



Conserving our Sense of Place

Why is Conserving Watershed Landscapes Important?

We have a tendency to think that the landscapes that we enjoy and define *our sense of place* have been and will be around forever. However, just as we build communities that are desirable in which to live, so must we work to build retention of the landscapes that we consider treasured. Working to ensure that landscapes continue to offer scenic, recreational, natural, heritage and agricultural values for future generations requires a broad-based approach which covers urban and rural areas supported by unparalleled partnership with multiple stakeholders.

If Calgary continues at its growth rate of 4.5 per cent of area per year, it will reach 700 square kilometers by 2050, engulfing communities such as Okotoks, Airdrie and Cochrane. The risk of losing many of the rich and diverse prairie and foothills landscapes will be a primary challenge for elected officials, planners, landowners and communities.

Researcher Brad Stelfox, as quoted in *Study predicts foothills will become Calgary suburb*. Laurel Nadon, Okotoks Western Wheel, January 17, 2007

That's why we created Western Sky Land Trust

Over the years, landowners realized that the land they wanted to conserve did not fit within the mandate of existing land trust organizations. Consequently, through an alliance of landowners, like-minded conservation organizations, private citizens, government and corporate partners, Western Sky Land Trust (Western Sky) was created in 2005 to fulfill a vision of a more flexible land trust focused on **conserving landscapes for future generations**.

Western Sky is a locally-based land trust that works collaboratively to conserve watershed lands inside and outside cities, towns, hamlets and villages in the Calgary region. We also perform an essential role in providing unique opportunities that help bridge the gaps between other land conservation organizations and land donors. This is achieved by providing resources and outreach to help balance land conservation with community strategies that lead to private, public and philanthropic partnerships.

Western Sky is positioned in the community to work across political boundaries, assisting in identifying and securing conservation opportunities both in the urban and rural landscape, which is important as watersheds know no boundaries. Conservation of local watershed lands contributes positively to the water quantity and quality necessary for healthy communities, wildlife habitat and industry. Conserving these landscapes contributes to desirable communities, allows relaxation and recreational opportunities and connects us to the past through heritage lands. All of these elements make the Calgary region a desirable place to live and to visit and contributes to *Conserving Our Sense of Place*.

Why should I become involved with Western Sky Land Trust?

Maybe you are a person who fly fishes on the Bow, enjoys the experience of viewing wildlife passing through natural corridors, admires the landscapes when you walk or drive past, appreciates the importance of water quantity and quality, or understands the link these lands have in supporting agricultural activity and our heritage. If so, these are just a few reasons to support Western Sky.

Western Sky provides a **local and unique contribution** to land conservation in the Calgary region and we would not be able to do this important work without the generosity of our donors.

Our distinct contribution is highlighted by our first major conservation project, the Agrium-Nodwell Nature Preserve. Despite being located on a stretch of the Bow deemed by Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation to be of *national significance*, it did not fit within the mandates of existing conservation organizations, leaving Western Sky as the only organization in position to undertake this project. Its location contributes to an important wildlife corridor, contains habitat for close to 300 species of plants, and has large and diverse bird populations. Going forward, Western Sky is motivated to continue to conserve this stretch of the Bow River as it provides recreational activities for residents and international visitors, is the source for agricultural, industrial activity, and drinking water and contains important wildlife habitat. All of these functions, coupled with a resident population of over one million, make it a complex natural system that must balance a variety of needs. **Your contribution will help ensure the success of our efforts to conserve the Bow River watershed and other important watersheds in our community.**

How will my gift make a difference?

You can help ensure that the *sense of place* our landscapes provide is here for future generations. Your gift will make a difference by supporting Western Sky's goal to conserve open and natural areas within your community. Conservation of valuable watersheds can happen by allowing us to purchase or steward land, create conservation opportunities through our programs and/or grow our operations. Any donation large or small makes an important difference. We'd also like to hear about your vision for conserving the landscapes of our region. **Please contact us to see how we can work together.**

Living in the Calgary region, I value conserving landscapes that contribute to our quality of life, and provide a sense of place of where we live. I feel Western Sky is a worthy investment, and hope you will join me with your support!

David Bissett