

SOSCP

Annual Report 2001–2002

South Okanagan Similkameen
Conservation Program



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REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Working together cooperatively towards a common landscape vision greatly enhances probability of success. This couldn't be more evident than through the work of the partners in the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program. This second year of the partnership has shown growth in many areas – from planning to new partners to broadening the mandate to actions on the ground to increased financial support.

One of the most significant achievements of this year was the finalisation of the Strategic Plan and completion of five of the teams 5-year plans. These documents not only set direction and ensure we are working effectively towards common goals, objectives and priorities, but they have brought team partners together in knowledge sharing and joint planning to which all feel ownership. This is essential if we are to build the necessary trust and relationships for effective and efficient implementation.

The most important achievements are those that directly contribute to conservation on the ground and this year resulted in many such projects. Partners in all 6 teams have been actively working with landowners and each other to steward the land and to collect necessary information to direct future activities. Cooperation and involvement of landowners and the community is of course paramount to long term success.

This year showed increased focus on species at risk and the connection of their recovery to the common, broader habitat goals. Proposed new federal species at risk legislation will result in focus and commitment in the future. We have the opportunity to become a model for ecosystem-based recovery. The Science Team continues to play a vital role and will be key in coming years.

An added focus on aquatic habitats and the linkages between fish and terrestrial species through riparian areas was facilitated this year through initiating a working relationship with the Okanagan Nation Fisheries Commission and through many individual projects. It is through linking restoration, research, monitoring, stewardship, traditional ecological knowledge and outreach in habitats such as riparian areas that we best demonstrate the conservation of biodiversity and habitat through working collaboratively.

This year saw the addition of three new partners. I would like to take this opportunity to again welcome them on board. New partners are: Okanagan University College, UBC Faculty of Agricultural Science and the BC Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management. I hope that you find the partnership as rewarding and constructive as other partners have. In addition, this year we welcomed a new staff member, Janelle Parchomchuk who, as Outreach Coordinator, has greatly enhanced the profile of the SOSCP, its membership organisations, and most importantly our goals and visions. As a result of the leadership of Janelle and Program Manager, Rob Hawes, SOSCP now has a communications plan and more profile in the community.

Over the past two years, I have enjoyed my time as Vice-Chair and Chair of the SOSCP. As I pass the Chairmanship over to Bill Turner I want to thank all the partners for their dedication, time and resolve in making this partnership work. I particularly want to thank Rob, Janelle, Bill and the Team Chairs for keeping it all together and ensuring we get results on the ground. I look forward to the next few years which should prove exciting and productive.

Trish Hayes
Chair, SOSCP

MANAGER'S REPORT

The year has been a period of growth and accomplishments for the Partnership. SOSCP, still in its second year of operation, has moved forward to implement a common vision and strategy for conservation in the program area. Through the process of cooperation, we have been able to leverage significant new resources for conservation work .

The Annual Report outlines the many accomplishments of the teams working to implement the conservation strategies. The following are some of the highlights from the year's activities.

Highlights of the Year

Completion of the SOSCP strategic plan. The plan represents a shared vision and a cooperative, coordinated approach among the 30 Partners in SOSCP towards long term conservation in the South Okanagan Similkameen. SOSCP is a unique Partnership of non-government and government organizations working together to achieve common interests.

Improved communications between SOSCP Partners and the public. A high priority of the program is to have good communications between the Partners and with the public to increase awareness of the environmental values in the area. In the fall of 2001 we were able to hire an outreach coordinator to help facilitate communication. We have developed and implemented a communications strategy which includes frequent distribution of a calendar of events and press releases, updating the SOSCP web pages monthly with news and information and community open house information events.



Photo by Bob Lincoln

Robert Hawes, SOSCP Program Manager

Partnership building has been an important part of the year's activities. The Partnership has grown to 30 Partners and has increased its Partnership to include non traditional conservation groups, such as UBC Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Okanagan University College. Most of the Partners are actively participating in the program.

An aquatics program was initiated. SOSCP has been working with our Partners the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, and with the Okanagan Nation Fisheries Commission, to see how we can cooperate and support common interests related to riparian and fish habitat. This new cooperative approach is evolving and will lead to better leverage and efficient use of resources for aquatic habitat and species protection.



The announcement of the conservation covenant protecting Max Lake was a major accomplishment this year. Photo by Bob Lincoln

Cross border cooperation was initiated during the year. The Environmental Cooperation Council, representing environmental ministers from Washington State, BC, and the two federal governments, met in Penticton in December of 2001. SOSCP made a presentation to the Council recommending their on-going support for sharing information and resources with Washington state. Subsequently, the Cooperation Council agreed to support SOSCP's cross border cooperation initiatives.

Program funding increased substantially during the year. From the synergies of cooperation of the Partnership, we have been able to substantially increase the program contribution to conservation in our second year. The Partners contributed approximately \$2.8 million dollars of both direct cash expenditures and in-kind contributions. The contributions were roughly a third each between the federal, provincial and non government sectors.

Initiated steps to address the long term financial stability and decision making in SOSCP. The Partners realize that the program needs to look at obtaining long term stable funding in order to implement the 20-year strategic plan. A governance committee was established to look at the issue of funding by the Partners and issues around structure and decision making to improve the organization.

COSEWIC meeting was held in the program area. The federally sponsored Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada met in Osoyoos in 2001, the first such meeting outside the Ottawa area. SOSCP was able to host the committee and highlight the important attributes and species of concern in the area.

Why is the Partnership Important?

The Partnership is a coordinated approach on behalf of the different organizations that make up SOSCP. It is not a legal entity or a stand alone program, but rather, a cooperative approach to share information and resources.

The Partners held a workshop during the year to review the performance of the Partnership after the first year of operation. The review included whether SOSCP was meeting the expectations of the Partners when they joined SOSCP, to assess the values that the Partners wanted the program to focus on and to identify areas requiring improvement.

In general, the Partners have been very satisfied with the performance of SOSCP. The Partners believe that no one Partner can achieve the SOSCP objectives on their own. The values that the Partnership provides through the cooperative approach includes:

Leverage of resources

The Partners cooperate to find the required financial and technical resources to compete the priority projects. For the different sectors, federal, provincial and non-government, for every dollar they invest, they get almost three dollars back of value.

Increased funding

Due to the strategic program approach, the Partners are finding increased opportunities for funding by various donors. Donors prefer to support projects that are part of an overall strategy with clear goals and that are supported by several funding sources.

Facilitating work on the ground

The Partnership can help non local Partners make the right contacts and generally support on the ground activities with land owners and the general public. The program also provides increased opportunities for volunteers, stewardship and research projects.

Cooperation improves the effectiveness of Partner efforts

Through the cooperative approach, partners get to meet and know each organizations interests, issues and priorities. This provides for new ideas, local knowledge, access to expertise and the better use of resources for avoiding overlap and duplication of efforts.

Increased public awareness

Through regular media contacts, interviews and workshops, the program is building community support for conservation by increasing public awareness of the conservation values in the area. The program recognition helps to reinforce the efforts of individual Partner organizations.

Protecting species at risk

The program takes a broad landscape approach to protecting species at risk. By protecting critical habitat in four habitat types; wetland/riparian, grassland/shrub-steppe, rugged terrain and coniferous forests, we are protecting species at risk by conserving threatened habitat and the aquatic and terrestrial corridors for migration of threatened animals and plant species.

Rob Hawes
Program Manager, SOSCP

BACKGROUND

The South Okanagan Similkameen – A National Treasure

A combination of geography, geology and climate have combined to make the South Okanagan and Similkameen valleys a unique part of Canada. From the dry desert-like bench lands, shady cottonwood riparian woodlands along the rivers and tributaries, to upland forests and rocky terrains, the region has a rich variety of habitat types. Due to habitat diversity and the fact that these ecosystems are in such close proximity, the region supports one of the highest ratings for “species richness” in the country. Some of these species are found nowhere else in Canada or the world. For this reason, the South Okanagan Similkameen is known as Canada’s “hotspot” for species richness and rarity.

Animals such as the Yellow-breasted Chat, Pallid Bat and Tiger Salamander are among 38 COSEWIC-listed species at risk (Federal) and 256 Provincially listed species at risk. Due to increasing human pressures within this small geographic area some species are facing local extirpation, while others have already disappeared from the region. The goal of concerned citizens throughout Canada is to ensure that the wildlife diversity of the South Okanagan Similkameen is conserved in perpetuity.

The Okanagan-Similkameen corridor is also integral to maintaining the biological diversity and ecological adaptation of natural environments in British Columbia. The corridor provides a vital link for plants and animals between the interior grasslands of British Columbia and the Great Basin and dry interior desert ecosystems to the south.



Photo by Steve Cannings

Program History

The South Okanagan Similkameen is a focal area for cooperative efforts to conserve biodiversity. The South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) represents a unique effort of cooperation of local, regional, provincial and national and international organizations towards conservation of the wildlife and habitats of the South Okanagan Similkameen.

The formation of the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program follows a long history of dedicated conservation activity in the region. Habitat conservation for wildlife began in the 1960's, with the securement of important wildlife lands and the later formation of provincial parks and ecological reserves. The movement towards ecological sustainability continued as many local groups formed, specializing in various aspects of conservation.

On July 2, 2000, 19 government and non-government organizations formed SOSCP when they signed a Statement of Cooperation which outlined principles for partnering together in a mutual effort of cooperation. In just 2 years the program has grown to include 30 Partners. By working together, sharing information and resources, the Partners believe they can achieve more than they could working alone. This type of partnership between Government and non-government organizations is unprecedented

SOSCP Program

The purpose of the SOSCP is to coordinate conservation efforts to maintain the rich biodiversity of the area, including species at risk, and a viable ecological corridor between the deserts of the south and the grasslands to the north. The Program promotes a conservation-based philosophy that, unlike preservation, supports the integration of human needs for natural resources.

The Partners developed a 20 year strategic plan with a vision for SOSCP. The vision is : “A healthy environment that sustains the diversity of indigenous plants and animals while enriching people’s lives”. This vision reflects the desire for both environmental and economic sustainability.

In order to achieve the objectives of the program, specific goals were established for conservation of the four broad habitat types that occur in the area: riparian-wetlands; grassland/shrub-steppe; rocky terrain; and coniferous forests. The specific habitat goals were established in the SOSCP Prospectus report. A strategic plan was developed to guide strategies and work plans to achieve the habitat conservation goals.

The SOSCP program has six strategies, each with a team of Partners to develop and implement the work plans.

SOSCP Teams:

Science

Applying scientific knowledge

Outreach

Involving the community in conservation

Stewardship

Voluntary caring for the land

Ecologically Sustainable Land Use

Assisting in land use decisions

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Applying first nations’ knowledge and ecological heritage

Habitat Securement

Securing critical habitats.

Focus On Habitat

Many SOSCP efforts focus on habitats that are important to a variety of species at risk and associated wildlife. There are four main habitat types in the South Okanagan Similkameen that are of special importance to species at risk. Together these four habitat types, often occurring in close proximity in the narrow valleys, leads to the richness of the species which occur in the area.



Bob Lincoln

Grassland and Shrub-Steppe

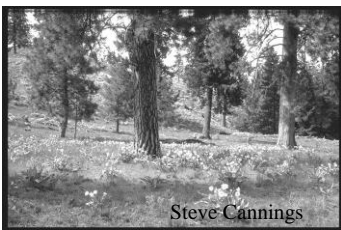
Home to Badgers, Sage Thrashers and the rare Behr's Hairstreak Butterfly, these habitats are extremely dry. Being an extension of the American deserts to the south, these grasslands are corridors for the migration of desert-adapted wildlife. With sandy soils and lack of precipitation, these habitats are easily damaged and slow to heal. Conservation efforts attempt to reduce damage or destruction of these areas while maintaining connectivity.



MWLAP

Wetland and Riparian

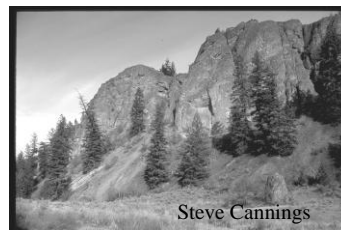
These moist habitats are the most biologically productive. Providing shelter and food for animals such as the Western Screech Owl, the Yellow Breasted Chat and the Great Basin Spadefoot, wetland/riparian areas are the most imperiled in the South Okanagan Similkameen. At least 85% of the historical wetland and riparian habitats in this region have been lost.



Steve Cannings

Coniferous Forests

Defined by large and stately conifers such as Ponderosa Pine, Douglas Fir and Western Larch, these forests have often evolved with and been maintained by fire. Veteran trees provide habitat for White Headed Woodpeckers and a variety of other cavity-nesting animals. Habitat restoration in these areas often entails forest thinning and prescribed fire.



Steve Cannings

Rugged Terrain

Rock outcrops, cliffs and jumbled talus slopes provide shade and shelter for many plants and animals. Snake dens, bat roosts, bird nests and Bighorn Sheep lambing areas are frequently located in these rocky habitats.

PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIES

There has been considerable progress during the second year of the program. Progress on the six SOSCP strategies are discussed in the following summary reports:

Science

The Science Team aims to develop and evaluate SOSCP priorities and prescriptions that are based on science, monitoring and ecological results of prescriptions, and using evaluation of those results to refine subsequent prescriptions. The Science Team is comprised of broad conservation expertise to provide scientific advice to the SOSCP steering committee and to other Teams.

The Science Team has identified the development and implementation of recovery plans as a priority, particularly for those species that are nationally at risk. There are currently 38 species listed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as species at risk in the South Okanagan Similkameen region and 256 provincially listed species at risk. Recovery action groups have recently been established for the Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*), Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*), Pigmy Short-Horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma douglasi*), Night Snake (*Hypsiglena torquata*), Great Basin Spadefoot (*Spea intermontana*), Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*), Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*), White-Headed Woodpecker (*Picoides albolarvatus*), Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*), Peregrine Falcon, anatum Subs (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) and Badger (*Taxidea taxus*).

In addition to the numerous research, monitoring and planning projects undertaken this year, there were two, one-day conferences that brought together many of the people doing research on birds and riparian systems. These events were important in carrying out one of the Teams functions in making the research activities in the SOSCP area more accessible to a wider audience.

Future priorities for the Science Team include establishing lines of communication between members of the Team and setting achievable one and five year goals for the Team. The recently established technical environmental advisory committee, under the leadership of the Ecologically Sustainable Land Use Team, has been identified as a good delivery mechanism for scientific information.

First Annual OUC Bird Symposium

The First Annual OUC Bird Symposium was held at the Okanagan University College on December 10, 2001. This one-day event highlighted the work of various biologists and naturalists studying and conserving local bird species. The public response to the symposium was positive and supportive. The event was fully booked with 90 people attending, and generated considerable media attention.

Outreach

The Outreach Team is chaired by the Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance. The goal of the Outreach Team is to foster increased conservation awareness, involvement and commitment of residents and visitors alike. Outreach activities are important to sustain the conservation ethic for protection of the biodiversity of the region.

The second year of the Outreach Program saw excellent success in implementing the outreach five year plan. Highlights for the Outreach Team include the increasingly popular annual Meadowlark Festival, various community lecture series, creating new opportunities for school and community involvement, and the filling of the new outreach coordinator position.

A coordinator for the Outreach Program was hired in September of 2001. Since this time, the coordinator has increased communication between SOSCP Partners and helped to bring important event and awareness information to the community. Strategic planning for the outreach Team was completed and funding initiatives begun.

The following events and projects are part of the Outreach Teams' initiative to foster increased conservation awareness:

Outreach Team Lead and Chair of the Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance, Judy Brock has dedicated years of volunteer service towards environmental education. Photo by Rob Hawes

The Meadowlark Festival



The Meadowlark Festival is one of the major events promoting the natural attributes of the South Okanagan Similkameen. Hosted

by the Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance, this event has been gaining popularity since its creation 5 years ago. SOSCP is also a sponsor of the Meadowlark Festival, and many of the SOSCP Partners are directly involved. The program benefits from the exposure through the festival brochure, the Nature Expo, and the bus tour that introduces participants to various project and Partners.

The Meadowlark Festival continues to be a highlight event for community awareness and involvement in outreach activities. This year had over 2000 participants in over 70 field events. The increasing draw of the festival has initiated the installation of a new fall event in 2002 to correspond with the SOSCP fall AGM.



Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance Lecture Series

The OSCA lecture series raises public awareness about ecological issues facing the people, wildlife and habitats in the SOSCP area. This past year, the OSCA lecture series included two lectures as part of the “Testing the Water’s” Series in which two speakers and various local conservation groups presented information regarding lake and watershed stewardship. This series was attended by over 60 people.

The Law Talks series sponsored by OSCA and by the Community Law office had 5 speakers present information on environmental economics. The talks promoted sustainable economies and ecologically friendly land-use decisions. This lecture series was very successful, with over 200 people in attendance.

Environmental Resource Centre

Operated by The Land Conservancy of BC and OSCA, the office at 27A Front Street in Penticton continues to act as a public drop-in resource centre for environmental outreach, stewardship, and conservation issues, promoting awareness of local wildlife, habitats and ecosystems. Window and in-store displays are changed and updated on a regular basis, attracting pedestrian traffic and interest. We have seen a steady increase in public awareness of the resource centre. On any given week, we have between 10 and 20 members of the public stopping in to see what the centre is about. Often, people dropping into the resource centre are landowners seeking habitat conservation, species, or stewardship information.

Last year the Okanagan Similkameen Boundary Fisheries Partnership helped to establish and expand the resource centre’s collection of aquatics and fisheries related resource materials, as well as new display stands. The resource centre also helped promote new outreach materials regarding snakes, cottonwoods and beavers produced by the South Okanagan Stewardship Program. The office is used as the headquarters for the Meadowlark Festival during the months of April and May. Other organizations such as Protect Our Parks (Penticton) and the Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society utilize the resource centre for meetings and displaying information.

Green Gifts Open House Event

The Green Gifts Open House Event sponsored by the SOSCP was initiated in December 2001 as an annual event highlighting SOSCP Partners. Held at the Environmental Resource Centre, it promotes the purchase of Christmas gifts, such as donations, sponsorships and merchandise, whose proceeds support local conservation. It also serves as a venue to familiarize the public with the Environmental Resource Centre and to raise public awareness regarding conservation. The event was highly successful, bringing 150 people to the office over two days and raising \$1500 for SOSCP Partners. The resource centre experienced a significant increase in traffic throughout the month of December. Green gift sales surpassed expectations, and can also be taken as a measure of the increased local awareness around environmental and conservation issues.

Okanagan Falls Elementary School Workshops

Seven environmental educators from the community gave a series of presentations to students at the Okanagan Falls Elementary School as part of a full-day earth day event. Topics included endangered species, bighorn sheep, bears, spiders, weeds, the puddles project and an art collage. Nine classes and the entire school staff participated in the event. This was seen as highly successful by both teachers and environmental educators and is hoped to become a model for future school programs.



Under the direction of Aaron Grant, this colourful collage depicting Sockeye Salmon was created by Gr. 7 students at the Okanagan Falls Elementary School.

Photo by Judy Brock

Public Displays

The SOSCP display was put up at various show venues and events. Three home shows, the environmental mind grind challenge in Penticton and the fisheries awareness night promoted environmental information to over 3000 community members. Updated display materials for the SOSCP display include a new SOSCP brochure, a new brochure for the Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance, as well as a poster of SOSCP Partner logos.

SOSCP / OSBFP Fisheries Awareness Night

The Fisheries Awareness Night on March 25th at the En'Owkin Centre had guest speakers give information to community members regarding fisheries management, stewardship and community involvement. This event included displays and presentations by four guest speakers with over 50 people in attendance. The evening was co-hosted by the Okanagan Similkameen Boundary Fisheries Partnership (OSBFP) and The Land Conservancy of BC.

Osoyoos Lecture Series

The Osoyoos Desert Society has been actively promoting a variety of SOSCP Partners and conservation issues during their successful lecture series this year. Lectures included weed control, fire management, the puddles project, SOSCP, Bluebirds and Partners in Flight. Each lecture was attended by approximately 20 to 30 people.



Sherry Linn of the Southern Interior Bluebird Trial Society presents a talk about bluebirds at the Desert Centre's lecture series. Photo by Kevin Dunn

Stewardship

The goal of the SOSCP Stewardship Team is to enhance and promote land stewardship by landowners, land managers and interested community groups in order to protect the diversity of native plants and wildlife. Stewardship is about actively caring for land, water, and cultural resources to ensure that they are maintained or enhanced. It benefits the environment, the landowner and the community for generations to come. This Team is lead by TLC - The Land Conservancy of BC under the coordination of Shawn Black.



Stewardship Coordinator Shawn Black holds a gopher snake. Photo by TLC – The Land Conservancy of BC

Stewardship Coordination and Delivery

The stewardship coordination and delivery program coordinates all stewardship activities under the SOSCP program. It also delivers stewardship programs to assist landowners in conserving their properties through stewardship agreements, conservation covenants and eco-gift donations. The stewardship coordination and delivery program also conducts an inventory of stewardship activities and runs GAP analysis.

Ecological Gift Donations

The Land Conservancy of BC has been working on a significant ecological gift this year. This donation will protect 60 acres of coniferous forest, including a number of old-growth western larch trees (among the largest in BC at over 600+ years old and 180+ feet tall), large ponderosa pines, Douglas fir and spruce. The site provides excellent habitat for Williamson's Sapsucker, Piliated Woodpecker, Flammulated Owl, Red-tail Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Turkey Vulture, Flicker, and high potential for

White-headed Woodpeckers. Another ecogift donation this year involved a one-acre portion of ponderosa pine/ bunchgrass habitat near Naramata that was donated to Turtle Island Earth Stewards.

Conservation Covenants

Conservation covenants of note this year were the completion of the Max Lake covenant protecting 16 acres of wetland/riparian habitat. Max Lake is home to a number of species considered at risk, including but not limited to the rare Vivid Dancer, Painted Turtle, Western Screech Owl, and Flammulated Owl. Other covenants in progress this year were the O'Reilly covenant on Park Rill Creek north of Oliver (600m of streamside habitat and 2 acre wetland), and one in the Lower Similkameen Valley (200 acres of grassland/shrub-steppe).

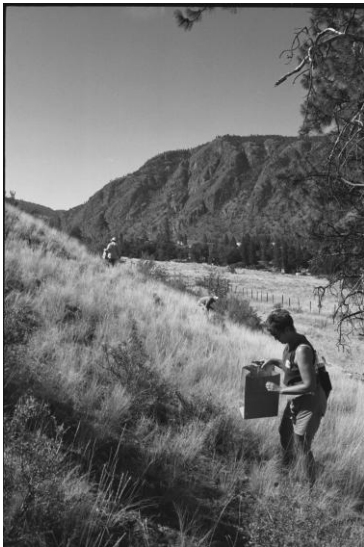
Landowner contact and stewardship database

At the end of the 2001-2002 fiscal year, there were over 130 landowners in the stewardship database. Work is currently underway to link the database to the GIS-based cadastral maps supplied by the Regional District. This confidential database will allow stewardship organizations to track stewardship with individual landowners. It will also be used to ensure that landowners are not contacted over and over again under a multitude of stewardship initiatives, and to ensure that all landowner contact work is coordinated and delivered in an effective manner.

Gap Analysis

Using digital data from the Ministry of Water land and Air protection combined with cadastral maps from the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen, the Stewardship Team has linked landowner contact records to the GIS database. Large, area based stewardship initiatives and the work of watershed roundtables will also be added to the GIS database. Stewardship work/data (landowner contact, large area based initiatives, parks, conservation holdings, etc.), species data, and habitat mapping will be compared and analyzed to identify gaps in stewardship delivery. Results from this analysis will be used to plan new stewardship projects for next year and to revise the five-year stewardship work plan.

Stewardship Projects



The Nature Trust of BC involves community volunteers in the stewardship of grassland habitat. Photo: Janelle Parchomchuk

Weed management

The Nature Trust of BC established monitoring and treatment trial plots for the control of noxious weeds. The project included treatment of 120 ha on 13 different sites through the work of 2 E-Team work crews. Four community weed pulls also added to the control of noxious weeds. Volunteers and staff from TLC and the South Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Program were also actively involved in weed control on over 20 properties and at Max Lake.

Riparian Habitat Restoration Project

Lead by the Nature Trust of BC and the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Riparian Habitat Restoration Project established 15 km of fences protecting and restoring riparian habitats on ranching lands. Monitoring points for Yellow-breasted Chats were established at these sites and landowner informational materials were distributed.

Puddles Project

The Puddles Project, lead by the Ministry of Water, Land and Air protection, increased volunteer awareness and participation in activities such as monitoring to conserve biodiversity within small wetland areas. The program prioritized small wetlands and gathered support from community members and interest groups such as the South Okanagan Naturalists Club. This project monitored 33 wetlands and resulted in 97.75 volunteer hours from 30 people. Data was obtained for use towards future conservation and the foundations were laid for ongoing monitoring in years to come. As well, three presentations were delivered and one landowner was contacted regarding the project.

Conservation Partners Project

Natural areas on farmland can represent the last vestige of habitat for a variety of native species. This program supports growers in BC who are actively protecting, enhancing, and restoring parts of their land as wildlife habitat. Lead by The Land Conservancy of BC, the Conservation Partners Project supports the work of agriculturalists to conserve habitat values on farm properties. The project was piloted in 2001, with six growers signing stewardship agreements with TLC, protecting over 220 acres of habitat. In 2002, the project has grown to include a total of 16 “Conservation Partners” protecting over 500 acres of habitat. Strong support from consumers, retailers, and wholesalers has helped to expand the program.

Landowner Contact

Together, the South Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Program and the Land Conservancy of BC maintained contact with 60 landowners owning over 9,000 ha of land. Other special focus landowner contact projects included habitat securement for bighorn sheep, antelope-brush awareness, understanding snakes, caring for cottonwoods, ponderosa pine awareness and riparian enhancement in the South Okanagan. Landowner contact is often the first step to further stewardship commitments by landowners. Most of the conservation covenants, ecological gift donations, and acquisitions within the South Okanagan-Similkameen region have originated from landowner contact projects.



The federally endangered White-headed Woodpecker is just one of the many species benefiting from the Okanagan Tree Encroachment Project. Photo: by Steve Canning

Okanagan Tree Encroachment Project

The BC Conservation Foundation used forest thinning and prescribed fire to enhance and restore forest habitat for California Bighorn Sheep and the White-headed Woodpecker. Two treatment locations included 80 ha of land located in the Vaseux protected area and the Vaseux-Bighorn National Wildlife area. Site inventory and data collection work was completed on both sites. Thinning work and a small, prescribed fire was completed on the east side treatment .

Ecologically Sustainable Land Use

The goal of the Ecologically Sustainable Land Use strategy is to ensure long-term ecosystem health, a sustainable economy and quality of life by providing conservation information, tools and other kinds of support to those who advise on and make decisions about land use. This Team is led by the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management with Terry Macdonald as the chair.

Inventory and Gap analysis of Land Management Tools in the SOSCP area

The Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management was the lead for this major project. The first component was an inventory of current land use planning tools that apply to lands in the SOSCP area. A spatial gap analysis was then conducted using the database information to determine where land use planning tools fall short in conserving habitat for species at risk. The information from this project will be used to provide recommendations to land managers and policy makers.

Review of Regional District Growth Strategies

The Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management conducted a review of the environmental management component of Regional Growth Strategies that have been completed in other parts of the province. The information generated will assist the Technical Environmental Advisory Committee (discussed below) and the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen during the forthcoming Regional Growth Strategy process.

Penticton and Area Visioning Project

The Penticton and Area Visioning Project was completed this year. This pilot project contributes to a long-term vision of Penticton and its surrounding area from a conservation viewpoint by highlighting areas of important habitat. Involving various members of the local conservation and planning community, the bioregional mapping technique was incorporated into the creation of four conservation maps: Habitat, Art and Viewscapes, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and General Conservation/ Quality of Life. This project represents the first critical step toward developing a comprehensive long-term vision that reflects the interests of all sectors in the Penticton and area community. In its turn, a comprehensive Penticton and area vision will be an important building block to developing a vision for all residents of the SOSCP area. This is a key objective in the Ecologically Sustainable Land Use Team's strategic plan



Members of the community participate in the Penticton and Area Visioning Project.

Photo by Rob Hawes

City of Penticton OCP Review

The Stewardship and the Ecological Sustainable Land Use Team of the SOSCP collaborated to produce two documents. These documents provide the City of Penticton with an overview of important habitats, and some related conservation issues and recommendations relevant to the scale of the Official Community Plan. The document *Important Habitats within the City of Penticton* was prepared by Ophiucus Consulting. It included within the report an *Important Habitats Map*. A second complementary document entitled *Comments and Recommendations on the City of Penticton OCP draft of December 20, 2001* was prepared by the South Okanagan-Similkameen (SOS) Stewardship Program.

Technical Environmental Advisory Committee

A plan was put forward for a technical environmental advisory committee (TEAC) as an advisory committee to the Regional District of the South Okanagan Similkameen. The advisory committee, made up of 12 volunteers with at least 15 years each of professional experience, is designed to advise the Regional District with sound technical advice as it reviews official community plans and major project referrals.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

The goal of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Team is to promote the collection, understanding and use of the Okanagan People's traditional and spiritual connection with the land. The Traditional Ecological Knowledge Team is lead by the En'Owkin Centre in Penticton, an educational centre serving the Okanagan people. The three main objectives of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Team are to facilitate the recovery of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in the community, to support the use of TEK in conservation of band lands, and to provide TEK for SOSCP Partners.

Facilitating the recovery of TEK in the Community

In achieving its goal for reinstatement of TEK among community members, the TEK Team conducted research and review of traditional knowledge information, transcribing and cataloguing archival information at the En'Owkin library. Local TEK trainees attended the indigenous environmental network conference during the summer and another conference was held in early spring, bringing together knowledge keepers from the south and central Okanagan to discuss intellectual property rights and to develop protocols for the use of traditional knowledge in conservation.

A series of workshops with traditional harvesters were held with members of the Penticton Indian band, the Lower

Similkameen Indian band and the Osoyoos Indian band. The En'Owkin centre accomplished additional work towards the recovery and retraining of TEK through holding a variety of educational courses with band members through the Ecoliteracy Science Program. One four-month course gave local band members experiential knowledge of the Cottonwood Riparian Ecosystem, while other students participated in the aboriginal children-in-care science camp and the Earth Day tour of Locatee lands.

Supporting the Use of TEK For Conservation of Band Lands

Two activities contributed towards supporting the use of TEK for conservation of band lands: the development of the Okanagan TEK council and an inventory of conservation needs for Band Lands. Two short-term and one long-term coordinator were hired for these activities. Members of the first aboriginal community were identified from all South Okanagan Bands to participate in local and Okanagan TEK Council. Elders, traditional knowledge keepers and harvesters attended a one-day conference in the spring of 2002. A process was initiated with the Penticton Indian Band TEK Committee to identify conservation lands towards a formal rezoning plan with the TEK council and the Penticton Indian Band Council.



SOSCP Partners attending a TEK Workshop hosted by the En'Owkin Centre. Photo by Bob Lincoln

Providing TEK for SOSCP Partners

In addition to providing on-going advice and informal workshops for SOSCP Partners, the Team facilitated a TEK conference for SOSCP Partners in January 2002. This half-day workshop was attended by 80 people, SOSCP Partners and guests from the community. It provided an introduction to the definition of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and its relevance to conservation.

The Team conducted a variety of local projects this year in conjunction with SOSCP Partners. They were successful in completing an inventory on the Penticton Indian Bands Locatee lands for the Riparian Ecosystem Conservation Education Project. The Locatee lands were temporarily secured using funds from the 7th Generation Fund, Aboriginal Foster Children-in-Care Program, BC Lottery, and TLC - The Land Conservancy of BC. A business and plan and an educational plan were developed for an Indigenous Knowledge Interpretive Centre on this site.

Development of the En'Owkin Centre facility continued with the planning of a restoration project for 10 acres of Black Cottonwood Riparian Habitat. Restoration was initiated in the spring with the planting of 5,000 ethnobotanicals on the En'Owkin Covenant Lands.

In addition to the above projects, Traditional Ecological Knowledge assessments were conducted on three properties within the Penticton Indian Band lands.

Habitat Securement

The goal of the SOSCP Habitat Securement team is to secure critical habitats. The team is chaired by Tom Lester of The Nature Trust of BC, and members include: TLC The Land Conservancy of BC; Ducks Unlimited Canada; Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service); and The Nature Conservancy of Canada.

The Habitat Securement Team members work cooperatively to identify potential properties of interest, assess the ecological and property values, negotiate with the land owners, and ultimately to secure and manage the properties.

Approximately 13 properties were evaluated over the year and negotiations are on-going with a number of land owners. One new key wetland property of approximately 50 acres was secured during the year.

CORPORATE HIGHLIGHTS

Partners

Three new organizations formally joined SOSCP during the year: UBC Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Okanagan University College and the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management. SOSCP has grown to 30 non government and government Partners.

The major initiative of the Partnership has been to focus on strategic growth with non-traditional partner organizations and to concentrate on serving and maintaining the existing Partners.

In addition to the formal Partners, SOSCP is cooperating informally with a number of organizations to achieve common interests, such as the Okanagan Nation Fisheries Commission and Smart Growth BC.

Program Performance Review

In September we held a workshop of the Partners called “Think-Tank Session” to review the performance of the program. The objective was to assess our progress in meeting the expectations of the Partners after the first year of the program, and to look for areas of improvement. The response from the workshop indicated that:

1. SOSCP was meeting the expectations of the Partners.
2. The main benefits of the Partnership in order of priority were: cooperation, networking, new resources because of the program, and that the Partnership provides forum for a broader understanding of issues.
3. The benefits that the Partners wanted to achieve by having SOSCP were in order of priority: increased public awareness of the local environmental values, improved cooperation, increased availability of resources, and building capacity of the Partners.
4. In terms of changes in organization structure, generally the Partners were satisfied with the existing structure.
5. In response to the question about were the Partners able to participate adequately in the program, most felt that they were participating as best they could given their available resources.

Governance

The Partners in the workshop identified that the long-term governance of SOSCP is a priority action task. The particular issues of governance are related to:

- obtaining stable long term funding and developing the appropriate structure required for enabling funding from donors,
- the continued participation of both government and non government organizations, and
- ensuring effective decision making as the partnership grows.

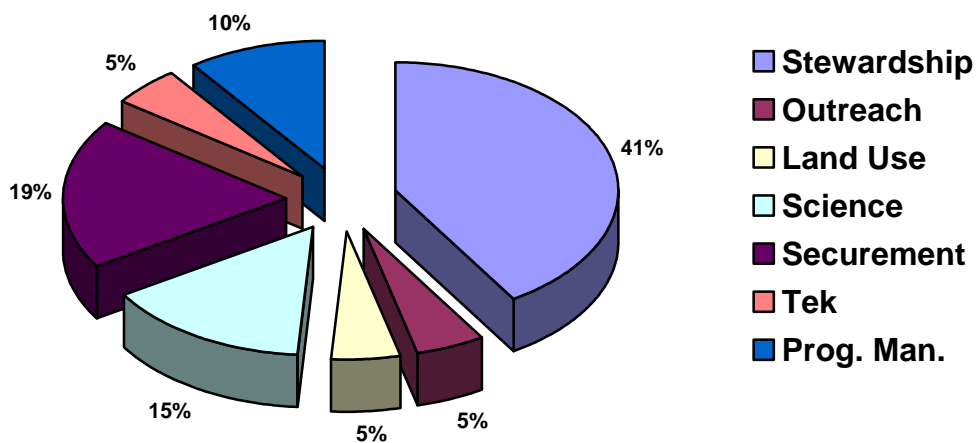
The Partners recognize that SOSCP is valuable in meeting the needs of individual Partner organizations, and with declining federal and provincial funding, alternative funding sources must be identified to continue the program over the longer term.

A governance committee of SOSCP was established in September to work with the Manager to develop recommendations for the Steering Committee on both funding options and organizational structure. The governance committee considered options for becoming a legal entity, reviewed models of legal status (e.g. a foundation, charity) and looked at existing organizations as models for SOSCP.

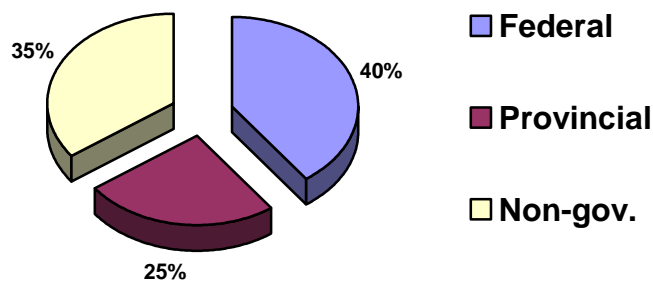
Funding

Partner contributions increased this year to approximately \$2.8 million. The increase was due in large part to the teams implementing their work plans and the synergies resulting from the cooperation created by the SOSCP Partnership. The contribution figures include actual dollars spent by the Partners and in-kind contributions by the Partners on program activities.

The figure below shows how the Partner contributions were spent in program activities. The main change in allocation of contributions this year over last year has been the increase in contributions to stewardship activities (now 41% from 22%), a decrease in habitat securement (19% from 42%) and the initiation of the TEK team.



The figure below provides a breakdown of the funding sources according to Federal, Provincial and Non government sources. The Non government source includes a small amount of local government contribution.



This shows the leverage created by the SOSCP program in terms of increasing contributions by the federal, provincial and non-government sectors to conservation activities in the South Okanagan-Similkameen areas.

Communications Strategy

Communications Network

The SOSCP communications plan was established and coordinated by the program manager and outreach coordinator to increase communications networking between program Partners. The communications network functions through regular distribution of press releases, calendar of events, website updates and SOSCP news bulletins to Partners and to the public. These activities have received positive feedback from Partners and public as a way to connect all people involved in conservation. This work has also led to an increased public awareness through coverage by local newspapers, television and radio stations on conservation subjects.

SOSCP Promotions

In addition to communications networking the program manager and outreach coordinator raised the community profile of the SOSCP and its Partners by delivering presentations and materials to various local and regional groups. Presentations to local interest groups, schools, municipal governments, cross-border representatives and potential funders help to extend the program. A new informational pamphlet and poster were produced this year to facilitate program outreach.



Western Screech Owl. Photo by Andy Bezener

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