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News Release

Conservation groups partner to secure forested lands frequented by at-risk population of grizzly bears in the Squamish-Lillooet region

Vancouver, BC (June 28, 2021) –The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP) have joined forces to conserve 111 hectares (274 acres) of forest and wetlands near D’Arcy, BC. The FWCP provided the funds to purchase the land, known as Gates Creek, with the aim of finding a long-term conservation solution for the ecologically important area. That solution has now been found through partnership.

Ownership of Gates Creek has been transferred to NCC, and the FWCP’s Coastal Region has made a further contribution to an endowment fund that will enable the long-term stewardship of the conservation area. Additional funding was provided by the Government of Canada, through the Natural Heritage Conservation Program, part of Canada’s Nature Fund, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and TELUS Communications.

Gates Creek is located in the territory of the St’at’imc people, adjacent to the N’Quatqua First Nations reserve lands. The FWCP is grateful for the connections and relationships it has made in the community over the years. This project provides a welcome opportunity for NCC to collaborate with N’Quatqua, who have a longstanding relationship with this land.

The property sits on a low floodplain, fed by an underground aquifer. Wetland and streamside areas on the property provide habitat for many rare and important species, including plants, amphibians, birds and mammals. The river that runs through the property supports a diversity of fish species, including salmon, trout, dolly varden and mountain whitefish.

Gates Creek protects essential, well-used habitat for two at-risk populations of grizzly bears, whose future in this region is threatened by continued habitat loss and fragmentation. Here, grizzly bears from the South Chilcotin population meet and mingle with bears from the Stein Nahatlatch population. Maintaining connectivity between these two grizzly populations is essential for their ongoing survival.

Gates Creek provides suitable habitat for 14 *Species at Risk Act (SARA)*-listed species, including grizzly bear, olive-sided flycatcher, monarch, western toad and wolverine.

NCC will develop a management plan for Gates Creek and will steward the lands as part of the organization’s conservation portfolio in their Fraser West Natural Area.

Quotes

"We are pleased to work with the Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program to secure a conservation future for Gates Creek. This land is crucially important for the grizzly bears that roam the valley, as well as for the fish and other wetland-dependent species found here. Projects like Gates Creek make a meaningful contribution to our goal of conserving more land, faster, so that all life can thrive." – *Nancy Newhouse, BC Regional Vice President for the Nature Conservancy of Canada*

"Funding land securement is one our most effective tools to conserve and enhance fish and wildlife. In the case of Gates Creek, conservation of this rare and valuable habitat has long been a priority as we work towards having thriving fish and wildlife populations in watersheds that are functioning and sustainable." – *Todd Manning, FWCP Coastal Region board chair*

"Here in British Columbia, we are fortunate to have an abundance of nature and biodiversity right in our backyards. Protecting and conserving more nature across the country is an important part of our plan to address the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Thanks to the Nature Conservancy of Canada and good projects like Gates Creek, we are creating a cleaner, healthier future for our children and grandchildren." – *The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change*

"TELUS is proud to have supported the Nature Conservancy of Canada since 2010. Gates Creek is an important conservation project and we are pleased to be able to assist the protection of nature and wildlife in B.C." – *Colleen Dix, Senior Sustainability Strategy Manager, PMO at TELUS*

Images & video

Photographs can be downloaded from this link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ugfx96dfqjbrqb/AACnbM1g9wchyYgss9u-CPdPa?dl=0>

Video b-roll can be downloaded from this link:

<https://vimeo.com/user52934486/download/567142803/25aeed7b53>

Facts

- Population fragmentation is a well-documented threat to wildlife species all over the world. Fragmentation creates smaller, isolated, less genetically diverse grizzly bear populations, as well as increasing risks from poaching, vehicle collisions and other human interactions.
- Wetlands provide immense benefits to biodiversity, with one in three provincial species at risk relying on wetlands to meet some or all of their needs. By filtering and purifying freshwater, controlling stream flows, recharging groundwater and preventing erosion, wetlands provide invaluable ecosystem services for human and more-than-human communities alike.



- The Fraser West Natural Area extends from Lillooet in the north to Pemberton in the south. The area has high natural diversity, important freshwater resources and critical wildlife habitat. This project is NCC's third conservation area in the Fraser West Natural Area, which was established in 2017.

About

The **Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP)** is a partnership between BC Hydro, the Province of B.C., Fisheries and Oceans Canada, First Nations and public stakeholders to conserve and enhance fish and wildlife in watersheds impacted by existing BC Hydro dams.

The **Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC)** 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 are matched with contributions raised by NCC and its partners, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the country's land trust community.

Learn more

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