

Local Conservation Fund Procedure



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Conservation Fund (LCF) Procedure supports the implementation of the Local Conservation Fund (LCF) by providing clear operational steps for project intake, review, evaluation, and reporting.
- 1.2 This Procedure works in conjunction with the Local Conservation Fund (LCF) Policy, the Regional District of Central Kootenay Local Conservation Fund Service Establishment Bylaw No. 2420, 2014, and the Local Conservation Fund Committee Bylaw No. 2975, 2025.
- 1.3 This Procedure provides operational guidance for administering the LCF and does not replace or supersede the LCF Policy.
- 1.4 The LCF Procedure:
 - 1.4.1 Defines roles and responsibilities of the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK), the Local Conservation Fund Committee (LCFC), the Technical Review Committee (TRC), and the Consultant.
 - 1.4.2 Sets out the process for project submission, technical review, committee review, and Board approval.
 - 1.4.3 Ensures transparency and consistency in how the Fund is administered, including conflict-of-interest management and project reporting.

1.5 Key Roles:

The following roles are described for the purposes of administering the LCF and are to be read in conjunction with the LCF Policy.

- 1.5.1 Proponent: an eligible organization that submits a project proposal to the LCF.
- 1.5.2 Consultant: the organization contracted by the RDCK to administer the LCF on its behalf. The Consultant is responsible for coordinating project intake, supporting the Technical Review Committee (TRC), and preparing recommendations for the Local Conservation Fund Committee (LCFC).
- 1.5.3 Technical Review Committee (TRC): an advisory body comprised of individuals with expertise in conservation-related fields appointed by the RDCK Board for the specific purpose of reviewing the technical merits of grant applications and recommending projects for funding.
- 1.5.4 Local Conservation Fund Committee (LCFC): means the standing committee of the RDCK Board, established under Local Conservation Fund Committee Bylaw No. 2975, responsible for reviewing proposed projects put forward by the Consultant funded by the Local Conservation Fund Service and making recommendations to the Board.

2 Governance

- 2.1 The LCF is administered by the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) in partnership with a Consultant, the LCFC, and the TRC.
- 2.2 **RDCK Responsibility**
 - 2.2.1 The RDCK is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the Fund and retains the responsibility for final approval of all matters related thereto.

- 2.2.2 The RDCK is responsible for the final approval of all projects, grant payments, and financial audits of the Fund.
- 2.2.3 The RDCK remains the final approving authority for all Fund matters.
- 2.2.4 The RDCK will engage a consultant to assist with the direct administration of the Fund and will appoint a TRC based on the recommendation of the Consultant.
- 2.2.5 The LCFC, established by Bylaw No. 2975, reviews the recommendations of the TRC and makes formal recommendations to the RDCK Board for project approvals.

2.3 Local Conservation Fund Committee (LCFC)

- 2.3.1 The LCFC is a standing committee of the RDCK Board, established under *Local Conservation Fund Committee Bylaw No. 2975*.
- 2.3.2 It is composed of the Directors representing the participating Service Area.
- 2.3.3 The LCFC reviews TRC recommendations and makes formal recommendations to the RDCK Board for project approvals, conditions, or deferrals.
- 2.3.4 It receives annual reporting on funded projects and may recommend program improvements to the Board.

2.4 Technical Review Committee (TRC)

- 2.4.1 The TRC is an advisory body appointed by the RDCK Board to provide a technical evaluation of project proposals.
- 2.4.2 It reviews proposals for technical merit, feasibility, and conservation effectiveness.
- 2.4.3 It also provides a ranked list of recommended projects to the LCFC.
- 2.4.4 It operates in accordance with its Terms of Reference, which are detailed later in this Procedure, including membership, evaluation criteria, and conflict-of-interest requirements.

2.5 Consultant Responsibility

- 2.5.1 Under formal written agreement, the Consultant is responsible for all aspects of Fund management, other than the direct financial management. This management includes:
 - 2.5.2 Preparing the Fund design documents.
 - 2.5.3 Advertising and managing the call for proposals.
 - 2.5.4 Responding to inquiries.
 - 2.5.5 Vetting TRC applicants.
 - 2.5.6 Facilitating the technical review of applications and projects.
 - 2.5.7 Coordinating project evaluation and overall program evaluation.

2.6 Governance Principles

The governance model for the LCF is based on the following guiding principles:

- 2.6.1 This is a tax-based Fund; therefore, in the decision-making process, taxpayers will be represented through their elected officials.
- 2.6.2 The LCF was created to provide a conservation service. Technical merit is of utmost importance to determine which projects are supported.

2.6.3 There is a relatively small amount of annual funding available, and it is important to design a simple, cost-effective decision-making structure.

2.7 Governance Model

- 2.7.1 The governance model may be modified as necessary to accommodate the goals of the LCF.
- 2.7.2 A two-tiered process will be employed, with the TRC making recommendations through the technical review process, and the LCFC reviewing those recommendations and making recommendations to the RDCK Board for final approval.

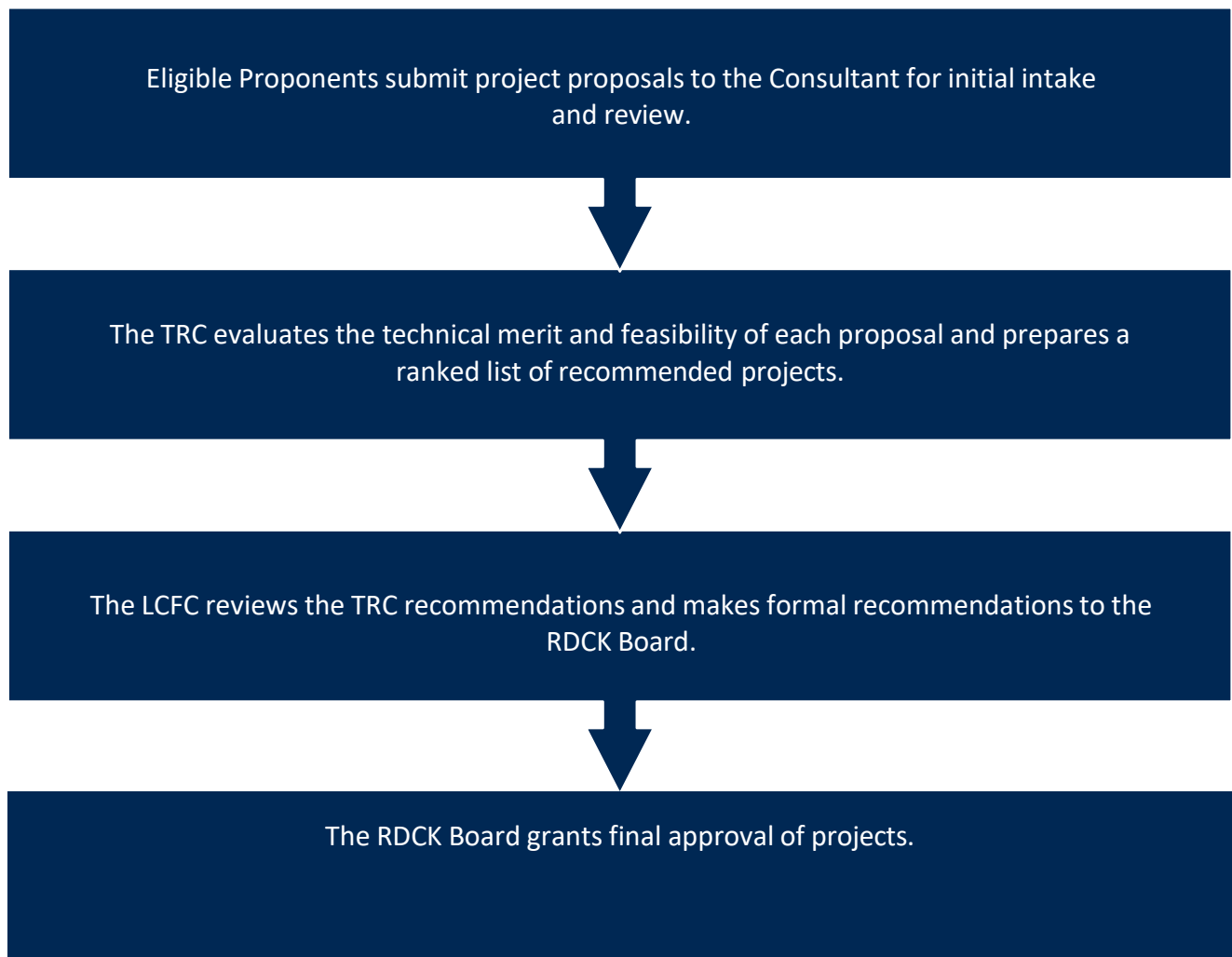


Figure 1 Governance Flow

2.8 Technical Review Committee (TRC) Appointments and Terms

- 2.8.1 The TRC will be selected based on nominations submitted to the Consultant or in response to an open call to fill a vacancy.

- 2.8.2 TRC members are appointed by the RDCK Board based on recommendations brought forward through the administration process.
- 2.8.3 The TRC is comprised of five members, and may be expanded up to seven members where needed to ensure appropriate expertise coverage.
- 2.8.4 TRC members will be selected with a maximum term of three (3) years.
- 2.8.5 Some members may be asked to serve for only one- or two-year terms to ensure membership continuity across years.
- 2.8.6 Given the small geographic area and high level of engagement in conservation projects, it may be difficult to find TRC members who will not, at some point, have an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest by virtue of the fact that they may also be interested in submitting proposals or working on successful projects. In such cases, the Conflict of Interest Guidelines will be followed.

2.9 Board Review and Approval

- 2.9.1 The RDCK is responsible for reviewing the recommendations of the TRC and for granting final approval.
- 2.9.2 The RDCK will determine whether a project meets eligibility criteria, including that it is not an existing responsibility of any level of government.
- 2.9.3 The RDCK Directors representing the participating Service Area may, at their discretion, have the opportunity to review the proposals with the Electoral Area advisory Commissions.
- 2.9.4 Final approval of projects will be granted at a regular meeting of the RDCK Board.
- 2.9.5 Only the Directors representing the participating Service Area will be entitled to vote on project approvals, using the weighted voting system.
- 2.9.6 In the case of acquisition/securement proposals, the RDCK may be required to maintain confidentiality; in such cases, proposal review and approval will take place at a closed meeting of the Board.

3 Guiding Principles

3.1 To best support the most effective projects, the guiding principles of the *Conservation Framework for British Columbia* will be followed:

- 3.1.1 Acting sooner – before species and ecosystems are at risk.
- 3.1.2 Acting smarter – priority setting is science-based; the results move us from reactive conservation to prevention using appropriate management actions.
- 3.1.3 Acting together – coordinated and inclusive action.
- 3.1.4 Investing more wisely – align conservation investments, priorities, and actions among conservation partners and stakeholders.

3.2 The following additional guiding principles will also be used in administering and evaluating projects under the Fund:

- 3.2.1 Projects that fall into the existing responsibilities of federal, provincial or local governments will not be eligible for funding.
- 3.2.2 Projects with strong funding partnerships will be given preference.

- 3.2.3 The review process will be as simple as possible, particularly with the recognition that a relatively small Fund is being administered.
- 3.2.4 Projects will be ranked on feasibility, cost-effectiveness, outside participation / cost sharing, project effectiveness and priority conservation action.
- 3.2.5 Projects will initially be ranked based on technical merit, regardless of where they occur within the Fund Service Area. Subsequently, regional equity may be considered in decision-making.
- 3.2.6 Only highly ranked projects will be funded. If there are not enough high-quality projects in any given year, funds will be carried forward to future years.
- 3.2.7 Changes to program design will be considered as more is learned about the needs of the areas, provided always that the goals of the Fund are still met.

4 Classification Scheme

- 4.1 The LCF applies a classification framework to identify and address key pressures affecting biodiversity within the Service Area.
- 4.2 The framework provides a consistent basis for considering how proposed projects respond to recognized conservation challenges and supports informed selection of projects for funding.
- 4.3 For the purposes of the LCF, conservation challenges are considered using the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classification of direct threats, adapted for local application.
- 4.4 The classification framework is used to support alignment between proposed projects, the Themes and Targets set out in the LCF Policy and identified conservation priorities.
- 4.5 The following threat categories are of particular relevance within the LCF Service Area and may be considered when assessing projects:
 - 4.5.1 Residential and Commercial Development: Development activities that result in the conversion and fragmentation of natural habitats, loss of timber and agricultural lands, and increased demands on water resources.
 - 4.5.2 Climate Change: Changes in climate conditions, including increased temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, reduced snowpack, extended dry periods, and extreme weather events, resulting in impacts to wildfire regimes, flooding and geohazards, hydrological systems, water availability, vegetation patterns, and wildlife populations.
 - 4.5.3 Terrestrial and Aquatic Invasive Species: Invasive terrestrial and aquatic species that disrupt ecological processes, degrade fish and wildlife habitat, affect timber and food systems, and contribute to soil degradation and reduced water quality through the displacement of native vegetation.
 - 4.5.4 Natural System Modifications (Dams and Water Management and Use): Modifications to natural systems, including dams, diversions, and water management activities, that alter natural flow regimes and result in ecological degradation, loss of biological diversity, and impacts to the functioning of aquatic and riparian ecosystems.
 - 4.5.5 Transportation and Service Corridors: Road, rail, and other service corridors that contribute to wildlife mortality, habitat fragmentation, and degradation of habitat quality, including impacts to aquatic ecosystems.

- 4.5.6 Human Intrusions and Disturbance (Recreational Activity): Recreational activities, including off-road use, that result in soil compaction, erosion, spread of invasive species, and disturbance to wildlife and habitats.

5 Fund Design and Timelines

5.1 The LCF is designed to support projects that conserve and enhance the natural environment in the Service Area through an annual project intake and review process.

5.2 General Projects

The annual project cycle for general conservation projects is as follows:

- 5.2.1 Call for Proposals – September/October
- 5.2.2 TRC Review Completed – November/December
- 5.2.3 LCFC Review and Recommendation to RDCK Board – January
- 5.2.4 RDCK Board of Directors Final Approval – February
- 5.2.5 Successful Applicants Notified – March
- 5.2.6 Contribution Agreements Finalized – March/April

5.3 Land Securement Projects

- 5.3.1 Land acquisition or covenant proposals may be submitted at any time during the year, at the discretion of the Consultant, provided there is sufficient time for the TRC and RDCK to review the proposals.
- 5.3.2 All securement proposals will be treated as confidential unless other specific arrangements have been approved by all parties.

5.4 Fund Design

- 5.4.1 A call for project proposals will be issued annually (September/October) and will be advertised based on criteria set by the Consultant and approved by the RDCK Chief Administrative Officer or their designate.
- 5.4.2 Funds will be dispersed annually, based on responses to calls for proposals.
- 5.4.3 Any funds not dispersed can be carried forward to the next fiscal year.
- 5.4.4 Projects must be in the Fund Service Area.
- 5.4.5 Projects should address IUCN threats to biodiversity targets and be informed by priority conservation actions identified in the Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund (KLLCF) Guidance Document and fall into at least one theme area.
- 5.4.6 Proponents must be a registered non-profit society, First Nation, or must partner with an eligible organization.
- 5.4.7 Project evaluation by the TRC includes consideration of conservation value for money.
- 5.4.8 Proposals should reflect relationship to the RDCK Official Community Plans, where applicable.
- 5.4.9 Proponents must be prepared to make a 10-minute presentation on the outcomes of their work on an annual basis, in addition to submitting written interim and final reports.

- 5.4.10 Proponents will receive 80% of the grant upon signing a contribution agreement and 20% upon completion of the approved final report.
- 5.4.11 For minor changes to projects, or where the RDCK has awarded less than the proposed amount under the recommendation of the TRC, the Consultant has authority to allow proponents to change aspects of their work plan.
- 5.4.12 For substantive changes to the workplan, proponents must receive the support of the TRC.
- 5.4.13 For a major change in the goals of the project, approval must be given by the RDCK.

6 Project Eligibility

6.1 Projects funded through the LCF must align with the purpose, and themes set out in the LCF Policy and be informed by the KLLCF Guidance Document.

6.2 Ineligible Activities

The following types of projects will not be considered for funding:

- 6.2.1 Existing federal, provincial or local government responsibilities.
- 6.2.2 Capacity building or operating expenses for organizations.
- 6.2.3 Projects with recreational benefits only.
- 6.2.4 Community infrastructure services.
- 6.2.5 Lobbying or advocacy initiatives.
- 6.2.6 Wildlife feeding programs.
- 6.2.7 Non-applied research (research not related to a conservation action goal).
- 6.2.8 Training costs for contractors.
- 6.2.9 Enforcement activities.
- 6.2.10 Fish rearing, farming, stocking or hatchery projects.
- 6.2.11 *Rehabilitation, captive breeding or control of wildlife species.
- 6.2.12 *Mapping only projects.
- 6.2.13 *Inventory only projects.
- 6.2.14 *Planning only projects.
- 6.2.15 Education only projects.
- 6.2.16 Fishing and hunting tour or curriculum guides.
- 6.2.17 Information projects on regulations or stocking.
- 6.2.18 Conferences.
- 6.2.19 Production or sponsorship of commercial programs.
- 6.2.20 *Interpretive services.
- 6.2.21 *Creation or management of electronic databases, websites or file systems.

*These activities will be considered if they are part of an eligible project that will lead to 'on-the-ground' implementation or if they provide knowledge which is vital to achieving the overall objectives of the Fund.

7 Technical Review Committee (TRC) – Terms of Reference

The TRC is the technical advisory body of the LCF. Its role is to ensure that all project proposals receive an independent, expert review for technical merit, feasibility, and conservation effectiveness.

7.1 Purpose

The purpose of the TRC is to:

- 7.1.1 Ensure all proposals to the Fund receive a sound technical review based on a fair assessment of proposal merit and project effectiveness;
- 7.1.2 Maintain a high level of accountability and transparency in the review process; and
- 7.1.3 Provide the LCFC and RDCK Board with a ranked list of technically appropriate proposals for funding consideration.

7.2 Composition

- 7.2.1 The TRC is comprised of five to seven members, with at least one member having expertise in each of the following areas:
 - 7.2.1.1 Water conservation
 - 7.2.1.2 Climate change
 - 7.2.1.3 Forestry and ecosystem management
 - 7.2.1.4 Fish and wildlife conservation
- 7.2.2 Members are appointed by the RDCK Board, based on recommendations from the Consultant.
- 7.2.3 Membership is structured to ensure continuity across funding years, with some members serving consecutive terms.

7.3 Proposal Ranking Guidelines

- 7.3.1 Each proposal will be independently reviewed by each Committee member and be ranked on what is submitted by the proponent.
- 7.3.2 The Committee will only review proposals on their technical merit and effectiveness.
- 7.3.3 Experts in fields related to the activities within proposals may be consulted as necessary.
- 7.3.4 The Consultant may reach out to proponents to clarify information prior to facilitating the technical review.
- 7.3.5 Each proposal will be discussed collectively, and Committee members will have an opportunity to change their scores based on input from other members.
- 7.3.6 Scores from each Committee member will be used to determine the final evaluation score for the proposal.
- 7.3.7 The proposals will be ranked from highest to lowest score.
- 7.3.8 For projects that have received funding in previous years, the TRC may consider progress to date and outcomes achieved when evaluating a new application.
- 7.3.9 All applications are reviewed and ranked on an annual basis, and funding approval is not guaranteed from one year to the next.

- 7.3.10 The RDCK acknowledges information in reports produced through this fund will become part of the public scientific database and the information will be used in a professional and respectful manner as opposed to supporting a specific lobbying effort.
- 7.3.11 The TRC will make an assessment of each application and where concerns around lobbying are raised, they will not recommend the project for funding.
- 7.3.12 The Committee chair will sign the ranked list and the Committee's comments will then be forwarded to the RDCK by the Consultant in a summary report.
- 7.3.13 The Consultant will participate in the technical review process but will not rank proposals; will provide additional file information as requested by the Committee members before and at review meetings; and will be available to answer questions from the RDCK on behalf of the Committee.

7.4 Technical Evaluation Criteria for Projects

7.4.1 Feasibility (i.e., is the project doable – Yes or No)

- 7.4.1.1 Is the overall proposal well written?
- 7.4.1.2 Are the objectives clearly defined?
- 7.4.1.3 Are the techniques and methods proposed the most appropriate ones to address the threat?
- 7.4.1.4 Does the proponent clearly understand the challenges they may face in completing the project?
- 7.4.1.5 Has the proponent demonstrated that the project will be able to overcome these challenges?
- 7.4.1.6 Are the proposed timelines reasonable?
- 7.4.1.7 Do the proponents have the capacity to deliver the project?
- 7.4.1.8 If applicable, are plans in place to get required permits or authorizations?
- 7.4.1.9 Have any possible negative implications or effects on other targets been identified and minimized?
- 7.4.1.10 Based on the answers to the above questions, rank the feasibility of the project from 0-10 with 10 being the highest ranking.

7.4.2 Cost Effectiveness (Yes or No)

- 7.4.2.1 Is there value for the funding being requested?
- 7.4.2.2 Are the benefits as described in the proposal in line with the cost of the project?
- 7.4.2.3 Are the project budget and in-kind rates realistic?
- 7.4.2.4 Based on the answers to the above questions, rank the cost effectiveness of the project from 0-5 with 5 being the highest ranking.

7.4.3 Outside Participation / Cost Sharing (Yes or No)

- 7.4.3.1 Do the proposed activities involve other agencies and organizations?
- 7.4.3.2 Does the project leverage funds from other sources?
- 7.4.3.3 Based on the answers to the above questions, rank the leverage potential of the project from 0-5 with 5 being the highest ranking.

7.4.4 Project Effectiveness (i.e., is the project worth doing?)

- 7.4.4.1 Is there a clearly demonstrated ability for the results of this project to address an identified IUCN listed threat to a biodiversity target and be informed by a priority conservation action identified in the KLLCF Guidance Document?
- 7.4.4.2 Is the project outside of the realm of regular government responsibilities?
- 7.4.4.3 Is the project rationale science-based and do the results move us from reactive conservation to prevention using appropriate management actions?
- 7.4.4.4 Does the project build on conservation measures from relevant Official Community Plans?
- 7.4.4.5 Does the project align conservation investments, priorities, and actions among conservation partners and stakeholders?
- 7.4.4.6 Is there an evaluation of project benefit or other measurables or indicators identified in the proposal?
- 7.4.4.7 Is there a clearly described extension component of the project (e.g., communicating results to the community, resource managers, workshops, reports, presentations, etc.)?
- 7.4.4.8 Based on the answers to the above questions, rank the effectiveness of the project from 0-20 with 20 being the highest ranking.

7.4.5 KLLCF Guidance Document Priority

- 7.4.5.1 Does this project address one of the priority conservation actions as outlined in the KLLCF Guidance Document (Table 5: Conservation Actions Summary).
- 7.4.5.2 Based on the Conservation Action and Habitat Target, allocate points from 0 to 10 (based on Table 5) with 10 being the highest ranking

7.4.6 Other Comments

- 7.4.6.1 Are there any other technical concerns?
- 7.4.6.2 Are there any technical conditions to funding?
- 7.4.6.3 Are there any other general comments from reviewers?

7.5 Conflict of Interest Guidelines

7.5.1 General Guidelines

- 7.5.1.1 TRC (“Committee”) members will act at all times with due diligence, honesty, and in good faith, for the public interest.
- 7.5.1.2 The conduct and language of Committee members will be free from any discrimination or harassment prohibited by the *Human Rights Code of Canada*.
- 7.5.1.3 The conduct of Committee members will reflect social standards of courtesy, respect, and dignity.

7.5.2 Confidential Information

- 7.5.2.1 Committee members will not reveal or divulge confidential information (defined as that which cannot be obtained from other sources) received in the course of Committee duties.
- 7.5.2.2 Confidential information must not be used for any purposes outside that of undertaking the work of the Committee.

7.5.3 Duty to Inform

- 7.5.3.1 Committee members will inform the Consultant of any circumstances, be that an actual conflict of interest or an appearance of conflict, which may have a negative or harmful effect on their ability to perform the duties required of the appointment or the reputation of the Committee. The member will advise all other members and staff, in writing (email accepted), well in advance of the Committee meeting: (a) that there is a potential conflict; (b) the nature and scope of the conflict; and (c) the specific project to which the conflict may apply.
- 7.5.3.2 For some proposals, Committee members may have a direct involvement in the project. In this case, the Committee member will be asked to leave the meeting during the discussion of such proposals.

7.5.4 Statement of Intent

- 7.5.4.1 Participation in Committee work should not result in any personal or private financial or other substantive gain. Private gain does not include honoraria for Committee work.
- 7.5.4.2 Members of the Committee will avoid any conflict of interest that may impair or impugn the independence, integrity or impartiality of the Fund, the Regional District of Central Kootenay or the Consultant.
- 7.5.4.3 There shall be no apprehension of bias based on what a reasonably knowledgeable and informed observer might perceive of the actions of

the Committee or the actions of an individual member of the Committee.

7.5.5 Practical Consideration in Determining Conflict

- 7.5.5.1 Activities undertaken as a citizen must be kept separate and distinct from any responsibilities held as a member of the Committee.
- 7.5.5.2 Activities undertaken as a committee member must be kept separate and distinct from other activities as a citizen.
- 7.5.5.3 Other memberships, directorships, voluntary or paid positions, or affiliations remain distinct from work undertaken in the course of Committee work.
- 7.5.5.4 Committee members must not participate in, influence, or assist with the preparation, submission, review, or discussion of any project where they have an actual or perceived conflict of interest, including situations that could reasonably be perceived as resulting in preferential treatment.
- 7.5.5.5 Actions taken in the course of Committee duties can neither cause nor suggest to a reasonably knowledgeable and informed observer that members' ability to exercise those duties has or could be affected by private gain or interest.
- 7.5.5.6 All personal financial interests, assets, and holdings must be kept distinct from and independent of any decision, information or other matter that may be heard by or acted upon by the Committee.
- 7.5.5.7 Personal employment shall not be dependent on any decision, information or other matter that may be heard by or acted upon by the Committee. If such a situation arises, Committee members must disclose to the Committee and the Consultant any involvement in a proposal or issue before the proposal or issue is discussed by the Committee. Members will be excused from discussion of the project at the discretion of the Committee.

7.6 Declaration

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the Technical Review Committee - Terms of Reference for the Local Conservation Fund and the Conflict of Interest Guidelines contained herein. I agree to conduct myself in accordance with these guidelines and to disclose any real or perceived conflicts of interest.

Name of Committee Member (print): _____

Signature of Committee Member: _____

Date Signed: _____