



For Immediate Release
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Funding for Projects Will Help Local Species and Ecosystems

\$725,000 investment in the Upper Kootenay River watershed

(EAST KOOTENAY) Fourteen fish and wildlife projects aimed at the Upper Kootenay River watershed are getting underway thanks to the Upper Kootenay Ecosystem Enhancement Plan (UKEEP). This is the second year that projects have been delivered through UKEEP, and in 2016-17 projects valued at more than \$725,000 are expected to continue to show positive results for local fish and wildlife.

Species that will benefit include: Westslope Cutthroat, Bull and Rainbow Trout; Mule and White-tailed Deer; Wolverine; Bighorn Sheep; Lewis's Woodpecker; and many other grassland birds.

This year, UKEEP funding is approved for six fish and eight wildlife projects, including invasive weed control, removing fish barriers, and urban deer relocation. Other projects approved for 2016-17 include:

- Bull Trout inventory and recovery in Wildhorse River;
- assessing the sustainability of Wolverine harvest;
- Alexander Creek habitat restoration and enhancement;
- identifying key habitats for Long-billed Curlews; and
- 144-hectare open grassland habitat restoration near Newgate to help ungulates.

Projects are being delivered by a mix of local stewardship groups, environmental organizations, consultants and First Nations. "Last year, UKEEP funds supported a variety of projects in the East Kootenay," says FWCP Columbia Region Manager, Crystal Klym. "Fish barriers were removed on Wickman Creek to open up prime spawning and rearing habitat. Grasslands near Elko were restored to improve ungulate habitat and invasive weeds were treated on 22 different conservation properties."

"We thank all those who work to conserve and enhance the natural assets of the region," said Kindy Gosal, Columbia Basin Trust Director, Special Initiatives. "These 14 projects speak to the variety of challenges our region faces, to the dedication of Basin residents to address these challenges, and to how individual endeavours can generate significant results."

"Working with the Trust, we anticipate building a solid foundation of effective and results-based projects under UKEEP that guide conservation efforts in this watershed," added Klym.

"I would like to thank our partners with BC Hydro, Columbia Basin Trust, and the federal government," said Bill Bennett, MLA for Kootenay East. "Through these projects, we can continue to ensure the vibrancy of fish and wildlife populations throughout our region."

The FWCP administers UKEEP projects through a funding partnership with Columbia Basin Trust, which provided \$3 million over three to five years.

(cont...)

FWCP is a partnership between BC Hydro, the Province of B.C., Fisheries and Oceans Canada, First Nations and Public Stakeholders, to conserve and enhance fish and wildlife impacted by BC Hydro dams. To see the full list of projects supported under UKEEP for 2016-17, and other FWCP projects, visit fwcp.ca.

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