

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Students Plant for the Future

Penticton, BC – Close to 50 youth in the South Okanagan are learning about natural habitats through hands-on activities in their local communities.

The Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS) is spearheading the three-year project that connects middle school students with nature. The students are directly involved in planning, implementing and monitoring project results. Up to two hectares will be restored as students learn the value of being land stewards through place-based learning.

“The Okanagan is a biodiversity hotspot, but it is also one of the most heavily impacted regions with high numbers of species and ecosystems at risk,” states Lisa Scott, Executive Director of OASISS. “This project aims to help youth understand the value of native plants for wildlife and learn about culturally important plants.”

The project was made possible with funding and support from the South Okanagan Conservation Fund (SOCF) and the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS). School Districts #67 and #53 are both involved.

Students from Holy Cross School are focusing their efforts on Max Lake, west of Penticton. The property is owned by Peter’s Bros. Construction and the wetland habitat is protected under a conservation covenant jointly held by The Land Conservancy and the RDOS.

“It’s a fabulous learning opportunity for the students,” says Trevor Buller, a teacher at Holy Cross School. “Being outdoors helps students develop sense of place and learning through exploring their environment.”

Students from Oliver Elementary School set their sights on a local grassland area owned by the town of Oliver.

Scott plans to get the two classes together next spring to learn from each other and experience the different ecosystems.

This project builds on the success of a previously funded SOCF project, Biodiversity Under Siege. The lesson plans developed through that project have been applied by middle school teachers and resulted in a strong interest by teachers to further engage their students by having them help to restore damaged ecosystems.

For more information on invasive species resources for educators, go to: www.oasiss.ca/educators

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Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS)

www.oasiss.ca

www.facebook.com/invasivespeciessociety

www.instagram.com/okanaganinvasives

The Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention, detection and management of invasive species in the Okanagan-Similkameen region. Established in 1996, OASISS addresses invasive species and their pathways of spread. Partners work collaboratively to prioritize species and management areas. The role of OASISS is to encourage and facilitate coordinated inventory, treatment and monitoring of invasive plants. The society is also responsible for monitoring local lakes for invasive mussels and other aquatic invasive species. Public education programming and training is provided via websites, social media and in person throughout the region.

South Okanagan Conservation Fund (SOCF)**Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS)**

www.soconservationfund.ca

www.rdos.bc.ca

The South Okanagan Similkameen is biologically, a unique area of Canada. The RDOS has the second highest number of species at risk of any other Regional District in BC as well as the highest proportion of sensitive ecosystems. Natural lands in both rural and urban areas filter our water, supply open spaces for wildlife and people, and provide quality of life to communities. Unfortunately, these systems are under stress. The current generation must take action now to ensure a healthy physical environment for future generations.

The purpose of the Fund is to provide local financial support for projects that will contribute to the conservation of our valuable natural areas; one step towards restoring and preserving a healthy environment. The intent is to provide funding for conservation projects that are not the existing responsibility of the federal, provincial or local governments. A Technical Advisory Committee with appointed members provides expertise in the review and recommendation of projects and recipients of funds, and RDOS has contracted administrative management support for the Fund.

The RDOS is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the Fund and retains the responsibility for approval of all matters related thereto, including projects, payments, and financial audits of the Fund.



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