

PENTICTON OXBOWS - FAQs

Where are the Penticton oxbows located?

All the oxbows are located on the historic floodplain of the Okanagan River connecting the Okanagan and Skaha Lakes.

How many oxbows are there?

There are between 12 and 15 oxbows...most were created when portions of the Okanagan River were cut off by the Federal/Provincial construction of the river channel in the late 1950s, but a few natural oxbows remain as well.

Who owns the land adjoining the oxbows?

The centre of original Okanagan River was the boundary separating federal lands to the west (Penticton Indian Reserve) and provincial lands to the east (City of Penticton)...within each of those properties portions are owned or controlled by individuals with property rights.

What impacts did the channelization of the Okanagan River create?

The channelization resulted in the breaking up of the original river into separate oxbows with the loss of flowing water, reduced nutrients in the oxbows, deterioration of shoreline or riparian habitats, and greatly reduced variety and abundance of wildlife (includes fish) and aquatic and riparian plants.

What needs to be done to protect the oxbows?

All levels of government share the responsibility for protecting the oxbows to maintain the native wildlife and plants found in the Okanagan, particularly those that are already at risk of extermination or extinction.

Can the oxbows be restored to their original natural state?

No! The alterations that have occurred are mostly permanent given the extent of historic development. They now require measures to enhance them to the extent possible and ongoing commitments to maintain those measures.

What measures are needed?

The most significant measure is the protection of the oxbows and it requires an agreement involving all levels of government, including their commitment to undertake or to authorize enhancements of the oxbows.

Do land owners adjoining the oxbows have a role in protecting and enhancing the oxbows?

Yes! Each property owner can obtain written government produced information as to the things that they should do (i.e. protect existing or plant new riparian vegetation) and not do (i.e. don't remove riparian vegetation and don't place yard or other waste in or near an oxbow).

Can people not living on an oxbow help?

Yes! Volunteers can join any of several conservation minded non-government groups who work with government and land owners to protect and enhance the oxbows (i.e. Friends of the Oxbows; Ducks Unlimited Canada; South Okanagan Naturalists' Club; etc.).

How can I join Friends of the oxbows?

Ask a member of the steering committee present at an information booth or visit our website Pentictonoxbows.ca