

CENTRAL OKANAGAN LAND TRUST

Legacy

...a newsletter of the Central Okanagan Land Trust



Photo — J. Steeves

COLT helps restore Mission Creek

— *Judie Steeves*

Spawning kokanee returning to Mission Creek this fall found remnants of the former creek restored and waiting for them, thanks to the Mission Creek Restoration Initiative and the Central Okanagan Land Trust, as well as a variety of other organizations.

Restoration involves setting back the dykes built decades ago to channelize the creek as it flows from the mountains to Okanagan Lake, and re-building ancient meanders to allow a slower pace of flow where fish can rest and spawn. Dyking resulted in loss of 60 per cent of the creek's length, 80 per cent of its spawning and rearing habitat and 75 per cent of its riparian area.

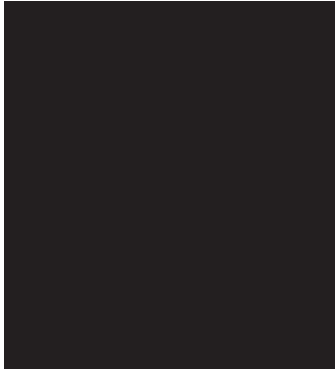
The project is a multi-phase, multi-stakeholder partnership aimed at improving fish stocks and promoting biodiversity.

COLT manages funds for the MCRI, including more than \$265,000 in a grant the land trust secured from the federal government and donations from local fish and game clubs, including Trout Unlimited, the Peachland Sportsman's Association, Oceola Fish and Game Club, and the Kelowna Fish and Game Club.

Phase I was successfully completed this year and included the setback of 500 metres of dyke, re-establishment of the floodplain and creation of increased habitat, including the planting of riparian vegetation—all of which will benefit a variety of fish and wildlife, including some rare and endangered species. In all, there is now four times more riparian habitat in that section of the creek.

Planning for a second phase is now underway for a new section of the creek.

COLT President's Message: Small can be Mighty



It is exciting to see large pieces of private property donated for conservation purposes, and much deserved fanfare tends to accompany these rare events. Recently, the Central Okanagan region and we in COLT had such a gift bestowed on us: what is now the Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park. However, I want to celebrate

and highlight the value of smaller properties as well. The size of an area useful for conservation purposes can scale in size from that which may be needed to support microbial processes, up to that needed to support a diverse aquatic insect community, and further up to that needed for the movement of large vertebrates. They are all valuable. The quality of the habitat can depend more on its specific characteristics, its connectivity to other habitats, and the degree to which its ecosystem is intact, as opposed to the property's sheer size. We know that a small, hidden patch of ground under a green canopy of trees can be as refreshing to the soul as a grand vista. Given this, we at COLT cherish the smaller properties that we keep in trust, even ones as small as the five acres at Robert Lake, an at-risk alkaline ecosystem.

I encourage people to keep this in mind when they are estate planning and wish to create a legacy. A few acres of swampy ground, pond, intact grassland, undisturbed forest soil, saline marsh, or rocky outcropping may seem like wasteland to many people but they could be important habitat for microbes responsible for nutrient cycling and degradation of contaminants, they may be part of a network of corridors for the movement of pollinators, they may provide important winter (or summer!) refuge areas for small birds, amphibians or reptiles, or they could be the home for a species at risk of being extirpated from B.C.

Over the years, habitat for wildlife and ecosystem services in the Okanagan has been lost on a bit-by-bit basis, but that same incremental process can be used to reclaim and mitigate the rate of loss. It is possible for there to be synergy amongst small properties so that the benefits of the whole are greater than the sum of its parts. The board members of COLT all live in this valley, and we share in its future. We regularly walk, enjoy, inspect, and steward the properties under our care. As your local land trust, COLT is ideally suited to play a central role in the acquisition, holding and management of pieces that can form the mosaic of an ecologically functional Okanagan landscape. With your help, we look forward to the opportunity to continue in that role.

Sincerely,

Laura Hooker
President

Notes from the Executive Director



The year 2016 has been a whirlwind of activity for the Central Okanagan Land Trust. The bulk of that work for me has focused on the two projects you will read about here - Munson Pond and the Mission Creek Restoration Initiative. In both cases, that work turned largely around preparing grant applications and reporting them out to the various agencies.

Perhaps the best way to gauge the success of these projects is to take a few moments for a relaxing stroll around the new trail at Munson Pond or take a bit longer hike down the new dike along the south side of Mission Creek Greenway between Gordon Drive and Casorso Road. While there is still work to do in these projects, you will see improvements through our support of wildlife, riparian habitat, protection of endangered species, and this will result in public awareness of the need for protected natural spaces.

The board's oversight has made this work move forward smoothly with our funding and community partners. In addition to that oversight, board members have been 'on the ground' conducting site inspections and meeting with prospective land donors or covenant holders.

In the coming year you will see even more changes with the construction of two viewing platforms at Munson Pond and with interpretive signage on those platforms. At Mission Creek we hope to see the newly established fish spawning and rearing sites well used and the adjacent riparian habitat beginning to fill in nicely.

As we do this work, please join us - walk these trails, make a donation to COLT, tell your family and friends about these projects, and encourage their support.

Mostly, as we head into a new year, I would like to thank you for your faith in COLT and in the work we do to protect and enhance the local wildlife values that we all hold so dear.

Wayne Wilson
Executive Director

Park around Munson Pond taking shape

By Judie Steeves

With minimal disturbance to the wildlife that call Munson Pond home, visitors can now enjoy the pathway and boardwalk through this scenic oasis and peek into the secret lives of birds and other wild creatures.

Restoration is still progressing, now that 9.8 hectares around the pond has become a Kelowna park, and a conservation covenant on a portion of the park is held by the Central Okanagan Land Trust, to ensure it remains in its natural state.

The land trust was also successful in its application for a federal EcoAction grant for \$75,000 toward re-naturalizing the riparian and upland areas around the pond.

COLT partnered with the city and a number of other groups, including the Okanagan Basin Water Board and volunteers from local schools and businesses, who planted trees and bushes in the new park.

Work this year also included a baseline biological inventory, removing encroachments on the edge of the pond and management of noxious weeds.

Construction of two wildlife viewing platforms is currently being completed, to allow visitors to enjoy the pond's varied birdwatching opportunities with minimal disturbance.

Interpretive signs will also be installed to help educate people about this dry valley's diminishing wetland resources and inspire respect for nature.

Along with its restoration and conservation of a mid-city wetland, this pond naturalization project is an important educational tool.

Photo — contributed



New Board Members

Tanis Gieselman moved to the Okanagan in 1989, where she grew up falling in love with the West Kelowna wilderness. After completing a BSc. in Ecology at Okanagan University College in 2005, she became especially aware of conservation issues in the Okanagan, and began studying seed-saving technologies as a means for conserving native biodiversity outside of parks and protected areas. In 2008 she moved to Vancouver to complete an MSc. at UBC. Her research investigated the impact of various types of human development on the edges of remaining grasslands. After her MSc., Tanis stayed in Vancouver for five years to be a science educator at UBC's Beaty Biodiversity Museum, while continuing to develop her seed-saving strategy in Kelowna. She returned to Kelowna in 2015 to work with the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP) as the Projects Coordinator.



Bill de Bosch Kemper

My wife, Bet, and I moved from Victoria to the Okanagan in 1978, with our two young sons. We loved the semi-arid lands, the forests, and the mountains of the area and whenever time permitted we explored the many backroads, trails, lakes, and rivers in the region.



I received a PhD in Psychology from the University of Victoria and

Continues...

Create a legacy
CENTRAL OKANAGAN
LAND TRUST

Our Mission

...to protect land for wildlife and parks so biodiversity and natural features are preserved for future generations.

Board of Directors

Laura Hooker – President
Barry Jones – Treasurer
Kurt Zander – Secretary
Judie Steeves – Recording Secretary
Robert Groves - Director
Tanis Gieselman - Director
Dorothy Mills - Director
Don Knox - Director
Hugh Westheuser - Director
Gord Savage - Director
Bill de Bosch Kemper - Director

Ex Officio – Wayne Wilson, Executive Director

Ex Officio – Representative, Regional District Central Okanagan

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worked as a clinical psychologist at Kelowna General Hospital (1978-1993) and in Private Practice. I retired from my private practice in 2014. I served on a number of Boards of professional and other non-profit organizations throughout my working life, but COLT represents my first foray into the world of conservation and land trusts.

In Memoriam - Frank Williams

A founder and key board member of the Central Okanagan Land Trust died Nov. 21 at the age of 86.

Frank Williams served on the board in a number of capacities for 23 years.

During that time he was a valuable resource for the board, with his clear reasoning and excellent memory; his network of contacts throughout the community and the respect everyone had for him.

A Chartered Accountant, Frank focused on ensuring the young land trust board laid down a strong foundation, with fiscally-responsible policies that would allow it to further its goal of conserving important natural features of his beloved Okanagan.

Frank moved to Kelowna to work for Rutherford Bazett and Co. in 1957 and became a partner.

He was active in community work and volunteered with Jaycees, First United Church, the United Way, the Social Planning Committee, the Naramata Centre for Continuing Education and the Downtown Rotary Club.

He was also among those who created the framework for the Central Okanagan Foundation, which was formed 40 years ago, and which later created the land trust.

He is survived by his wife Marie, sons Mark and Richard and daughter Kathleen.



The Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park is an example of a more-involved inspection, partly because of its size and diversity and partly because the Johns family requested its conservation in a natural state.

COLT was bequeathed the 320-hectare property in 2011 on Kelowna's South Slopes area with the stipulation it be maintained as a wildlife sanctuary.

COLT doesn't have the capacity to manage property, so it entered into a 99-year lease with the Central Okanagan Regional District to manage the land as a park, under a detailed management plan, as agreed on by both parties.

COLT's annual inspections began with a baseline inventory which included identification of six plots within the property. Each is monitored by COLT biologists to ensure the wide variety of flora and fauna on the property remain healthy.

Records of these independent inspections by COLT are filed by the land trust and shared with interested family descendants. They are available to the public.

In the case of properties where the land trust has simply donated funds to help in purchase of land, no inspection at all is done; and in the case of small properties managed by other agencies, a less-complex annual inspection is carried out and the report filed.

Snakes being studied in the Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park

By Barry Jones

There have been several random sightings of rare snakes in the Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park, so an inventory is underway to determine which species inhabit the 320-hectare property, which is owned by the Central Okanagan Land Trust and managed by the Central Okanagan Regional District. This park was created as a protected wildlife sanctuary, which provides COLT with a unique opportunity to study the health and abundance of wildlife in an area very close to a large and growing urban area. COLT director Hugh Westheuser does annual inspections of this park for the land trust, and he has been ensuring there are inventories of the wide variety of flora and fauna that use it for at least part of their life cycle. He has organized twice-yearly bird counts and has several trail cameras positioned to record the movements of large mammals. Following random sightings of rare snakes, it was decided to add snakes to this formal inventory process. Local biologist, Les Gyug, made several field trips to the area to identify and map as many areas of likely snake habitat as possible. In the spring, when snakes are emerging from their hibernacula, COLT members will patrol these sites regularly to monitor snake activity. Several species of Garter Snakes are commonly seen in the park but we hope to record some threatened species such as the Northern Pacific Rattlesnake, Rubber Boa, Great Basin Gopher Snake and the Western Yellow-bellied Racer.

Property inspections a vital COLT task

By Hugh Westheuser

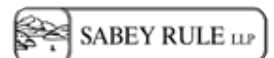
Regular property inspections are the backbone of the volunteer work performed by directors of the Central Okanagan Land Trust, whether the land has been donated, purchased or has a covenant on it.

Such inspections are vital to ensure the land is being used as the donor wished; or, if it is managed by a third party, that it is managed according to the plan agreed on.

That annual inspection may be minimal or very involved, depending on the size of the property and how it is to be managed.

Partners

The Central Okanagan Land Trust is fortunate to enjoy the financial, operational and/or development support of individuals, companies, local government, and other agencies. These partnerships help build a stronger network of parklands and conservation areas for wildlife – and we are the collective and individual beneficiaries of those healthy natural spaces. We thank all of them for their continuing support of our work and for their faith in our land stewardship practices.



Named Endowment Funds

- J. W. & M. E. Scott Family Fund
- J. W. Bootle Family Fund

- Charles Pettman Memorial Fund
- Bernice Mabee Memorial Fund
- Harvey & Ruth Whitson Fund

- Dick & Jean Hall Fund
- Central Okanagan Land Trust – Open Fund

- Johns Family Endowment Fund
- Hobson Family Endowment Fund
- Cynthia Ellis Endowment Fund