

Community Mapping Network Outreach Project 2003-2005

Announcing the Community Mapping Network Outreach Project. The project is designed to create new data sharing partnerships and to improve relevant data holdings to support land use decisions in the following geographical areas: Coastal BC, Fraser Basin, Upper Skeena, Okanagan, and Kootenays. Funding is through the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia and CMN partners.

What are some benefits of the project?

The project will yield positive benefits for planning sustainable communities. It will provide access to up- to -date and accurate natural resource information that will be highly beneficial. For example, stream line and watercourse information is critical to determine required setbacks for development and redevelopment purposes and for identification of degraded habitat and potential restoration opportunities. Local governments will be able to use the service to provide the highest quality local information to Official Community Planning processes. The expansion of knowledge and access to a publicly available information systems will enable land use decisions that include habitat and species conservation values.

What skills will be improved?

Mapping and monitoring literacy is becoming a must-have skill for volunteers and professionals involved in land and water conservation and stewardship activities, and this two-year project will certainly help answer that need. Technological developments over the last decade have spurred the growth of community-based mapping, monitoring and inventory work and a tremendous amount of community effort has been spent developing methods for data collection at map scales (1:5000) suitable for community planning.

The demand for this information is growing; the equipment to produce it is becoming more affordable; and the tools and methods to provide quality data that can be integrated with existing government-held data sets are now available.

What will this project accomplish?

The project will increase the ability of volunteers and professionals to use and contribute data to the CMN especially in high growth or highly impacted communities. It will increase the number and quality of data sets accessible through the network and will increase the number of partnerships with communities and local governments.

This will be achieved through the following activities:

- Provide outreach and training
- Develop outreach and training tools
- Raise awareness of CMN
- Promote of data collection

- Acquire and integrate key databases and information
- Develop online data entry applications for selected species and habitats
- Form strategic partnerships with community groups and local governments to enhance the management and accessibility of the data holdings in the CMN.
- Maintain and improve existing information infrastructure. Maintain and support the CMN computer systems by load-sharing and connecting servers, providing stable 24-7 internet service, improving documentation and metadata.

What is the Community Mapping Network?

For about seven years, staff from CMN Charter Organizations have been working together to make natural resource information and spatial databases accessible to non-government organizations, communities, the public, government agencies, industry and First Nations; to promote sustainable resource management and to assist planning sustainable communities in British Columbia.

The primary goal of the Community Mapping Network (CMN) is to provide a service that collects, integrates and shares natural resource information, maps and mapping information to promote sustainable resource management and to assist planning sustainable communities in British Columbia and Canada. The CMN integrates data from many sources and makes it accessible at no cost to the user through an interactive internet-based mapping and database system. This information has many uses including land-use and community planning, storm water management, emergency response, habitat restoration and enhancement, watershed planning, coastal planning, development referrals, impact assessment, research, education and awareness.

The CMN through its partners and projects:

- Builds capacity within communities to collect and manage resource information;
- Champions community based data collection and data management, and integration of these data with other data bases to maximize their utility;
- Uses a distributed network of servers to provide internet access to resource information, base maps and imagery
- Provides expertise to assist development of on-line spatial data
- Develops tools and techniques to provide high quality data at scales useful to local land use decision-making (e.g. common methods and standards)
- Links community based mapping with government data bases such as the Canada/BC Fisheries Information Summary Systems (FISS) and the Coastal Resource Information System (CRIS);
- Shares ideas and project information locally and internationally
- Provides information about watershed management, stream ecology, fish and wildlife habitat and restoration opportunities and promotes active stewardship
- Creates an open forum for discussing the use and management of natural resources; and
- Promotes planning sustainable communities through workshops and case studies

Since its inception the CMN has championed the collection of community-based data, particularly around sensitive aquatic and riparian areas. The CMN has also pioneered interactive internet distribution of data on www.cmnbc.ca. Accessing and integrating local information with larger publicly funded data sets is a unique service of CMN. The

CMN provides a set of tools and standard methods that are used to help conserve fisheries, wildlife and aquatic habitat resources. The CMN distributes data sets from over thirty communities, and in turn, through its own servers, enables a growing number of local and regional governments to integrate their data. The CMN partners with over thirty-five organizations and is a venue for 22 natural resource atlases.

During its first five years, the CMN worked primarily in riparian and aquatic areas in the Georgia Basin, a region experiencing unprecedented growth, and associated habitat impacts. Recently CMN has expanded its service area, partnering with governments, non-profit groups, First Nations and other agencies throughout BC. To that end, this project proposes to systematically expand the geographic reach of the CMN service area through a two pronged approach of training and reciprocal data-sharing agreements, to improve the level of knowledge of CMN users and provide more continuous and consistent quality data sets for British Columbia.

The data and information provided on the CMN can be categorized as decision support information. Without precise, up to date spatial data, land use decisions made at any level, from the private landowner to the regional or provincial government are reduced to varying degrees of guess work. If you don't know what's on the landscape, planning that includes conservation values becomes increasingly challenging. It is important to note that many key data sets are funded through the Real Estate Foundation of BC and will be integrated into the CMN data holdings as a natural out come of this out reach project.

One of the CMN's objectives is to make data available to decision-makers at a scale most useful for local planning purposes (ideally 1:5,000). Urban and rural watersheds throughout British Columbia comprise of a myriad of land uses including residential, agriculture, industry and recreation. Natural features such as wetlands, unmapped tributaries, species distributions and key erosion points must be identified to allow informed decision making and to plan sustainable communities. Once the data is compiled, the data is integrated with existing local, provincial and federal data bases and made available.

The BC Conservation Foundation

The BCCF has been a supporting partner of the CMN for six years. The Foundation houses and maintains part of the network's infrastructure. The BCCF's mission is "to make a positive contribution to the conservation of BC's fish, wildlife and habitat through the provision of administrative, project management and technical field services." The BCCF works closely both with partners and independently to undertake projects in fish, wildlife habitat inventories, research, enhancement, restoration, resource stewardship and environmental education.

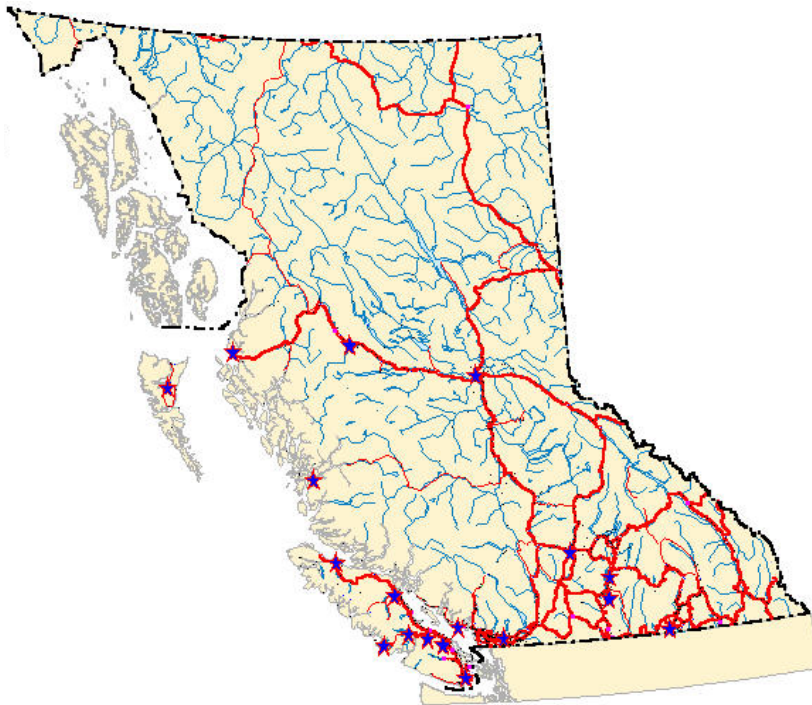
If you would like more information about the project or you would like to let us know about a key natural resource database that you would like to see made accessible through the CMN or would like to arrange a training or awareness workshop please contact one of the people below.

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Community Mapping Network Partners and Atlas Projects



Sunshine Coast Regional District
Fraser Valley Regional District
Comox Strathcona Regional District
Nanaimo Regional District
Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District
District of Saanich
Cowichan Valley Regional District
District of Squamish
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