



THE STEWARDSHIP SERIES

Caring for something we don't own

WETLANDS – A GIFT FOR ALL

Wetlands are a key critical component for healthy ecosystems, providing crucial habitat for fish, birds, ungulates, and other wildlife. Wetlands are also a gift to people, and directly benefit human well being by providing clean drinking water, flood management, water retention measures, erosion control, and climate stabilization through carbon storage. Around the province wetland habitat is being lost at an accelerated rate. Major factors contributing to this issue are: the creation of dams and accompanying reservoir systems that flood wetlands located in valleybottoms, de-watering land for agriculture purposes and human development, river channelization to reduce flooding, and intense industry initiatives like mining and forestry. Even invasive plant species like reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) can severely reduce the ecological integrity of a wetland when in high enough densities. The Salmo River Valley currently harbours effects of all these impacts.

In response to this loss of wetland habitat, the Salmo Watershed Streamkeepers Society (SWSS) is working with the National Wetland Conservation Fund and local landowners Vladimir Kuzma, Jack Janssen Steenberg and Jackie Jonkheid, and Wyatt Peebles to create and restore wetland habitat, and re-implement ecological function. Activities included: increasing water exposure, adding coarse woody debris and creating islands to increase habitat complexity, and decreasing slopes to reduce potential erosion. Activities on these properties will continue with wildlife and vegetation monitoring, mapping, weeding, native planting, and if necessary, watering.

Landowners have already documented various waterfowl and ungulates using new and enhanced wetland areas. Regardless of whose property healthy wetlands are on, we are all downstream and we will all realize the gifts they continually give.

What can you do? There are many ways for YOU to help out the existing wetlands in your area. A simple way is to spend more quality time in nature. The more time you and your family spend experiencing nature, the more you will care for it and want to protect it. Another way is to learn about non-native plants that pose a threat to the natural environment – learn how to decrease the spread of invasive species between different hiking trails and how to discard yard waste in an environmentally sensitive manner. Eliminate the use of pesticides and other non-natural substances; everything we use has the potential to enter the environment. Most of us already conserve water in late summer, but think about changing your water consumption habits to decrease water usage at all times of year. Lastly, be a steward. Being a steward means actively advocating for the environment to your community and to your government. Being a steward also means actively involving yourself to better the environment you are a part of.

SWSS is currently seeking volunteers interested in future planting and weeding activities. We are also seeking landowners to continue our wetland restoration activities in the Salmo River Watershed. If you would like to volunteer, or have an interest in increasing wetland habitat on your property, please contact us via our website (www.streamkeepers.bc.ca), Facebook, or phone (250-357-2630).

The River Speaks

PLEASE SUPPORT THE SALMO WATERSHED STREAMKEEPERS SOCIETY! **250 357-2630**