition, Capacity Building, Research, Advocacy and Education, and Access. Urban Sustainability and Grassroots Product Donations applications are accepted anytime. Please see their website [for more information](#).

Bullitt Foundation

The Foundation now concentrates on innovative sustainable development issues including ecosystem services and planning, and civic engagement. **Letters of inquiries** received on or before **September 15** will be considered for the **November 1 proposal deadline**. Since inquiries are submitted electronically, these are firm deadlines. Consult the <http://bullitt.org/> for details.

Public Opportunities

Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen Calendar

<http://www.rdos.bc.ca/index.php?id=415>

Village of Keremeos Council Meeting Schedule

<http://www.keremeos.ca/Village/municipalcouncil.html>

Town of Oliver Council Meeting Schedule

<http://www.oliver.ca/siteengine/ActivePage.asp?PageID=25>

Town of Osoyoos Council Meeting Schedule

<http://www.osoyoos.ca/siteengine/activepage.asp?NewsID=19>

City of Penticton Council Meeting Schedule

<http://www.penticton.ca/city/council/meetings/default.asp>

District of Summerland Council Meeting Schedule

<http://www.summerland.ca/municipalhall/calendar.aspx>

Your Contribution

If you would like to have your conservation project listed, to submit a news item for the SOSCP Newsletter, or would like to provide feedback on this issue, we'd love to hear from you!

SOSCP Newsletter

South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program

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This e-mail has been sent as you have requested to be kept abreast of news through the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program website. — If for any reason you wish to be removed from this mailing list please send an email to: soscp2@gov.bc.ca and your email address will be removed promptly from our mailing list. To update your email address please send your request to: soscp2@gov.bc.ca.

Donation Information

If you, or your organization, would like to support the coordinating function of the SOSCP, please contact one of the following



Environmental Legacy Fund

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