



South Okanagan Similkameen

CONSERVATION
PROGRAM

YOU CAN HELP KEEP NATURE IN OUR FUTURE

The South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program Needs Your Support

**Because we
care about this
place**

In the southern interior of British Columbia lies a natural jewel worth protecting – we call this area the South Okanagan Similkameen.

To the uninformed observer, our semi-arid landscapes may look dry and empty. In fact, the South Okanagan Similkameen is a unique landscape and a biological “ark” housing the largest number of species that are at risk in Canada. It is one of the four most endangered areas in our country.

**Natural
treasures are
threatened**

The area’s fertile valley bottoms have long been a prime attraction for agricultural interests including cattle ranchers, vegetable growers, fruit orchardists and vintners. A sunny climate and warm lakes make the South Okanagan Similkameen a popular area in which to work, vacation and retire.

Increased human activities have reduced and fragmented fragile natural areas. Intensive agriculture, logging, mining, gravel extraction and other industrial activities, have contributed to the loss of natural areas creating a crisis. We have lost much of the critical valley bottom natural habitat - this puts the future of our precious water resources, our recreational oases, our iconic wildlife in question.

Imagine 256 species of plants, animals and insects trying to scratch out a living in ever-shrinking habitats as they teeter on the brink of extirpation.

It’s a grim picture we have joined forces to counteract, but we haven’t much time, we must act now.

We are rooted in the landscape

We are working to conserve the last wild places -- places that provide homes for an abundance of wildlife and for humans to connect with nature. We in the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program are determined to see these places maintained as a natural legacy for future generations -- we work together to ensure that the ecological treasures of the South Okanagan Similkameen are here to stay.

Our work brings together the resources and influence of 50 partner organizations, all working on conservation in this area. Together, we strive to protect the exceptional diversity of wildlife and habitats, and the quality of life that the South Okanagan Similkameen area offers.

Our shared vision is a healthy environment that sustains the diversity of indigenous plants and animals while enriching people's lives.

We bring big-picture thinking and leveraging

The need for conservation in this region is critical.

Three things distinguish the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program:

- Preventing duplication between, and competition among, organizations with interests in conservation in the South Okanagan Similkameen area,
- Fostering synergies and economies of scale to make everyone's work more effective, and
- Leveraging expertise and financial resources.

By co-ordinating our efforts, we ensure that the right people are working on the right projects, that our efforts compliment instead of compete, and that we all keep our eyes on the goal: conserving our last remaining natural places and protecting our natural heritage.

Who we are

By working together, sharing information and resources, we are achieving more than we could alone. The South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program co-ordinates and leverages the conservation efforts of 50 organizations (see www.soscp.org).

Our partnership between government agencies and conservation organizations has created a model for conservationists in other areas of BC, Canada and the United States.

We make a tangible difference

Here's how, together, we make a difference. These are some examples of our work:

- We have protected over 50,000 hectares of vital habitat through private land purchases and protected designations for public land.
- We work with private landowners to help them care for, and enhance the natural values on their properties.
- We actively promote conservation covenants and other forms of land protection to encourage property owners to protect sensitive habitat.
- We have raised the profile of the environmental values of the area, so the public sees it as more than a place for people. We have built support for conservation and protecting biological richness.
- We do habitat restoration on the land, including restoring a section of the Okanagan River to its natural state.
- Our work has led to provincial policies and management guidelines to protect the habitats of species at risk.
- We have been a lead player in focussing the federal government's Species at Risk initiative, and are now pioneering efforts to protect species at the landscape level.
- We have increased our partnership with local governments (municipalities, regional districts) in conservation. We are now seeing biodiversity protection incorporated into Official Community Plans.
- We are supporting comprehensive outreach programs including the Meadowlark Festival, wildlife forums, lecture series, displays, open houses and programs for school children and the general public.
- We have more than 50 projects under our banner.

This is just a sampling. For a comprehensive sense of our work, details are available in our 2008-2009 Annual Report and on our website www.soscp.org

**Your support
will make a
difference**

We need your support. Your contribution will go a long way toward ensuring that the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program continues to be a powerful protector of threatened species and ecosystems.

We are the South Okanagan Similkameen's best hope for an enduring conservation legacy.

There are two ways you can help:

1. By donating to one of our Partners to protect nature, your gift is tax deductible and will go directly to work on the ground.
2. By donating to our Program (we can also issue a receipt). We receive the interest on the fund. The capital is never spent – it sustains conservation efforts forever.

Contact SOSCP Program Manager Bryn White at 250-490-8225 or Bryn.White@gov.bc.ca to direct your contribution.

**What people are
saying about us**

“Among the most influential regional groupings are organizations such as the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program...”

- Tim Pringle, Former Executive Director, The Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia

“Almost 2,000 hectares of land have this permit designation which allows for careful consideration of ecological values during the development application and approval process. This is the culmination of 10 months of cooperation, learning and sharing resources.”

- Don DeGagne, District of Summerland CAO.

“We would never have accomplished our OCP work without the support and leveraging of this partnership. The highlight of this project is my new understanding of the uniqueness, sensitivity and importance of the natural environment of the South Okanagan.”

- Ian McIntosh, District of Summerland, Manager of Development Services.

“We are impressed with the breadth and depth of the SOSCP's involvement in conservation and stewardship in the region...”

-Celina Owen, Manager of Communications The Real Estate Foundation of BC
