

**SOCIETY FOR ECOSYSTEM  
RESTORATION IN NORTHERN  
BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2020 - 2025**

**A FIVE-YEAR VISION FOR HEALTHY AND  
RESILIENT ECOSYSTEMS IN NORTHERN  
BRITISH COLUMBIA**



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

On behalf of the Society for Ecosystem Restoration in Northern BC (SERNbc), I am pleased to introduce our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan which reaffirms our vision, mission, mandate, and principles and sets out specific objectives for the next five years to achieve our vision of a growing restoration economy and healthy, resilient ecosystems in northern British Columbia.

SERNbc's first formal strategic plan was prepared in 2013 to provide guidance to the Society. At this time, priority areas identified for restoration include open forests, at-risk ecosystems including those used by species at risk, aquatic ecosystems, berry producing areas, and ecosystems vulnerable to climate change. More recently, the Board has re-affirmed these priorities and added new objectives for the 2020-2025 period.

Since 2014, SERNbc has built substantial capacity and expertise to develop and deliver ecosystem restoration programming in first, the Vanderhoof District, second the Omineca Region, and now across Northern BC. SERNbc has also achieved steady growth in terms of the scale, scope, and complexity of completed projects and funding awarded to the organization.

In 2020-2025 SERNbc will continue to:

- Identify, treat, and monitor vulnerable and degraded ecosystems in northern BC to sustain ecological services and socio-economic needs,
- Develop and coordinate ecosystem restoration programming,
- Collaborate with partners and stakeholders in northern BC, and
- Acquire, store, and disseminate technical information about ecosystem restoration.

As we move into our 7<sup>th</sup> formal year of operations, we look forward to continuing our core work, collaboratively developing and delivering restoration programming, while continuing to build the critical infrastructure, with our partners and member organizations, to grow the restoration economy and build healthy, resilient ecosystems in Northern BC.



John DeGagne, President

Society for Ecosystem Restoration in Northern BC

**Prepared by:**

The SERNbc Board of Directors and Staff in conjunction with Trout Creek Collaborative Solutions.

**Support provided by:**

The Ecosystem Restoration Branch of the Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

**Approved by:**

The SERNbc Board of Directors, April 30, 2020



## INTRODUCTION

The Society for Ecosystem Restoration in Northern BC (SERNbc) is a regional non-profit society established, formally, in 2014. Since its inception SERNbc has supported and directly developed and delivered a wide range of ecosystem restoration programming in northern BC.

Forest management, industrial development, and climate change are large-scale disturbance agents in northern BC ecosystems. Where these disturbances impair ecosystem resilience, ecosystems may become vulnerable and at risk of further degradation. Our ability to understand this vulnerability and alter our management approach is key to maintaining the health and resilience of at-risk ecosystems. Ecosystem restoration, in this context, describes a continuum or suite of activities designed to identify degraded ecosystems and implement appropriate management interventions to restore the structure and function of important ecosystem attributes.

SERNbc is a trusted delivery agent of ecosystem restoration services in northern BC. SERNbc facilitates understanding of vulnerable and degraded ecosystems and develops and delivers management interventions designed to restore ecosystem structure and function. Through these activities, SERNbc is improving our understanding of sustainable resource management and is a leading advocate for the nascent restoration economy in northern BC.

As development, climate change, and other pressures increase in northern ecosystems SERNbc is well positioned to build the restoration economy with all levels of government, First Nations, industry, and other important stakeholders. Our collective goal is to build a better understanding of the importance of northern ecosystems for ecological values and the socio-economic well-being of northern communities.

In March 2020, a facilitated strategic planning session was held with SERNbc's Board of Directors, staff, and other key individuals with the goal of creating a roadmap for development and delivery of ecosystem restoration programming over the next five years.

The results of this process were compiled, transcribed, and synthesized to either affirm old or determine new components for a renewed strategic plan. The planning session confirmed the relevance of the 2014-2019 vision, mission, and mandate and identified six new strategic objectives which are described within this plan.

This 2020-2025 Strategic Plan will guide the SERNbc Board of Directors and staff over the next five years to implement longer term goals and objectives to guide the development of strategies, tactics, actions, to ensure the growth of ecosystem restoration programming in northern BC. These strategic objectives will also provide SERNbc with the ability to measure progress, success, and failures which are important tools that will contribute to the success of the organization.



## VISION

“Healthy and resilient ecosystems in Northern BC.”

## MISSION

To manage the structure and function of vulnerable and degraded ecosystems in Northern BC to achieve a desired condition that will sustain ecological services and socio-economic needs.

## MANDATE

1. To identify, treat, and monitor vulnerable and degraded ecosystems in Northern BC;
2. To foster collaboration and coordinate ecosystem restoration programming in Northern BC;
3. To acquire technical information on ecosystem restoration and disseminate to partner organizations, First Nations, and other stakeholders; and
4. To inform and advocate for current ecological vulnerabilities to land managers, First Nations, and other stakeholders.

## VALUES

- Collaboration - We embrace the opportunity to work with, grow, and learn from each other;
- Equity - We ensure appropriate representation from all regions in Northern BC including diverse representation from the SERNbc Board of Directors and Membership;
- Growth – We will support the development of ecosystem restoration activities at all scales in Northern BC; and

- Impact - We will measure our effectiveness against science-based, defensible, goals and be able to demonstrate tangible, on-the-ground, results at the appropriate scale; and
- Continuous Improvement - We strive to learn, improve, and do better tomorrow than we did today.



## OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles are fundamental to the development of SERNbc and to the effective delivery of strategic ER priorities. These principles will guide decision-making as an organization:

- SERNbc is a partnership driven organization recognizing the critical need to develop collaborative programming with governments, First Nations, NGO's, academia and other proponents in Northern BC.
- SERNbc may add value to the activities of industrial partners in support of ecosystem services; where industrial activities do not consider ecosystem values. SERNbc will not assume the obligations of industry but may improve and provide mechanisms for holistic delivery. Where SERNbc is approached with ecosystem restoration opportunities; their alignment with SERNbc's vision, mission, and values will be assessed.
- SERNbc is interested in growing the restoration economy and supporting the development and delivery of ecosystem restoration programming across Northern BC, through a variety and multitude of independent delivery agents. Where invited, SERNbc will seek to collaborate, augment, or support all initiatives.
- The authority to implement ecosystem restoration programming on public lands rests with the Province, First Nations, and other land managers. Where SERNbc is approached by private landowners and other proponents with ecosystem restoration opportunities, their alignment with SERNbc's vision, mission, and values will be assessed.
- SERNbc relies on an array of external funding sources to develop and deliver ecosystem restoration programming. Where possible, opportunities for revenue generation will be explored.
- The development of ER programming will be supported by a regional and/or landscape level understanding and the identification of at-risk ecological priorities.

- SERNbc will strive to implement an ecosystem-based management approach that recognizes the full array of interactions within an ecosystem, including humans, rather than considering single issues, species, or ecosystem services in isolation.
- SERNbc recognizes the need to consider and balance ecological, social and economic values in the development and delivery of ecosystem restoration programming and will engage in a collaborative stakeholder-focused processes to ensure benefits to multiple values.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### 1. *Sustaining Momentum*

**Goal:** We will maintain a steady trajectory of growth to ensure sustainability of the organization.

*Objective 1:* Ensure adequate and continued base funding to support a full-time paid Society coordinator.

*Objective 2:* Continue the strategic use of seed funding to develop priority restoration programming and projects.

*Objective 3:* Continue to grow regional project development committees to identify local and regional restoration interests and align them with strategic priorities and funding opportunities.

### 2. *Organizational Development*

**Goal:** We will direct further attention to a number of key governance and structural policies to ensure clear and transparent operation of the organization.

*Objective 1:* We will create defined roles for Directors to clarify shared responsibilities for various organizational functions.

*Objective 2:* We will strive to have an inclusive and diverse board representing the north areas's diverse cultural, social, and gender perspectives.

*Objective 3:* We will consider and implement policy tools to build regional representation from all three, Skeena, Omineca, and Northeast, Forest Regions in northern BC.



### 3. *First Nations Partnerships*

**Goal:** We will actively seek new opportunities to align First Nations interests and capacity with the activities of the Society.

*Objective 1:* We will endeavor to work to with First Nations as partners in the development and delivery of restoration programming.

*Objective 2:* We will work to further First Nations involvement in the Society, including, but not limited to, BOD membership, committee involvement, and project development and implementation.

### 4. *Aquatic Restoration*

**Goal:** We will diversify our largely terrestrial focus to include priority degraded aquatic habitats for restoration activities.

*Objective 1:* We will actively seek partnership opportunities with other non-governmental organizations to support the development of ecosystem restoration projects targeting degraded fish habitat.

*Objective 2:* We will continue to support the development and implementation of fish passage assessment and watershed assessment tools.

*Objective 3:* We will broaden our membership to include representation from all levels of government and actively pursue funding for and develop aquatic restoration projects.

### 5. *Landscape Level Planning*

**Goal:** Where possible, we will develop, encourage, and partake in landscape level land-use planning initiatives to provide an ecosystem restoration perspective.

*Objective 1:* We will participate in land-use planning and watershed assessment forums to ensure the holistic consideration of all ecosystem values.

*Objective 2:* Will seek to understand and incorporate resolution of landscape issues into project delivery.

## 6. Communications and Extension

**Goal:** We will engage in communication efforts to build the SERNbc brand and increase awareness of our expertise and capacity to land managers, users and the general public to create opportunities and support for ecosystem restoration in northern BC.

*Objective 1:* Provide targeted audiences with SERNbc related information, tools, and educational materials and support further development and on-the-ground delivery of ecosystem restoration programming.

*Objective 2:* Develop and disseminate ecosystem restoration information that is targeted towards individuals and organizations that can play a role in ecosystem restoration.

*Objective 3:* Build a constituency of support for ecosystem restoration through relationships and strategic partnerships.



## PRIORITY ECOSYSTEMS

### 1. Open Forests

- This category includes open forest types impacted by land management activities including the transition from grassland/brushland ecosystems to open forest conditions. Examples ecosystems include grasslands, shrub complexes, berry producing areas, dry south-aspect Douglas-fir forests and other open forest types.

### 2. Deciduous and Mixed-Wood Forests

- Deciduous and mixed-wood stands provide valuable habitat conditions that support animal and plant species assemblages very different from those found in coniferous forests. Old deciduous stands are particularly valuable because their attributes offer habitat complexity that can support a high level of biodiversity, mitigate the spread of wildfire, and provide a valuable source of nutrients for ecosystem maintenance and regeneration.



### **3. *Ecosystems-at-Risk or Ecosystems supporting Species-at-Risk***

- Red-listed (endangered or threatened) or blue-listed (of special concern or vulnerable) ecosystems, or ecosystems supporting species at risk.
- Restoration activities to be focused on restoration of ecosystem structure and function to support the long-term viability of these species and ecosystems.
- Values are associated with the long-term persistence of wildlife and plant species and ecological communities that are considered at risk.

### **4. *Wetlands***

- Wetland restoration can be used to address a range of wetland impacts, such as hydrology/water levels and vegetative structure and composition.
- Values associated with this category could be directly related to water itself (e.g. water quality) as well as processes directly linked to water (e.g. longevity of fish species, fish production, sustainability of watering source).

### **5. *Fish Habitat and Fish Passage***

- Significant gains to improve fish habitat can be made by restoring passage where it has been blocked by development infrastructure such as roads and rail.
- Support, develop, and deliver projects related to riparian function, hydrology and overall watershed management activities as they influence aquatic ecosystems.

### **6. *Forest Ecosystems Vulnerable to Climate Change***

- Where forested ecosystems are expected to be vulnerable or stressed under anticipated future climates, adaptation aimed at improving the resiliency of these ecosystems will be important.
- Maintaining and enhancing ecological structure and function through activities such as riparian enhancement, preservation of large diameter snags and CWD, accelerating old forest conditions in plantations through species manipulation, gap creation, and creation of structural diversity.