

Developing a Comprehensive Spatial Database of Non-governmental Organization Conservation Areas in British Columbia

British Columbia NGO Conservation Areas Database Technical Working Group

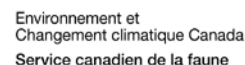
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Abstract

A collaborative effort between conservation partners spanning several years, the British Columbia Non-governmental Organization (NGO) Conservation Areas Database aims to provide a comprehensive, standardized spatial database of BC's private conservation lands. Designed to complement existing federal and provincial protected area inventories, this database incorporates securements from nearly 40 different NGOs. Maintenance of the database is centralized, which allows NGOs with different GIS capabilities to add and maintain information, and incorporates an annual update and maintenance process that requires minimal resources to administer. The annual updates and management of the database is cost shared via in-kind support from Ducks Unlimited Canada and The Nature Trust of British Columbia with funding from the Canadian Wildlife Service to support the Pacific Bird Habitat Joint Venture and the Canadian Intermountain Joint Venture. The database can be used to store attribute information, to provide base data for the creation of map products, for landscape modeling and analyses, and for conservation securement planning. This spatial conservation database improves joint planning efforts between partners, as it resolves inconsistencies between different spatial datasets related to boundaries, attributes, accuracy, scale, and data currency. This model for partnerships and database design could be considered as a template for other provinces throughout Canada. Technical development of the database is led by the Technical Working Group, namely Ducks Unlimited Canada, The Nature Trust of British Columbia and the Canadian Wildlife Service. Project direction and coordination is led by the General Working Group members, which in addition to the Technical Working Group includes the Nature Conservancy of Canada and The Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia. A Fee Simple (NGO owned private) lands layer is available for public use via the DataBC Data Catalogue and iMapBC.

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Conservation partners have collaborated since 2002 as part of the British Columbia Non-governmental Organization (BC NGO) Conservation Areas Database Working Group to develop a comprehensive, standardized inventory of BC's non-governmental conservation areas (also known as private conservation lands). These areas include properties designated as Fee Simple, Registerable Interests, and Unregisterable Interests and complement the protected areas inventories created by the Federal and Provincial Governments. The BC NGO Conservation Areas Database was developed from cadastral mapping of legal parcels. The attributes of each conservation parcel were populated with information obtained from conservation partners, as well as by searching land titles.

Fee Simple is defined as ownership of the title to a legal parcel. *Registerable Interests* are non-Fee Simple conservation securements registered on title, specifically conservation covenants and leases. Conservation Covenants are a voluntary and legally binding interest on all or a portion of a legal parcel. The title is retained by the landowner, but the covenant and covenant holder (e.g. conservation organization) are registered on the title and bind current and future owners of the parcel in how the land is used. Leased lands are managed for conservation, similarly to Fee Simple properties, and are usually long term. Leases that have not been registered on title have not been included in the Conservation Areas Database. *Unregisterable Interests* are conservation securements not registered on title. These are primarily long term conservation agreements. Conservation Agreements are voluntary arrangements with land owners to manage the land, or a portion of the land, with a particular objective. Overlapping ownership and/or agreements can occur on a single legal parcel and are tracked in the BC NGO Conservation Areas Database. For example, the purchase of a Fee Simple parcel may have been cost-shared between two or more conservation organizations, which are all registered on the title. This same parcel may also have a conservation covenant registered and held by another organization.

Technical development of the database is led by the Technical Working Group, namely Ducks Unlimited Canada, The Nature Trust of British Columbia and the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment and Climate Change Canada. Project direction and coordination is led by the General Working Group members, which in addition to the Technical Working Group includes the Nature Conservancy of Canada and The Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia. The conservation areas of nearly forty NGO conservation organizations are included in the database. The conservation parcels are produced with the cooperation of the Integrated Cadastral Information Society, which is coordinating the development of a standardized legal parcel fabric among British Columbia's local governments, utilities, assessment office, land titles office, and the Provincial Government. Some local land trusts have chosen either not to participate or to withhold some of their properties from inclusion in the project. The total conservation area of these properties currently amounts to 17 hectares and represents 17 properties.

The Annual British Columbia Conservation Areas Summary provides an accurate identification of total conservation area in BC. As some NGO conservation areas overlap with Provincial or Federal conservation areas, as well as Local Government Park Natural Areas, the Summary Report calculation for the total area of conservation lands in BC removes any existing overlap and resultant double counting. As of 31 December 2016, there are a total of 160,032 hectares of NGO conservation lands in BC. Overlapping securement types on a single property have been removed from this total. A full summary of securements by NGO is available in the *Annual British Columbia Conservation Areas Summary Report 2016*.

Local Government Park Natural Areas have been included in the annual reporting as of the 2016 Summary Report. These regional or municipal park areas consist of parcels or portions of parcels that met criteria for them to be considered as conservation of a natural area. These areas were identified through a project led by The Nature Trust of British Columbia with funding from the Canadian Wildlife Service. A public version of the Local Government Parks Natural Areas dataset is available from The Nature Trust of British Columbia by request. A full list of contributing Local Governments is available in the *Annual British Columbia Conservation Areas Summary Report 2016*.

