



Media Release

Employment lands project launched in Kootenay-Boundary

May 14, 2012

For immediate release

Decision-making around economic growth in the Kootenay-Boundary region will soon be easier, thanks to a new project now underway. The newly-launched Basin-Boundary Employment Lands Inventory Project will directly address an issue faced by many communities: access to land to accommodate existing business expansion and future investment and economic growth.

“This project will provide several important deliverables,” says Rob Gay, General Manager of Community Futures East Kootenay, the lead organization on the project. “The first of these is a comprehensive inventory of employment lands.”

The project defines employment lands as lands that generate economic wealth, including: agricultural lands; lands zoned or designated for heavy industry, light industry and commercial (non-retail); First Nations designated employment lands; brown and greyfield sites; and Crown lands available for development.

“A better understanding of the availability and type of employment lands will help the region to retain and attract businesses and investment,” says Gay. “This information is a key tool to ensuring economic growth, and helping to create and retain jobs.”

BC’s Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation (JTI) is an active partner in the project.

“We are pleased to see this project get underway”, says Diana Brooks, Regional Manager, Kootenay Region. “The role of the JTI is to support job creation and investment attraction, and to help build investment-readiness in the region. From an economic development perspective, this project will provide valuable information to the region as a whole.”

“We will start by producing an inventory of employment lands and their associated infrastructure and economic assets in a universal GIS platform,” says Terri MacDonald who will provide research support for the project in her role as Regional Innovation Chair at Selkirk College’s Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute. “Then we will bring together key stakeholders to discuss the results and identify collaborative regional solutions. We will look closely at the question: What is our region’s ability to accommodate economic growth?”

In addition to providing a comprehensive inventory of employment lands, the project is expected to build regional collaboration that will help develop solutions to shape future growth.

“When it comes to economic development, we need to think regionally,” says Nelson Mayor John Dooley, who will also serve on the project’s regional advisory group. “I feel this inventory is long over due. It is one of several key elements of an economic development strategy for the region.”

Nelson is just one community of among over 30 municipalities, regional districts and tribal nation councils that will be invited to share data and participate in the project.

In the long term, the inventory is expected to help make the region more attractive to investors, build business retention and expansion and help communities make more informed planning decisions.

The project is supported by a broad range of partners, including: Community Futures of East Kootenay; Kootenay Association for Science and Technology, the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation (JTI) and the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (RDI) at Selkirk College. The project is funded by the Southern Interior Beetle Action Coalition, Community Futures East Kootenay, and the Columbia Basin Trust. The Selkirk College Geospatial Research Centre will provide geospatial mapping support.

For more information, please contact:

Rob Gay

General Manager
Community Futures East Kootenay
Phone: (250) 489-4356
Email: rob@cfek.ca

Terri MacDonald

Regional Innovation Chair in Rural Economic
Development
Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, Selkirk
College
Phone: (250) 365-1434
Email: tmacdonald@selkirk.ca