



Implementing Stewardship Practices that Benefit Species at Risk: Perspectives from the Land

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Introduction

By employing stewardship practices, such as riparian habitat protection or enhancement, land-managers across B.C. can play a critical role in protecting species at risk.

To promote the further adoption of stewardship practices that benefit species at risk, the Stewardship Centre for BC profiled 20 land-managers across B.C. engaged in these practices.

The 20 case studies, completed from 2014-2017, included data on participants' stated motivations for stewardship, challenges to stewardship, and outcomes of stewardship.

We also collected data regarding the employed stewardship practices and presence of species at risk.

An analysis of these case studies demonstrates a better understanding of how:

- (a) money,
- (b) relationships, and
- (c) stewardship

can help increase stewardship practice adoption.

“At the end of the day if you haven't got healthy pasture lands and healthy water on your ranches, you are not going to be profitable”
Project Participant



STEWARDSHIP CENTRE
FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA



Motivations

A. Money

Only 25% of the participants stated they were motivated to complete stewardship practices extrinsically or by 'expected achievement of separable outcomes' such as financial benefits.

When participants did discuss financial benefits as a motivation or an outcome they often employed the logic of 'win-wins' suggesting that stewardship practices can benefit agricultural operations and nature in the long-term.

However, the initial costs and maintenance costs associated with stewardship practices such as riparian fencing or invasive species control was challenging for some participants.

Financial incentive programs that offset costs associated with stewardship practices could help land-managers further adopt practices.



“For me, maintaining biodiversity is extremely important. If I was coming from a financial standpoint, maybe not so much because we cut off a lot of our grazing. But our priority is to maintain biodiversity.”
Project Participant

B. Relationships

Some participants were motivated by their relationships with their families and communities to participate in stewardship, while many benefited from the relationships they formed while conducting stewardship activities. However, starting and maintaining relationships can be challenging.

Some participants also stated that they were unaware of the support many organizations provide for stewardship practice adoption.

While conducting these 20 case studies, we also found that focusing on stewardship practices – easy and concrete to identify – was better for initial relationship building with potential participants than focusing on species at risk as participants were not always familiar with species at risk and/or wary of their association with the *Species at Risk Act*.

The Stewardship Centre for BC

The Stewardship Centre for BC was created to assist governments, businesses, conservation and environmental organizations, and citizens to carry out stewardship activities in the most efficient, effective, and rewarding ways.

A leader in promoting stewardship values as the foundation for sustainability, the Stewardship Centre for BC wants to make “shared stewardship” – the voluntary adoption of environmentally sustainable

practices by all sectors of society – a reality in British Columbia.

We champion science-based, best practices so that British Columbians can understand, enjoy and sustain healthy ecosystems through stewardship.

As good stewardship relies on good decision-making, we work closely with our partners to develop innovative technical, educational and capacity building resources.

For more information about the Stewardship Centre:

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C. Stewardship

Participants were broadly motivated by a desire to be stewards of their land.

Increasing the adoption of stewardship practices requires an understanding of how land-managers view and interact with nature.

This may be particularly relevant to ‘early-adopters’ of stewardship practices such as the participants in the Stewardship Practices Project who were broadly motivated by stewardship as expressed by their desire to work with nature and to protect and enhance the environment.

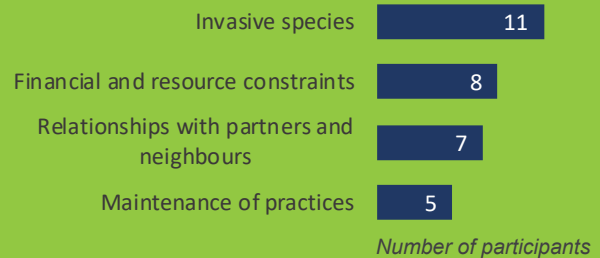
“Our goal is to promote strong and healthy families and to provide our community with a choice of nutritious quality farm products, while cultivating the holistic balance between land, animals and people.”
Project Participant



Perceived Challenges to Stewardship

More than half of participants mentioned challenges with invasive species when implementing stewardship practices.

Participants noted that they were challenged by invasive species because of (1) the ongoing and incremental nature of the work and (2) a lack of effective non-chemical controls for larger impacted areas.



Stewardship Outcomes

Seven common outcomes were identified from the interview data. These outcomes were both social and ecological. All participants (20) saw increases in natural habitat and/or biodiversity because of the stewardship practices.

Participants also observed many different types of wildlife benefiting or using the habitat they had protected or restored. Some participants observed species at risk using restored habitat.



Conclusion

Based on our results from a literature review and analysis of case studies, a stewardship practices model that accounts for the financial costs and benefits of stewardship, focuses on practices rather than species at risk, and focuses on supporting a stewardship ethic in land-managers demonstrates promise.

As such, the stewardship practices model employed by the Stewardship Centre for BC in its work with land-managers, which utilizes easy-to-access information (guidance) on specific stewardship practices and showcases “early adopters” of these practices, could help increase adoption of practices by land managers.

Recommendations

Finally, following are recommendations for further work on stewardship practices that benefit species at risk:

(1) Create resource tool and further resources for land-managers

Update the Stewardship Practices Project webpage to include more resources for land-managers such as links to organizations and resources that can assist with implementation of stewardship practices. This will provide a “one stop shop” resource currently missing in British Columbia.

This is a response to some of the challenges land-managers face in navigating the many organizations attempting to increase the adoption of stewardship practices. As well, with their partners, SCBC can develop new resources that address concerns noted by land-managers, like invasive species. The SCBC could become a hub where land-managers are inspired by

their peers, and then have some concrete resources to get started on their own projects.

(2) Complete more ‘intensive’ outreach and collaboration

With the completion of updated guides about stewardship practices and species at risk, a tool to search for species at risk (speciesatriskbc.ca) and 20 case studies, the Stewardship Centre is well positioned to increase outreach about SAR and stewardship practices with land-managers. The creation of a resource tool for land-managers noted above would complement these resources. Outreach that is more ‘intensive’ such as in-person presentations should be prioritized.

(3) Expand collaborative partnerships

Team up with organizations already working with land-managers to deliver more on the ground work. Increased collaboration between government, industry and the non-profit sector will increase the effectiveness of different approaches to stewardship. A ‘Stewardship Practices Model’ that supports and interacts with existing incentive programs such as BC’s Environmental Farm Plan or account for regulations such as SARA will have a greater positive impact.

“We call it holistic, natural, farming system, everything should fit together and there’s no one part of the farm that’s more important than the other. Our assistance as humans is to make the pieces fit together in a more fluid fashion, a more workable fashion as we understand the natural processes that are undergoing in the soil, in the water, or in the forest.”
Project Participant

The full *Perspectives of the Land* report is available at: www.stewardshipcentrebc.ca/stewardship-practices-for-species-at-risk-gallery.

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Project Partner



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