

# British Columbia Ecological Services Initiative

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Joey Chopra, Tegan Adams, and David Zehnder

**E**cological Goods and Services (EG&S) are benefits derived from ecological functions of healthy ecosystems, which are globally recognized as necessary for human health and well-being. British Columbia and Canada lack policies to provide farmers with incentives to supply and (or) enhance ecological goods and services on their lands. The British Columbia Ecological Services Initiative's (BCESI) objective is to demonstrate a voluntary incentive-based model that encourages farmers to adopt or preserve Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) for the maintenance and enhancement of ecological goods and services under their management control.

As a producer-led initiative, the BCESI is made up of a team of experts focused on demonstrating, analyzing, and disseminating information on the concept of EG&S to a variety of interest stakeholders including producers, policy makers, government, public institutions, consumers, and others.

## Program Phases

The BCESI is divided into three phases: Phase One, the development and testing of the model, is to be completed in 2012.

Phase One started in 2010 with the initiation of the Windermere District Farmers' Institute Ecological Goods and Services Three Year Demonstration Project (WDFI EG&S), funded in part by the East Kootenay Conservation Fund. This project established the initial three year demonstration site. So far, this phase has involved conducting an initial assessment of the demonstration site to establish an Environmental Farm Plan and accompanying BMPs. Recommended changes to the site have included the maintenance of the existing fence to exclude cattle from a portion of the riparian zone designated for the project, and the fencing off of the turtle nesting site in the same area, which in turn required the creation of a new winter watering site. Other components of this phase include an in-depth literature review, interviews with global EG&S experts, the establish-

ment of program management and delivery teams, and engagement with key stakeholders regarding the EG&S concept and results from the demonstration site.

Phase Two of the project—now underway—is the development of a province-wide EG&S Research and Demonstration Project. This phase will take what was learned in the first year of phase One and establish additional demonstration sites with a variety of commodity producers in different regions across the province. Biological and economic results will be monitored and communicated to stakeholders. This phase will determine the viability of the concept in this larger provincial context and lay the ground work for Phase Three.

If the results from the initial demonstration phases indicate that a long-term concept is viable, Phase Three will facilitate the implementation of this long-term EG&S Program for the province of British Columbia.

## Conclusion

The BCESI's main goal is to create and maintain an established, long-term, financially sustainable, province-wide ecological goods and services program. Other aspects of the Initiative include research of EG&S efforts globally, research of long-term funding solutions, and an information project which will use collected information to establish a collaborative, web-based information exchange system for British Columbia producers, government officials, NGOs, and other stakeholders. The Initiative is supported by the BC Agriculture Council, BC Cattlemen's Association, University of Alberta, Simon Fraser University, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, BC Ministry of Environment, Environmental Farm Plan Program, Ducks Unlimited, University of Montana, the Columbia Basin Trust, Regional District of the East Kootenay Conservation Fund, and the Windermere District Farmers Institute.

The Program Delivery Team is a team of individuals and institutions who will be delivering this project: Wanda Gorsuch, EG&S Expert; King Campbell, Ducks

Unlimited; Dr Nancy Olewiler, Simon Fraser University; Dr Peter Boxall (Economist) and other EG&S experts from University of Alberta; University of Montana Field School; contracted specialists; Dave Zehnder, Consulting Project Co-ordinator & Rancher; Agricultural Producers (at demonstration sites); and Shizu Futa, Certified Professional Bookkeeper. Pedro Lara Almuedo and Don Gayton, extension specialists with FORREX, are also providing consultation on the program's extension and communication aspects.

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*For more information on this topic check out the FORREX Webinar Series “Natural capital, ecosystem services and forest management” or subscribe to the FORREX “Conservation Biology eNewsletter” where we regularly feature articles on natural capital and valuation of ecological goods and services.*

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### Contact Information

For further information, please contact *David Zehnder*, Program Co-ordinator, British Columbia Ecological Services Initiative, Program Coordinator, ESI Ecosystem Services Initiative, Website: <http://bcesi.ca>  
Email: [dzehnder@telus.net](mailto:dzehnder@telus.net)

*Joey Chopra* is a 2nd year Masters student at Simon Fraser University's School of Public Policy.

*Tegan Adams* is a Research Associate with the Policy Analyst Unit of the Institute for Land Use Innovation (ILUI), University of Alberta, and is the ILUI's project liaison with the BCESI. Email: [tjadams@ualberta.ca](mailto:tjadams@ualberta.ca)

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