

Frequently Asked Questions about a Proposed Conservation Fund

WHAT IS A CONSERVATION FUND?

Conservation Funds are dedicated funds that are held by local government 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, local area service or fees. Environmental conservation is considered a service provided by local and regional governments, similar to services like recreation, libraries, waste management, sewer and water.

WHAT IS THE SOUTH OKANAGAN CONSERVATION FUND?

In December of 2016, the RDOS Board approved an Environmental Conservation Service Bylaw (South Okanagan Conservation Fund) for the South Okanagan that requisitions up to a maximum of \$450,000 annually 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. Some funds are solely focused on parkland acquisition and management; others address a broader array of conservation needs and initiatives.

IS THIS RELATED TO THE NATIONAL PARK?

The South Okanagan 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 DOES IT WORK?

The South Okanagan Conservation Fund is held and overseen by the RDOS in a dedicated account earmarked for conservation only. Community groups and organizations apply to the Conservation Fund to support their environmental conservation projects. Local government decision makers make the final decisions related to expenditures.

SOSCP has been engaged to assist with the administration of the granting process, and a committee of technical experts with clearly established criteria will also help ensure that projects proposed are technically sound, and contribute to important conservation goals.

WILL THE FUNDS ONLY BE USED FOR CONSERVATION PROJECTS?

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

DO ALL RDOS AREAS AND MUNICIPALITIES PARTICIPATE IN THIS FUND?

Currently, 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?

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

WHAT WILL THE FUNDS BE USED FOR?

The Fund supports an array of stewardship and acquisition activities. Criteria that outline the themes and goals for projects are included in the Terms of Reference for the fund.

The purpose of the fund is to provide financial support for projects that will contribute to the conservation of our valuable natural areas; water, environment, wildlife, land and habitat conservation efforts.

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.

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 can 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 provides administrative support for the South Okanagan Conservation Fund.