



# NEWS FROM NATURE

Wildfires are coming. Here's how we're preparing.



Smokey skies at White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch | Photo: Alex Thomson

It's shocking to realize that wildfires are no longer confined to a season in British Columbia. Our province is now on guard for wildfires all year round—wildfires that threaten the environment, wildlife and human life.

Zombie fires have entered our lexicon. These are the holdover fires that cast eerie plumes of smoke from underground burns that smoulder from year to year. We've entered an unknown climate.

Last year, the province endured the most destructive summer wildfire season ever recorded. Yet, wildfire records are expected to be shattered again in the year ahead due to lack of precipitation, low snow pack levels, our warming climate and extreme weather events.

## FIRE SUPPRESSION PLANS TO PROTECT VULNERABLE HABITATS

One of the hottest and driest zones in all of B.C. is the Bunchgrass biogeoclimatic zone in the South Okanagan. It's home to The Nature Trust's 152 hectare (375 acres) Antelope-brush conservation complex which includes

the Antelope-brush shrub steppe, one of the most critically endangered plant communities in Canada and a globally imperiled ecosystem. At least 26 species at risk have been observed on this property.

The Nature Trust's regional land managers and field crews are actioning fire suppression efforts now on this complex and multiple Nature Trust conservation areas in tandem with the work of the BC Wildfire Service (BCWS). These efforts start with the thinning and pruning of ponderosa pine stands to increase the vigor of Antelope-brush shrub steppe ecosystems and decrease the risk of a high intensity or high severity wildfires. It is precise work completed by hand to minimize disturbances to soils and wildlife.

The Nature Trust has also quantified the damage of the Okanagan's 2023 Upper Park Rill Creek fire and organized the rehabilitation work to the fireguard created by BCWS. This work will include rolling back and reseeding the more than 12 kilometres of machine

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created fireguard at the White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch. The work doesn't end there. The Nature Trust will have ongoing and long term costs to ensure the rehab work remains effective and does not become a vector for invasive plants and future degradation of this at risk landscape.

More habitat enhancement and fuel management prescription plans are being actioned at The Nature Trust's Vaseux Lake conservation complex and the ecologically important 152 hectare (375 acres) Antelope-brush Conservation Area. Vaseux Lake is the centre of one of the most ecologically rich areas in Canada, home to bighorn sheep and many endangered plant and animal species.

## THE NATURE TRUST OF BC HAS 500+ CONSERVATION AREAS IN ITS CARE

These are but a few examples of conservation complexes that The Nature Trust is committed to protecting, restoring and managing in perpetuity.

Complexes like The Nature Trust's remarkable Hoodoos Conservation Area in the Columbia River Valley in the East Kootenay. It is one of the most ecologically significant areas managed by The Nature Trust and part of a critical link in a wildlife corridor that features grasslands, wetlands and forests, all held in an exquisite balance by natural mechanisms including wildfires. Until now.

The land is becoming more flammable. The balance has shifted due to climate warming, deforestation, settlement and a phenomenon known as forest encroachment in which forests slowly migrate downslope onto grasslands, threatening some of the planet's most reliable and resilient carbon sinks and habitats for species-at-risk.

Forest thinning is a powerful process that mimics historic fire events and reduces the amount of fuel available to burn. The Nature Trust's thinning efforts will preserve these native grasslands through prescribed tree removal and grass reseeding; opening up the tree canopy to allow for the growth and restoration of some 15 hectares of native grasslands.


**We are a non-profit organization committed to the restoration and management in perpetuity of the more than 180,000+ acres in our care. Every acre counts. It matters to the province, the planet and future generations of British Columbians.**

Our new **Wildfire Fund** will help support the costs of our ongoing efforts to reduce wildfire damage to every conservation area under our protection.

Preparing wildlife habitat for the wildfires ahead demands more money and more resources. Wildfires are our new reality, not only for The Nature Trust, but for all who live, work and play in British Columbia.



Thinning and restoration planting of Antelope-brush  
Photo: Alex Thomson

Thank you to all our funders, including Drax Foundation, RBC Foundation, S.M. Blair Family Foundation, the Columbia Basin Trust, Paper Excellence, and the B.C. Conservation and Biodiversity Awards for supporting our wildfire mitigation projects. Donate now to our Wildfire Fund to help The Nature Trust prepare and recover from what is expected to be another record-shattering year of wildfires and impacts to wildlife and vital habitats. 

Forest Fire at night in the Okanagan Valley



## PRIORITY PROJECT

### Help protect the Kw'a'luxw River: a vital salmon habitat on Vancouver Island


Imagine a river teeming with life, where every ripple supports an ecosystem, and 250 species rely on the surrounding area. The Kw'a'luxw (Englishman) River is one such place—a haven for all five species of Pacific salmon: chinook, chum, coho, pink, and sockeye. These iconic salmon are the heartbeat of our ecosystem, nourishing the wildlife, sustaining our environment, and providing food for generations.

The Kw'a'luxw (Englishman) River estuary is one of B.C.'s most endangered rivers as a result of declining fish stocks.

It provides habitat for: all five species of Pacific salmon, three species of trout, plus, the estuary and nearshore coastal area

is an internationally significant habitat for migratory and breeding birds and mammals like black bear, cougar, deer, river otter, and Roosevelt elk.

For over 40 years, The Nature Trust of British Columbia has dedicated itself to protecting the vital lifeline that is the Kw'a'luxw River and watershed. Now, we face a critical opportunity to protect Shelly Road—5.2 hectares (13 acres) of important wildlife habitat along this crucial river—from being lost to development forever.

But we can't do this alone. We need help raising \$215,000. Donate at [naturetrust.bc.ca](http://naturetrust.bc.ca) or by returning the enclosed donation form. 



Kw'a'luxw (Englishman) River

## PARTNERSHIP PROFILE

Sip wine. Save wildlife. Introducing Wild Goose Winery. 100 per cent of wine tasting fees are donated to The Nature Trust.

A conversation with Kerri Wyse-McNolty

#### **Why is conservation important to Wild Goose Winery?**

As a winery, we are deeply connected to our natural surroundings and recognized the vital role that a healthy ecosystem plays in the quality of our grapes and overall success of our vineyard. Environmental stewardship protects local habitats and protects biodiversity, which in turn supports the natural balance necessary for sustainable agriculture. Partnering with The Nature Trust aligns with our values of sustainability and environmental responsibility allowing us to contribute to broader conservation efforts that are crucial to our operations. Wild Goose Winery is not just a business but a part of the community in Okanagan Falls and the South Okanagan Valley. Supporting The Nature Trust helps protect the natural beauty and health here for future generations ensuring the community and local economy can thrive.

#### **What does Wild Goose Winery hope to achieve through this partnership?**

We aim to bolster conservation initiatives that protect and restore local habitats—safeguarding critical land areas, water sources, and species that depend on them. We also seek to raise awareness and engagement around conservation issues with our customers and broader community. By doing so, we hope to inspire more individuals and businesses to support and engage in environmental stewardship. As a winery, we hope to maintain the natural resources that are essential for high-quality wine production and ensure the winery's continued success and contribution to the local economy. This is a mutually beneficial relationship. The Nature Trust can gain support and resources for its projects, while Wild Goose Winery benefits from enhanced environmental health that supports agricultural practices.



CELEBRATING  40 YEARS  
**WILD GOOSE**  
• W I N E R Y •

#### **How will Wild Goose Winery raise funds to support the partnership?**

We have introduced a \$5 tasting fee for each customer participating in our wine tasting experiences. Wild Goose Winery will donate 100% of these fees to The Nature Trust. Every guest who joins us for a tasting directly contributes to preserving our natural environment. The total amount donated will be determined by the number of guests who participate in our tastings throughout the season. Join us for a wine tasting and help support The Nature Trust of BC! 



## UNESCO endorsement + REFBC nomination

Coastal estuaries are where freshwater and oceans meet.

In British Columbia, estuaries support more than 80 per cent of the province's coastal fish and wildlife and are vital for Pacific salmon species. Juvenile Pacific salmon rely on estuaries as crucial nursery habitat during their migration from rivers to oceans.

Yet coastal wetlands represent less than three per cent of our coastline—a tiny percentage that is being threatened by the impacts of climate change through rising sea-levels, ocean acidification, temperature and salinity changes and other factors.

Efforts to support estuary resilience are critical in the face of these threats.

This is the work of *Enhancing Estuary Resilience in Coastal BC*, a multi-year collaborative project led by The Nature Trust of BC through the West Coast Conservation Land Management Program and supported by the B.C. Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund—a multi-


year project built on strong partnerships between Coastal First Nations, non-governmental organizations, provincial and federal governments and academic groups.

We are proud that UNESCO has endorsed the *Estuary Resilience in Coastal BC* Project for its contribution to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030. This endorsement recognizes the transformative power of collaboration and innovation in attaining the goal of healthy oceans and in the preservation and protection of our vital coastal estuaries.

The *Estuary Resilience in Coastal BC* Project collects, analyzes and monitors data from multiple estuary sites in B.C. to determine estuary resilience to climate change. This information helps to identify opportunities for restoration and enhancement that incorporates both scientific data and traditional Indigenous knowledge to build the resilience of these important ecosystems for ongoing food

security, fish and wildlife habitat, and community wellness.

We are also proud that The Nature Trust of BC has been selected as a finalist in the Real Estate Foundations 2024 Land Awards Program for its *Enhancing Estuary Resilience: An innovative Approach to Sustaining Fish and Fish Habitat in a Changing Climate* project (Fresh Water category). The Land Award recognizes outstanding B.C. leaders and projects that make an impact through innovation, collaboration, engagement, sustainability, equity, social justice, Indigenous self-determination and reconciliation and climate mitigation and adaptation.

Estuaries are the heart of ecosystems between rivers, the ocean and upland environments. The Nature Trust of BC is committed to continuing to build on the strengths of our partnerships and collaborative actions to monitor and restore these invaluable B.C. habitats. 



## Thursday, October 3, 2024 · Fairmont Hotel Vancouver

Join us for an enchanting evening dedicated to conservation. Your participation and generosity will directly contribute to preserving the biodiversity of our province.

### HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- **Buy a ticket**—Secure your spot by checking the box on the donation form or via the below contact information.
- **Donate an auction item**—We are seeking items and experiences.
- **Be a sponsor**—Contact Emma at 604.969.3254

For information on how to support from afar, and general Gala enquiries please contact Emma at [events@naturetrust.bc.ca](mailto:events@naturetrust.bc.ca) or call 604.924.9771



### JOIN THE CONVERSATION

  @NatureTrustofBC  @NatureTrustBC  
 The Nature Trust of British Columbia

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