

Environment Strategic Plan 2014 – 2019

Our Mission

The Trust supports efforts by the people of the Basin to create a legacy of social, economic and environmental well-being and to achieve greater self-sufficiency for present and future generations.

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Introduction

Basin Residents Shape Columbia Basin Trust's Delivery of Environmental Benefits

In spring 2013, Columbia Basin Trust began a discussion with Basin[†] residents about renewing its water and environment strategic plans. Workshops and meetings across the Basin, combined with a Basin-wide survey, generated ideas and recommendations that helped define environmental priorities and shape the goals, objectives and activities in this plan. This *Environment Strategic Plan* will guide the Trust's Environment and Water Initiatives[†] from 2014 to 2019.

This plan will build community capacity and facilitate the development and implementation of projects and initiatives that will help preserve the natural assets of our region and strengthen our collective ability to address current and future environmental priorities for the benefit of all Basin residents.

[†]Symbol denotes term defined in the glossary.



How We Approach Our Work

Working Toward Environmental Well-being†

At the Trust we envision an environment where varied, connected landscapes and waterways are resilient†, bio-diverse and able to support the human and ecological needs that depend upon them. Our commitment to environmental well-being is rooted in the aspirations of Basin residents:

1. Aquatic and terrestrial ecosystemst are diverse, healthy and functioning.
2. Watersheds and water sources continue to provide abundant, high-quality water throughout the Basin to serve a variety of human and ecological needs.
3. Basin residents have an increased understanding of how they are connected to the natural environment and depend upon it for their health and livelihood, which results in more environmentally aware decisions and actions.
4. Residents, communities and organizations have the knowledge, skills and capacity to work effectively and collaboratively to achieve healthy and resilient communities in response to environmental pressures such as a changing climate.

Focusing on Environmental Priorities

We believe we can make the most progress toward environmental well-being by focusing on a few of the most critical environmental priorities. By taking focused steps over the next five years through the implementation of this plan, we will support the achievement of positive long-term outcomes related to ecosystems, water and a changing climate.

These priorities were identified by Basin residents and subject matter experts to ensure the Trust is focusing its resources appropriately, and in ways that will support collaboration with other groups and organizations working on environmental well-being in the Basin. Doing so will leverage our collective efforts and create the greatest opportunities for environmental well-being at individual, community and Basin-wide scales.

We recognize the connection and interdependence of the environment, our society and the economy. This is why we are committed to integrated and collaborative approaches that not only contribute to environmental well-being, but also social and economic well-being.



Goals & Objectives

Setting the Stage for Progress

Five goals support the Trust's strategic priorities for water and environment and will help focus the Trust's Environment and Water Initiatives. They are presented here as distinct areas of focus, but the Trust recognizes the goals are intertwined and interdependent, and must be considered together in order to make progress toward environmental well-being. Each goal is supported by a series of objectives and activities that describe how the Trust will support progress toward the goals from 2014 to 2019.

Goal 1: Water

Contribute to safeguarding and enhancing the quality and availability of water in the Basin for a variety of human and ecological needs.

Why focus on water?

Clean, fresh water is essential to every aspect of life in the Columbia River Basin. Despite the apparent wealth of fresh water, increasing human activities, population growth and the projected impacts of climate change are placing pressure on this precious resource. The Trust is committed to supporting efforts that will safeguard and enhance water quality and availability for a wide range of human and ecological needs today and tomorrow. Doing so is essential to maintaining healthy watersheds that meet the needs of communities and support the Basin's economy.

Objectives	Activities	Desired Outcomes
<p>1 Strengthen the Basin's research and monitoring capabilities to identify and evaluate potential threats to water quality and quantity to help guide current and future use of water resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborate with other organizations to identify inventory, research and mapping needs regarding surface and groundwater sources.• Support water quality and quantity data collection and research that are scientifically sound and can contribute data to management frameworks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data and research contribute to increased understanding of surface and groundwater sources throughout the Basin.• Understanding of the Basin's water resources is increased through projects and partnerships, and the data contributes to water policy and management.
<p>2 Enhance the capacity of Basin residents to contribute to water and watershed management decisions affecting local water resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitate and coordinate dialogue, engagement and collaboration related to water and watershed management and related issues at local and regional scales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basin residents have access to information, understand the issues and therefore have enhanced capacity to meaningfully contribute to water and watershed management decisions.
<p>3 Support and facilitate water conservation and source protection efforts to help assure the availability of clean water for human and ecological needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and share knowledge and practices communities can use in their efforts to preserve water quality at its source.• Continue to support communities in implementing practices to conserve water.• Support protection, enhancement and restoration of water resources that provide important habitat for fish and wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communities have increased access to knowledge and leading practices they can use to help preserve the quality of water, at its source, for human and ecological needs.• Communities adopt leading practices that enable them to use water efficiently, resulting in reduced water use, enhanced infrastructure longevity and cost savings.• Increased conservation and stewardship[†] of water resources enhances fish and wildlife habitat.

Goal 2: Ecosystems

Strengthen Basin-wide and local efforts to maintain and enhance aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem function and native biodiversity†.

Why focus on ecosystems?

Ecosystems must be able to function and adapt so the diversity of life in the Basin will endure and essential goods and services† provided by ecosystems continue to support a high quality of life for Basin residents. In an era when changing temperatures and precipitation patterns have begun to impact human communities and disrupt the natural habitats of many species already threatened, maintaining and enhancing ecosystem functionality and biodiversity is critically important. Through collaboration, partnerships and project funding, the Trust’s activities will support efforts to ensure the region’s native biodiversity is able to adapt and thrive over time.

Objectives	Activities	Desired Outcomes
1 Strengthen efforts to maintain and enhance ecosystems and species of conservation concern.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue partnering with community-based and government organizations to enhance and conserve ecosystems of conservation concern at local and regional scales through research and support for on-the-ground projects. Support projects that contribute to the enhancement and conservation of fish, wildlife and plant species that are of conservation concern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project funding and collaboration result in conservation and enhancement of ecosystems of conservation concern. Contributions to long-term conservation and enhancement of fish, wildlife and plant species that are of conservation concern.
2 Contribute to scientifically sound land conservation and stewardship on private lands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue contributing to land securement† for conservation purposes. Continue supporting partners to develop and implement stewardship plans for conservation securements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased amount of land with high conservation value and public benefit is protected through a variety of means to ensure current and future generations can appreciate the Basin’s biological diversity† and natural heritage. Increased number of stewardship plans are in place or under development to guide the management and use of conserved lands, and management is progressing in accordance with agreed-to objectives.
3 Help reduce the threat of invasive species to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support collaboration and on-the-ground projects that prevent, reduce and monitor the establishment and spread of current and new invasive species. Improve Basin residents’ understanding of how native biodiversity is impacted by invasive species. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More groups work together to address invasive species. Further establishment of invasive species is prevented or reduced. Basin residents have increased awareness and understanding of the importance of native biodiversity and the threats posed by invasive species.



Goal 3: Resilience† in a Changing Climate

Enhance Basin-wide efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for and adapt to changing climatic conditions.

Why focus on a changing climate?

Our climate is changing: temperature and precipitation increases are impacting environmental conditions including glacial runoff, water temperatures, stream flows, freeze/thaw cycles, floods, droughts and wildfires. Together, these changes underscore the need to prepare for and adapt to a future climate that will be different than what we have experienced before. Building awareness, providing information, supporting science and developing tools to support mitigation† and adaptation† at individual and Basin-wide scales is essential to assisting Basin residents and communities reduce greenhouse gas emissions and become more resilient to our changing climate.

Objectives	Activities	Desired Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Improve information and awareness within households, communities and businesses about climate change impacts, costs, greenhouse gas emissions and the economic, social and environmental benefits of energy efficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to support new and existing research and partnerships that enhance knowledge about the current and projected effects of climate change in the Basin.• Build awareness that inspires and enhances the capacity of households, communities and businesses to reduce their contributions to climate change, including through means that save money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Credible, science-based information is available to Basin residents, communities and businesses to guide decisions and actions.• Basin residents, local governments and businesses reduce greenhouse gas emissions and understand the benefits of doing so.
<ol style="list-style-type: none">2 Support communities to develop and implement climate change mitigation and resilience strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue supporting local governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and become more resilient to the effects of climate change, including potential catastrophic events such as fire, flooding and drought.• Collaborate with other organizations to develop and support implementation of Basin-wide climate change mitigation and resilience strategies that are responsive to local and global circumstances and opportunities.• Support monitoring of mitigation and adaptation efforts to understand progress and share lessons learned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local governments continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop innovative strategies to become more resilient to changing climatic conditions, such as extreme weather events.• A range of organizations collaborate to explore, develop and implement Basin-wide strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to risks and opportunities presented by changes to the Basin's climate.• Mitigation and adaptation efforts are monitored and evaluated and results are shared.

Goal 4: Environmental Education and Stewardship

Engage Basin residents in opportunities for lifelong environmental education† and stewardship that inspires ecologically informed decisions and actions while developing a deep sense of place.

Why focus on environmental education and stewardship?

Increasing environmental awareness through a variety of learning opportunities will encourage ecologically informed decisions and actions. This awareness is also critical to developing a deep sense of place that fosters stewardship in children and adults alike. By focusing on school- and community-based learning, the Trust can help engage residents of all ages in lifelong opportunities to develop an understanding of the natural environment and support residents to become active stewards. Doing so will require innovation and collaboration to harness the power of human actions and decision making to enhance the resiliency† of our region.

Objectives	Activities	Desired Outcomes
1 Nurture in Basin kindergarten to grade 12 students an appreciation of the natural world and empower their development as environmental stewards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborate with schools and school districts to identify and act on opportunities to integrate environmental education into a variety of curricula, from kindergarten to grade 12.• Support more hands-on and outdoor learning experiences for youth that achieve school-based learning outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Several schools and school districts integrate environmental education into their curricula.• Environmental education delivery partners work with schools to deliver more outdoor learning experiences that achieve school-based learning outcomes.
2 Support community-based environmental education that inspires Basin residents of all ages to be environmental stewards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support community-based environmental education delivered through diverse methods that reach Basin residents of all ages with messages that motivate ecologically informed decisions and actions.• Support and facilitate collaboration and sharing of education resources between organizations offering community-based environmental education.• Support citizen science and observation through projects and web-based data sharing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community-based environmental education fosters ecologically informed decisions and actions.• Community-based environmental education efforts are strengthened through collaboration, networking and information sharing.• More Basin residents are engaged in citizen science and observation, strengthening their sense of place as well as their engagement with and understanding of the natural environment.



Goal 5: Environmental Capacity Building to Strengthen Communities

Support communities and organizations in developing and maintaining the capacity to effectively address Basin-wide and local environmental challenges.

Why focus on building environmental capacity?

Responding to the Basin's environmental challenges will take a commitment to collaboration by communities and a range of organizations with the capacity and skills to address issues related to ecosystems, water, a changing climate, environmental awareness and stewardship. The Trust works with a wide range of partners to help fulfill its mission. Helping to equip our partners with the resources and organizational capacity to address a range of environmental challenges today in preparation for tomorrow is vital.

Objectives

- 1 Help strengthen the capacity of organizations and communities contributing to environmental well-being.

Activities

- Develop and implement support structures to help strengthen capacity of non-profit organizations.
- Help organizations address specific environmental priorities by supporting and facilitating coordinated efforts.
- Enhance knowledge about the Basin's environment by improving the accessibility of data from Trust-supported projects.
- Support networking and information sharing between local groups, organizations and communities working on environmental priorities.

Desired Outcomes

- Non-profit organizations working on environmental issues are strengthened and able to fulfill their goals more effectively.
- Efforts to address environmental priorities are enhanced through coordinated approaches.
- Data from Trust-supported projects is readily accessible to Basin residents, communities, organizations and agencies.
- Organizations and communities have enhanced access to networking and the information they need.

Glossary

Basin: The portion of the Columbia River system in Canada that the Trust calls the “Trust Region” and which is referenced in its mandate. Visit a map of the Basin at cbt.org/map.

Biological diversity/biodiversity: The variety of living organisms, and the ways in which these life forms organize themselves (genes, populations, species, communities, ecosystems, biomes), and the ways in which they interact with the physical environment and one another. Since biodiversity plays an important part in ecosystem functioning, conserving biodiversity must include paying attention to the three components of biodiversity—composition, structure and function—since these components interact to maintain biological diversity.

Climate change adaptation: Anticipating climatic changes and developing strategies to reduce the unwanted or undesirable impacts of those changes and optimize the desirable changes.

Climate change mitigation: Efforts that reduce greenhouse gas emissions that fuel climate change.

Climate resilience: The capacity to absorb current and future climate stresses while maintaining functions, structures and systems.

Ecosystems: A community of living organisms (plants, animals, fungi and microbes) in conjunction with the abiotic (non-living) components of their environment (such as, air, water and mineral soil), interacting as a system. A healthy ecosystem is where the composition and abundance of biotic and abiotic components, as well as the linkages between them, are effectively functioning to exchange energy, cycle nutrients and respond to changes in the environment.

Ecosystem goods and services: The benefits arising from the ecological functions of healthy ecosystems that accrue to all living organisms, including humans. There is a growing recognition of the importance to society that ecological goods and services provide for health, social, cultural and economic needs. Examples of ecological goods include clean air and abundant fresh water. Examples of ecological services include purification of air and water, maintenance of biodiversity, decomposition of wastes, soil and vegetation generation and renewal, pollination of crops and natural vegetation, groundwater recharge through wetlands, seed dispersal, greenhouse gas mitigation and aesthetically pleasing landscapes.

Environmental education: Organized efforts to teach about how the natural environment functions and, in particular, how human beings can manage their behaviour in order to live sustainably.

Environment and Water Initiatives: The Trust initiatives that will be guided by the *2014–2019 Environment Strategic Plan* to support environmental well-being in the Basin.

Environmental well-being: A state when biological systems remain diverse, healthy and productive over time, and allow for the survival and flourishing of humans and other organisms. It is vital to our ability to thrive in human society today yet leave resources for the future. It reflects awareness, a deep sense of place and appreciation of how we can influence, interact with and support our surroundings. It is incorporated with all aspects of social and economic well-being because it responds to our continual interaction with our physical surroundings and our ability to adapt to environmental changes.

Securement: A way of legally conserving private land with important biodiversity, ecological functions and/or agriculture and forestry value that contribute to the long-term environmental health and sustainability of a region through fee-simple purchasing of land, acquiring the title to lands through donation or holding conservation easements and agreements that restrict certain types of land use.

Resilience/resilient: Resilience is the capacity of a system, such as an ecosystem, to tolerate disturbance without collapsing into a qualitatively different state that is controlled by a different set of processes. A resilient system can withstand shocks and rebuild itself when necessary. Resilience in social systems has the added capacity of humans to anticipate and plan for the future.

Stewardship (environmental stewardship): The responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices to maintain ecosystem health, safeguard biodiversity and ensure the availability of the land and water resources upon which society depends. It embraces an ethic that land, water and wildlife are entrusted to our care, and that it is our collective responsibility to pass onto our children—and generations to come—a healthy and diverse environment.



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