

DRIVEWAY

edition, designed to inform and entertain with brightly written stories from a group of B.C. new automotive section in today's as the Capital News unveils its WELCOME TO the driver's seat

SPORTS

THE HEAT is on as the UBC Okanagan men's and women's volleyball teams begin the 2013-14 Canadian eager to hold their own against more established university teams. Interuniversity Sport season

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Weekend Edition

The Central Okanagan's Best-Read Newspaper

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FRIDAY

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how you can participate.

See story on page A3 you value them as part of the Okanagan Wetlands Strategy Capital News reporter Judie background on this project and Steeves researched the you know and describe how coming weeks to list wetlands basin spadefoot toad, tiger salamander and yellow-breasted managing stormwater. recharging underground aquifers, controlling erosion and returns such as in filtering They have value in the at risk as painted turtles, great runoff, alleviating flooding, they also provide economic biodiversity they offer, but haven for mosquitoes or a place You're being asked in the They're home to such species Wetlands are more than a

AQUATIC BIOLOGIST Kyle Hawes, of Ecoscape Environmental Consultants of Kelowna, says the wetland behind him is a healthy one, with an uneven edge, some open water, varied aquatic and wetland plants, a variety of bird species using it and native upland vegetation. JUDIE STEEVES/CAPITAL NEWS

GOING





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Remaining protection wetlands need

JUDIE STEEVES STAFF REPORTER

often-endangered species in the Okanagan. n a sense, we're all guilty of destroying wetlands, habitat for a myriad of

runoff each spring.
"In the historical context, to prevent it from inundating Creek, where the land is now farmed and the creek has been channelled away in a ditch acres of land during its peak town area used to be all wet-lands, as did much of the property for miles around Mission After all, Kelowna's down-

this city was built on the destruction of local wetlands," points out Nelson Jatel, water stewardship director for the Okanagan Basin Water Board, who has lived in the valley for most of his life. "We collectively share in the guilt."

He's project manager for the first phase of the Okanagan Wetlands Strategy, a collab-oration of the OBWB, B.C. Wildlife Federation and Cen-tral Okanagan Regional Dis-trict, each of which will contribute in-kind work toward the

Jatel notes that we all are beneficiaries of channelizing and damming projects of the

1940s and 1950s in the Okanagan Valley; projects that have changed the face of the valley in the past 200 years

"Hopefully this project will capture some of the history and alert people to the importance of what's remaining,"

our house in order, and putting wetlands on people's radar.

It's a role he sees as very fitting for the OBWB, bringing resources and people together to create a warehouse of comject which he sees as 'putting excited about the pro-

ehensive information about

Because the Okanagan has such a dry climate, wetlands are home to many species at risk, from Tiger Salamanders to Painted Turtles and a variety

and to get a feeling for how people view wetlands; wheth-er they value them, and if so, in formation from all sources, in cluding individuals, to locate of ducks and geese.
The idea will be to pull inas many wetlands as possible ilkameen Conservation Program, the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program, North Okanagan Regional District, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, Environment Canoperations, Environment Canoper

visory capacity are the City of Kelowna, Ducks Unlimited,

Involved in a technical ad-

the South Okanagan Sim

grated in a map with many layers for the whole Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys, so it will be a map that reflects the The data will all be inte-

> different lenses of the different people who value wetlands liance, Okanagan College, and the Ministry of Agriculture. Armed with an Environ-ment Canada Sustainable

ject is now in the collecting-information stage, a task that's been contracted to Ecoscape Environmental Consultants, led by senior aquatic biologis Kyle Hawes, one of its prin-Ecosystems Program grant of \$35,000, the \$64,800 pro-

He points out that 85 per cent of wildlife use wetlands

ada, the Okanagan Nation Al-

to many rare and endangered species. directly or indirectly, so they're critical habitat, particularly in the Okanagan, which is home

As well, they have spiritual values to First Nations people and esthetic values to many other people, as serene places to enjoy nature, for education and for recreation.

In addition to providing biodiversity and habitat for

species at risk, wetlands are important tools in flood con

Okanagan Basin Water Board NELSON Jatel, water JUDIE STEEVES/CAPITAL NEWS Kelowna. found this jewel of a pond and Okanagan Wetlands Strategy, and project manager of the stewardship director for the wetland hidden in the middle of

trol. "They act like a sponge to hold back water; to allow it to spill over into riparian areas and release it slowly," he explained. They also help recharge groundwater resources.

Wetlands remove excess

They're also important in erosion control. fact, engineers today construct wetlands specifically to filter runoff and storm water.

nutrients and purify water. In

More than 85 per cent of the Okanagan's wetland and velopment of one sort or an-other—and the loss continues natural riparian habitat has been lost, most filled in for de-

although it's slowed, says

vineyard and other agricultur-al development and activities, cattle grazing, improper drain-age management, road construction and hazard tree re-moval in addition to develop-Hawes.
Wetlands are at risk from

vasive species threaten their health. Climate change will likely alter wetland habitats, and with development of other sorts, fragmentation can reduce their effectiveness. Contamination and in-

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regional district and B.C. Wildlife Federation Wetland mapping project a collaboration of

And then there's recreation, particularly an activity known as mud-bogging, which involves intentionally de-

stroying wetlands, just for the fun of it.

Margaret Bakelaar, environmental/land use planner for the region-al district, says they have Sensitive Habitat and In-

ventory Maps or SHIM, Wetland Inventory and Mapping or WIM and Foreshore Inventory Mapping or FIM and worked with a student from UBCO to do base-

line maps of wetlands, but this project will compile information from around

BCWF was planning to do the same thing, so the collaboration was born. The regional district had planned to hold public workshops on wetlands, but found the

they're under pressure from development," she where the priority wet-lands are and where

"We want to know

explained.
"The more information we have, the better. I ance for decision-mak-ing," she added. provides valuable guid-

MARGARET Bakelaar, environmental/land use planner with the Central Okanagan Regional District, says detailed mapping of sensitive areas has been done, but this pro-

STEEVES/CAPITAL NEV

restoration or protection of wetlands, she added.

Protection is a priorof non-government agen-cies out there interested in be a focus on stewardship, she noted. There are lots been identified there can Once wetlands have

ity over restoration, she

There are other tools

land trusts to protect sensitive natural features. such as covenants through The aim is to engage more fish and game clubs to get involved in projects conserving wetlands.
"There's a huge base of volunteers there," he

group to hold onto the Wetlandkeepers program, which was adopted by the organization, explains Neil Fletcher, wetlands wetlands program since 1996 and is the only education program cooup to hold onto the The BCWF has had a

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It has projects going on around the province to help communities re-store wetland habitat, en-Estate Foundation of B.C. and Shell Canada.
Once Ecoscape completes the outreach portion of the project and collates the results of the data gathering process, there'll be a clearer idea of what now exists in the valley,

he noted, and from there, priorities can be set so volunteers interested in a field project know where they should begin.

to get involved in some work in the Okanagan when Fletcher discovered

ands, and had planned

ject will take that the next step.

PROJECT UNDERWAY

other projects were get-ting underway.
"We didn't want to re-invent the wheel, so we collaborated," he ex-

Ecoscape staff have been collecting data from a variety of sources so they can consolidate the

open water; whether it's swamp, marsh, fen or bog and what types of vegetation there is. scribe the sort of wet-land it is: whether there's

are also important, from animals to birds and in-

been gathered by other agencies, and is organizing meetings with the public, First Nations, fish and game clubs and naturalists' organizations.

They'll be asking people to list wetlands they're aware of and detection of the cost of the state of the st

Education Program has the support of Wildlife Habitat Canada, the Real

The BCWF Wetlands

Wildlife observations

The potential risks to each wetland are also important, noted Hawes.

That information will

importance of wetlands to them and what qualities matter the most. be gathered together in a single document with asing their comments on the sessments of what every-one has had to say, includ

priority wetlands will

Taking action to protect, enhance or restore wetlands would be part of a next phase of the pro-

To contribute your knowledge and valuation of wetlands, go to: surveymonkey.com/s/okanagan_wetlands_strategy_phase1
A public meeting has tentatively been set for Thurs., Nov. 28 at a location. tion yet to be determined



FRI., OCT. 25



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