

CENTRAL OKANAGAN LAND TRUST

Legacy

...a newsletter of the Central Okanagan Land Trust



Excavator working with Okanagan Nation Alliance fisheries biologist on placement of in-stream boulders.

Steve Matthews

One of the 4 completed 'pool and riffle' structures in Mission Creek just downstream of the Robert Hobson EECO Centre

Pools in Mission Creek

by Judie Steeves

Just weeks after a project to create four new pools and riffles in Mission Creek by the Mission Creek Restoration Initiative, both kokanee and sockeye salmon were already spawning in the creek and making use of the new habitat.

The news comes from Steve Matthews, the fisheries biologist coordinating the project, who was pleased to see the arrivals creating redds in the gravel deposited downstream from the riffles, ready to lay their eggs, last fall. The project was completed in August, during the brief window that equipment is permitted to work in the river to avoid causing harm to spawning trout or kokanee.

Creation of pools and riffles is restoration of a natural feature in

Mission Creek in an area where the creek makes a straight run through the historically-straightened creek bed, in order to reduce some of the energy in the water's flow and oxygenate water to benefit fish. The slower flowing water and creation of pools also provides rearing habitat for young fish in the pools and allows gravel to be deposited, forming good habitat for spawning beds.

"We're trying to mimic natural features so we can create habitat to help recover Okanagan Lake fish stocks," explains Matthews.

"Ideally, we would widen the river's channel so it could behave in its natural way," he added.

Such dike setbacks and channel widening have been done in a section between Casorso Road and Gordon Drive as a demonstration of what can be achieved in terms of improving fish habitat and providing better flood protection for adjacent landowners, he explained.

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The Central Okanagan Land Trust acknowledges that we live and work in the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territory of the Syilx Nation, and we give thanks for the opportunity to help steward the land and learn from those who have been here since time immemorial.

Incoming President's Report

Tanis Gieselman



It is humbling to be asked to act as the President for the COLT Board of Directors. Since I took on the role of Vice President in 2019, I knew this day might come one day, but it still caught me by surprise! It has been my great pleasure to mentor under Gord Savage over the past six years, and to learn from all of the incredibly knowledgeable and dedicated people that volunteer on this Board. Our heartfelt thanks go out to Gord for leading us for so many years, and for continuing to put

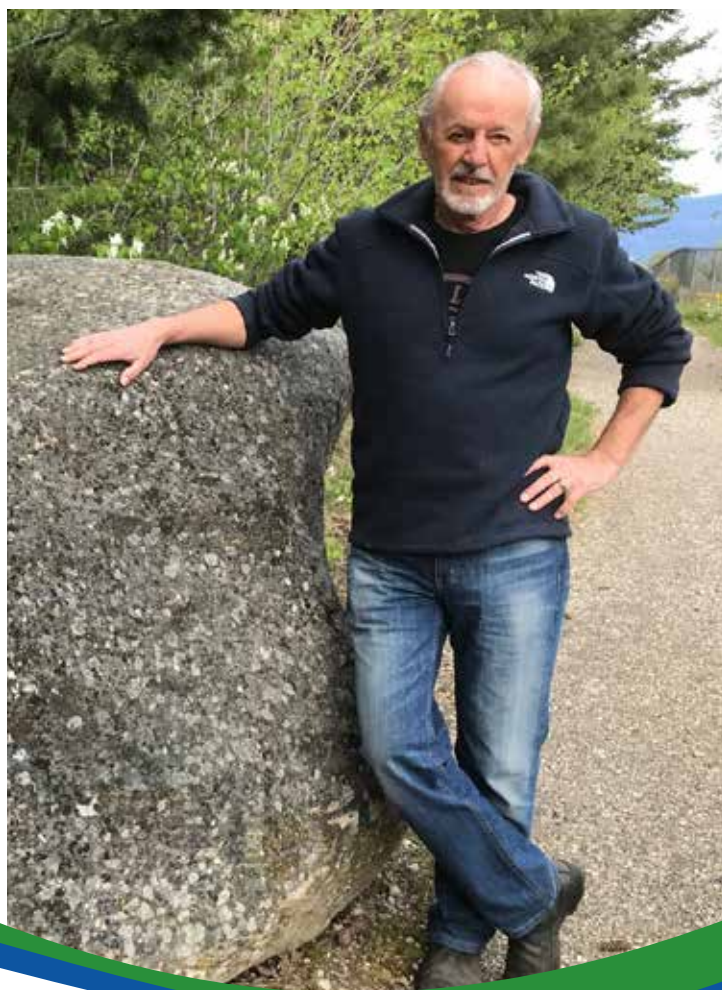
in an incredible amount of time towards land donation projects and COLT operations. Thanks for all you do Gord!

I started volunteering with the COLT Board at the end of 2016, when Ellen Pedersen asked me to take her place on the Board upon moving away. Ellen had been my Lab Instructor for "Biology of Vascular Plants" at Okanagan College fifteen years earlier, and she picked me because she wanted the person who took her place on the COLT Board to be able to continue doing vegetation surveys at the Johns Family Nature Conservancy. Five permanent survey plots were set up in five unique ecosystems around the Conservancy in 2009, and have been surveyed almost every June since then, to track the habitat recovery and spread of invasive species after the 2003 Okanagan Mountain Park Fire. This is just one example of the work that COLT will continue this year. We have teams working on a wetland construction project, supporting the Mission Creek Restoration Initiative, managing invasive species, maintaining a bluebird trail, offering student mentorship, advocating for protection of key areas, and negotiating new conservation areas. I feel very privileged to get to work with this Board, and I am incredibly excited to see what this dream team is able to accomplish over the coming year!

Tanis Gieselman
President, COLT

Looking back and to the future ...

One of my favourite activities is, and always has been, just going for a walk somewhere where I can be surrounded by the sight, sounds, and scents of the forest, grasslands, and wetlands. A few weeks ago when there was still a good layer of fresh snow in our neighbourhood I took a walk on a section of the Greenway just a short trek west of our home and I found myself in a beautiful sagebrush and dry grass meadow on a ridge overlooking Mission Creek meandering its way to the west of Gallagher's Canyon toward the city. There was a pair of coyote tracks in the fresh snow and when I got to a nice spot overlooking the scene the two coyotes stepped out from some sagebrush just below where I stood. At this moment I began to reflect on how fortunate we are to live in an area where we can have the ability to find these quiet places that have been conserved and protected from the ever-growing community we live in. —>



POOLS continued from cover

However, there are lots of challenges to doing that on a larger scale, he adds.

The MCRI, which is made up of representatives of provincial and federal governments, local governments, the Okanagan Nation Alliance, Westbank First Nation, Central Okanagan Land Trust, Friends of Mission Creek and the B.C. Conservation Foundation, has been working since 2006 on plans for restoration of the lower section of the river, including the 2015 dike setback project and monitoring, but it's very expensive work to undertake, Matthews notes.

He's excited about the increased awareness and support for the project over the years, and pleased that a lot of progress has been

made up to now.

This year there are plans for another floodplain expansion, but only on one side of the creek, downstream of the Mission Creek Spawning Channel near the Robert Hobson Environmental Education Centre in Mission Creek Regional Park.

Funding has come from the Okanagan Basin Water Board, the City of Kelowna and the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation.

Representing COLT on the committee is Don Knox, who comments "This has been an exciting learning experience. We watch what the creek 'wants to do' and try to help it achieve this. It's extremely rewarding when we're successful!"

I have to admit that when I was invited to join the board of the Central Okanagan Land Trust eight short years ago, I really did not fully appreciate the efforts and the true value of the work this group was involved in to make every attempt to conserve and protect so many of the few remaining natural areas within our region. I have been fortunate to act as the President of COLT for the past six years and to be involved in getting to know and work with an amazing and dedicated group of individuals. We continue to work closely with our many community partners, the Regional District of Central Okanagan, the City of Kelowna, the Mission Creek Restoration Initiative, the Central Okanagan Naturalist Club, the "Friends of" groups being, the South Slopes, Black Mountain, Woodhaven, Mission Creek, and Robert Lake. We have collaborated with all of these groups in seeking ways to identify lands to be conserved for the purpose of protecting as much of the natural environment in our region as possible. We have to continue to remind ourselves of the importance of this work for the health of the environment that surrounds us.

The vision of all of the above-noted groups and COLT is common in achieving these goals. I have stepped back from my role as the COLT President but as long as I'm upright and able, I will remain actively involved and look forward to working with our amazing group of volunteers. In the meantime get out for a walk around Munson Pond, the Johns Family Nature Conservancy, Thomson Marsh, the Black Mountain grasslands, or Mission Creek corridor, and know that COLT and our partners are working to save more of these types of special places for the betterment of us all.

Gord Savage,
Past-president, COLT

Executive Director Report

Wayne Wilson



After a few years of writing a brief annual review, I've come to the conclusion that, they're all busy years.. and 2024 was no different. More than that, I found it all exciting and encouraging work too - the big things and the little things.

Perhaps the biggest things this past year were the launch of our new website and the construction of the Pools and Riffles Project on Mission Creek. Both of these are covered in more detail here, but I can tell you that, for all the work involved, there is nothing quite like the sense of satisfaction you get looking back on the completed work. Stroll along Mission Creek Greenway or graze through the pages of our new website and you'll see what I mean.

Smaller projects need work too, and there are a couple that stand out for me. When you visit the Thomson Marsh, you'll see new signage to honour the history of the Thomson family who donated the lands for Thomson Marsh. It was wonderful to work with the Thomson family to sort out historic photos and write the captions. COLT also played the lead role in setting up a workshop for local government, estate planners, lawyers etc with the American Friends of Canadian Conservation. That leadership will be followed up soon with another workshop - this time with the EcoGift Program that promotes the donation of land for wildlife parks and wilderness areas in our region.

This past year also saw the start of work on the Burtch Road Extension on the west side of Munson Pond. When we entered into the Conservation Covenant with the City on the Munson Pond Park, we knew the road Right-of-Way was in place. Now, we have the task of working with the City of Kelowna staff and their environmental consultants to craft ways that the extension has as little impact on the environmental viability of the park - and we are up to that collaborative task.

Of course, there is more environmental stewardship work coming down the pike, and your COLT will be there to offer support.

Wayne Wilson
Executive Director



Our Mission

To steward the land in its trust for the conservation of natural ecosystems in the Central Okanagan, in perpetuity.

Board of Directors

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Angela Corman - Recording Secretary
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Bill de Bosch Kemper - Director
Laura Hooker - Director
Don Knox - Director
Kalin Ocana - Director
Eve Wegscheidler - Director
Leah Schurian - Director
Kim Inglis - Director

Ex Officio – Wayne Wilson, Executive Director

Ex Officio – Representative, Regional District Central Okanagan

Central Okanagan Land Trust
306-1726 Dolphin Ave.
Kelowna, BC V1Y 9R9
Email: info@coltrust.ca
www.coltrust.ca

Charitable Corporation Number: 13695 7198 RR0001

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COLT's public face is now all updated

by Judie Steeves

A new, updated website for the Central Okanagan Land Trust was completed last fall, to take full advantage of the new 'brochure' created in the form of a business card that includes our mission statement, contact information and a QR code to take you to our new website.

To have a look at that, go to: www.coltrust.ca

The new card, to be used as our brochures used to be used, highlights COLT's new logo, completed last year, with a photo taken from the Johns Family Nature Conservancy Regional Park, 400 hectares of land that was donated to COLT in 2013 by the Johns family.

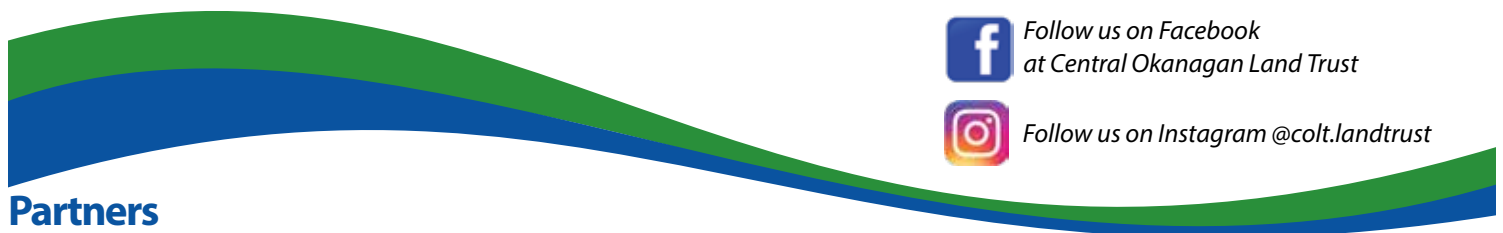
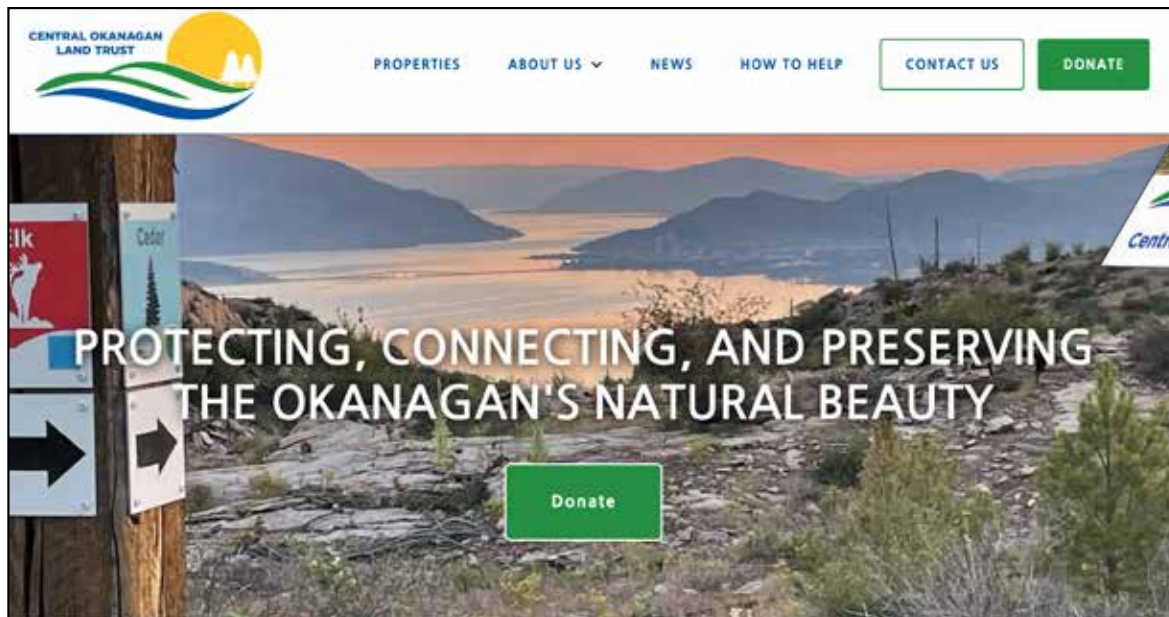
Local website designer, Sean Shepherd of Nucleus Strategies, undertook the re-design of COLT's website, which includes updated information on all our properties and ways in which the community



Sean Shepherd of Nucleus Strategies

can support the work of the land trust. It includes lots of new photos and valuable details about the conservation work we do. Shepherd noted, "It was incredibly rewarding to work with the Central Okanagan Land Trust. Their passion and tireless commitment to protecting our natural environment is both inspiring and humbling.

"Collaborating with a group so deeply rooted in stewardship reminds us what's possible when people come together with a shared purpose to care for the land and future generations."



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at Central Okanagan Land Trust



Follow us on Instagram @colt.landtrust

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.



Grant Thornton



Named Endowment Funds

- Central Okanagan Land Trust Fund
- COLT Johns Family Conservation Area Fund
- COLT Munson Pond Fund
- Bootle Family Fund
- COLT Cynthia Hunter Fund
- Dick & Jean Hall Fund #1
- Hobson Family Fund for COLT
- Bernice Mabey Memorial Fund
- Charles & Kay Pettman Family Fund
- J.W. & M.E. Scott Family Fund
- Westheuser Family Fund
- Ruth Nuyens Whitson Fund
- John & Monica Shantz Fund
- Wilson Family Fund