



Committee of the Whole

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Committee of the Whole
to be held at
City of Penticton, Committee Room A
171 Main Street, Penticton, B.C.

Monday, October 19, 2015
at 3:45 p.m.

1. **Call Committee of the Whole to Order**
2. **Adoption of Agenda**
3. **Presentations:**
 - 3.1 South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program - Bryn White 1-16
Re: Local Conservation Fund 2015
4. **Media and Public Question Period**
5. **Adjourn to In-Camera**

Adjourn to a closed meeting of Council pursuant to the provisions of the *Community Charter* section 90 (1) as follows:

- (e) the acquisition, disposition or expropriation of land or improvements, if the Council considers that disclosure could reasonably be expected to harm the interests of the municipality;
- (i) the receipt of advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose.
- (j) information that is prohibited, or information that if it were presented in a document would be prohibited, from disclosure under section 21 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act;



102 Industrial Avenue
Penticton, British Columbia
V2A 7C8
Tel: (250) 490-8225
Fax: (250) 490-2231
Email: bryn.white@gov.bc.ca
Website: www.soscp.org

October 13, 2015

Mayor and Council
City of Penticton

Re: **Establishing a Local Conservation Fund**

Please see the attached information package in support of our discussion on October 19th 2015.

The proposal for establishing a Local Conservation Fund has been raised at the RDOS Board table, and direction has been provided for SOSCP to engage and solicit public opinion on the establishment of a fund.

I am looking forward to an opportunity to talk with Mayor and Council about this innovative and important concept, and how it would benefit the community of Penticton specifically.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Bryn White".

Bryn White
South Okanagan Similkameen
Conservation Program Manager
250.490.8225

A Regional Conservation Fund for the South Okanagan Similkameen
Prepared by: South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP)
October 2015

1. What is a conservation fund?

A *conservation fund* is a dedicated funding source established by a regional district or municipality to support environmental conservation. The fund provides local financial support for activities to protect valuable natural areas, as part of restoring and sustaining a healthy local environment. It focuses on projects that don't fall within the mandate of other levels of government.

A regional district or municipality has the legal authority to establish and operate a conservation fund as a service, just as with other services such as fire protection, water supply, recreation and waste management. The fund can be financed through a property tax, parcel tax, local area service tax or fees. A fund program usually runs for ten years, after which the regional district decides whether or not it will continue. Five BC regional districts have created conservation funds, four of which are comparable to the RDOS as they are mostly rural – the East and Central Kootenay RD's, Central Okanagan, and Cowichan Valley Districts – as well as the Capital Regional District.

2. How will a conservation fund benefit the Okanagan Similkameen region?

The South Okanagan Similkameen region is known for its spectacular natural surroundings, including habitats and species that are at risk. Local residents value natural areas as contributing significantly to their high quality of life, yet governments and community organizations have only limited resources to conserve and protect these values. Now is the ideal time to establish a conservation fund. There are still significant natural areas worth protecting and land is still relatively available and affordable. Partners are prepared to help acquire and manage these areas, and the public is supportive.¹

The Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen (RDOS) made a commitment to environmental protection and conservation in the 2010 *Regional Growth Strategy*. Those policy statements translated into a partnership with the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) to prepare "*Keeping Nature in Our Future: a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for South Okanagan Similkameen*", completed in 2012.

A conservation fund for the Okanagan Similkameen will:

- provide local governments and conservation groups with a practical tool to protect the valuable natural areas identified in the regional biodiversity strategy;
- open up opportunities to leverage additional funding through pooling resources with other government and non-government organizations;
- allow the region to build on lessons learned from other successful conservation funds in B.C.;
- provide a reliable source of funding to create a significant natural legacy for future generations in this region and beyond.

3. What are the goals of a conservation fund?

Each local government custom designs the conservation fund to address local environmental priorities and dovetail with existing planning and decision-making. The following are possible goals for a regional conservation fund, which would be refined in consultation with local governments, communities, and other stakeholders:

¹ SOSCP commissioned Polls conducted by Synovate for South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program, 2004, 2008.

- Acquire, manage and protect natural areas of regional importance, including habitats for diverse fish and wildlife species, many of which are rare and at risk;
- Restore and protect watersheds, including lakes, watercourses and groundwater;
- Build on the network of regional green and open spaces for people and wildlife;
- Support stewardship activities to restore and enhance damaged or disappearing ecosystems, e.g., wetlands, riparian areas, and rare sagebrush grasslands;
- Increase recreation and tourism opportunities;
- Protect special places that enhance local quality of life, and encourage people to explore the region's history and natural environment; and
- Protect ecosystems and their services that support our economy and communities.

Several community conservation priorities emerged in spring 2013 during the RDOS-supported public open houses and Advisory Planning Committee meetings on the regional biodiversity strategy in seven municipalities/electoral areas. Along with the above list, they provide a starting point for future consultation on the conservation fund:

- Water management (quality/quantity).
- Parks and protected areas, including regional parks.
- Wildlife corridors and connectivity in valley bottoms.
- Promoting compatibility of agriculture and the environment.
- Specific development and planning tools to strengthen environmental protection.

4. How does a local government establish a conservation fund?

The creation of a conservation fund involves the following activities:²

1. Identify a team to work on establishing the fund, with both government and community partners. (The SOSCP will likely be the main partner for this area.)
2. Engage local governments and communities in deciding on the conservation fund.
3. Choose the desired legal approach to establishing and financing the fund.
4. Design the fund, including a conservation vision and goals, based on priorities identified in "Keeping Nature in our Future" and consultation.
5. Identify criteria and processes for inviting, approving and evaluating projects.
6. Establish efficient, transparent procedures for fund management and administration.

The preference of the RDOS is to have member municipalities participate in a regional fund that is established based a percentage of property value. The regional goal is to garner up to \$500,000 per year to support conservation efforts. The average cost per household is dependent on the property value, and how many households are in the service area (more participating areas, the less cost per household). The annual per household costs in other areas of British Columbia range from \$10 to \$20 approximately.

RDOS is seeking public input, and working with SOSCP to gauge public support throughout the remainder of 2015 – with a goal of referendum in early 2016.

² South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program. 2011. *Establishing a Regional Conservation Fund in British Columbia: A Guide for Local Governments and Community Organizations*.
<http://www.soscp.org/conservationfundguideforbc/>

Establishing a Regional Conservation Fund in the South Okanagan Similkameen



*Presented by
Bryn White, SOSCP
Program Manager*

*For City of Penticton
October 2015*



Who is the SOSCP?

Partnership of 50 government and non-government organizations working together to conserve nature in the South Okanagan and Similkameen



What is a conservation fund?

- A distinct and reliable source of funding held by a regional district or municipality for the specific purpose of undertaking ecological activities
- Once the fund is established, community groups and other organizations can apply for funding to support their projects
- Money from the local fund can be used to match outside funds to increase the power of the fund
- The fund is overseen by local governments with guidance from an independent technical committee



*RDEK - Upper
Columbia Valley
Conservation Fund:
up to \$230,000
annually for wildlife,
watersheds and
working lands*

*The Comox Valley
Regional District:
\$750,000 per year to
acquire new parks*



Why establish a conservation fund?

- Nature Conservation Strategy developed for our region called **“Keeping Nature in our Future”**.
- Why? Natural areas and wildlife here are rare and endangered.
- Strategy to guide nature conservation and help to ensure that local development and land management is environmentally sensitive in our region.
- Strategy provides recommendations about conserving and restoring priority natural areas; including how to fund those activities.

A key recommendation is that local governments establish a “Local Conservation Fund”.



Why establish a conservation fund?

From this....



To this....



- Conserve ecologically important areas for threatened and endangered species
- Protect and restore fish and wildlife habitat
- Protect community watersheds, ensuring water quality and quantity
- Protect important natural areas from fire, weeds and off-road vehicles
- Encourage volunteer nature conservation activities on public and private land
- Protect natural spaces for hiking, walking and wildlife viewing
- Support environmental education and awareness

From this....



To this....



What types of projects could be eligible for funding?⁹

Watershed and drinking water protection?

Fish and wildlife habitat restoration?

Parkland acquisition?

Open-space?

Protection of endangered species?

Trails network development?

- Project types will vary from region to region depending on conservation goals and priorities
- Criteria and evaluation process should be established and specified in a terms of reference
- Regional goals and priorities can be determined through public opinion polling or may have already been identified through an official community plan or sustainability planning process.



Where does the money for a conservation fund come from?

- 10 -



- Nature conservation can be considered a **service just like planning, parks and recreation, libraries, sewer, and water**
- A conservation fund can be financed through property value or parcel levy, local area service tax or fees

Examples:

- Central Kootenays \$15/flat parcel
- East Kootenays \$20/flat parcel
- Capital Region \$20/flat household
- Central Okanagan \$26.50 avg/by assessed value/household



Who else has done this?

“The lands acquired for the regional parks and trails system through this fund contribute significantly to the environmental, economic and social sustainability of the region. It is a defining ingredient of the region...”

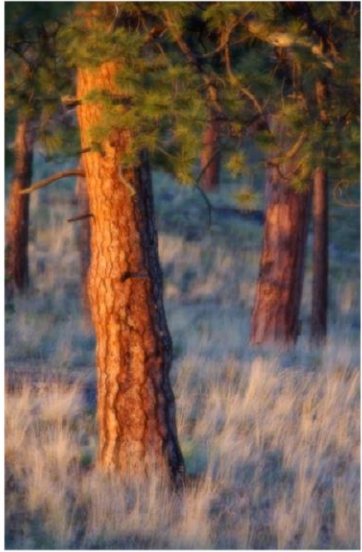
*Geoff Young
CRD Board Chair*

- Capital Regional District
- Upper Columbia Valley; Central Kootenay (regional districts)
- Central Okanagan Regional District
- Cowichan Valley Regional District



Who holds & manages the conservation fund?

- Motivation to pursue the fund can come from a regional district, municipality, community group, land trust or other NGO
- The regional district or municipality collects monies for the fund. Administration to disburse the monies can be a different entity or through local government with support of a technical committee
- A partner organization, for example, the SOSCP may be assist with aspects of fund management



How is a conservation fund established by a municipality? ^{- 13 -}



- Providing a service, such as a conservation fund, is at the discretion of council and no approval need be sought from the electors to establish the service (under section 8(2) of the *Community Charter*)



How is a conservation fund established by a regional district? ^{- 14 -}



- Regional district boards must adopt an establishing bylaw to create a service (under the *Local Government Act*)
- In most cases, approval must be obtained through assent of the electors (i.e. Referendum), alternative approval process or consent on behalf of municipal participating area



How long is a conservation fund in place?

- Money in a conservation fund is non-lapsing (can be carried over from one fiscal year to the next)
- Conservation fund programs typically have a lifespan of 10 years
- After 10 years, elected representatives may choose to continue the fund by passing a resolution, or seek public confirmation for an extension through public opinion polling or referendum



Goal:

*Establish a
Regional
Conservation Fund
by end of 2016*

Summary:

- Strong support for this concept from public feedback
- Specific projects that may benefit – Penticton Creek Restoration; Penticton Oxbows Restoration
- Threshold amount per household: \$10

