



# Green Bylaws Toolkit guides

## Toolkit details

Thanks to funding support through Ducks Unlimited, the Green Bylaws Toolkit collaborative can offer consultations to local governments on:

- Best management practices
- Biology
- Ecology
- Legal aspects of regulations

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For more information:

Green Bylaws Toolkit:  
<http://www.greenbylaws.ca/>

SOSCP web page on  
Land Use Planning and  
Guidelines: <http://www.soscp.org>

Smart Growth BC  
website: <http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/>

by Julie Schooling, Corporate Publications Specialist

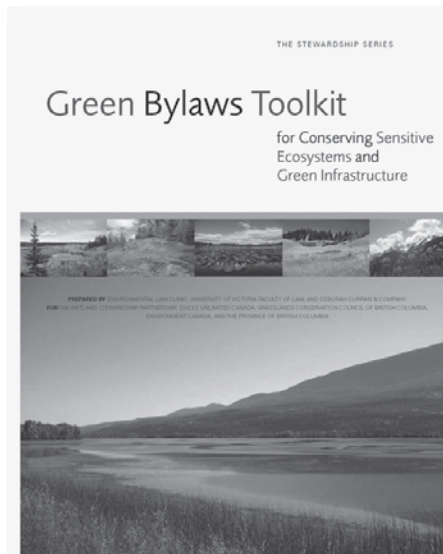
How do ecosystems fare in the face of ongoing development? Impacts continue to be severe enough that **Rob Hawes**, Land Use Planning Team Leader with the South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP), can state firmly, “Traditional methods of land conservation are simply not enough.” Hawes is putting his beliefs into action by co-ordinating extension of the *Green Bylaws Toolkit* in the Okanagan, a project supported by long-term funding through Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Wetland Stewardship Partnership. An April 15, 2008 workshop in Vernon, organized by the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP), showcased the Toolkit along with complementary efforts that are informing planning and development. Hawes sees the tools and consultation offered by the Toolkit initiative as a critical route to achieving key conservation objectives, with the potential for habitat protection beyond the traditional approach of conservation covenants and parks.

The Toolkit (available at <http://www.greenbylaws.ca/>) gives examples of a wide variety of land-use policies, bylaws, and other tools that can be used by local government decision makers and planners to help conserve environmental values, including sections on:

- Regional Growth Strategies,
- Regional Conservation Strategies,
- Official Community Plans,
- Zoning, and
- Environmental Development Permit Areas (EDPAs).

As part of the project, co-ordinators in four pilot regions (see sidebar) link British Columbia municipalities and regional districts with non-government organizations and technical advisors like **Deborah Curran**, an environmental lawyer with the University of Victoria Environmental Law Centre. Curran’s experience shows that local governments need to keep two key principles in mind when developing conservation-oriented bylaws and EDPAs:

- Regulations and guidelines must be applied objectively with measurable standards.
- There must be consistency between EDPAs, bylaws, and any other relevant plans and regulations, all of which must clearly reflect the community’s shared vision and intent.



To maintain functioning ecosystems within and adjacent to development, tools must be highly site-specific, reflecting solutions that are tailored to fit each community’s unique diversity of sensitive natural resources.

Following presentations by Hawes and Curran, the OCCP’s Program Co-ordinator, **Simone Runyan**, presented an overview of Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) mapping, which has been done in the North Okanagan. Mapping at various scales is essential to identify ESAs and inform decision making throughout the planning and approval processes. Runyan emphasized

that Sensitive Ecosystem Inventories (SEIs) at the 1:20,000 scale are adequate for planning purposes (e.g., understanding current and potential connectivity on the landscape), but that detailed development planning requires ground assessment by a qualified environmental professional, 1:5000 mapping of identified ESAs, and surveys at appropriate times of the year. Using layers of maps in a progression from SEI identification to ESA designation can be a powerful tool in the public education and consultation process. Vernon Councillor and biologist **Buffy Baumbrough** notes that the process “caught the imagination of the community,” prompting an unprecedented level of engagement and support for the Interior community’s planning initiatives. A variety of organizations fund community-scale mapping efforts, including the Real Estate Foundation of BC, BC Ministry of Environment, and local government partners.

Regional Growth Strategies are one component of the Toolkit which take a longer-term perspective: “What will our region look like in 20 years?” An initiative launched by the Fraser Basin Council, with funding support from the Real Estate Foundation of BC and the Province of British Columbia, funds



# sensitive community development

planners who work with communities to facilitate public consultation processes with the aim of achieving consensus around how each community wishes to grow.

Reflecting greater public involvement, the practice of planning is shifting towards performance-based objectives versus prescriptive regulations, which echoes the results-based Forest and Range Practices Act. For developers and local governments, this permits creative and flexible solutions that still meet objectives defined by the community. An observation made repeatedly during this workshop was the critical importance of having biologists and/or ecologists on staff at local governments—this ensures that approval of development proposals are made with an integrated understanding of the ecological benefits or impacts inherent in each proposal. The Green Bylaws Toolkit initiative aims for long-term engagement with communities, and recognizes the importance of having champions among both politicians and stakeholders to ensure commitment to implementation of planning-related decisions.

There are plans to add to the *Green Bylaws Toolkit* over time. Curran anticipates layering in a section on groundwater protection and management as well as more case studies (which are generously sprinkled throughout the package). Another priority is to provide more guidance around green



Julie Schooling photo

infrastructure planning to ensure ecological connectivity and systems approaches at the community scale. In Curran's opinion, "there's no need for legal reform—local governments simply need to make effective use of all available tools." As more communities do this, Curran anticipates a shift in "culture" towards more stringent norms and standards being set and enforced by elected officials, municipal staff, and the public. In support of this shift, those involved with the *Green Bylaws Toolkit* are open to collaboration with organizations like FORREX to help link local governments with resources and extend the Toolkit concepts to protect sensitive ecosystems around the province. 🌲

*Presenter Deborah Curran, Cariboo-Chilcotin Regional Co-ordinator Ken MacKenzie, SOSCP/Ducks Unlimited Land Use Planning Team Leader Rob Hawes, and OCCP Program Co-ordinator Simone Runyan at the Green Bylaws Toolkit workshop held in Vernon April 15, 2008.*