



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF CENTRAL KOOTENAY

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

Wetland restoration in Lister supports ecological diversity

Nelson, BC: The site of a former spring-water source for the Lister Water System was recently restored to a natural series of wetlands, thanks to the efforts of staff from the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) and under the oversight of internationally recognized wetland ecologist Tom Biebighauser. The project will increase habitat for waterfowl, wading birds and shore birds; increase breeding habitat for a diversity of amphibians and reptiles; improve wildlife viewing opportunities; and restore a turtle hibernation site. The work was completed over the weekend.

“This project represented an opportunity to turn an abandoned administrative site into thriving wetlands that support a wide diversity of wildlife and plants, and I am proud that our organization has been able to make it happen with support from project partners and funders,” said Karen Hamling, Chair of the RDCK Board of Directors. “It’s a unique project and an example of the innovative work that the RDCK does to support sustainability in our region.”

The project was a joint effort with the RDCK and the BC Wildlife Federation’s Wetland Education Program (WEP), and was supported by the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program. Funding was also provided by the Columbia Basin Trust through their Environmental Grant program and the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program.

The site was formally abandoned in 2012 as the water system’s source when a new groundwater source on the property was developed. Three wetlands were restored by using a variety of techniques including the construction of shallow bays that will contain warmer water needed by amphibian larvae for development; the formation of slopes, ridges and small islands to support turtle nesting; and the introduction of woody debris for turtle basking and waterfowl loafing sites. In addition, a two-metre-high dam was removed, and head-cuts that have been causing erosion were controlled by burying rock in the ground across the floodplain of the stream.

“The spring is a natural wonder,” said Tom Biebighauser. “These restored wetlands will be beautiful to look at and provide critical habitat for a diversity of wildlife species. The salamanders, toads and dragonflies that colonize the restored wetlands can be expected to control any mosquitoes that may appear.”

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Mr. Biebighauser has been enthusiastically restoring wetlands for over 36 years. He has designed more than 5,000 wetland restoration projects and has successfully supervised the construction of more than 2,100 wetlands in 24 states, British Columbia, Ontario, New Zealand, Puerto Rico and Taiwan. Mr. Biebighauser builds more than 150 wetlands each year, and has developed highly successful and inexpensive techniques for constructing wetlands in urban areas, on rangeland, farmland and in forested areas. He specializes in planning and building wetlands to provide habitat for endangered and threatened species of animals and plants.

Another wetland restoration project was completed earlier in the week at nearby Erickson Elementary School, also in partnership with many of the same individuals and organizations.

"Wetlands have far too often been considered as wastelands and there is still a trend towards wetland loss around BC," said Neil Fletcher, Manager of the Wetlands Program at BC Wildlife Federation. "Through our program, we have been working in the Kootenays for nearly a decade to build capacity to restore and conserve wetlands through a variety of extension programs and partnerships. The RDCK has always been supportive of our work, and this year we're really pleased to work alongside them on this project."

Incorporated in 1965, the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) is a local government that serves 60,000 residents in 11 electoral areas and nine-member municipalities. The RDCK provides more than 160 services, including community facilities, fire protection and emergency services, grants, planning and land use, regional parks, resource recovery and handling, transit, and much more. For more information about the RDCK, visit www.rdck.ca.

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Photos from the project are available on request.

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