



COMOX VALLEY  
**LAND TRUST**

## COMOX VALLEY LAND TRUST ANNUAL REPORT

**April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021**

With COVID-19 such a pervasive factor in our lives, it is hard to imagine that this year could be characterized as CVLT's "double-double" year, but it was. We doubled the amount of land protected through our Land Protection Program and we doubled the capital invested in our Stewardship Endowment Fund.

### Land Protection Program



With the addition of a new covenant protecting Perseverance Creek in the Cumberland Forest, the total of CVLT's protected lands now stand at 276 hectares, double the amount protected in 2018. The acquisition of Perseverance Creek was initiated by our partners, the Cumberland Community Forest Society. High-priority ecological areas of riparian and upland forests on both sides of the creek are now protected in perpetuity through a conservation covenant.





Our second “double” also involves the Cumberland Forest. As part of our obligations to protect lands in perpetuity we have a responsibility to monitor each of our covenants on an annual basis. A biologist visits each site and prepares a compliance monitoring report. In 2014 CVLT set up a Stewardship Endowment Fund, the annual disbursements of which are used to pay for covenant monitoring and management. The initial capital contribution generated only enough annual revenue to cover some of our sites, and each time we take on a new property an additional capital contribution is made. In late 2020, CVLT received a significant anonymous contribution and half of the gift was added to the Stewardship Endowment Fund to cover future monitoring expenses for all the Cumberland Forest covenants.



The Morrison Headwaters Nature Preserve Phase 2 project was the beneficiary of the other half of this most generous gift. This project is proceeding on a willing-seller, willing-buyer basis with detailed boundary definition and appraisals of land of timber values hopefully proceeding in this fiscal year.

The gift is the most generous contribution made by an individual in the history of the CVLT.

With growing public recognition of the importance of reducing carbon emissions and maintaining biodiversity, the preservation of forest and wetland ecosystems are essential tools in the natural climate solutions toolbox. Protected forests can continue to sequester carbon for hundreds of years. Likewise, wetlands can sequester and store carbon in their biomass and soils. To further



support our work CVLT has established the Comox Valley Natural Climate Solutions Fund. Donations to this fund are used to buy and protect natural areas in the Comox Valley.

## **Conservation Partnership Program**

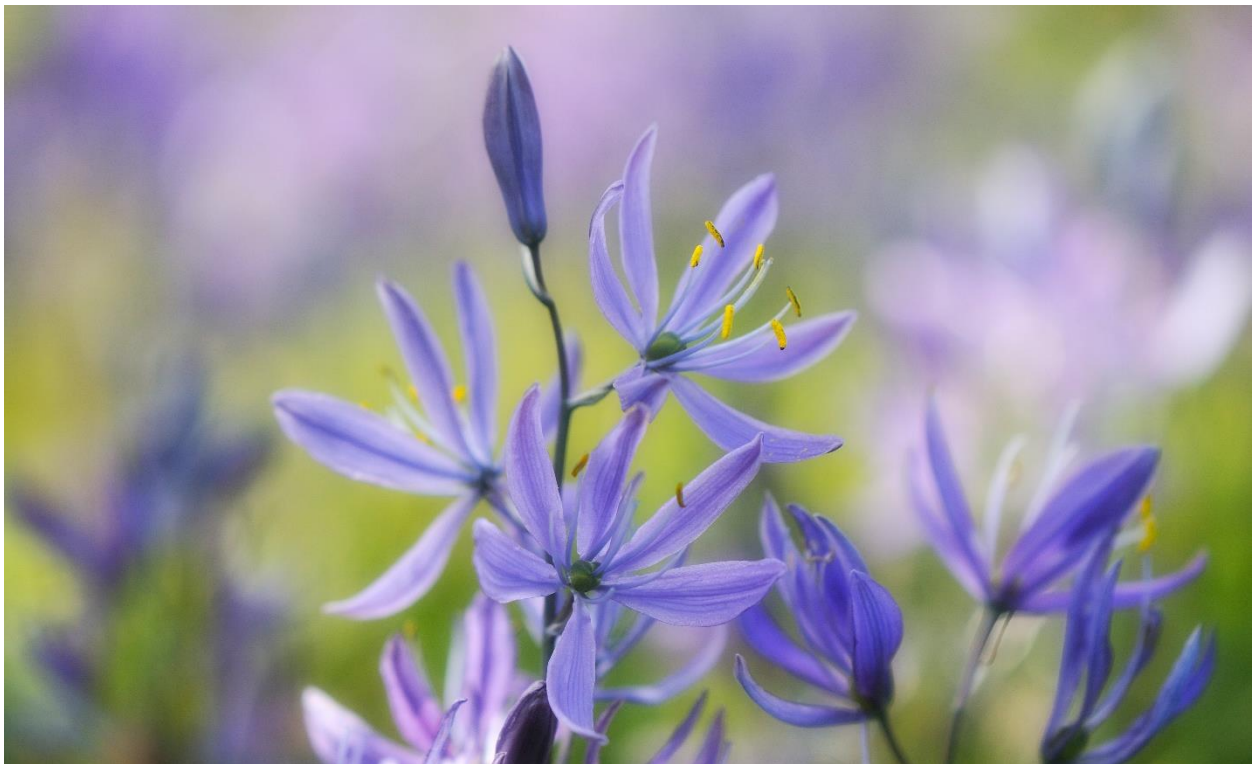
This program expanded its involvement in local government policymaking and advocacy for improving environmental conditions in the valley.

With the Comox Valley Regional District, we participated in the:

- Airshed Roundtable
- Comox Lake Watershed Advisory Group
- Liquid Waste Management Plan
- Tsolum River Agricultural Watershed Plan Phase 2
- Public discussion around the creation of a Regional Park Service

With the City of Courtenay, the partnership served on the:

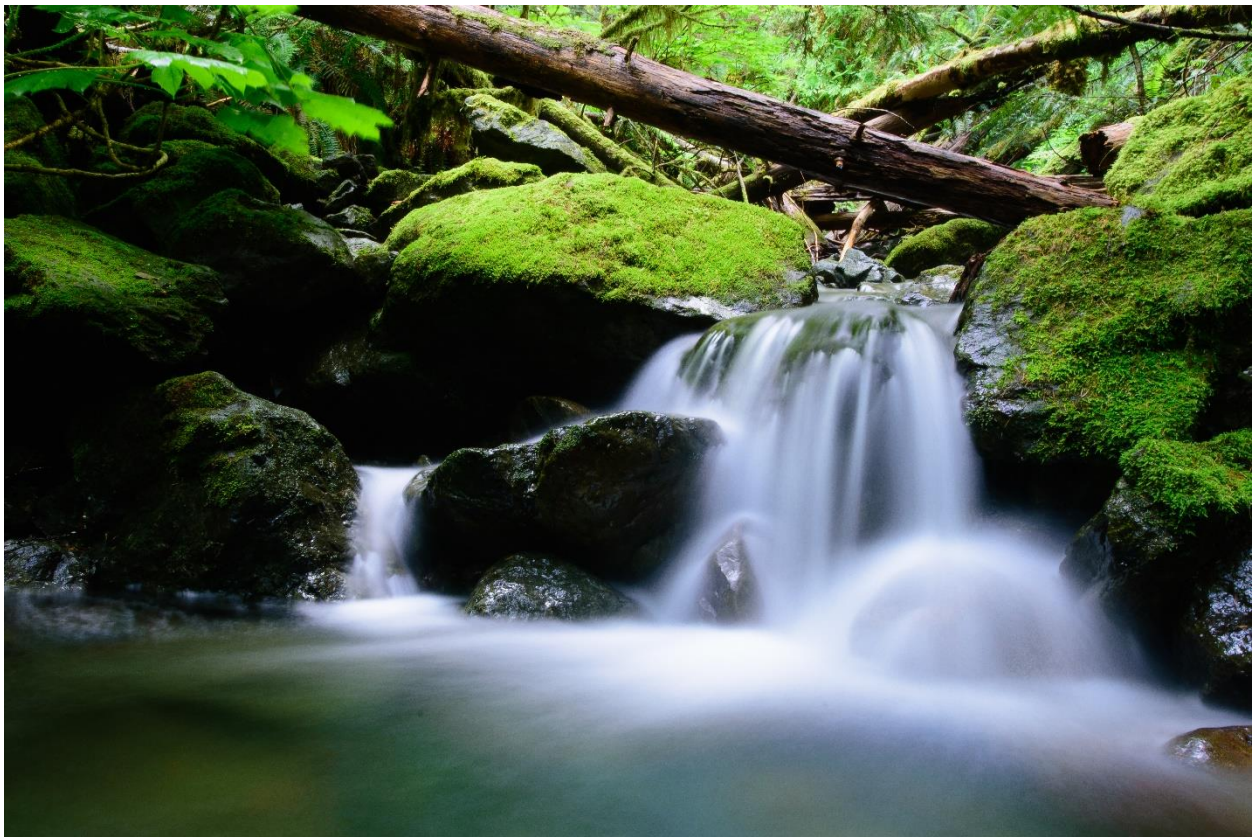
- Environmental Working Group
- Official Community Plan Technical Advisory Committee





The goal of Official Community Plan update is to provide city council with meaningful, integrated, technical input on a range of community issues related to the creation of the City of Courtenay climate friendly Official Community Plan (OCP). The advisory committee provides technical guidance on long-term planning principles, policy development and ideas for partnership and acceleration of implementation strategies that support the ultimate goal of reducing community greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change.

The CVCP's involvement as a member of this project committee recognizes our credibility and expertise, which has been growing significantly in recent years. The partnership was also designated as a Development Permit referral agency. Courtenay development permit applicants are now encouraged to seek CVCP input on environmental issues related to their projects prior to getting involved in detailed planning.



CVCP was also an active participant in two Municipal Natural Assets Initiative (MNAI) pilot projects affecting the Morrison Creek and Comox Lake watersheds.

MNAI is changing the way municipalities deliver everyday services, increasing the quality and resilience of infrastructure at lower costs and reduced risk.

The MNAI team provides scientific, economic and municipal expertise to support and guide local governments in identifying, valuing, and accounting for natural assets in their financial planning



and asset management programs and developing leading-edge, sustainable and climate resilient infrastructure.

The Morrison Creek Watershed pilot project focuses on the development of a species-at-risk tool where we explored the interplay between natural asset stormwater management and critical habitat for species at risk. The analysis was completed and includes an economic evaluation of the natural asset services that are provided by the watershed. The results of the analysis are a valuable tool to support the CVLT's efforts to acquire and protect the creek's headwaters.



The CVCP Education and Outreach Program presented the Comox Valley Watershed Resilience Symposium from October 21 to 23: Climate Change, Collaboration and Landscape Restoration that was very well attended. The CVCP also hosted two online information sessions with Deb Curran and Erin Gray (UVic Environmental Law Centre) regarding how to maximize environmental protection through Official Community Plans. Recordings of the symposium presentations and one of the OCP presentations are available on our website.

The CVCP Steering Committee added three new members (the Courtenay and District Fish & Game Protective Association, Cumberland Wetlands Working Group, and the Puntledge River Forest Protective Association) and welcomed back the Brooklyn Creek Streamkeepers, MARS and the Tsolum River Restoration Society around the Zoom table.





## Conservation Science

Under the leadership of our executive director, CVLT has launched its third program area: conservation science.



The current focus is on bat research, with three distinct but inter-related program areas:

- 1) Determining the presence, relative abundance and habitat preferences of bat species in the Puntledge Watershed, especially those species potentially vulnerable to White Nose Syndrome, with the support of the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program.
- 2) Contributing to continental-scale bat population monitoring through the establishment and operation of the Comox Grid Cell of the North American Bat Monitoring Program in partnership with the BC Ministry of Environment and the Wildlife Conservation Society.
- 3) Agreeing to host and take on the responsibilities of delivering the North Island Chapter of the BC Community Bat Program.

As bats are nocturnal, much of the research is conducted after dusk by a small, but dedicated group of insomniacs. Our research has already confirmed the presence of two species of bat not previously known to occur on Vancouver Island (Mexican Free-tailed Bat and Fringed Myotis), and has highlighted the importance of the Comox Valley as a major migratory stop-over along the coastal fall migration route of Silver-haired Bats. Our team has also greatly expanded our



knowledge of where bat maternal colonies are located in the Valley and is actively monitoring bat populations at these colonies.

## Organizational Update

A new land trust accreditation program similar to that in place in the United States is being discussed in Canada. Accreditation could help to ensure greater consistency in the delivery of conservation projects across the country and to provide donors with greater assurance that their contributions are well spent and their legacies are well protected.

As a first step the CVLT board has adopted the Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices, upon which an accreditation program would be based. Next steps involve the adoption of policies governing all aspects of the way we work. We have been early adopters of this program and look forward to completing this program and capturing the benefits of accreditation. Several institutional funders already request the organization's status with regard to adoption of the CLTA Standards and Practices, included the Government of Canada.



## Thank You

Notwithstanding the challenges presented by the pandemic, the Comox Valley Land Trust has been able to continue its focus on land protection and providing the community and local decision makers with the best information to maintain and enhance our environmental values.



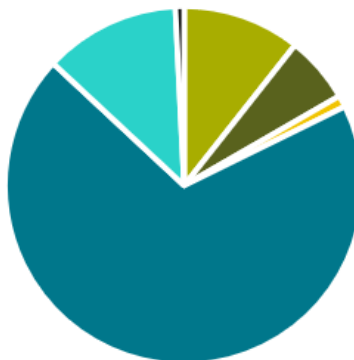


We would like to thank the volunteer CVLT Directors, local stewards, our hard-working team of professionals (Tim, Erin, Ian, Laura, Jerad, Fran, Kera, and Kelsey), and most importantly you, our members and supporters, for your contributions to preserving and enhancing the natural qualities of our Comox Valley.



## Comox Valley Land Trust 2020/21 Revenue and Expenses

### CVLT Total Revenue

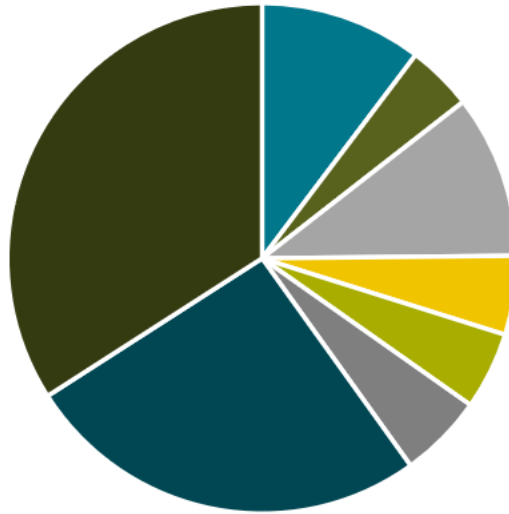


- Federal Funds
- Provincial Funds
- Local Government Funds
- Investments
- Individuals (incl Calendar Sales)
- Foundations and other ENGO's
- Fee For Service





## CVLT Total Expenses



- Overhead
- Fundraising
- Education and Outreach
- Land Protection
- Policy and Development Referrals
- Environmental Research
- Endowment Fund contributions
- Land Securement fund

