



Realizing a vision for conservation through collaboration

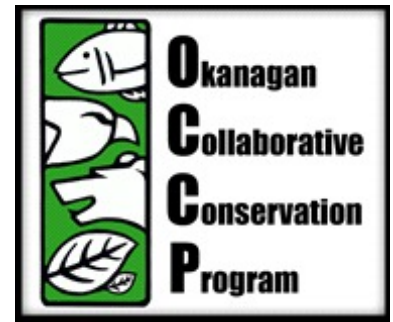
ANNUAL REPORT | 2015-2016
Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program

MANDATE

To facilitate conservation and stewardship efforts on public and private lands, set conservation objectives, and generate the support needed to maintain this effort.

VISION

The Okanagan region is an area rich in natural diversity that provides valuable habitat for a unique and diverse array of plants and animals, many of which are rare in Canada. Healthy ecosystems and habitat networks are valued and conserved by decision-makers and citizens as the basis for health, livelihoods, livable communities, and economic development.



Who are we?

The Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program is a partnership of government, academic, and environmental organizations that acknowledge the unique ecosystems of the Okanagan, and that the protection of these natural assets is a shared responsibility. The OCCP is guided by a Steering Committee consisting of representatives from Partner organizations and has a contract Program Manager and Projects Coordinator.

What do we do?

The OCCP facilitates a collaborative approach to biodiversity conservation in the North and Central Okanagan. Our current focus is ensuring follow through on the goals and recommendations in *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy in the Okanagan Region*. We create action teams, which are groups of Partners and members of the community working together on specific projects to meet biodiversity conservation goals.

The OCCP would like to acknowledge and thank the following organizations for their financial support:

This project was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada.

Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier du gouvernement du Canada.

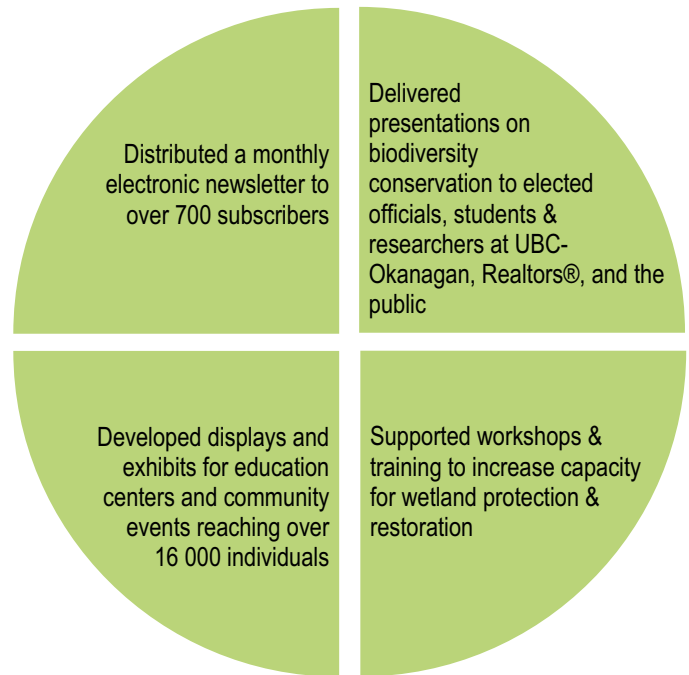


2015-2016 Key Activities & Accomplishments

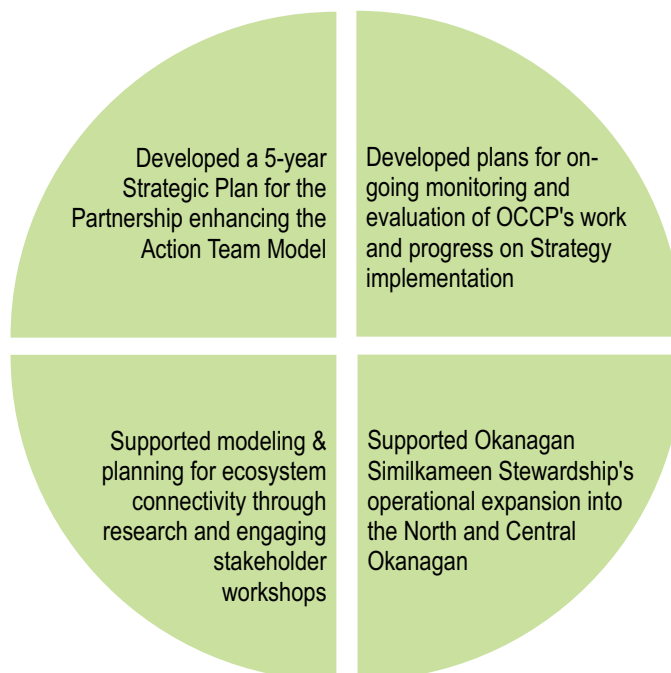
Foster networks & partnerships



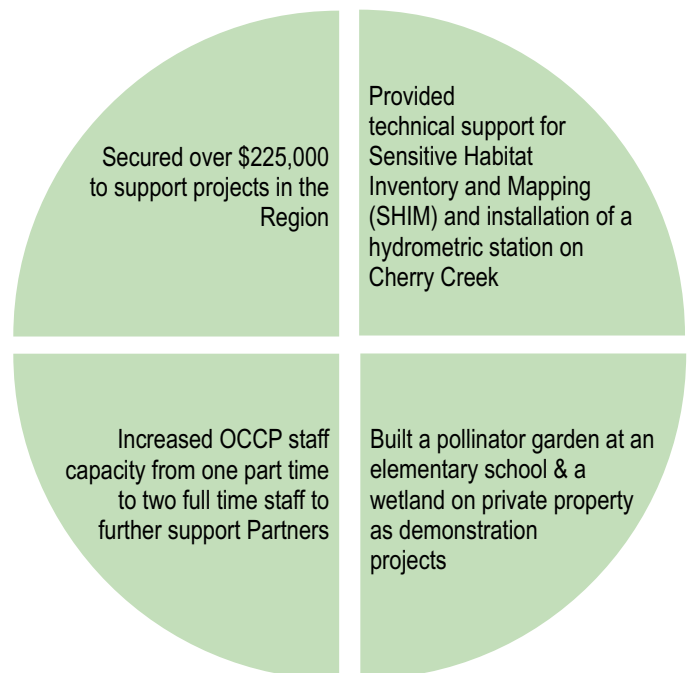
Build awareness & understanding of biodiversity conservation



Ensure follow through on *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy in the North & Central Okanagan*



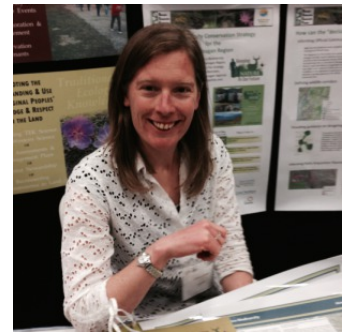
Create/obtain resources to fill gaps



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Message from the Outgoing Program Coordinator

What a year for the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP)! In 2014 the OCCP and its sister organization, the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) published *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region* and this year (2015-16) the OCCP staff, Steering Committee and Partners have been working hard to ensure the vision of the Strategy is realized. That is, healthy ecosystems and habitat networks are valued and conserved by decision-makers and citizens as the basis for health, livelihoods, livable communities, and economic development.

Realizing this vision requires collaborative and strategic efforts across different jurisdictions and land tenures, by everyone, in every sector of our communities. The OCCP plays a unique role to help coordinate and facilitate across multiple jurisdictions, ensuring that resources and lessons from projects can be shared resulting in effective collaboration.

This year the OCCP updated its strategic plan, aligning it with *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region* creating a more thorough plan for how we can work collaboratively. A big change for OCCP was growing from a part-time coordinator to two full-time staff. This transition would not have been possible without the trust and commitment from OCCP's funders and Partners who understood OCCP's vision that increased support and capacity would result in exponential benefit to conservation and our communities.

In today's world we are starting to realize that science alone won't solve the biodiversity, climate change, and environmental issues of our time; we need a cultural, social revolution. As I reflect back on the work of OCCP, I see that through the OCCP's activities such as creating resources and capacity, education, outreach, and on-the-ground projects, OCCP is helping citizens and decision-makers value and conserve natural ecosystems. These values and actions are the cultural and social revolution that is needed.

The Okanagan is indeed a very special place and I feel lucky to have lived and worked here. I wish the OCCP continued success.

Carol Luttmer
Program Coordinator 2014-2015



Message from the Program Manager & Projects Coordinator

We joined the OCCP at an opportune time, when *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region* was published, and OCCP updated its 5-year strategic plan enhancing the Action Team model. The Action Teams are groups of Partners and community members working together on specific projects, bringing in more resources for conservation and stewardship to the Okanagan, resulting in benefits to the regional society and the environment.

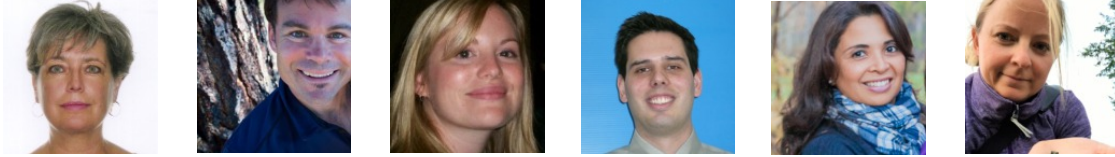
The intention is that by further facilitating collaboration through the Action Team model, OCCP can help our Partner organizations reach their individual goals. These goals include public outreach and education, incorporating protection of the natural environment in official community plans, development of bylaws and best practices, securing land for conservation, and stewardship of the natural environment. If each Partner organization can realize their individual goals, this will contribute to the larger vision of ensuring the Okanagan remains an area rich in natural diversity, where healthy ecosystems and habitat networks are valued and conserved by decision-makers and citizens as the basis for a high quality of life.

We look forward to working with all of OCCP Partners and community members on biodiversity conservation in the region.

Program Manager
Scott Boswell

Projects Coordinator
Tanis Gieselman





2015-16 Steering Committee

Margaret Bakelaar | Environmental/Land Use Planner, Regional District of Central Okanagan

Aaron Deans | Executive Director, Allan Brooks Nature Centre Society

Laura Frank | Regional Planning Projects Manager, North Okanagan Regional District

Robert Miles | Manager Long Range Planning and Sustainability, City of Vernon

Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo | Coordinator, Okanagan Institute for Biodiversity, Resilience, and Ecosystems Services (BRAES), The University of British Columbia - Okanagan Campus

Alyson Skinner | Executive Director, Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society

Program Partners

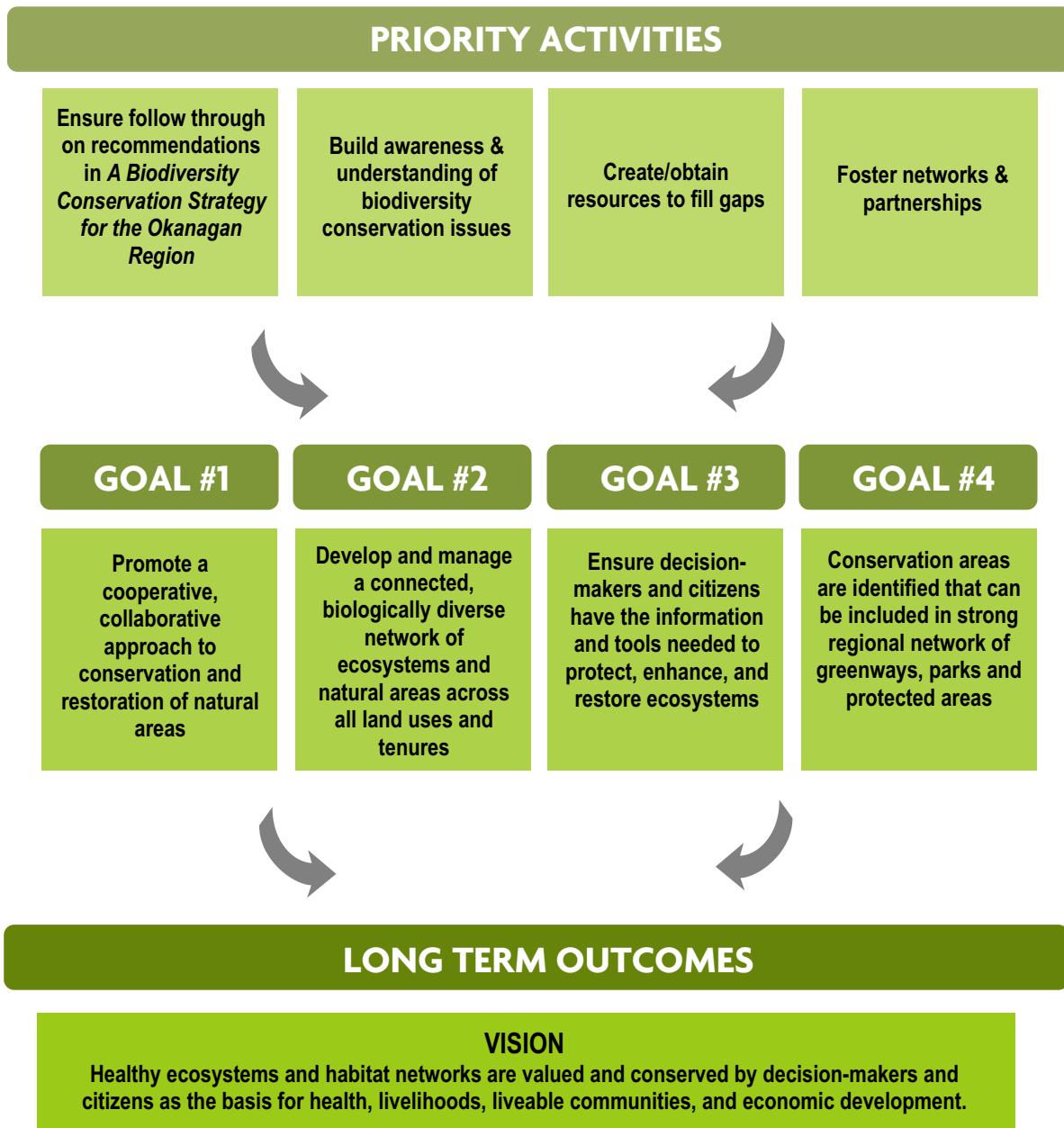
The OCCP has 35 signatory partners, but also works extensively with other organizations and community members who share common goals for biodiversity conservation. The OCCP has a strong partnership with its sister organization, the South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) to deliver region-wide initiatives.

Regional District of Central Okanagan
 Regional District of North Okanagan
 City of Kelowna
 City of Vernon
 District of Coldstream
 Village of Lumby
 District of Peachland
 District of Lake Country
 City of West Kelowna
 Department of Fisheries and Oceans
 BC Ministry of Environment
 Environment Canada
 Allan Brooks Nature Centre Society
 Bishop Wild Bird Foundation
 Central Okanagan Land Trust
 Community Mapping Network
 Fresh Outlook Foundation
 Outdoor Discoveries

Vernon in Transition
 Science Opportunities for Kids
 Central Okanagan Naturalists' Club
 North Okanagan Naturalists' Club
 North Okanagan Parks and Natural Areas Trust
 Society for the Protection of Kalamalka Lake
 Sustainable Environmental Network Society
 UBC-Okanagan
 UBC-Okanagan Institute for Biodiversity, Resilience, and Ecosystems Services
 Okanagan College
 Ducks Unlimited Canada
 Nature Conservancy of Canada
 Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society
 Land Trust Alliance of BC
 Okanagan Basin Water Board
 The Land Conservancy of BC
 Grasslands Conservation Council

Priorities & Goals

In 2015, the OCCP developed its strategic plan for 2015-2019 to ensure follow-up on the recommendations in *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region* (the Strategy) in the North and Central Okanagan. The strategic plan identifies priority activities to meet the goals and vision outlined in the Strategy.



This annual report is organized by the four goals outlined in the Strategy. Under each goal are descriptions of OCCP's activities and the Action Teams and projects that supported each goal. This report is by no means a summary of all the tremendous biodiversity conservation work done by individual Partners in the North and Central Okanagan.

GOAL #1

Promote a cooperative, collaborative approach to conservation and restoration of natural areas.

One of the main functions of OCCP is to coordinate and facilitate conservation and stewardship among its Partners and the wider community. OCCP accomplishes this by creating opportunities for on-going engagement and communication among Partners and the wider community throughout the North and Central Okanagan and beyond. Much of this on-going engagement and communication results in the formation of groups of Partners working on specific projects, such as those described under Goals #2, 3, and 4. On-going monitoring and evaluation ensures that lessons learned among projects are shared and guides the strategic direction and priorities of the OCCP.

Engagement & Communication

A key to the success of the OCCP and following through on the recommendations in *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region* is engagement of Partners, stakeholders, decision-makers, and the public. The OCCP has three sets of objectives for engagement: informing, consulting/conferring and collaborating. These objectives are met in various ways; through social media, one-on-one meetings with the Partners, presentations to stakeholders and decision-makers, and participation in conferences, workshops, and Partner activities. The Partners and the OCCP Steering Committee identify emerging priorities and opportunities for conservation actions, and form Action Teams to implement projects.

The OCCP has an electronic newsletter that is distributed monthly to over 700 subscribers. It provides relevant local information on projects, events, resources, and employment, volunteer and funding opportunities.



Facilitating and Strengthening Partnerships & Collaboration

The OCCP helps facilitate and strengthen partnerships by coordinating and leading Action Teams, which are groups of Partners and community members working on specific projects. The OCCP:

- work with Partners to identify emerging priorities and projects;
- participate directly or help ensure appropriate stakeholders are involved in various forums, conferences, committees, stakeholder input sessions, initiatives and projects throughout the region; and
- help Partners secure funding and expert support needed to implement projects.

The OCCP also hosts events that provide Partners and community members opportunities to network. This year the OCCP hosted an opening for the exhibit *"How do we get from here to there"* at the Allan Brooks Nature Centre, and co-hosted a celebration of Collective Impact with the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and the SOSCP to recognize ten years of water funding by OBWB in the Okanagan.



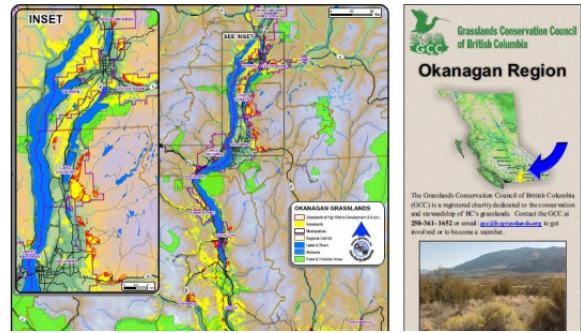
The Opening of the Exhibit “How do we get from here to there” at Allan Brooks Nature Centre in Vernon brought together elected officials, members of conservation organizations, industry, and the public to learn about the OCCP, the importance of biodiversity conservation and the protection of wildlife corridors and to network and celebrate accomplishments to date.



The “Celebration of Collective Impact” showcased the work of grantees that received funding from the OBWB Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant Program (WCQI) over the last 10 years. OBWB has awarded \$3.2 million to 55 organizations and 197 projects, which has allowed grantees to deliver projects worth more than \$20 million to help conserve and protect water in our region.



The OCCP are on the leadership team for the Okanagan Wetland Strategy which is a collaborative effort led by Okanagan Basin Water Board to inventory, protect, enhance and restore wetlands throughout the Okanagan.



The OCCP helped the Grassland Conservation Council collect information on grasslands at risk.

Inter-Regional Monitoring & Evaluation Framework for Environmental Indicators

Project Partners: Regional District of North Okanagan, University of British Columbia, EcoPlan Consultants, South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program, Regional District of Central Okanagan

The OCCP, the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) and other stakeholders throughout the Okanagan-Similkameen are supporting the North Okanagan Regional District with developing an Inter-Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to help track the implementation of the Regional Growth Strategies in all three of the Okanagan-Similkameen Regional Districts. Each district has environmental goals outlined in their Regional Growth Strategies, such as protection of water and healthy ecosystems, which require inter-regional cooperation. Collaboration on identifying region wide quantitative and qualitative environmental indicators will assist in creating a cost efficient way for the Regional Districts and stakeholders to assess progress on biodiversity conservation and support effective evidence-based policies and decision-making.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The OCCP is monitoring the effectiveness of its Action Team model, including how successful the action teams are in achieving their desired results and supporting the goals and strategic directions in *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region*, and the impact of this work (i.e., what are the long term impacts on biodiversity conservation in the North and Central Okanagan). The OCCP is also working with SOSCP and other Partners on monitoring and evaluating long term effects of biodiversity conservation initiatives on a regional scale.

GOAL #2

Develop and manage a connected, biologically diverse network of ecosystems and natural areas across all land uses and tenures.

This year OCCP focused on engaging stakeholders on planning for ecological connectivity in the Central Okanagan and helping with restoration projects on three different land tenure types: private property, public school grounds, and crown land (also see Goal #4). Plans are to extend the ecological connectivity work beyond the geographic boundaries of the Central Okanagan to enhance protection of ecosystem connectivity on a larger scale.

Workshop on Planning for Ecological Connectivity in the Central Okanagan

Project Partners: Regional District of Central Okanagan, Complex Environmental Systems Lab at UBC-Okanagan, Washington-BC Transboundary Connectivity Working Group

The OCCP assisted in the coordination of an ecosystem connectivity workshop to introduce planning tools and resources for participants to identify and prioritize important wildlife habitat corridors in the Central Okanagan. Over 40 participants from municipal and regional governments, provincial and federal ministries, First Nations, non-profit organizations, private industry, consultants and academics shared their expertise during the one-day workshop. The information gathered at this workshop will be used for refinement of mapped connectivity corridors and identification of protection and restoration opportunities.

“Great job! I really think workshops like these further the ideas and energy around connectivity. Many thanks!”

- Workshop Participant

A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region identified that the Okanagan is a critical habitat link between the US Columbia Basin and BC Interior Plateau. The Central Okanagan is a pinch point for connectivity between these habitats. This information, together with land use information from the Regional District of Central Okanagan's (RDCO) Regional Growth Strategy update, led to a partnership between RDCO and UBC-Okanagan to complete more detailed spatial analyses on ecological connectivity, land use, cover and tenure and ecosystem services to inform planning for the protection of ecological connectivity.



Participants share their expertise in the Workshop on Planning for Ecosystem Connectivity in the Central Okanagan.

Radies Wetland Restoration Demonstration Project

One of the key findings of *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region* is that the valley bottoms have a large proportion of very high and high biodiversity values in the region. The valley bottoms are also comprised primarily of private property. This highlights the need to promote voluntary stewardship of habitats on private land.

Project Partners: Ophiuchus Consulting, Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship, BC Wildlife Federation Wetlands Education Program, Wayne & Wendie Radies

To promote stewardship on private lands, OCCP supported a demonstration project at the highly visible intersection of Black Rock and Francis Roads in Vernon. Property owners, Wayne and Wendie Radies became Wildlife Habitat Stewards with Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship. A wetland was established by constructing a compacted liner using clay from the site and plantings of native species.



The construction of the wetland was made possible by the participation of many people including Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship, Ophiuchus Consulting, and participants in the BC Wildlife Federation's Wetland Institute.



The Radies wetland was designed to provide habitat for waterfowl and the Great Basin Spadefoot, such as the one shown here.



Salvaged sedges, 700 native plants and nearly 30 lbs of grass were planted at the newly constructed wetland.



Okanagan Landing Pollinator Garden

Project Partners: Okanagan Landing School, Dusty Shovel Gardens, Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship

This spring, students at Okanagan Landing Public School are more anxious than normal for the change of season. Last fall they designed and planted a Pollinator Garden on their school property, thanks to support from OCCP and several other community organizations and sponsors. The garden has 300 plants, including perennials, shrubs and annuals to support pollinators and a number of plants that are important to the local Okanagan First Nations. The project also included restoration and enhancement of a hillside on the school grounds by removing invasive weeds and planting native species to reduce erosion and provide additional habitat for caterpillars and bees. The students will be tending to the garden throughout the school year, learning about important connections between pollinators and healthy ecosystems.

What's next?

This project was a hit with students, teachers and school administrators. Based on the success of this Project, the OCCP and its Partners are planning to develop an information package other schools can use to create more outdoor learning spaces on school grounds and curriculum units to help teachers make use of their outdoor spaces.

“Okanagan Landing's Pollinator Garden would not have happened without the support of OCCP, Dusty Shovel Gardens, and Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship. Due to their support, students, teachers and administrators were able to dig into their learning about pollinators and plants, rather than being consumed with all the fundraising and networking necessary for making the project happen. Art, writing and science as well as social skills were enhanced as students worked furiously on planting the garden. Now in the spring they are measuring the growth of the alliums, counting the crocuses and identifying all the plants they planted in the fall. Thanks OCCP for making this possible!”

- Sheila Munroe, Teacher, Okanagan Landing Public School



The Okanagan Landing School Pollinator Garden was designed to support pollinators and for students to learn first hand about conservation and environmental stewardship.



Students also created a variety of artistic representations of their learning and Monarch butterfly-themed pieces where sent to be displayed at the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History in California as part of the quest to restore western Monarch butterfly populations from Canada to Mexico.

GOAL #3

Ensure decision-makers and citizens have the information and tools needed to protect, enhance and restore ecosystems.

This year the OCCP continued to fill information gaps that will help decision makers and citizens make informed decisions to protect ecosystems. This included supporting spatial analyses on ecological connectivity throughout the region and Sensitive Habitat Inventory and Mapping (SHIM) and the installation of a hydrometric monitoring station for Cherry Creek.

In order to bring the messages of *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region* to the public and enhance the capacity of local organizations and individuals, the OCCP has been supporting several education initiatives such as seminars, workshops, and educational outreach to the general public through exhibits and community stewardship projects as well as presentations.

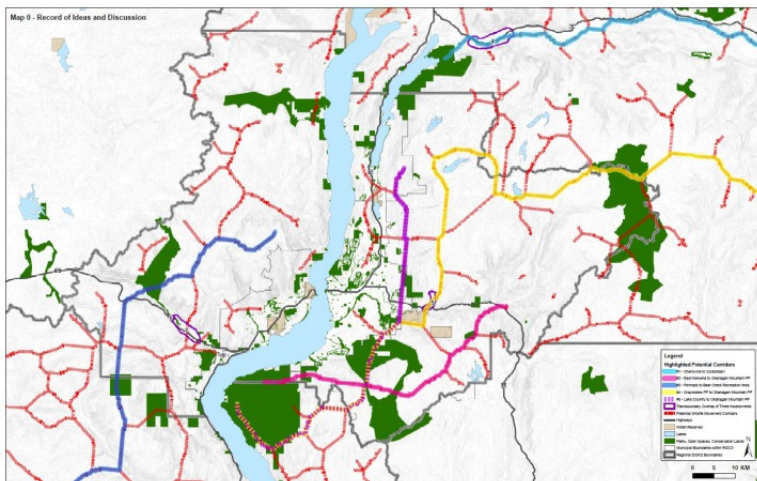
Regional Analyses of Ecological Connectivity in the Okanagan

Partners: Complex Environmental Systems Lab, UBC-Okanagan, Regional District of Central Okanagan

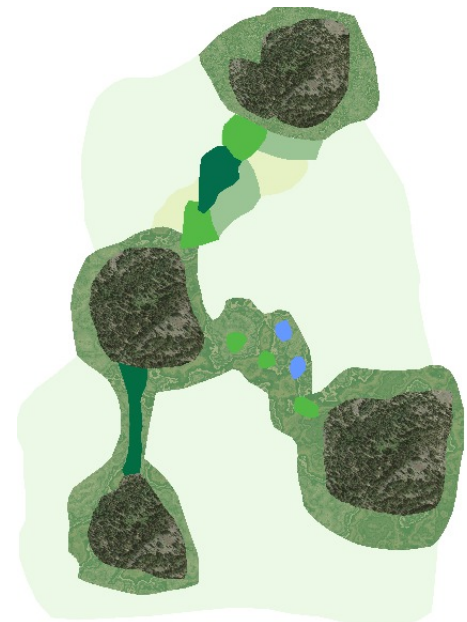
Dr. Lael Parrott and her team of researchers at the Complex Environmental Systems Laboratory, UBC-Okanagan, with the support of Regional District of Central Okanagan, OCCP, and academic grants are conducting modeling to identify regional ecosystem corridors.

The work builds on the Habitat Connectivity Map from *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region*. A spatial modeling tool called “Circuitscape” was used to find the most likely corridors for animal movement through the landscape. A series of maps were created that overlay land use, cover type, and tenure with potential wildlife corridors. The researchers are also assessing connectivity based on a variety of species with different habitat requirements, and examining the relationships between landscape scale connectivity, ecosystem services provisioning, and ecological resilience.

Regional analyses of ecological connectivity are informing planning efforts to conserve sufficient areas of high quality natural habitat and linkages between them to support biodiversity, habitat for species and ecosystem services (e.g., air and water filtration, flood mitigation, pollination, natural pest control, aesthetics, outdoor recreation).



Key wildlife movement corridors through the RDCO



Sharing tools and information from *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region*

A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region and the supporting documents in the *Keeping Nature in Our Future Series* contain valuable information that can help decision makers and individuals protect, enhance and restore ecosystems. One of the ongoing roles of the OCCP is to promote the use of this information and associated tools and resources such as mapping products, statistical summaries, and recommended actions. The OCCP shares the information and tools through a communication and engagement plan that includes presentations, responding to partner requests, and participation in partner activities. This year, the mapping products were added to the online Great Northern Ecological Connectivity Data Atlas. They are also available on the Community Mapping Network.

Over 80% of students in an undergraduate class at UBCO indicated they had learned something about sustainability in the Okanagan after hearing the presentation on biodiversity conservation by the OCCP Projects Coordinator.

To increase awareness and integrate the tools from *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region* for use by a broad spectrum of provincial agencies responsible for mid to long term planning and statutory decisions on the land base, the OCCP supports sister organization, the SOSCP, in working with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Ecosystems Section in the Thompson Okanagan. The Strategy's spatial products have been provided for integration into the provincial mapping database and the SOSCP and Ecosystems staff are developing corresponding guidance to support the use of the biodiversity information as part of Crown land decision-making.



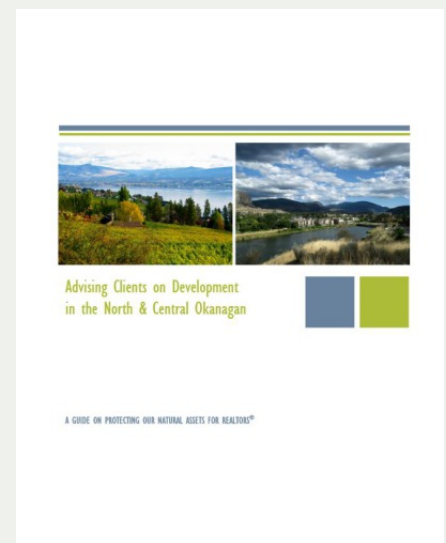
In 2015-16 presentations on biodiversity conservation were delivered to: elected officials at the City of Vernon, District of Peachland, City of Armstrong and RDCO; students and researchers at the University of British Columbia-Okanagan; and to hundreds of visitors at Kelowna's Seedy Saturday event.

Seminar For Realtors®: Protecting our Natural Assets

Project Partners: UBC- Okanagan, Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations, District of Lake Country, City of Kelowna

The OCCP coordinated a seminar for Realtors® from the commercial chapter of the Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board (OMREB) on "Protecting our Natural Assets" to share information with the community on why and how we need to preserve nature in the Okanagan. The seminar built on interest generated from previous seminars in 2014. The seminar included presentations by OCCP Partners on biodiversity conservation, the value of environmental services, development permits, and laws and regulations for waterfront properties.

Seminar participants received a booklet on Advising Clients on Development in the North & Central Okanagan. The booklet was adapted from a similar one for the South Okanagan. The OCCP greatly acknowledges the work of the South Okanagan Real Estate Board (SOREB), the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) and the Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance (OSCA) in preparing the booklet.



Enhancing capacity for wetland protection and restoration through education

This year, the BC Wildlife Federation's (BCWF) Wetlands Education Program brought several of their wetland education events to the Okanagan, and OCCP helped coordinate, co-host and fund components of this work. Many OCCP partners were guest experts or participants in these events, which included a 2½ day Wetlandkeepers Workshop in Kelowna, an intensive 7-day Wetlands Institute Course in the North and Central Okanagan, and a workshop for local and regional planners in the North and Central Okanagan.

“It is a rare gem to encounter a local organization so well connected to its community and that enables individuals and groups to enhance regional conservation objectives.

The OCCP was instrumental in helping us, the BCWF, run successful programs throughout the Okanagan this year- connecting us with key people, sites, and funding that really made the difference.

The best outcomes of our events is when individuals and local organizations move wetland restoration and protection projects forward and it is great that OCCP is there to support organizations in the North and Central Okanagan”

- Neil Fletcher, BCWF Wetlands Program Manager

The Okanagan region has lost more than 80% of its wetlands. The restoration and protection of remaining wetlands is critical to conserving biodiversity and protecting the ecosystem services that wetlands provide.





The Wetlandkeepers Workshop in Kelowna attracted 25 participants who gathered at the Ocoela Fish and Game Club to learn as well as provide insightful information on the local wetlands. Members from local groups participated, including the Ocoela Fish and Game Club, Okanagan Xeriscape Association, Central Okanagan Land Trust, Okanagan Nation Alliance, and Twin Lakes Stewardship Society. Participants learned about wetland values, mapping and surveying and heard from several expert guest speakers.



The workshop on Municipal and Regional Wetland Conservation in the Okanagan brought together stakeholders who explored gaps and opportunities on how to protect wetlands and watersheds with a focus on the Okanagan Wetland Strategy, wetland policies and regulations, and the integration of wetlands in storm water management. Participants enjoyed a guided tour of the Marshall Fields Stormwater Infrastructure Project in Vernon. The BCWF Wetlands Education Program and OCCP are using information from the workshop to further identify priorities, projects and collaborations for wetland conservation.



The Wetlands Institute was a 7-day course involving 36 participants who learned about wetland stewardship, restoration and construction skills as well as the Okanagan Wetland Strategy and local projects, through field activities, site visits, and presentations lead by guest experts and internationally renowned trainers. During the week, two wetland restoration projects were completed including integration of a wetland with farming practices at Curly Frog Farms in Kelowna and a clay-lined wetland in Vernon. Each participant came to the workshop with a wetland project they wish to implement in their home communities.

Public Outreach & Community Stewardship for Biodiversity Conservation

Project Partners: Allan Brooks Nature Centre, Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship, Okanagan Basin Water Board

In order to share the key messages about biodiversity conservation with the general public, the OCCP supported the development, construction, and delivery of interactive displays for the Allan Brooks Nature Trailer, and community stewardship projects where members of the public gained knowledge and hands-on experience.

The displays in the Allan Brooks Nature Centre (ABNC) Trailer, developed in collaboration with ABNC and the Okanagan Basin Water Board, are focused around the theme of “Keeping Nature in Our Future” and include videos, hands-on activities and information about local conservation issues, habitat connectivity, grasslands, riparian areas, wetlands, and water. In 2015-16, the Nature Trailer was hosted at over a dozen community events, engaging over 4000 people throughout the Okanagan. The Allan Brooks Nature Centre is also using the Trailer to bring nature-based activities and learning to schools.



The Allan Brooks Nature Centre Trailer is supported a by large group of community supporters and funding agencies. The OCCP helped support the construction of the trailer and its current displays.

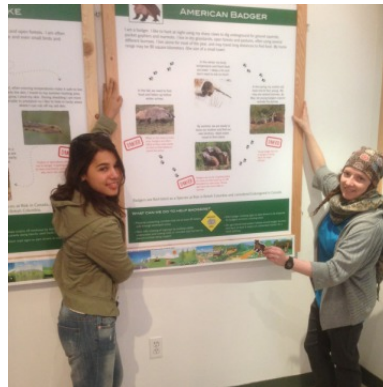


The Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship led community stewardship events throughout the Okanagan where members of the public could help out with planting, management of invasive species, and care-taking of restoration sites, while also visiting the Nature Trailer. These events included planting at the Ellis Creek Basin, planting at the Penticton Channel riverside with Okanagan Nation Alliance, and the removal of invasive burdock and planting native plants and tree cuttings along the Lumby Salmon Trail, a popular walking trail which runs along a salmon spawning creek.

“How do we get from here to there?” Travelling Exhibit

Project Partners: SDL Environmental Consulting, Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance, Allan Brooks Nature Centre, Regional District of Central Okanagan, Regional Parks (Environmental Education Centre for the Okanagan)

“How do we get from here to there?” is a travelling exhibit developed by OCCP that explores wildlife travel patterns through the year and the importance of preserving habitat corridors needed by wildlife. The exhibit is based on *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region* and the supporting guide *Designing and Implementing Ecosystem Connectivity in the Okanagan*. It provides opportunities to deliver consistent messages about biodiversity conservation throughout the Okanagan and for education centers to collaborate and share resources.

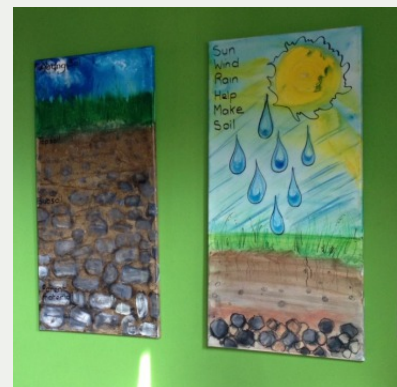


The exhibit “How do we get from here to there?” was attended by over 12,700 visitors while at the Allan Brooks Nature Centre in Vernon from May to October 2015 and at Environmental Education Centre for the Okanagan (EECO) from November 2015 to March 2016. In the coming year it will move to the Desert Centre in Osoyoos and then to the Penticton Museum.

Year of Soils Exhibit

Project Partners: Regional District of North Okanagan, Okanagan Science Centre, Buffy Baumbrough, Patricia Doyle, Gale Woodhouse

In celebration of the United Nations 2015 International Year of Soils, the North Okanagan Regional District and the OCCP supported an exhibit to encourage interest in the living world beneath our feet and the importance of soil. The exhibit includes a giant art installation about soil organisms that is on display at the Okanagan Science Centre in Vernon. To promote the exhibit, a family fun day was hosted at the Science Centre exploring the microscopic world of soils. The Allan Brooks Nature Trailer was also on-site with some hands-on fun looking at burrowing animals that make their homes out of soil. The Soils exhibit was developed by local artists and the team at the Okanagan Science Centre.



Visitors at the Okanagan Science Centre can learn about the importance of soils and the organisms that live beneath our feet through an interactive display that takes visitors “underground” and allows them to discover the microscopic world of soil organisms.

Sensitive Habitat Inventory Mapping & Hydrometric Monitoring for Cherry Creek

Project Partners: Cherry Ridge Management Committee, Cherryville Water Stewards, Regional District of North Okanagan, Ecoscape, Natalie Ford, Claude Labine (Campbell Scientific), Dr. Natasha Neumann

Cherry Creek is a key sub-drainage in the Middle Shuswap Watershed in the North Okanagan Regional District. A cooperative effort by the Cherryville Water Stewards, the Cherry Ridge Management Committee and local residents led to the Cherry Creek Watershed Study. The goals of the study were to engage citizens and stakeholders in documenting existing conditions and to determine a way to meet desired future watershed conditions. The OCCP provided financial support to conduct Sensitive Habitat Inventory and Mapping (SHIM) of Cherry Creek, for Dr. Natasha Neumann to provide hydrological expertise, and for the installation of a hydrometric station. The results of the SHIM surveys and detailed maps were shared at community meeting attended by seventy local residents. The next steps for the project include developing plans for implementing bank stabilization measures and restoration of riparian areas for critical fish habitat.

Sensitive Habitat Inventory and Mapping (SHIM) documented aquatic and riparian habitat and identified problem areas of eroded banks and degraded reaches along Cherry Creek from the confluence of the Shuswap River up to Currie Creek.

The hydrometric station, donated by Claude Labine, was installed just below the Sugar Lake Road bridge and enables Cherryville's Water Stewards to monitor real-time volume measurements throughout the year.



Representatives from the Cherry Ridge Management Committee, Ecoscape Environmental Consultant's Ltd., and OCCP reviewing the outcomes of the Sensitive Habitat Inventory and Mapping work and planning for follow-up restoration work.



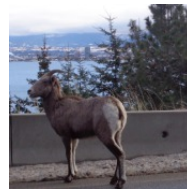
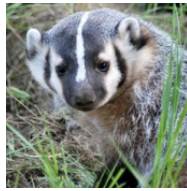
GOAL #4

Identify conservation areas that can be included in a strong regional network of greenways, parks and protected areas.

Planning for Natural Area Protection in the North Okanagan

Project Partners: Regional District of North Okanagan, Caslys Consulting

The mapping developed as part of *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region* helps identify conservation areas that can be included in a regional network of greenways, parks, and protected areas. The OCCP has been working with Caslys Consulting on spatial analyses that use the mapping to help the North Okanagan Regional District (RDNO) meet several of the goals to protect its parks, natural areas and open spaces as outlined in its Regional Growth Strategy. These goals include coordinating the establishment of regionally significant open space networks and linkages across jurisdictional boundaries and exploring funding mechanisms to support regionally significant open space and parkland acquisitions.

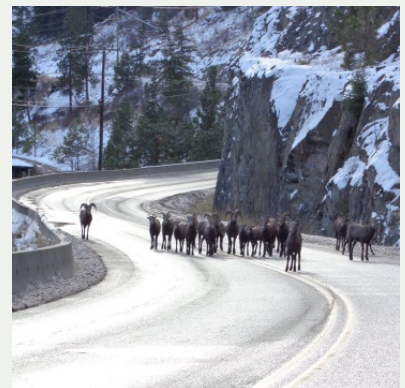


Habitat Improvement at Bald Range

Project Partners: Peachland Sportsmen's Association, Oceola Fish and Game Club, Kelowna Fish and Game Club, Central Okanagan Naturalists Club, Okanagan Trail Riders Association, Forest Lands and Natural Resources Operations

In December 2015 a group of volunteers from the Peachland Sportsmen's Association, Oceola Fish and Game Club, Kelowna Fish and Game Club, the Central Okanagan Naturalists Club, and the OCCP did some heavy lifting for a grassland improvement project in the Lambly (Bear) Creek watershed. The goal was to clear away a large number of dead ponderosa pine trees that had blow-down, to help reduce the risk of wildfire and open up the area for the grasses to grow back. The grassland is being improved to provide higher quality feeding habitat for large ungulates such as mountain sheep.

The OCCP also assisted the volunteer group with plans to help formalize further management and improvement of this site with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations. The Action Team is working to implement further habitat improvement projects over the next year, including an operational experiment to remove invasive species from the grasslands. This site is part of a larger network of habitat corridors that facilitate wildlife migration and support ecosystem connectivity.



Mountain sheep on the road near the Bald Range Habitat Improvement Site.

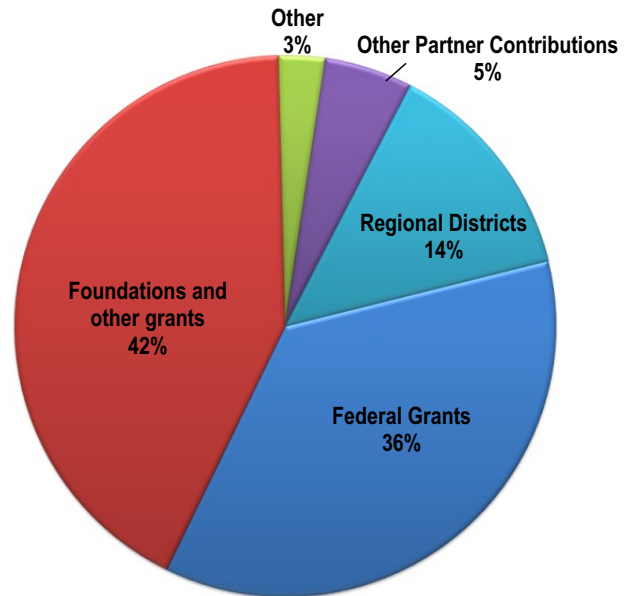
Financial Overview

The OCCP's fiscal year is April 1st to March 31st. During the 2015-2016 fiscal year OCCP brought in \$229,982 to support projects in the North and Central Okanagan and the core functions of OCCP. This revenue only represents the cash flow managed by OCCP, not the total cost of projects OCCP is involved with. (For example OCCP may contribute \$10,000 to a project, but the total project costs may be \$30,000). This revenue does not include in-kind contributions, on which OCCP relies heavily. All of the Steering Committee members provide their services in-kind and Partner involvement is all in-kind.

Twenty percent of OCCP's income came from within the region (primarily contributions from Partners such as the North and Central Okanagan Regional Districts and non-profit Partner organizations). These local contributions were leveraged 4-fold, bringing in 80% of OCCP's funding from federal grants such as Habitat Stewardship Program, Eco Action, Environment Canada and foundations and other organizations such as Real Estate Foundation of BC, Vancouver Foundation, the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative, and TELUS.

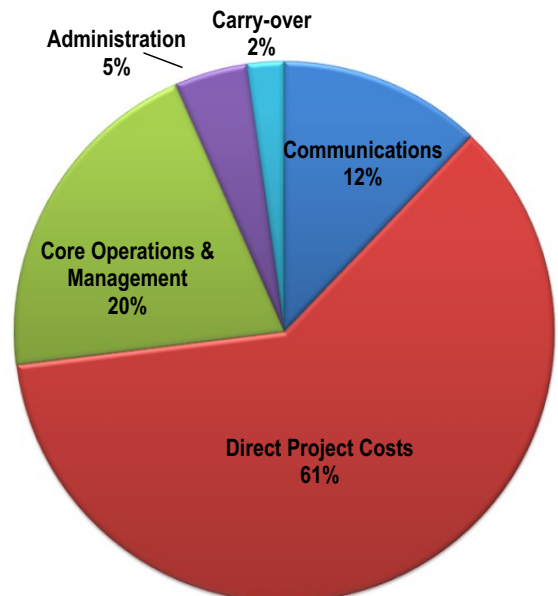
OCCP Revenue 2015-16

Total Revenue \$229,982



OCCP Expenses 2015-16

Total Expenses \$229,982



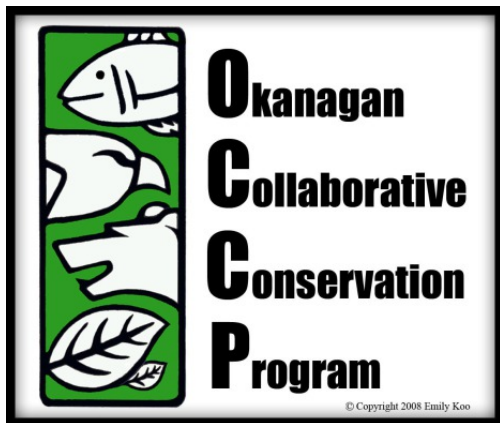
Looking Forward

Moving forward, the OCCP will continue to focus on realizing the goals in *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region*, primarily through helping to coordinate and facilitate action teams. With increased staff capacity the OCCP is looking forward to being able to further enhance biodiversity conservation in the region, including bringing in more funding to support projects.

With the wrap up of the 2015-16 fiscal, planning begins for the next year. OCCP has over fifty projects that Partners and community members have brought forward to consider for the next year, and has already made applications for funding on behalf of 12 of them. The new year will bring new projects as well as continuing 10 projects that are carrying over from 2015-16. The OCCP is prioritizing projects that support *A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region* and that focus on outreach and education, filling information gaps, and stewardship and conservation, which have been OCCP's three main focuses since its inception.

It is an exciting time! Please consider joining the OCCP as a Partner, collaborator, funder, or a volunteer!





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