



NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management
Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection

\$8 MILLION TO CREATE BC TRUST FOR PUBLIC LANDS

VICTORIA – The provincial government is providing a one time contribution of \$8 million to create a new public lands trust that will support biodiversity conservation in British Columbia, Sustainable Resource Management Minister George Abbott and Water, Land and Air Protection Minister Bill Barisoff announced today.

“This fulfils our New Era commitment by conserving ecologically important private lands for the benefit of the public,” said Abbott. “This funding will result in increased habitat conservation and green space ensuring that the highest priority sites in British Columbia are identified and that the best long-term conservation investments are made.”

The \$8 million, with a minimum requirement for matching dollars from the conservation sector, will support improved conservation planning, and more efficient acquisition and management of private lands that have unique ecological values.

“We are pleased to see the government providing greater certainty of funding for the next few years,” said Les Bogdan, of Ducks Unlimited Canada, spokesperson for the BC Conservation Lands Forum Partnership. “By working together, we can improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of private and public sector efforts to secure and manage lands for biodiversity in British Columbia.”

A B.C. Conservation Lands Forum, a provincial partnership of government and conservation organizations, will also be created to co-ordinate priority setting, identify shared interests and opportunities, and arrange partnerships to accomplish their goals.

The four key non-government conservation organizations spearheading the forum are: Ducks Unlimited Canada, The Land Conservancy of B.C., Nature Conservancy of Canada, and The Nature Trust of B.C. The forum will also advise the trustee on the use of the trust funds. Other non-government groups and local governments with conservation interests may also be included in the forum.

The Trust will also support the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection’s commitment to conserve critical habitat and species through strategic land acquisitions. The ministry spends approximately \$5 million each year on property acquisitions, resulting in new protected areas, ecological reserves, provincial parks, wildlife management areas and other conservation lands. With contributions from partners, the annual value of land secured and protected each year is often three to four times this amount.

“In the past three years, the ministry and its partners have acquired \$91 million worth of land with significant environmental value,” Barisoff said. “The BC Trust for Public Lands provides new resources and a new framework for private land acquisitions, which are essential to the protection and enhancement of our environment.”

Private land makes up about five per cent of the provincial land base. This land represents over 30 per cent of the land ranked highest for conservation of species diversity.

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