

South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program



Annual Report 2003-2004

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Cover Pictures
Sage Brush : Dick Cannings
Penticton Scene : Peter Ord
Gopher Snake : Andy Bezener
Pictograph : Peter Ord

report from the chair



*SOSP Chair Jim Hope overlooking MacIntyre Bluff
Photo : TNT*

To the SOSP Partners, funding supporters and the greater Community:

On behalf of the partner organizations participating in the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program, we are extremely pleased to present a summary of the Program's activities and accomplishments for the reporting period between April 1, 2003 and March 31, 2004.

We have an institutional lag between the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program's reporting cycle and operational activities. I therefore think it is important to take a broad view and offer a perspective on the activities of this regional conservation partnership for the past 18 months through November 2004.

The South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program is completing its fifth full year of activities. We have in our first five year's made major progress on the priorities identified in the partnership's first prospectus and subsequent Strategic Plan.

Rob Hawes, as the Program's first Coordinator has helped to create an operational framework that keeps the six Technical Committees of SOSP functioning smoothly. We look forward to the SOSP Business Plan document, now in progress, to identify clearly what resources are needed and to help ensure that shared functions or tasks among the Committees are carried out in a seamless and efficient manner. And the recruitment of a replacement for Rob's position is an effort that all partners share an interest in having a successful outcome.

We have made major progress towards strengthening formal ties with the region's First Nations. The decision of the Osoyoos Indian Band Council to join SOSP reflects the on-going efforts made to operate in a respectful and inclusive manner. We are making progress in reaching out to the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen and various corporate interests. We expect further new members from these community sectors in the future.

We continue to face several challenges. There are 32 separate community-based organizations, various provincial and federal resource agencies, and several province-wide non-government conservation agencies. And as of December 9 an additional three new partner members, one of which is the Osoyoos Indian Band. A major challenge is maintaining open communications and an active dialogue with this network of organizations that make up the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program. We all must continue to work cooperatively to ensure that South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program does a good job in fulfilling its existing commitments and examine critically proposals to assume new roles or projects. The danger remains that we take on more than we can fulfill as a "program or conservation consortium". If we do not fulfill our obligations the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program risks its credibility with both the South Okanagan community and our financial partners.

report from the chair

We are fortunate in that our structure of governance relies on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is made up of all the SOSCP's partner organizations. The Steering Committee meets quarterly in Penticton to review progress and make any collective decisions required. Each SOSCP partner sends a designated representative and has a full opportunity to share their respective organization's views. Generally we operate on a consensus model though on more than one occasion we have made a decision by majority vote.

The Securement Committee has made tremendous progress with expanding the network of conservation lands along the lower portion of the Okanagan River. Work is now under way to secure the funds to proceed with a series of demonstration riparian restoration projects to restore that nature follow of the river and its associated habitats. In a similar manner the first 100 acres of a site that forms a new Antelope-brush Conservation area in the vicinity of McIntyre Bluff has been purchased on behalf of the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program.

I also want to give a warm thank you on behalf of the partners to the efforts of Rob Hawes, Program Manager and Peter Ord, our Communications Assistant. Rob Hawes has decided to step down from his SOSCP Program Manager position. Rob Hawes has provided important leadership to the partners and effectively served as the Program's spokesman as this conservation partnership has grown and matured. He and Peter are working together to help provide interim coverage until a replacement Program Manager has been selected.

To our network of partners, volunteers, contractors and the public; you have the collective sincere thanks from the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program Steering Committee.

Yours in conservation,

Jim Hope
Chair

In this fourth year of the SOSCP, the Partners continued to make significant contributions to conservation in the program area. We have made progress in both the immediate and longer terms to strengthen the partnership, implementing the SOSCP strategic plan and to achieve effective species recovery by developing a landscape recovery strategy. The six teams in SOSCP continue to update their work plans, coordinate activities for implementing the strategies for conservation of important habitats and their species, the north-south corridor and biodiversity conservation.

The Annual Report outlines some of the highlights of the many accomplishments of the Partners working to implement the conservation strategies.

Highlights of the Year's Accomplishments

Working With Local Government

Strengthening working partnerships with local government, and the community in general, has been a priority activity for SOSCP over the past year. We increased our technical support to local governments providing technical environmental information for local planning as well as our participation on several local government initiatives.

Participation in local government initiatives included participation in the Green Sustainable Economic Development initiative for the Okanagan Valley. We participated in the workshops, the review of report recommendations and assisted in looking for technical and financial support to help implement the recommendations for sustainable development in the Okanagan Valley. We also supported development of the Regional Growth Strategy process by the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen, and achieved a major future role in this process by being requested to providing environmental support during the strategy development.

In terms of technical support, we worked cooperatively the Regional District of the Okanagan Similkameen to raise over \$75,000 in funding to complete habitat mapping in rural Osoyoos and rural

Naramata. The habitat mapping, to complete areas not covered in the existing Habitat Atlas for the rural Osoyoos and Naramata areas, was undertaken to help in updating the official community plans for these areas. The work identified important and sensitive habitats to conserve these areas and their threatened species through designation as Development Permit Areas in the official community plans.



Osoyoos Official Community Plan Meeting. Photo : Rob Hawes



HCTF Chair Heather Lemieux presents Stewardship award to Thomas & Clifton Families. Photo : Rob Hawes

Habitat Securement

Securement of important habitats continued to be a major activity over the past year. On the Quintal Property, Ducks Unlimited Canada purchased the third land parcel, completing a major securement of land adjacent to the Okanagan River and near the head of Osoyoos Lake.

SOSCP continued to support restoration of the Okanagan River through the “Proof of Concept Project”, a pilot project, to demonstrate the feasibility of restoring riparian and aquatic habitats along the Okanagan River. One significant parcel of land was purchased north of Oliver. Work is ongoing to develop restoration plans for the purchased property and to secure additional parcels of land along the river.

SOSCP was also involved with Fortis BC (formerly Aquila) to facilitate mitigation for habitat loss with the development of the power station near McIntyre Bluff. SOSCP worked with Fortis and their consultants to develop a formula for mitigation of habitat loss and to look for off site mitigation opportunities.



Securement and restoration of riparian habitat along the Okanagan River. Photo by Rob Hawes

Landscape Recovery Strategy

A landscape recovery strategy was drafted and accepted by SOSCP Partners. This was a major piece of work to consider the whole landscape, rather than individual species, for both the recovery of species at risk as well as the prevention of habitat deterioration and potentially increasing the number of species at risk. This strategy forms the basis of coordinating recovery efforts of the SOSCP teams for the 42 presently listed COSEWIC species in the program area. This strategy will help prioritize the efforts of the teams and help ensure that we are focussed on priority efforts for the recovery of species at risk.

Partnership Building

Partnership building over the past year included efforts at improving the functioning of SOSCP and by initiating awards for community stewardship.

As part of our efforts to review and improve the functioning of SOSCP we undertook a review of what works well in SOSCP and where we need improvement. A survey was completed aimed at people working on the ground and a facilitated Partner workshop was held to review our strengths and areas needing improvement. As a result of the workshop, it was confirmed that level of support by SOSCP Partners remains very high and Partners want to continue to support and improve on the cooperative SOSCP model of delivery of conservation efforts.

At our Annual General Meeting we initiated the community stewardship awards by the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund. We plan to make this an annual event to acknowledge contributions by members of the community and SOSCP partners to good stewardship.

Securing Long Term Program Funding

A priority activity over the past year has been to secure additional sources of short term program funding and to develop options and a strategy for securing longer term funding to help sustain the SOSCP. While the overall program contributions have been growing, funding for on-going program management, the dedicated coordination that keeps the program functioning, has been declining due to constraints on traditional government and available foundation support.

This year we were able to secure an additional contribution from the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection in the amount of \$40,000 to be spent over three years, to support on-going program coordination costs. Environment Canada, through the Canadian Wildlife Service, also pledged continued support over the next three years.

We undertook a survey of long term funding options for SOSCP. The BC Conservation Foundation completed a survey of foundations that support environmental organizations and that could potentially fund SOSCP. We also retained Carmanah Strategies to review the current funding landscape, recommend fundraising positioning and prospects for SOSCP and to draft a "Case for Support" document to assist our funding applications. As a result of the Carmanah Strategies recommendations, the SOSCP Partners were able to focus their funding efforts. SOSCP Partners are committed to building the SOSCP Conservation Legacy Fund, with a goal of \$2 million, that can be used to sustain SOSCP program coordination activities. Two foundations were also approached in BC to support the SOSCP operating costs.

Contributions of the Partners

One of the measures of program performance is the level of contributions by the Partners to SOSCP projects. This year saw a continuing high level of contributions from the Partners, with total contributions approximately \$4.2 million. This level of contributions was allocated to approximately 55 projects over the year.

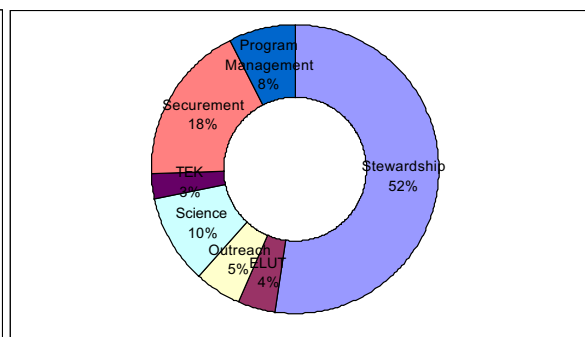
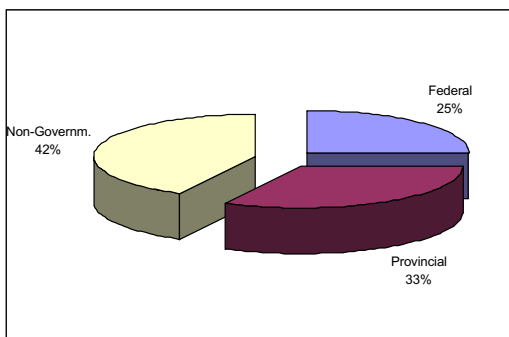
The contributions by sector, which measure both direct dollars spent by the Partners and in-kind contributions, are shown in the attached figure. This year saw a major increase in the contributions by the provincial government due in part to funding for several land securement projects. The second figure shows the breakdown of the contributions by teams in the past year. The resulting breakdown in contributions shows almost an equal contribution by the federal, provincial and non government sectors.

In Summary

The Partnership through the six teams has continued to make significant progress in implementing

SOSCP
Contributions
2003-2004

Total :
\$4.2 million



Contributions
by Team
2003-2004

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 42 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.



Similkameen River in Autumn. Photo: B. Lincoln

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.

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 SOSCP 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 3 years the program has grown to include 32 Partner organisations. 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 setting a model for conservations in other areas.

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 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.

SOSCP Teams:

Habitat Securement
Securing critical habitats

Ecological Sustainable Land Use
Assisting in land use decisions

Traditional Ecological Knowledge
Applying first nations' knowledge and ecological heritage

Stewardship
Voluntary caring for the land

Outreach
Involving the community in conservation

Science
Applying scientific knowledge

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.

Grassland and Shrub-Steppe

Home to many rare and endangered species, including Badgers, Sage Thrashers and the rare Behr's Hairstreak butterfly, these habitats are extremely sensitive. 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 dry climate, these habitats are easily damaged and slow to heal. Conservation efforts attempt to reduce damage or destruction of these areas while maintaining connectivity.



**Grasslands
in Okanagan**

Photo: P. Ord

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. Approximately 85% of the historical riparian habitats in this region have been lost.



**Riparian
Habitat**

Photo: L. Neish

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.



**High Altitude
Pine Forest**

Photo: MWLAP

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.



**Rugged Terrain
at White Lake**

Photo: P. Ord



Stewardship



Science



Outreach



**Ecological Sustainable
Land Use**



Securement



**Traditional Ecological
Knowledge**

What are the symbols next to the team names?

These are 'ecoliteracy' symbols representing the 6 core concepts of ecology that describe the patterns and process by which nature sustains life. Look out for them in the team pages.

Info courtesy of Ecoliteracy Centre, CA USA
Art work courtesy of Larry Munro, Merritt BC

The goal of the Stewardship Team is to enhance and promote land and water stewardship by landowners, land managers, and interested community groups in order to protect the diversity of native plants, wildlife, and fish. The activities and projects of the SOSCP Stewardship Team and participating partners work towards this goal, and the overall aims of SOSCP.

Land Acquisitions and Donations

The Land Conservancy of BC is proud to announce the completion of the Lehman Springs donation under the Ecological Gifts Program. Thanks to initial contact work done by the SOS Stewardship Program, this important donation has resulted in the protection of 24 ha of coniferous forest habitat on Anarchist Mountain near Osoyoos. This forest contains a rare stand of old growth Western Larch trees (some of the biggest in BC), along with a mixed stand of Ponderosa Pine, Interior Douglas Fir, and Spruce. This is one of the largest cash value EcoGift donations in the interior of BC.

Conservation Covenants

Work continued with a number of landowners who are moving towards conservation covenants for their properties, and our efforts to promote the use of conservation covenants and other forms of stewardship agreements are starting to pay off, with more and more landowners expressing interest in these conservation options. The O'Reilly covenant on lower Park Rill was completed and ready for registration. This was the second year of monitoring under the Max Lake (TLC) and Long Ranch (TNT) covenants. No violations were reported.



Snake Fence Presentation at Tin Horn Creek Winery. Photo : S. Wood

In 2003-2004, the following SOSCP partners were actively engaged in the delivery of stewardship and related projects: TLC The Land Conservancy of BC (Chair of the SOSCP Stewardship Team), The Nature Trust of BC, the SOS Stewardship Program, Ducks Unlimited Canada, BC Ministry of Water, Land & Air Protection, the Regional Weed Committee, and the BC Conservation Foundation. Under the Okanagan River Restoration "Proof of Concept" Project, The Land Conservancy of BC negotiated the acquisition of two key properties on the west side of the Okanagan River north of Oliver.

The purchase of the first property closed in January 2004, and the second property was scheduled to close in the summer of 2004. Funding for these purchases has been provided by the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund and the Ministry of Transportation, with the titles being held by the Okanagan Region Wildlife Heritage Fund Society. We would like to thank these partners for their support of this important project. Once secured, these two properties provide over 10 acres and almost 1 km of river front that will be restored to create fish and riparian habitat.

Landowner Contact Projects

Due to space limitations, the information presented below are only highlights from the stewardship work done under the various projects in 2003-2004. Please feel free to contact Shawn Black, SOSCP Stewardship Coordinator, for more detailed information.



Nested Systems

Multilevel structures of systems in nature nesting within other systems, each forming an integrated whole with a boundary, while at the same time each is part of a larger whole.

Riparian Rewards

2 riparian restoration projects planned and implemented

8 Western Screech Owl nest boxes installed on 4 properties to supplement a lack of suitable nesting cavities.

On-going contact and site visits with key riparian landowners

Began working with landowners in the Marron Valley under a community stewardship approach. This has been very successful.

Finalized, printed, and distributed the new *Butterflies of the Antelope Brush Plant Community* fact sheet.

Organized and prepared for implementation of an Antelope-brush restoration demonstration project (planting completed after the 2003-2004 fiscal year).

Continued to contact and work with owners of important Antelope-brush habitat.

Facilitated access to private land for researchers doing Behr's Hairstreak inventory work



Burrowing Owl den installation at Osoyoos Desert Centre. Photo : S. Wood

Conservation Partners Program

17 stewardship agreements in place with farms participating in the program

Approximately 203 ha of habitat protected under these agreements, including a riparian forest used by a pair of Western Screech Owls.

Puddles Project

Landowner contact work continued in the Osoyoos area.

Approx 4.5 ha of wetland habitat conserved via exclosure fencing.

Organized a number of training sessions (such as wetland keepers for landowners and volunteers).



Carl MacNaughton of TNT
Photo: TNT

White-headed Woodpecker Suet Feeder Watch Program

48 landowners in prime White-headed Woodpecker habitat are participating in the program monitoring their Suet Feeders for use by this endangered bird.

At least 2 credible sightings were reported as a result of this program.

Development of recommendations for follow-up and continuing with the program.

Okanagan Tree Encroachment Project

Forest thinning work was completed at 4 locations, resulting in approximately 50 ha of habitat restored for White-headed Woodpeckers.

Riparian Habitat Restoration Project

Installed 2.7 km of fencing at 4 locations, resulting in approximately 45 ha of riparian habitat fenced.

Restoration planting at 5 locations with almost 900 plants.

Stewardship of California Bighorn Sheep in Recovery

Organized a community based outing for landowners in the McLean Creek area.

Distributed information on California Bighorn Sheep, and specifically information on the domestic/wild sheep disease transfer threat to landowners.

Provided sheep and conservation input into the NE Sector Plan for Penticton.

On-going participation in the Bighorn Sheep Advisory Group providing coordination and implementation of stewardship related recovery activities



Screech Owl Box installation. Photo : L. Scott

Weed Management & Coordination

Approx 600 ha of land was treated for invasive weeds at 30 sites

Badgers & Burrowing Owls (B&B) Project

Installed a demonstration artificial burrow at the Osoyoos Desert Centre to increase awareness about the endangered Burrowing Owl.

Contacted landowners in areas of important Badger and potential Burrowing Owl habitat.

Worked with Fairview Mountain Golf Club on a sign on Badgers and Burrowing Owls.

Wildlife in Vineyards/Saving Snakes

- Planned and implemented a snake barrier fencing pilot/ demonstration project at Tinhorn Creek Vineyards. Installed approximately 2km of snake fence. Hosted a workshop for vineyard/orchard managers and owners (20 attended).
- Prepared and printed two new informational fact sheets (*Working in Snake Country & Snake Barrier Fencing*).



Phyllis Jmaeff & Lisa Scott at Jmaeff Property. Photo: Lisa Scott

The loose association of individuals that is the SOSCP Science Team has continued in 2004 to meet for specific purposes, provide specific information to other SOSCP teams, and encourage and conduct research on conservation in the South Okanagan and Lower Similkameen. Below is a list of some of the science-based activities that have been conducted in the SOS through the past year. As always it is difficult to draw a line between what has been done by the Science Team as such, what has been done at their initiation, and what has been done essentially independent of SOSCP. However, all of the following bear directly on the conservation and recovery effort coordinated by SOSCP. Apologies in advance to anyone whose efforts have not been recorded here.

On the large scale, the SOSCP Landscape Recovery Strategy and Action Plan should be nearing completion by the end of March 2005. One of the key elements of the landscape strategy is the priority-setting process using the extent of habitat loss, the degree of protection, and presence of key conservation features. Orville Dyer (MWLAP) has developed this into a significant planning tool and it remains now to find an effective way of transferring the output to those that need the information.



Prescribed Burning. Photo: Lisa Scott

Two other major efforts that are currently under way will provide valuable input to recovery at the landscape level. These are Parks Canada's feasibility study for a South Okanagan grassland park, and the TNC/NCC Okanagan Ecosystem Assessment. The latter, headed locally by Barb Pryce, is particularly interesting in that it uses many of the same planning principles and techniques as does the SOSCP Landscape Recovery Strategy but on a broader scale, encompassing the whole Okanagan both north and south of the international boundary. Perhaps it is appropriate to mention here the Partners-In-Flight activities initiated by Andy Bezener. PIF is a continent-wide plan based on conservation of species that are representative of different habitats, not just of species at risk.

This initiative dovetails well with the broader goals of SOSCP but also with some specific local projects. Lisa Scott continues to monitor effectiveness of methods for controlling weeds, a threat at the landscape level.

At the habitat level much of the work is concentrated on riparian and shrub-steppe habitats with Christine Bishop and Pam Krannitz, both of CWS, heavily involved in both basic research on the distribution and demography of key species, and in implementing and evaluating restoration and recovery activities. Pam and her crew have done extensive point surveys of grassland birds, and cavity-nesting birds in burned and unburned areas. Brewer's and vesper sparrows, in particular, have been banded and monitored as part of the Shrub-steppe Bird Demography Project, an international effort to describe the habitats that support source populations of priority, shrub-steppe bird. She has also worked on the use of prescribed burns and tree thinning in restoring habitat for white-headed woodpeckers and sage thrashers. Christine Bishop and Andy Bezener have worked hard in riparian habitats to establish two long-term projects; 5 sites for the continent-wide Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program, and an evaluation of the efficacy of fencing riparian habitats in recovering populations of species at risk. They have also started work on a technical report for CWS on width-requirements for effective, riparian buffer-zones. Christine is also leading the exciting project undertaken by CWS and Ducks Unlimited to restore the Vaseux Meadows to suitable habitat for yellow-breasted chats and other riparian species.



Cycles

Interaction within an ecological community involves the exchange of energy and resources in continual cycles. Cyclical exchanges are sustained by pervasive cooperation.

Recovery plans for riparian, antelope-brush, and the White Lake Grasslands are currently in the works. During 2004 a lot of research has been directed toward antelope-brush habitat and the species that depend on it, mainly because of the dramatic losses of this habitat. Bryn White, Sylvie Desjardin of OUC and Denis St John have continued their Behr's hairstreak surveys, and Sylvie is developing a metapopulation model for the species. Funds are in place for two projects to be completed over the winter; one an update of the TEM antelope-brush mapping by MWLAP, EC, and PC, the other by Richard Hebda (RBCM) to develop a protocol to predict habitat shifts in a changing climate using antelope-brush and its obligate Behr's hairstreak as the model.

- At the species level activities include:-
- BC Nocturnal Owl Survey (Dick Cannings, Bird Studies Canada).
- Monitoring spring and fall bird migrations at the Vaseux Lake Bird Observatory (Dick Cannings)
-
- Pilot year of a multi-year, range-wide long-billed curlew survey, BC pilot completed (John Surgenor, MWLAP).
- Lewis's woodpecker demography research (Xiang Zhu and Dr. Jamie Smith, UBC).
- Williamson's sapsucker inventory funded by BC MWLAP as part of the Identified Wildlife Management Strategy (Jeff Hoyt, MWLAP, Les Gyug, Okanagan Wildlife Consulting).



Preparation of COSEWIC status report for Williamson's sapsucker, funded by COSEWIC secretariat of CWS. (Dick Cannings, COSEWIC, Les Gyug).

- Mormon metalmark survey (Orville Dyer).
- Rare plant surveys (George Douglas, Douglas Consulting).

In addition, work continues on recovery plans for seven plant species, five reptiles and amphibians, four birds, and two mammals. Many of these have to be completed by March 2005.

Bryn White (OUC) and Peter Ord (SOSCP Outreach) have conducted research in cooperation with IMPACS Consulting on the most effective methods of presenting information about species at risk to the general public.

Several events have occurred at OUC that could significantly alter the scientific input to conservation in the SOS. Firstly, Karen Hodges has been appointed as the Canada Research Chair in Conservation Biology and is currently trying to build a locally-based, research program. Her first research associates are likely to be updating the complementarity analysis that has been a key aspect of recovery planning, and reviewing current ideas on incorporating the concepts of connectivity and corridors into recovery planning. Secondly, construction on the new Centre for Recovery of Species and Habitats at Risk has just commenced and will incorporate both GIS and DNA-analysis labs. Lastly, the degree programs of OUC have been taken over by UBC and they have plans to hire 250 new faculty in the next five years. Their frequently-stated aim is to make UBC-Okanagan a first-class, research-oriented university, and they have identified a multi-disciplinary approach to conservation and ecological sustainability as fields in which they will be concentrating their efforts. These events will focus attention on the SOS, draw graduate students to pursue research in this area, provide the latest in technology to carry out those projects, enable collaboration with social scientists, and lend access to new funding sources such as NSERC. Progress is slow, but progress is being made.

The goal of the Outreach Team is to foster increased conservation awareness, involvement and commitment of residents and visitors alike. Outreach activities were designed to strengthen the conservation ethic to protect the biodiversity of the region.

The fourth year of the Outreach Program saw the team develop programs to engage targeted publics to key issues surrounding the recovery of habitats, species and the pursuit of sustainable development in the South Okanagan Similkameen. What is becoming a popular tradition within the SOSCP is the celebration of OSCA's role in community outreach as featured through another successful Meadowlark Festival. The culmination of 12 months hard work was highlighted during the festival and can be featured in the review below.

Outreach Projects

The following events and projects are part of the Outreach teams' initiative to foster increased conservation awareness, involvement and commitment of residents and visitors alike; and to strengthen the conservation ethic to protect the biodiversity of the region. Information regarding the SOSCP program and the conservation activities of the Partners are highlights at many of these events.

The Meadowlark Festival

The Meadowlark Festival was one of the major outreach events highlighting the natural attributes of the South Okanagan Similkameen and species at risk. The festival included; - Field events : Over 90 events were featured, with a combined participation of over 3000 people.

- Banquet: This year's banquet was held at the Naramata Centre with special guest host Mark Forsythe.
- Nature Expo : The Expo was held at the Okanagan University College with approximately 300 people attending.
- Winged Migration : In conjunction with the Art Gallery of the South Okanagan, the film "Winged Migration" was shown to a sold-out crowd.
- Festival Open House: The Tumbleweed Art Gallery again hosted an art show and reception featuring the artworks of Painter/Photographer duo Andy Bezener and Kindrie Grove and Ron Hall's festival piece, "Working with the Ancient Ones to Heal the Land".
- Concert Series : A concert series performed by the Wind in the Woods trio was featured in Summerland, Penticton, Oliver, Naramata and Cawston.
- En'Owkin Event : This was a multicultural event, featuring multicultural foods and entertainment with over 120 attending.

Meadowlark
Festival
FireEvent

Photo:
P.Ord



Penticton
HomeShow
Display

Photo:
P.Ord



Development

All living systems develop, and all development involves learning. During this process an ecosystem passess through a series of stages from rapid growth to stable adjustment.

Launch of ECommunity Network

The ECommunity Network project was launched to involve the public in a recognizable, sustainable and engaging format involving community stakeholders participating in conservation and sustainable development. Representatives from the Regional District, City of Penticton, Penticton Indian Band and School District 67 were on hand for the launch of the program at the En'owkin Centre. The ECommunity Network will be the public relations arm for much of SOSCP's Outreach projects.



South Okanagan Similkameen

ECommunity Network

Here today. Here Tomorrow.

Public Events

Public participation in SOSCP outreach events was achieved through a series of presentations. These included the 'After the Fires' presentation and forum in November 2003, Osoyoos Desert Centre lectures on species and habitats at risk for residents in Osoyoos, Oliver and Keremeos, inaugural 'Spotlight on Species' presentation on Big Horn Sheep and Invasive Weed presentations and weed pulls through out the valley.

Outreach Exhibits

The Outreach team developed and delivered a traveling exhibit highlighting focal species and habitats in a fun and educational format. The exhibit was featured in the Penticton Museum, RAVE Resource Office, 2004 Home Builders Show, Rural Osoyoos OCP event and at the Osoyoos Desert Centre, where it is housed for the time being.

Outdoor Recreation Guidelines

A combination of brochures and standardized guidelines were developed to educate and assist the public involved in activities on sensitive habitats. The material was distributed through outdoor recreation groups, businesses, visitor centers and community centers.

Communication Strategies

Up to 5 species and habitat at risk communication strategies were developed in order to assist outreach groups develop effective messages and promotion techniques to target publics identified as important for the recovery of species and habitats at risk. A 'Communication Savy' Workshop was delivered to provide messaging and marketing ideas for groups involved in community outreach.

Eco-Studies

2003 saw the formation of the Eco-Studies program based on the OSCA school projects delivered over the last few years. Classroom presentations, fieldtrips and stewardship projects were featured to schools throughout the South Okanagan-Similkameen. One of the highlight was the delivery of species at risk courses for secondary students interested promoting stewardship projects within Riparian and Grassland ecosystems. The Eco-Studies program offered a centralized and coordinated system for teachers and educators to access resource people linked to conservation education.



*Riparian clean-up project - Oliver elementary School.
Photo: Peter Ord*

The goal of the Ecologically Sustainable Land Use Team (ESLU) is to help SOSCP implement the strategic plan by providing sound technical information, tools and other kinds of support to those who advise on and make decisions about land use. Led by Denis O'Gomran as the chair, this Team also includes the participation of the Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance, South Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Program, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, BC Ministry of Forests, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Grasslands Conservation Council of BC, Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society, Protect our Parks and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

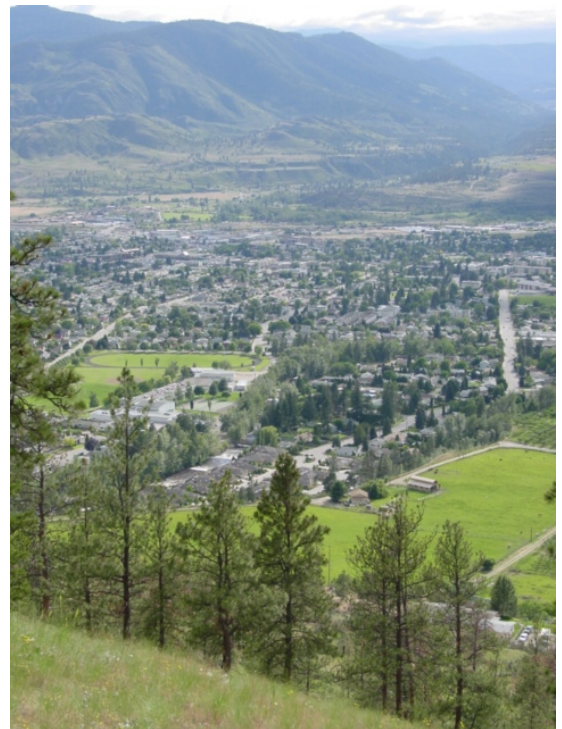
Projects undertaken by this Team during the 2003-2004 year include :

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

The work this year was to complete the report which is housed at the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management. The report consists of an inventory of current land use planning tools that apply to private land, as well as to provincial and federal crown lands (excluding Indian Reserves), in the SOSCP area. A spatial gap analysis was then completed 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.

Technical Environmental Advisory Committee

The technical environmental advisory committee (TEAC) was approved by the Board of the Regional District of the Okanagan Similkameen (RDOS) 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 available to advise the Regional District with sound technical advice as it develops Official Community Plans, reviews major development proposals and in the implementation of the forthcoming Regional Growth Strategy.



Penticton from Campbell Mtn. Photo : P. Ord

Sensitive Ecosystem Habitat Mapping

To support protection of sensitive habitats, the ESLU team has made it a priority to complete mapping of sensitive ecosystems for consideration in the updating of Official Community Plans. Areas that are mapped as sensitive ecosystems, can receive a Special Development Permit designation in local planning and protection. Areas that are not mapped, do not receive local government protection. The ESLU team concentrated this year on developing the terms of reference, raising funding, and contracting with a consulting firm to complete approximately 7,000 acres of uplands in rural Osoyoos. A contractor was hired to begin the mapping project for completion in 2003-04.



Dynamic Balance

All ecological cycles act as feedback loops, so that the ecological community continually regulates and organizes itself. When one link in the cycle is disturbed the entire cycle brings the situation back into balance.

Two key land parcels were secured in fiscal year 2003-2004. The Nemes property along the Okanagan River was secured as part of the Proof of Concept Project for the Okanagan River Restoration. This acquisition was made possible with funding from the BC Ministry of Transportation and the hard work of Shawn Black and The Land Conservancy, John Holdstock of the Okanagan Region Wildlife Heritage Trust Fund, and Steve Mathews of the Ministry of Water Land and Air Protection. This property and the adjacent parcel will allow restoration of riparian and in-stream work to commence.



Quintal property, north of Osoyoos Lake, adjacent to Road 22 and the South Okanagan Wildlife Management Area. Photo: Ducks Unlimited.

The second acquisition was Lot 674 of the Quintal property at the north end of Osoyoos Lake. This parcel is the last of three lots to be negotiated to consolidate a large contiguous tract of floodplain wetland and riparian habitat. Thanks to the generous support of the Ministry of Transportation, this parcel along with two others acquired the previous year will now be restored and provide habitat for species at risk. Ducks Unlimited Canada who also contributed to the purchase and holds title to the land will integrate the restoration of this parcel with the surrounding land.



Flows

Organisms live in open systems which require a continual flow of energy and resources to stay alive. What is waste for one species is food for another, thus there is a continual recycling of energy within the ecosystem.

The goal of the TEK team is to develop an integrated approach in utilizing traditional ecological knowledge, values to foster and enhance the habitat recovery strategy of the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP).

One of the objectives of the TEK team is to contribute to the successful implementation of the SOSCP landscape recovery strategy by engaging selected First Nations locatee lands land owners in the direct recovery and conservation of species at risk. Habitat recovery on locatee lands is contingent on the approach to individual land owner contacts through and integrated TEK to SAR recovery strategy utilizing TEK outreach in direct contact with selected areas with a high potential of TEK value combined with high priority SAR. This involved developing TEK to SAR inventories on selected sites and developing information leading to a stewardship agreement with landowners. Three locatee landowner contacts utilizing TEK are in various stages of inventory stewardship planning and implementation. The PIB locatee project in partnership with TLC continues in the stewardship agreement with one locatee owner and is in development stages with two additional locatee owners.

Another objective of the TEK team is to create a strategic conservation support team comprising TEK keepers that is harvesters in each of the three Bands of the South Okanagan. These teams would be formally constituted to provide direct advice to individual locatee landowners, Band Councils and business development.

Advice relating to priority setting for stewardship and recovery for lands which contain both high TEK use values and high SAR values is the objective of forming the TEK advisory councils in each of those communities. The role of the committees would be to work in cooperating with the Band Councils to achieve goals related to species at risk habitat recovery. In the current year the information sharing protocol agreements are in the final stage of approval with the Lower Similkameen Band Council and in the final draft stage with the Penticton Indian Band. Its becoming very clear that these advisory councils are being called upon to provide clear, sound advice and information to Band Councils on traditional ecological use site identification and ethno use values and are strategic therefore in creating the link to the protection and stewardship of SAR that exist on those identified sites both on and off reserve.



Richard Armstrong leads a fieldtrip on traditional territory. Photo : En'owkin



Students at Locatee Land. Photo : En'owkin



Networks

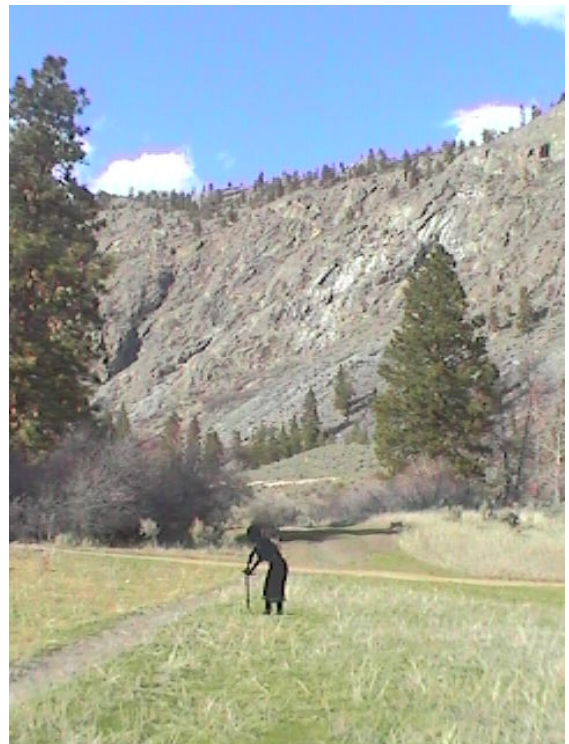
All members of an ecological community are interconnected in a vast and intricate network of relationships the web of life. The success of the whole community depends on the success of its members, and vice versa.

This work is continuous and ongoing and has been assisted by information awareness raising directly to the advisory councils on specific SAR and critical habitat strategies of the SOSCP including antelope brush systems, shrub steppe systems and riparian systems in OIB, PIB and LSIB. Currently Tammy Allison continues on salary as a TEK technician assisting in the coordination of the meetings of the TEK advisory councils in liaison with the Band Council and community members.

Another objective is for the provision of traditional ecological information that will assist other SOSCP recovery teams and or SOSCP recovery organizations such as SOSCP outreach, science, sustainable land use planning, stewardship and acquisitions. The objective of utilizing TEK to provide information to these teams in order to enhance their overall ability to engage First Nations in planning, development and implementation of the SOSCP strategy. This can only take place if team members and organizations of SOSCP utilize TEK in their strategies. This means consulting with the TEK team is mandatory. Unfortunately in this past year our funding in the provision of this service to other TEK teams was non-existent as it was rated a low to moderate priority in the HSP request, and turned down in the IRF request as not a priority. However, En'owkin Centre continued to carry out this role with its own resources. As a result a number of very successful inputs by TEK to provide outreach regarding the antelope brush system in OIB and community outreach regarding SARA in PIB achieved a broad spectrum of results. Currently Richard Armstrong, Traditional Knowledge Biologist, continues to work part time as a consultant to ourselves in this area.



Teaching the Children. Photo: Enowkin



Nk'mip Desert Centre. Photo: Enowkin

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Osoyoos Lake Water Quality Society

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Pacific Salmon Foundation

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Web: <http://www.psf.ca/>

Penticton Museum and Archives

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Web: www.city.penticton.bc.ca/cityhall/parks_rec/museum.htm

Royal BC Museum

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Contact: Sherri Klein; Tel: (250) 498-4251

Southern Interior Bluebird Trail Society

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