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32 PROJECTS TO IMPROVE OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Columbia Basin Trust approves \$870,000 in Environment Grants

(Columbia Basin) – From counting bird species to increasing composting, 32 projects from around the Columbia Basin will address environmental well-being thanks to \$870,000 from Columbia Basin Trust Environment Grants.

“These projects will make a difference in improving terrestrial and aquatic habitat, helping communities adapt to climate change, monitoring water resources and engaging Basin residents in environmental stewardship,” said Tim Hicks, Columbia Basin Trust Senior Manager, Delivery of Benefits. “Together, these projects will contribute to the well-being of the diverse landscapes, waterways, fish and wildlife in the Basin.”

All projects focus on one or more of the Trust’s four environment goals: ecosystems, climate, water or environmental education. See the complete the list of projects at ourtrust.org/environmentgrants.

One of the recipients is the BC Wildlife Federation. Its project aims to help restore, enhance and conserve wetlands at locations in the Creston Valley, near Salmo and near Rossland, and provides workshops to educate the residents and build capacity among wetland stewards.

“There was a time when wetlands were considered wastelands, and many have since been lost or severely degraded in the Columbia Basin,” said Neil Fletcher, Wetlands Program Manager. “However, they are now being recognized as valuable to both our communities and our local wildlife. Our project aims to support those who want to help restore and maintain wetlands.”

Another recipient is Living Lakes Canada. It will continue monitoring groundwater quantity at 12 priority aquifers around the Basin, develop ways to more efficiently manage and share groundwater data. It will also host community workshops about groundwater stewardship.

“Groundwater stewardship is integral to water sustainability in the Columbia Basin,” said Heather Leschied, Program Director. “Groundwater helps maintain surface water levels vital for communities and healthy ecosystems, and is important for climate resiliency as we experience increased use and demand in our watersheds.”

The Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation of Canada is also receiving a grant. It will plant whitebark pine seedlings in several locations in the Basin to help restore this endangered species, and will collect seeds from healthy trees to send to nurseries and researchers.

“Whitebark pine seeds are a very important food source for the Clark’s nutcracker, red squirrel and grizzly bear,” said Randy Moody, President. “But in the Kootenay-Columbia region they are greatly declining—as many as 90 per cent of the trees are infected by white pine blister rust in some stands. As only mature trees produce cones, it’s important to restore the trees to increase future seed availability in the ecosystem.”

Biologist Penny Ohanjanian will help reintroduce northern leopard frogs to the Columbia marshes. Once widespread, this species of frog is currently endangered in BC with populations limited to the Creston valley and a recently established population at Bummers Flats in the East Kootenay. This project aims to re-establish them near Brisco.

“It is vital reintroduce the frogs to as many sites as possible to avoid extinction,” said Ohanjanian. “As part of the Northern Leopard Frog Recovery Team, I’ll be helping to oversee these reintroduction activities and support continued trans-locations to ensure adequate numbers are released to establish a population.”

Supporting healthy, diverse and functioning ecosystems is one of the Trust’s 13 strategic priorities. Learn more about the Trust’s other environment programs, including its Climate Action Program and new Ecosystem Enhancement Program at ourtrust.org/environment.

Columbia Basin Trust supports the ideas and efforts of the people in the Columbia Basin. To learn more about the Trust’s programs and initiatives, and how it helps deliver social, economic and environmental benefits to the Basin, visit ourtrust.org or call 1.800.505.8998.

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PHOTO 1: The BC Wildlife Federation will be working to restore, enhance and conserve wetlands at four locations thanks to an Environment Grant from Columbia Basin Trust.

PHOTO 2: Living Lakes Canada will continue to monitor groundwater quality around the Basin thanks to an Environment Grant from Columbia Basin Trust.

PHOTO 3: The Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation of Canada will help restore endangered whitebark pine around the Basin thanks to an Environment Grant from Columbia Basin Trust. Here a team member puts cages on tree cones to protect them from foragers.

PHOTO 4: Biologist Penny Ohanjanian will be working to reintroduce northern leopard frogs to the Columbia marshes thanks to an Environment Grant from Columbia Basin Trust.

MEDIA CONTACT

Rachel Lucas
Columbia Basin Trust
1.800.505.8998
rlucas@cbt.org