



**For Immediate Release:**

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## **First Projects to Help Fish and Wildlife Under New Plan**

### **More than \$500,000 in Funding Announced**

**(EAST KOOTENAY)** The Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP) and Columbia Basin Trust (the Trust) have approved 11 fish and wildlife projects that will help conserve and enhance ecosystems in the upper Kootenay River watershed, including Kooconusa Reservoir. These projects are the first to be funded under the Upper Kootenay Ecosystem Enhancement Plan, developed jointly by the FWCP and the Trust.

Four fish and seven wildlife projects were approved for a total of more than \$500,000.

“These projects will begin to address long-standing concerns regarding the impacts of Libby Dam and the Kooconusa Reservoir on fish and wildlife,” said Dave White, Public Representative on the FWCP-Columbia Board. “The public identified an important gap and we are really excited to partner with the Trust to start to fill that gap by implementing the plan that guides conservation efforts in this watershed.”

The projects will include a range of activities, from inventory mapping sensitive habitats around Kooconusa Reservoir, to replacing culverts and reconnecting high-value fish habitat in the Gold Creek watershed, to restoring grassland ecosystems near Elko and Wycliffe. Other projects will support amphibians, Westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout; control the spread of invasive plants; and test the feasibility of relocating mule deer from urban areas to areas where their populations are in decline. Projects in the future, under the Plan, may also include incorporating some trans-boundary fish and wildlife work.

“We want a mix of on-the-ground projects and information-based projects aimed at improving our understanding of the ecosystems, which will help inform conservation planning and support management decisions and hands-on work in the future,” added White. “These projects will do just that.”

Columbia Basin Trust provided \$3 million to develop the plan and fund local fish and wildlife projects over the next three to five years. The FWCP, which already coordinates and supports fish and wildlife work in the region, will oversee delivery of the projects.

“Since we announced our partnership with the FWCP in spring 2013, we’ve been working together to address important ecological issues that affect environmental well-being in the area,” said Kindy Gosal, Columbia Basin Trust Director, Special Initiatives. “Through this plan we now extend that collaboration to other groups with an interest in the future of the region so they can provide their expertise with projects on the ground. We anticipate seeing tangible results that make a lasting difference.”

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Learn more about the [Upper Kootenay Ecosystem Enhancement Plan](#) and the projects approved for 2015/16 at [fwcp.ca](http://fwcp.ca) (see [Columbia Region 2015 Project Summary](#)).

The FWCP is a partnership between BC Hydro, the Province of BC, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, First Nations and Public Stakeholders to conserve and enhance fish and wildlife impacted by BC Hydro dams.

Columbia Basin Trust supports efforts to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits to the residents of the Columbia Basin. To learn more about the Trust's programs and initiatives, visit [cbt.org](http://cbt.org) or call 1.800.505.8998.

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**Contact:**

Angus Glass  
FWCP Communications Coordinator  
1.250.352.1300  
[angus.glass@bchydro.com](mailto:angus.glass@bchydro.com)

Rachel Lucas  
Columbia Basin Trust  
1.800.505.8998  
[rlucas@cbt.org](mailto:rlucas@cbt.org)