



News Release

Conservation project protects salmon sanctuary in the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest

Bella Coola, BC (January 14, 2020) – The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has acquired a 70-hectare (174-acre) property on the Bella Coola estuary. Located on the edge of the community of Bella Coola and directly adjacent to other conservation lands, this parcel was the last unprotected private property at the mouth of the Bella Coola River. Despite its proximity to the town center, the estuary remains naturally productive, providing essential habitat for salmon, grizzly bear, migratory birds and other wildlife.

The new Tidal Flats Conservation Area protects inter-tidal marshes, mudflats and tidal channels that provide valuable habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds and juvenile salmon. Upland areas of the property are forested with western red cedar and Sitka spruce.

The estuary supports a number of confirmed species at risk, including Species At Risk Act (SARA)-listed grizzly bear (special concern), marbled murrelet (threatened) and Dolly Varden (special concern). Conserving Tidal Flats ensures that the estuary will continue to function in a natural state for the benefit of these species and many others.

Tidal Flats is well-used by the local community for recreation, wild food foraging and scientific research. The Nuxalk Nation has voiced their support for this project, as have many other residents of the Bella Coola Valley.

This land conservation project was made possible by funding from the Government of Canada's Nature Fund, including the Natural Heritage Conservation Program and implementation funds for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. The Nature Conservancy of Canada also gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, through the *North American Wetlands Conservation Act*, and many generous donors (see full list below).

Video and images

Images and maps:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ah2weq5sm9bu18w/AABVJPoWpUbWbAsdYWB-uVcta?dl=0>

Video B-roll: <https://vimeo.com/383387048/5d5a70866f>

Quotes

"These estuary lands are so productive, so full of life, and therefore so important to the people and wildlife who make their homes in the Bella Coola Valley. We are excited to undertake this project, which is the Nature Conservancy of Canada's first in the valley. We

are grateful for the support of the community and look forward to building long-lasting relationships as we work together to care for the unique nature that makes the Great Bear Rainforest not just world famous, but globally irreplaceable.”

–Nancy Newhouse, BC regional vice-president, Nature Conservancy of Canada

“Nuxalk community members frequently use the Tidal Flats lands for cultural, medicinal and recreational purposes and have long wanted to see these lands protected in order to support our community’s ongoing use of them. Given the high ecological and cultural values on the estuary, the Nuxalk Nation supports the Nature Conservancy of Canada’s interest in conserving Tidal Flats. With their success, we look forward to working with the Nature Conservancy of Canada to care for this significant area for generations to come.”

–Chief Wally Webber, Nuxalk Nation

“We know that our wild salmon populations and other species at risk are facing urgent threats—from warming waters caused by climate change to the loss of important habitat that they migrate through. With the help of partners like the Nature Conservancy of Canada and First Nations communities, our government is protecting an important salmon habitat in the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest. By taking the initiative now, we’re establishing a sustainable ecosystem so that our wildlife can thrive.”

–The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change

“The Bella Coola estuary has been of such environmental, cultural and historical significance to the Bella Coola Valley and the Central Coast of British Columbia. This is a tremendous opportunity to ensure it continues to benefit our whole community and region in the future.”

–Tom Hermance, president of Bella Coola Valley Tourism and long-time Bella Coola resident

Facts

- The Bella Coola River supports the region's largest coho salmon run, which relies on the continued health and productivity of the estuary. The intermingling of fresh and ocean water in the estuary creates an environment that is both unique and essential to the life cycle of salmon, among other creatures.
- Salmon are central to life in the Great Bear Rainforest. These iconic fish nourish everything from marine mammals, such as orca and sea lions, to birds like herons and kingfishers, to land dwellers, including bears, wolves and humans. Salmon also feed the forest, where insects, algae, mosses, shrubs and trees all take up the nutrients from decomposing salmon.
- Trumpeter swan, Barrow's goldeneye and American widgeon are just some of the migratory bird species that visit Tidal Flats every year.
- Coastal wetlands are important carbon sinks and will increase resilience to rising sea levels.



Acknowledgements

The Nature Conservancy of Canada acknowledges the generous funding support from many governments, foundations and individuals, including:

- The Government of Canada
- Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program
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- Eric Grace
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About

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is the nation's leading not-for-profit, private land conservation organization, working to protect our most important natural areas and the species they sustain. Since 1962, NCC and its partners have helped to protect 14 million hectares (35 million acres), coast to coast to coast. To learn more, visit natureconservancy.ca.

The Government of Canada's Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) is a unique public-private partnership to support new protected and conserved areas by securing private lands and private interests in lands. The program is managed by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). Federal funds invested in the program come from the Canada Nature Fund and are matched with contributions raised by NCC and its partners, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the country's land trust community.

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