

MEDIA RELEASE

13 April 2023 – For Immediate Release

Shuswap Watershed Council awarding five grants for water quality improvement

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) has announced grant funding for projects that protect and improve water quality in the Shuswap watershed.

“Protecting and enhancing our water quality is an important objective for the SWC,” states Jay Simpson, Chair of the SWC. “We know our water quality here is pretty good, and we want to keep it that way. However, there are also risk factors and we’re working to mitigate those.”

The SWC’s Water Quality Grant Program offers funds to assist farms, landowners, and stewardship groups with projects that protect and improve water quality, with a focus on mitigating the risks associated with nutrient-loading from land into surface waters.

“Nutrients – especially phosphorus – are an important factor of water quality and soil health,” explains Erin Vieira, Program Manager for the SWC. “It’s needed for healthy soil and productive crops, but it’s also a key factor contributing to algal blooms – when more phosphorus and other nutrients flow into the lake, the likelihood of water quality issues and algal blooms can increase.”

“Our goal with the grant program is to help farmers and other land stewards keep nutrients on the land and in the soil, not running off or leaching into nearby creeks and rivers where it could contribute to water quality concerns,” Vieira says.

One of the grant recipients, Rivershore Nursery owned and operated by Katherine Lawrence and Peter Barss in Mara, is using grant funds to upgrade irrigation infrastructure to a more efficient drip system to reduce water use and decrease run-off. The tree nursery will also use grant funds to plant cover crops on four acres of the nursery to improve soil health and reduce surface run-off. Additionally, grant funds will go toward inoculating new planting stock with mycorrhizal fungi which will improve the trees’ ability to take up nutrients, thereby decreasing the amount of fertilizer needed by the nursery.

“We are proud to support these innovative projects to reduce nutrient run-off into the lakes,” says Alex de Chantal, SWC program manager. “It is inspiring to see our grant recipients working to protect the environment for future generations.”



The four other grant recipients for 2023 are Crystal Lake Ranch in Malakwa where grant funds will be used to build livestock control fencing along the Eagle River; Shuswap Organics in Enderby who are planting cover crops and incorporating no-till practices to build the farm's soil health and improve nutrient retention; Fresh Valley Farms north of Armstrong where a Rova Barn™ will be built to automate the management of pastured livestock, build soil health, and protect sensitive and wet areas on the farm; and Iron Horse Ranch in Celista which is building new riparian fencing and off-stream watering for livestock.

"Agriculture is a significant part of the economy in the Shuswap. We want to support the adoption of new and improved nutrient management strategies by local farms to help protect our water quality, and that's what we're doing by making these grant funds available," says Simpson.

The total value of the grants being awarded is \$53,004. The grant program is administered via a competitive process whereby applicants submit applications. The expense was approved at a SWC meeting in March, with work getting underway later this year. The SWC grant funds will leverage other cash and in-kind contributions for a combined project value of \$109,629.

Since the Water Quality Grant Program began in 2020, the SWC has awarded 13 grants worth a total of \$178,169. The next round of intakes for the grant program will open in November.

-30-

Photo: IMG_0636.jpg. Peter Barss and Katherine Lawrence of Rivershore Nursery in Mara are one of five recipients of grant funding from the Shuswap Watershed Council. Photo credit: Erin Vieira.

About: The Shuswap Watershed Council is a watershed-based partnership organization that works on water quality and safe recreation in the Shuswap.

Contact: For more information, please contact Alex de Chantal or Erin Vieira c/o the Fraser Basin Council in Kamloops at 250 314-9660 and visit www.shuswapwater.ca.