

## **Frequently Asked Questions about a Proposed Conservation Fund**

### **WHAT IS A CONSERVATION FUND?**

Conservation Funds are dedicated funds that are held by a regional district or municipality for the specific purpose of undertaking and administering environmental conservation projects.

### **WHERE DOES THE MONEY FOR A CONSERVATION FUND COME FROM?**

Conservation Funds are established through a service bylaw that enables local governments to requisition funds through an annual property tax. Environmental conservation can be considered a service provided by local and regional governments, similar to services like recreation, libraries, waste management, sewer and water.

### **WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED FOR THE SOUTH OKANAGAN?**

The RDOS Board has proposed an Environmental Conservation Service Bylaw for the South Okanagan that would requisition \$10 on average, per household, per year in the communities of Summerland, Penticton, Oliver and rural RDOS Electoral areas “A”, “C”, “D”, “E” and “F”.

### **WHERE ELSE IS THIS DONE?**

Several BC regions such as the Central Okanagan, Vancouver Island and East & Central Kootenays have had great success with local Conservation Funds.

### **IS THIS RELATED TO THE NATIONAL PARK?**

Establishing a Conservation Fund is not part of a proposed National Park. A Conservation Fund is a separate, practical tool for local communities to fund and accomplish environmental conservation.

### **HOW WILL IT WORK?**

Once established, community groups and not-for-profit organizations will be able to apply for funding to support locally important conservation projects. Independent technical experts and local government decision makers will work together to ensure that any proposals for funding contribute to locally important conservation goals. The RDOS may enter into an agreement with another organization to help administer the fund.

### **WILL THE FUNDS ONLY BE USED FOR CONSERVATION PROJECTS?**

The bylaw to establish the Conservation Fund will be detailed in its description so that funds cannot be directed to non-conservation projects.

## **DO ALL RDOS AREAS AND MUNICIPALITIES PARTICIPATE IN THIS FUND?**

The communities of Summerland, Penticton, Oliver and the RDOS Electoral areas “A”, “C”, “D”, “E” and “F” are part of the proposed fund.

## **WHO DECIDES HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT?**

An Independent Technical Committee will assist with the application review, but all final decisions rest with elected officials.

## **WHAT WILL THE FUNDS BE USED FOR?**

It is anticipated that the funds will support both stewardship and acquisition projects. Criteria for eligible projects will be included in a Terms of Reference for the fund. Some of the goals may be to:

- Conserve and restore ecologically important areas
- Protect water resources - watersheds, lakes, streams and wetlands
- Build on the existing network of natural places for people and wildlife
- Help landowners care for nature on their properties
- Protect ecosystems and their services important to the economy and communities
- Encourage volunteer nature conservation and education activities

## **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?**

Our natural environment contributes greatly to our quality of life. Healthy lands ensure clean and abundant water, fresh air, fish and wildlife habitat, local food, working farms and ranches, and natural places for people to enjoy. Each year, the fund will generate up to \$450,000 to support locally important environmental conservation projects. In addition, conservation funds attract additional funding from private, provincial and federal sources from outside the community.

## **HOW LONG WILL THE FUND BE IN PLACE?**

Like any other service, the Environmental Conservation Service for the South Okanagan is open to review by decision makers every year.

## **ISN'T THERE ALREADY FUNDING FOR CONSERVATION?**

Local communities often do not have the resources to undertake locally important environmental conservation projects. Granting foundations and government funding programs often specify a requirement for matching funds to be successful. A conservation fund is that dedicated source of local funding that would match and leverage additional monies from outside the community.

## WHO IS THE SOUTH OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN CONSERVATION PROGRAM?

The South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) is a partnership of 50 non-profit, government and First Nations organizations that have been working together since the year 2000 to conserve nature for South Okanagan and Similkameen communities. SOSCP works with partners to help improve the effectiveness of conservation efforts.

Our partners make significant investments towards environmental conservation in the South Okanagan Similkameen each year:

- We help private landowners care for nature on their lands.
- We secure and restore important natural areas.
- We work with Traditional Ecological Knowledge keepers.
- We use science to inform decisions, management actions and to establish conservation priorities.
- We provide sustainable land use information and resources to decision makers.
- We engage the community in learning about, and experiencing nature.

SOSCP supports the establishment of a South Okanagan Conservation Fund.