



# flyway

## Rancher helps Grade 4 students learn about wetlands

Bob Gibson has been ranching in the south Okanagan for 20 years. He runs 700 head of cattle in this arid country and he knows the value of water.

This is a semi-arid region where many wetlands have been drained, and those that remain are small and scattered and often threatened by development. South Okanagan wetlands support not only cattle, but also species found nowhere else in Canada, many of them threatened or endangered with extinction. Wetlands are valuable to both wildlife and people. Rancher Bob Gibson wants students to learn that.

Gibson's pledge to sponsor 17 classes a year for the next three years will result in the participation of over 1,200 Grade 4 students from Summerland and Osoyoos in DUC's Webfoot wetland education program.

"I've supported Ducks Unlimited in a small way over the years," says Gibson. "But this is a great opportunity to show our land and the environment to the Grade 4 students."

Through Gibson's sponsorship, classes will receive a Project Webfoot teaching kit full of aids for teachers such as lesson plans and activity guides, plus student resources, all with a focus on wetland ecosystems. The sponsorship also provides these classes with a field trip with a naturalist to a local wetland where they will see, hear, smell and touch the wetland habitats and communities after they learn about them in the classroom.

Students receive the Marsh World field guide, stickers, certificates, and a one-year subscription to Puddler magazine, DU's wetland and wildlife magazine for children up to 11 years old.

"Grade 4 teachers across B.C. have welcomed the program because both the kit and the field trip touch on major themes of their B.C. Science

curriculum, which is Habitats and Communities," says Kathleen Fry, DUC B.C. education co-ordinator. "By giving them background information and easy-to-use materials and assistance, we encourage them to look more at wetlands in their teaching.

"The field trip is the capper," says Fry. "It gets them out to look at wetlands in their own backyard."

The wetland program for these students will be a field trip to Vaseux Lake, a federal migratory bird sanctuary and DUC conservation project. In addition to plants, insects and pond life, students might see trumpeter swans, Canada geese, wood ducks and American coots. The lake is also a great spot to teach students about flyways and bird migration.

It's rare for an individual to sponsor this many classes for the Webfoot program. In recognition of Gibson's generosity, DUC held a reception on Aug. 8 at Vaseux Lake to thank Gibson for his contribution. 🦆



(l-r) Jim Shaver, volunteer and field trip delivery person for Project Webfoot, Kathleen Fry, DUC Pacific Region Education Coordinator, Gibson and B.C. Provincial Speaker and MLA Hon Bill Barisoff.

# Securing waterfowl oasis in the Fraser Valley

A bid to secure an oasis of rare and threatened wetland habitat in the Lower Mainland's unique Fraser Valley ecosystem has succeeded with a land purchase agreement led by Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC).

The Silverdale Wetlands Project, a 46-hectare (113-acre) land parcel in the Fraser Valley community of Mission, is a prime example of wetland conservation that also serves a broader mandate of agriculture, fisheries, and waterfowl protection in a single project.

The Silverdale project got off the ground through a partnership of DUC, the District of Mission, and the Stave Valley Salmonid Enhancement Society (SVSES).

The Silverdale acquisition is key to DUC's long-range plans for the Fraser Valley which will aim to secure what little survives of natural habitat in the valley. Silverdale is one of the few remnants of the historical Fraser River flood plain with intact ecosystem functions and productive foraging habitat for waterfowl.

Deemed an extremely environmentally sensitive area, the Silverdale lands also became an earmark of the District's conservation strategy with buffer zones and development restrictions in place to protect its ecological integrity.

There is no disputing that the Fraser Valley continues to be one of the province's most popular human settlements with record rates of urbanization in the last decade. Large areas of farmland and wetland have borne the brunt of some dramatic shifts, incurring ever-diminishing loss of ecologically unique natural habitat.

A key stakeholder in the area – the waterfowl that needs Fraser Valley wetlands as more than a stopover during migration along the B.C. coast – has felt the impact dramatically.

“This is an important milestone for DUC's plans to salvage previous wetlands in the Fraser Valley,” says Les Bogdan, manager of conservation programs. “With 85 per cent loss of original wetlands in the Lower Fraser, the securement and enhancement of this unique habitat in the Fraser Valley is a high priority.”

The Silverdale Wetland provides a rare combination of fresh-water wetlands surrounded by agricultural land and forest. Silverdale Creek, which runs through the property, is already designated by the Province as one of 15 sensitive streams due to its value for fish stocks, water flows, and restoration potential.

To maintain and improve the Silverdale habitat, DUC, the District of Mission, and SVSES will work together with key stakeholders to develop a management plan to maximize the potential for traditional species such as dabbling waterfowl including mallard, wood duck, wigeon and teal.

The Silverdale Wetlands project was implemented with the above-mentioned partners and under B.C. Trust for Public Lands (BCTFPL) and its partners.

BCTFPL partners include Environment Canada, B.C. Ministry of Environment, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Union of B.C. Municipalities, Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, Nature Conservancy of Canada, The Nature Trust of British Columbia, The Land Conservancy of British Columbia, the Pacific Salmon Foundation and Ducks Unlimited Canada. 🦆



# DUC supports beneficial management practices on B.C. farms

Every year, DUC works with traditional soil-based farmers in the highest priority landscapes to help them farm sustainably, while at the same time providing resting, feeding and nesting areas for waterfowl and wildlife. Producers across Canada take their role as environmental stewards very seriously, and DUC supports farmers through long-term partnerships. Through Environmental Farm Planning (EFP), DUC hopes to expand and build stronger partnerships with producers.

On Aug. 4, DUC entered into a partnership with the British Columbia Agriculture Council (BCAC) to contribute \$250,000 this year to help producers make improvements to their farm practices that will benefit water and wildlife.

DUC's contribution will add to the \$2,500,000 of federal-provincial funding made available through the BCAC, which leads the EFP program in B.C. Through the EFP, producers can request an environmental review for their farm to develop specific action items to reduce environmental risks. Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) will provide financial incentives to improve on-farm stewardship.

Producers might find through their review that they need to improve their waste management practices, farm run-off systems, irrigation management or grazing management planning, or one or more of the other BMPs that make up the 32 categories of farm practices on the list.

DUC's support will augment funds from the federal and provincial programs and improve the incentives to farmers and ranchers. For example, riparian area management practices, such as installing a remote watering system for livestock, help conserve



This solar powered livestock water system is an example of the cooperative investment by DUC and the BC Ag Council in important conservation areas.

wetlands and riparian zones for wildlife. Farmers who receive funding from DUC will sign an agreement that the improvements will stay in place for at least 10 years.

Because this program is available provincewide, it can have landscape-level impacts. Over time, at the landscape level, the BCAC and DUC partnership will help to reduce environmental risks on the farms and in turn improve the water quality and quantity and provide the framework to restore entire watersheds.

“Not only are we going to impact watersheds on a larger scale, but we're also going to impact a larger percentage of the landscape, and we hope to enhance our working relationship with the agricultural community throughout British Columbia,” says Les Bogdan, manager of conservation programs, B.C. Coastal Eco-Region. “Partnerships like this provide us with an opportunity to use our funding efficiently and to develop multi-level partnerships with governments and the agricultural producers.”

DUC and the BCAC will continue to work together to develop and implement mutually acceptable BMPs that will benefit agriculture and wildlife in British Columbia.

“I see this as a huge step forward for DUC,” says Bogdan. “It's a great partnership.”



(l-r) Dick Geltink, President of BC Ag Council, Hon Pat Bell, BC Minister of Agriculture and Lands, Ian Barnett Director Regional Operations, Pacific Region.

# Wetland Stewardship Partnership

If you had a goose that laid golden eggs worth between \$250 million and \$1 billion a year, would you look after your goose? One billion dollars is the upper estimated value of services provided by wetlands in just one small part of B.C., the lower Fraser Valley. Provincewide, the value is tens, maybe hundreds, of billions.

In 2002, 10 partners from government, industry, community and environmental NGOs, including Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), decided it was time to look after this particular golden goose. They formed the B.C. Wetland Stewardship Partnership (WSP).

“There’s really been no focus on wetlands over the years,” says Ted Pobran, B.C. Environment and Project Manager for the WSP. “They’ve really been looked at as wastelands, areas that can be used for development. Over the last 10 years, people are finally recognizing the goods and services that wetlands provide.”

Wetland goods and services include flood control, water purification (removal of nitrogen, phosphorus and contaminants), erosion control, waterfowl and fish production, recreation, water supply and storage.

“Through this stewardship program, we’re hoping to not only bring a better focus on wetlands through public education better stewardship, but also – by working with local governments and other governments – to bring in some sort of policy to better protect and conserve wetlands,” says Pobran.

DUC is active in the partnership. Ian Barnett, DUC director of operations,

Pacific Region, chairs the WSP. Barnett says that the WSP is producing a number of products for use by governments and developers to minimize wetland loss and degradation.

One product, funded by DUC, Environment Canada, BC Environment, and the Real Estate Foundation is the “Model Bylaw Initiative”. Legal Director of the University of Victoria Environmental Law Clinic, Calvin Sandborn is developing a model wetlands bylaw for municipalities. Local governments can take this “off-the-shelf” model bylaw and amend it to adapt to local conditions.

“One of the big barriers of getting new legislation is the municipal government putting the resources into drafting something,” says Sandborn. “My experience is that if you have a model piece of legislation, it’s much easier to get it passed.”

To develop the bylaw, Sandborn and his students are reviewing wetland policies in municipalities all over Canada and the U.S. “We’re trying to cherry-pick the best provisions from different jurisdictions and put them together into the Rolls-Royce of wetlands bylaws.”

Promoting wetland conservation policy and legislation is only one of the goals of the WSP. Other goals are strategic planning, public education, wetland securement, wetland restoration and enhancement. All of these activities are familiar to supporters of DUC – it’s what DUC works for every day. Now, with WSP, there’s a bigger team looking out for the golden goose. 🦢



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