



Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022

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***Stewardship leaves
a lasting legacy for
future generations***

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Stewardship**
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VISION

Stewardship leaves a lasting legacy for future generations.

MISSION

The Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society exists to promote voluntary conservation, stewardship and enhancement of important habitats on private lands and within the communities of the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys.

STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship is the voluntary conservation and care for biodiversity and fish and wildlife habitat by landowners and community groups.

A CASE FOR STEWARDSHIP

The Okanagan is an exceptional place, known for its spectacular landscapes, iconic wildlife, amazing outdoor recreation opportunities, world class wines and diverse agricultural products. The region is also home to some of the greatest concentrations of species diversity and species at risk in Canada and is recognized as one of Canada's most endangered natural systems.

Many of the wildlife and natural areas in the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys are threatened because of the impacts from the very things which make this a desirable place to live and visit. Our towns, cities, agriculture and other human activities on land and water cause habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, the spread of non-native species, anthropogenic climate change, and pollution. All of which contribute to a decline of natural spaces and the plants and animals that depend on them.

Within the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys one-third of the land base is privately owned and managed. Private land is concentrated in the valley bottoms where at risk species and habitats are most common. Which means that empowering private land managers to undertake conservation on their own lands and within communities is critical to maintaining healthy ecosystems and thriving populations of native species.

Working at the grassroots community level is also effective in identifying and addressing threats within important geographic areas locally. Getting stakeholder groups involved helps to increase feelings of ownership over projects and increases the longevity of projects.





WHAT WE VALUE

- **Mutual partnerships** with landowners, communities and other organizations.
- **Working together**, in collaboration and coordination with stakeholders.
- **Landowner-and community-driven** projects increase success and longevity of our initiatives.
- **Health and well-being** of the public is directly tied to the health and well-being of our local ecosystems.
- **Natural values and habitats** are conserved based on the best available science.
- **Diversity** in people, habitats and place to supports resilient communities, environmental equity, and varied cultural values.
- **Respect** for all landowners, individuals and other stakeholders that we work with.
- **Accountability** with our stewards and our funders.



WHAT WE DO

Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship (OSS) works directly with land stewards and community groups in order to support and assist them in conservation, restoration and enhancement of important wildlife habitat throughout the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys.

The Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society conserves important habitats for the benefit of the public by:

- Working cooperatively and collaboratively in delivery of our programs and projects.
- Providing land owners and community groups with information about local conservation issues.
- Providing land owners and community groups with assistance and support in conservation, restoration and enhancement of key habitats for wildlife.



GOAL

IMPORTANT HABITATS ARE STEWARDED IN THE OKANAGAN AND SIMILKAMEEN VALLEYS

OBJECTIVE: Promote voluntary stewardship of wildlife habitats on private land and within communities.

- Prioritize and deliver land owner contact and community support based on best available science.
- Provide interested land owners with one-to-one direct landowner support and assistance.
- Work with land owners and community stewardship groups to establish tailored conservation plans for private lands and communities.
- Promote voluntary stewardship through community meetings and public outreach at local events and through media.

OBJECTIVE: Support existing Wildlife Habitat Stewards.

- Check in with existing stewards at least once a year to assess needs and answer questions.

- Recognize Wildlife Habitat Stewards for their careful stewardship of important habitats through gate-post signs, demonstration projects, and media.

OBJECTIVE: Increase the number of Wildlife Habitat Stewards.

- Develop written management agreements with interested land owners outlining best management practices.
- Support Wildlife Habitat Stewards through land management assistance, training, and technical expertise.
- Recognize Wildlife Habitat Stewards for their careful stewardship of important habitats through gate-post signs, demonstration projects, and media.
- Continue to develop incentives for stewardship of important habitats.
- Develop clear guidelines for partnership.

One third of the land in our region is privately owned.

OBJECTIVE: Support landowners and community groups in restoration and enhancement of habitats that support wildlife.

- Develop partnerships with managers of natural areas within communities, such as City and Regional Parks departments.
- Assist land owners and community stewards with planning, implementation and monitoring of habitat enhancement and restoration projects including:
 - Re-vegetation projects (seeding and/or planting of native species)
 - Fencing projects (eg. livestock/ATV exclusion, domestic/wild sheep separation)
 - Invasive Plant Management
 - Residence construction/enhancement (sand mound installation for turtle nesting, bat and owl nest box installation and maintenance)
- Complete projects that are driven by landowners and communities and based on mutual partnership with landowners.

OBJECTIVE: Facilitate long-term conservation options with interested landowners.

- Provide landowners with information on conservation options specific to their situation.
- Partner with local, provincial and national land-trusts as appropriate.
- Assist landowners in navigating permanent conservation of their properties.

Many habitats found within urban and agricultural areas are degraded and require enhancement in order to be more functional.



GOAL

2

THE PUBLIC IS ENGAGED IN OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ABOUT AND PARTICIPATE IN STEWARDSHIP IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

OBJECTIVE: Provide landowners and community groups with information about local habitats and wildlife.

- Provide landowners and community stewardship groups with information on native plants, wildlife, land management issues and sustainable land use.
- Work collaboratively to identify and address gaps in information and materials and produce such information and materials if necessary.
- Continue to produce and deliver a semi-annual program newsletter which provides program updates, information

about local wildlife initiatives and conservation options.

- Develop site-specific interpretive signage in order to communicate demonstration projects and their purpose.
- Work with community stewardship groups and initiatives to deliver community information meetings specific to local interests and issues.
- Work collaboratively to deliver public interest workshops aimed to provide information and develop skills of local land owners and community stewards.
- Communicate the results of significant projects and activities through media releases, acknowledging partners and supporters.

OBJECTIVE: Encourage participation of stakeholders in stewardship initiatives by respecting diverse social and cultural values.

- Broaden accessibility of stewardship information.
- Develop a communication strategy that engages all of our communities.
- Identify gaps in stewardship delivery, while respecting the roles of partner organizations

OBJECTIVE: Facilitate stewardship of important habitats through hands-on volunteer opportunities.

- Engage local residents in workshops and training.
- Promote citizen and action science and stewardship opportunities.
- Target volunteers through special interest and community groups.
- Establish a volunteer recognition program.

People connect with what they know. Hands-on experiences build stronger attachments to nature.



GOAL 3

OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN STEWARDSHIP AND ITS INITIATIVES ARE RECOGNIZED WITHIN THE COMMUNITY AS A LEADING STEWARDSHIP ORGANIZATION

OBJECTIVE: Increase our presence and visibility throughout our region.

- Develop and implement a communications strategy.
- Highlight successful projects through newsletters, social media, print media and interpretive signage.
- Extend results and achievements through public outreach and involvement in local communities
- Celebrate our successes.

OBJECTIVE: Recognize and highlight the value of stewards and their contributions.

- Gate-post sign recognition of Wildlife Habitat Stewards.
- Highlight steward partners in newsletters, social media, print media and interpretive signage.

OBJECTIVE: Recognize and highlight our funding partners

- Maintain transparency and accountability to stakeholders.

An increased public profile and acknowledgement of significant projects will engage more land owners and community stewards.

GOAL 4

OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN STEWARDSHIP IS ENGAGED IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES THAT AFFECT STEWARDSHIP

OBJECTIVE: Increase and facilitate access to relevant information, data and expert stewardship knowledge.

- Ensure that confidentiality with landowners and partners is respected.
- Provide feedback to municipal, regional, provincial and federal governments and their initiatives.
- Share information with partners and stakeholders.

OBJECTIVE: Increase OSS's conservation impact through strategic partnerships across diverse stakeholder groups.

- Cooperate with partnerships, organizations, community groups and stewards in order to realize vision.
- Be inclusive while ensuring that the record and reputation of potential partners is consistent with the vision, goals and values of OSS, its members and stewards.
- Work with partners and stakeholders to determine priorities and ensure that projects are delivered based on best available information.

OSS accomplishes its goals through cooperation and collaboration with many other stakeholders.

Integrating expert stewardship knowledge can inform policy and land use decisions.

