



**Kootenay
Lake
Partnership**

2015



Kootenay Lake Partnership 2015 Yearly Report

Prepared by:
Ryan van der Marel, Chair

Executive Summary

The Kootenay Lake Partnership (KLP) was formed in 2010 in response to growing development pressures around Kootenay Lake. With a desire to use sound science to inform decision-making on foreshore use, the KLP operates through collaboration and resource-sharing to protect the biological and cultural values of West Kootenay area lakes. In 2013 the KLP took the results from the foreshore inventory and mapping (FIM) from both Kootenay and Slocan Lakes and began developing Shoreline Guidance Documents (SMG).

SMGs identify the range of shoreline sensitivity, from high vulnerability through to relative resilience, to changes in land use or habitat modification. They use a risk-based approach to shoreline management, assessing the potential risks and benefits of different activities (e.g. construction of docks, groynes, marinas, etc.) for the different shoreline segments. The document is intended to provide background information to stakeholders, proponents, and governmental agencies when land-use changes or activities are proposed to ensure accepted best practices are employed during land development to ensure minimal impacts to fish or wildlife habitat or First Nations cultural sites. The development of guidance documents will benefit communities around the lake by laying out an ecological baseline to determine the risk of activities that may impact the ecological and archaeological values of the lake.

In 2014 the KLP decided to postpone an early draft of the SMG in favour of completing a Cultural Use and Values Study for the Ktunaxa Nation Council. 2015 saw the completion of the Cultural Use and Values Study and the final Archaeological Overview Assessment report. Now the final SMG will include cultural First Nations values. This is a precedent-setting meshing of known ecological and First Nations cultural values that will direct decision-making.

The process to get to a draft SMG in early 2016 is coming along and despite the loss of regional representation by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the partnership is still strong. It is hoped that new Federal leadership will bring a re-engaged DFO in 2016. The KLP has also been working closely with the Friends of Kootenay Lake in partnership with the West Kootenay Ecosociety and Living Lakes Canada. Their Community Values Study should help inform about public opinion around the lake for the future.

This year we successful closed the chapter on completing critical components for the SMG. We also developed a new, more efficient website for better public communication. The ongoing participation of all signatories to the terms of reference is a clear sign of the collaborative nature of the effort to improve decision-making for Kootenay Lake.

Acknowledgements

There is undeniable strength to working in collaboration across agencies for a common goal. The success of the KLP would not be possible without the patient and focused persistence by each agency representative. The KLP would like to thank Sangita Sudan of the Regional District of Central Kootenay for her project management and in-kind accounting support. Also, the KLP is grateful to Jason Schleppe, John Cathro, Craig Candler and Wayne Choquette, whose technical expertise and diligence is critical to the accomplishments of the Partnership. Finally the KLP would like to acknowledge its 2015 partner support including the Ktunaxa Nation Council, the Regional District of Central Kootenay (Area A), the City of Nelson, the Province of BC (FLNRO) and its 2015 external funders including the Real Estate Foundation of BC, and the Columbia Basin Trust. Thanks also for the dedicated efforts by our Chair, Ryan van der Marel, whose gentle persistence has been appreciated by all.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary..... 2

Acknowledgements..... 3

Introduction 5

2015 Year-in-Review 5

Progress Overview 8

2016 Outlook 8

Introduction

Through partnership, information sharing and optimizing available resources, the Kootenay Lake Partnership (KLP) develops integrated, collaborative approaches to lake management planning in order to address the current and future activities on and around Kootenay Lake in ways that sustain the lake's ecological health, First Nations cultural and socio-economic values. The KLP was formed in response to growing development pressures along the foreshore around Kootenay Lake. It has since expanded its scope to look at Slocan Lake as well, and uses sound science to inform decision-making by municipal, provincial and federal government agencies.

In the fall of 2012, a team of researchers undertook a three-week field study of Kootenay Lake to integrate the existing Foreshore Inventory Mapping (FIM done separately for the West Arm and main lake) and break the shoreline into relevant management segments. Additionally, a team of archaeologists completed an archaeological overview assessment (AOA) of Kootenay Lake which will complement the ecological study. Each lake segment was associated with a values ranking and a risk ranking which will be used to develop an ecological health index of the shoreline and related upland area. The index indicates zones of sensitivity (e.g. fish habitat, wetlands, tributary outlets, native grasslands, wildlife habitat and corridors, biologically productive areas). In order to fully understand the cultural First Nations values around Kootenay Lake, it was decided that a study would be completed by the Ktunaxa Nation Council to also identify those areas of significance.

In 2012 the KLP initiated discussions with the WK Eco Soc and Wildsight to create the FoKL. The lack of a lake wide stewardship group was noted in the scoping study undertaken by the KLP in 2011. It was especially significant when considering the lack of a coordinated voice representing the multi-stakeholders around Kootenay Lake from home owners, businesses, and public in the Columbia River Treaty discussions. FoKL is the stewardship arm of the KLP and both work closely to promote Kootenay Lake stewardship.

This work forms the basis of an improved understanding of current shoreline conditions in order to better manage the values (ecological health, First Nations cultural and socio-economic values) important to the communities in the West Kootenay region. The focus of 2015 was completing the Cultural Values and Use Study and to begin to integrate the three big datasets into one.

2015 Year-in-Review

In keeping with the KLP's goal (*of a productive and healthy Kootenay Lake ecosystem, with balanced land and water uses that support and sustain environmental, community, recreational, aboriginal, cultural, traditional and aesthetic values*), this year was the year for the Cultural Use and Values Study (CVS). Over the course of the year, knowledge holders and elders were interviewed and conducted site visits to identify those critical areas of First Nations values such as gathering sites, fishing access, ancestral village

sites and others. Oral histories associated with the lake were recorded, including hundreds of Ktunaxa cultural values (points, lines and polygons) that were mapped using a direct-to-digital, GIS compatible method. Thinking forward to the SMG, there were now three datasets (FIM, AOA, CVS) to be integrated in order to use this risk-based approach to shoreline management.

The KLP has had an important ongoing dialogue for the data to be consistent and format-ready for integration. In November the SMG consultants (Jason Schleppe, John Cathro, Craig Candler and Wayne Choquette) got together to discuss the integration of the data and how to move forward with a single document. As a next step, the lakeshore will be divided into linear management units with one of three colour designations (red, yellow, blue or similar). Management units will correspond to particular recommendations and actions (including required contacts). As the data for the CVS is Ktunaxa-specific, additional details and information will be held by Ktunaxa Nation.

Currently contracts will be issued to commence on the drafting the SMG (includes integration, activity risk matrix and draft report and updated maps). The development of the SMG will benefit communities around the lake by laying out an ecological baseline for decision making, to determine what activities may be undertaken without compromising the ecological values of the lake.

Throughout 2015, the KLP maintained the following guiding objectives in mind, to be able to measure success:

- Gather and share data within the study area about indigenous traditional and contemporary use, the aquatic ecosystems and associated uplands;
- Make new knowledge available to communities, decision-makers and other stakeholders;
- Develop science-based coordinated management planning processes for land and water uses associated with the lake, and promote collaborative and integrated decision-making by all levels of government, developers, planners, and all other interests;
- Liaise with other interest groups over gathered information with related initiatives and identified stakeholders and interest groups, to foster community stewardship (ongoing);
- Encourage relationship building between indigenous and non-indigenous communities and people on Kootenay Lake.

This year on two occasions Kenton Andreashuk was available to take people out of the CCRIFC boat. First staff from the regional district, including new area director, Aimee Watson were taken to observe some of the shoreline developments. Second, Provincial staff were on board to examine some of the ecological values along the West Arm of the lake.

As in past years, the KLP worked closely with the Friends of Kootenay Lake. The KLP provides a leadership and governance role within the steering committee and was able to help the Program Manager, Claire de la Salle, hire a replacement for her maternity leave. Toward the end of the year the KLP was able to support the new Manager, Kat McGlynn, with the selection process for a contractor to complete the Community Values Study for Kootenay Lake.

Working together in partnership requires patience for positive outcomes. While it takes longer for such a group to reach consensus, when it is reached there is trust in the other members. One of the challenges the KLP continues to encounter is the absence of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). The KLP is hopeful that the new federal government will enable representatives to again engage in strategic partnerships where their interests are involved. Looking back at 2015, the KLP reached some significant milestones with the completion of the CVS and the final AOA report. This sets the organization up for a successful start to the new year.

Progress Overview

	Kootenay Lake	Slocan Lake
Foreshore Inventory and Mapping	2010 West Arm completed 2011 Main Arm completed 2012 Full Lake combined and field verification	2011 Slocan Lake Fish and Wildlife Assessment (FIM/AHI)
Aquatic Habitat Index	2013 Index complete without report finalized due to Cultural Values Study	2011 Slocan Lake Fish and Wildlife Assessment (FIM/AHI)
Water Quality Monitoring Report	Yearly reporting by Province of BC – Environmental Protection	2011 Water Quality Monitoring Project Report
Archaeological Overview Assessment	2012 Field verification. Report completed in 2015	Not completed
Geodetic Water Level surveys	2013 Kootenay Lake foreshore Level 1 survey	Not completed
Cultural Use and Values Study	Completion in 2015	Not completed
Dataset integration	Anticipated completion by March 2016	Not completed
Shoreline Guidance Document	Anticipated draft April 2016 , completion by end of 2016	Completion in 2014

2016 Outlook

The FIM/AHI, AOA and CVS are only a step in the lake management planning process for Kootenay Lake. Not only is the inventory of ecological and First Nations cultural values extremely important for future management considerations, but the partnership that has formed to execute these inventories and drive the work, is one that will persist to continue to address the short and long-term needs of Kootenay Lake.

2016 will be an exciting year for the Partnership as it enters its 6th year since the signing of the Terms of Reference. It will be a priority to complete the SMG and work toward its implementation for Kootenay Lake. This will require a public engagement process which may take place at eight locations around the lake sometime beginning in the late spring and going into the summer in order to reach the seasonal homeowners. Elsewhere in the Kootenays, other lakes are under the same developmental pressures and undergoing the same processes. The KLP is setting an important benchmark for the management of shorelines on large bodies of water by considering a balance of values. Please visit www.kootenaylakepartnership.com to follow the Partnership’s progress and find out more.