

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 16, 2025

Invasive Tree Removal in the South Okanagan

Penticton, BC – Hundreds of invasive trees are being removed from public land in the South Okanagan throughout October.

The Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS) is spearheading a three-year project that includes the creation of demonstration sites on municipal land in Penticton, Oliver and Summerland. Invasive trees are being removed and replaced with ecologically suitable species. The goal of the project is to enhance habitat and resources for native wildlife and increase species diversity.

“We are showcasing what is possible with the removal of invasive species and replacement with native trees and shrubs,” says Lisa Scott, Executive Director of OASISS. “We hope to inspire private property owners to follow the same process on their land.”

The trees targeted for removal include Siberian elm, Russian olive, tree-of-heaven and black locust. All four species are well established in the South Okanagan and threaten local ecosystems. They grow rapidly, produce an abundance of seeds and outcompete native plants. This can result in loss of wildlife habitat, reduced biodiversity, altered hydrology, soil degradation, altered fire cycles, and loss of traditional food and medicinal plants. Invasive trees can also be the preferred host for invasive insects.

“This is a project that helps support our Urban Forest Management Plan goals,” said Todd Whyte, Parks Supervisor with the City of Penticton. “Removal of invasive trees will help increase biodiversity in the area and it will also limit the spread of invasive trees throughout the city.”

The reduction of invasive trees in high-value habitats and replacement of these trees with native plants will benefit environmental and societal values in the South Okanagan. This project also aims to create more resilient ecosystems that can better withstand the negative impacts from climate change.

Opportunities to strengthen local government legislation, policies and management practices relating to invasive trees will also be explored as part of the project.

The Invasive Tree Management in the South Okanagan project was made possible with funding and support from the South Okanagan Conservation Fund (SOCF) and the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS).

For more information on invasive trees, go to: www.oasiss.ca/homeowners

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Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS)

www.oasiss.ca

www.facebook.com/invasivespeciessociety

www.instagram.com/okanaganinvasives

The Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention, detection and management of invasive species in the Okanagan-Similkameen region. Established in 1996, OASISS addresses invasive species and their pathways of spread. Partners work collaboratively to prioritize species and management areas. The role of OASISS is to encourage and facilitate coordinated inventory, treatment and monitoring of invasive plants. The society is also responsible for monitoring local lakes for invasive mussels and other aquatic invasive species. Public education programming and training is provided via websites, social media and in person throughout the region.

South Okanagan Conservation Fund (SOCF)**Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS)**

www.soconservationfund.ca

www.rdos.bc.ca

The South Okanagan Similkameen is biologically, a unique area of Canada. The RDOS has the second highest number of species at risk of any other Regional District in BC as well as the highest proportion of sensitive ecosystems. Natural lands in both rural and urban areas filter our water, supply open spaces for wildlife and people, and provide quality of life to communities. Unfortunately, these systems are under stress. The current generation must take action now to ensure a healthy physical environment for future generations.

The purpose of the Fund is to provide local financial support for projects that will contribute to the conservation of our valuable natural areas; one step towards restoring and preserving a healthy environment. The intent is to provide funding for conservation projects that are not the existing responsibility of the federal, provincial or local governments. A Technical Advisory Committee with appointed members provides expertise in the review and recommendation of projects and recipients of funds, and RDOS has contracted administrative management support for the Fund.

The RDOS is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the Fund and retains the responsibility for approval of all matters related thereto, including projects, payments, and financial audits of the Fund.

