
INFORMATION BULLETIN

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April 27, 2010

Ministry of Environment

B.C. EXPANDS PARKS AND CONSERVANCIES

VICTORIA – The B.C. government introduced legislation that will establish seven new “Class A” provincial parks and one new conservancy, as well as make land additions to 12 existing provincial parks, Environment Minister Barry Penner announced today.

Bill 15, the Protected Areas of British Columbia Amendment Act, 2010, continues this government’s expansion of British Columbia’s parks and protected areas system by adding 13,219 hectares.

The provisions in this bill include:

- Establishing six new “Class A” parks and making additions to two existing “Class A” parks in the Lillooet region as a result of the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan.
- Establishing a new “Class A” park in the Kamloops region as a result of the Kamloops Land and Resource Management Plan.
- Establishing a new conservancy in the Ure Creek area following an agreement with the Lil’wat First Nation.

If the legislature passes bill 15, since 2001 the B.C. government will have established 65 new parks, 144 conservancies, two ecological reserves and nine protected areas, and expanded more than 60 parks and six ecological reserves, protecting more than 1.9 million hectares of additional land.

This legislation also adds lands to improve park values in 10 “Class A” parks around the province, including:

- 7.9 hectares to Beaver Creek Park in the Kootenays as a result of a private land acquisition.
- 270 hectares to Brandywine Falls Park along the Sea to Sky Highway.
- 44.5 hectares of marine foreshore to Buccaneer Bay Park near the Sunshine Coast.
- 64.8 hectares to Eskers Park near Prince George as a result of a private land acquisition.
- 2.2 hectares to Francis Point Park on the Sunshine Coast as a result of a private land acquisition.
- 124 hectares to Gilpin Grasslands Park near Grand Forks as a result of a private land acquisition.
- 911 hectares to Mount Robson Park.
- 310 hectares to Skaha Bluffs Park near Penticton as a result of private land acquisitions.

- 5.6 hectares to Tyhee Park near Smithers as a result of a private land acquisition.
- 62.7 hectares of land as a result of a private land acquisition and 18.3 hectares of foreshore to Valhalla Park in the Kootenays.

The bill also confirms the implementation of the 2004 decision for mining/tourism zones in the Lillooet plan area. Bill 15 will create a new South Chilcotin Mountains Park, a “Class A” park comprising 56,796 hectares from the area currently designated as Spruce Lake Protected Area. The remaining approximately 14,550 hectares are proposed for tourism and mining, but commercial logging will be prohibited.

The plan protects 56,796 hectares of land as a new “Class A” park, while opening up new economic opportunities by creating certainty on the land base. This plan strikes a balance that will provide job opportunities for families that live and work in this region, while still protecting the natural environment.

In addition to South Chilcotin Mountains Park, five other new “Class A” parks and two park additions are being established in the Lillooet area. These five new areas and two additions total 21,801 hectares. There is also a name change for one existing “Class A” park in the Morice plan area as a result of discussions with the Wet’suwet’en First Nation.

Amendments to the Protected Areas of British Columbia Act are regularly required to establish new parks and conservancies, to add land to existing parks, and to modify the boundaries of parks and conservancies.

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A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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DESCRIPTIONS OF THE NEW AND EXPANDED “CLASS A” PARKS AND CONSERVANCIES

Beaver Creek Provincial Park: This park, located approximately 12 kilometres south of Trail, is being expanded by 7.9 hectares as a result of a private land acquisition. The property lies in a rare interior cedar hemlock ecosystem and contains grasslands used by the blue-listed Columbia racer. The total area of the park will be 89 hectares.

Brandywine Falls Park: This park, situated along the Brandywine River 15 kilometres south of Whistler, is being expanded by 270 hectares to protect critical habitat for the blue-listed red-legged frog and other amphibians. The area includes small lakes, wetlands and forested uplands. A section of the Sea-to-Sky Trail travels through the park addition. The total area of the park will be 420 hectares.

Bridge River Delta Park (992 hectares): This new “Class A” park is being established as a result of the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan. The park is an example of a broad valley, glacial-fed, braided stream complex that remains in a natural condition within the Bridge River system. The park is an important spring habitat and cross valley connection for grizzly bears and provides habitat for moose, mule deer, wolverine, mink and Harlequin ducks. The park is located approximately 80 kilometres west of Lillooet and 65 kilometres north of Pemberton.

Buccaneer Bay Park: This park, situated on North Thormanby Island on the Sunshine Coast, is being expanded to include 44.5 hectares of intertidal marine foreshore. This addition protects sea grass meadows and sand shoals, which provide habitat for a rich variety of marine life, including shorebirds, salmon, rockfish, sandlance and Dungeness crab. The park addition also protects a sandy beach, which is a popular destination for boaters and kayakers. The total area of the park will be 45 hectares (0.5 hectares of upland and 44.5 hectares of foreshore).

Eskers Park: This park, located 40 kilometres northwest of Prince George, is being expanded by 64.8 hectares as a result of a recent land acquisition. The addition will expand the park by incorporating a private in-holding that was surrounded by the park. This addition will ensure the park is managed as one unit. It includes meadow, wetland and pine forest habitat. The total area of the park will be 4,044 hectares.

Francis Point Park: This park, located approximately 35 km northwest of Sechelt in Pender Harbour on the Sunshine Coast, is being expanded as a result of a private land acquisition to include 2.2 hectares of wetland and mature forest area within the under-represented Georgia Lowlands Ecoregion. The addition provides connectivity to Beaver Island Regional Park and includes important habitat for the red-listed western painted turtle. The total area of the park will be 83 hectares (74 hectares of upland and nine hectares of foreshore).

Fred Antoine Park (8,230 hectares): This new “Class A” park is being established as a result of the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan. It includes a complete and undisturbed watershed (Antoine Creek) and the upper elevations of Fred Creek.

The park protects a unique range of dry forest types and provides critical wildlife winter and spring range. It offers a wilderness recreation experience and contains numerous signs and artifacts of First Nations traditional use. Fred Antoine Park is located approximately 25 kilometres northwest of Lillooet.

French Bar Creek Park (1,159 hectares): This new “Class A” park is being established as a result of the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan. It protects under-represented dry forests and grasslands, a small frontage on the Fraser River and is a migration route for bighorn sheep. French Bar Creek Park is located approximately 60 kilometres north of Lillooet.

Gilpin Grasslands Park: This park, located six kilometres east of Grand Forks, is being expanded by 124 hectares as a result of a private land acquisition. The land acquisition involved a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Environment and The Land Conservancy of BC. The addition contains essential habitat for provincially blue-listed bighorn sheep and other species at risk (including western rattlesnake, gopher snake and badger) and retains significant grassland values. Primary access to the upland portions of the park and the new park addition is along the Gilpin Creek Forest Service Road. The total area of the park will be 912 hectares.

Gwyneth Lake Park (132 hectares): This new “Class A” park is being established as a result of the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan. It is situated on the Hurley-Carpenter Lake road tour route from the Lower Mainland and can cater to the destination and day use needs of visitors to the Goldbridge-Bralorne area. The park includes a small lake and marsh and provides opportunities for fishing, camping, picnicking and hiking. Gwyneth Lake Park is located approximately 70 kilometres west of Lillooet and 60 kilometres north of Pemberton.

Marble Canyon Park: This park, situated on the Sea-to-Sky Highway approximately 40 kilometres northeast of Lillooet and 40 kilometres northwest of Cache Creek, is being expanded by 1,994 hectares as a result of the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan. It protects the natural scenic and recreational values of Marble Canyon and Marble Lake, highly significant First Nation cultural values and important provincial recreation opportunities such as rock climbing, hiking, fishing and camping. As well, the park protects internationally significant coral-like stromatolite formations in the lake and globally significant fossil occurrences. The total area of the park will be 2,544 hectares.

Mkwil'ts Conservancy (3,874 hectares): This new conservancy is being established as an outcome of the province's Land Use Agreement with Lil'wat Nation as part of the Sea-to-Sky Land and Resource Management Plan. The conservancy is situated within the traditional territory of the Lil'wat Nation and protects a significant cultural site in the Ure Creek watershed. The conservancy is adjacent to Garibaldi Park, about 75 kilometres north of the City of Vancouver, and includes old growth hemlock forest that provides habitat for a range of species including mountain goat and spotted owl.

Mount Robson Park: This park, located 300 kilometres east of Prince George in the central Rocky Mountains, is being expanded by 911 hectares. The addition will expand the southwestern boundary of the park in the Marathon Creek drainage. This addition will further protect the visual quality of the upper Fraser River watershed in the vicinity of the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies. The total area of the park will be 225,285 hectares.

Oregana Creek Park (286 hectares): This new “Class A” park is being established as a result of the Kamloops Land and Resource Management Plan. It protects a small area of “ancient” forest containing a representative example of old-growth cedar/hemlock forest and associated vegetation community, including rare lichens. It also protects riparian areas along the upper reaches of the Adams River and serves as valuable seasonal habitat for mountain caribou. Oregana Creek Park is located approximately 150 kilometres north of Salmon Arm in the headwaters of the Adams River in the traditional territories of Secwepemc First Nations.

Skaha Bluffs Park: This park, located on the southeast perimeter of the City of Penticton, is being expanded by 310 hectares as a result of two private land acquisitions and the addition of a small Crown parcel. Sublot 18, comprising approximately 307 hectares, was purchased through a collaborative effort by the Ministry of Environment, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, The Land Conservancy of BC, the BC Trust for Public Lands, and through the contributions of numerous individuals, groups and agencies. It consists of a variety of distinctive terrain features, including steep cliffs, riparian areas, grassland and open forest, which function together to provide habitat for many provincially or federally listed species at risk, including bighorn sheep, western rattlesnake and western screech owl. The total area of the park will be 489 hectares.

Skihist Park: This park, located approximately eight kilometres east of Lytton on Highway 1, is being expanded by 353 hectares as a result of the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan. The addition significantly enhances the natural values of the park, adding representative examples of the dry forest types typical of the north facing slopes of the Thompson River valley, and includes elk and deer winter range, old growth forest, a regenerating burn, cliffs, talus slopes and deep draws. The area also includes a portion of the historic Cariboo Wagon Road and offers new opportunities for natural and cultural history interpretation, complementing the existing day-use and camping opportunities of the park. The park is in the traditional territory of the N'laka'pamux First Nation. The total area of the park will be 386 hectares.

South Chilcotin Mountains Park (56,796 hectares): This new “Class A” park is being established as a result of the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan. The area is presently within the existing Spruce Lake Protected Area established under the Environment and Land Use Act. The area has long been recognized as having outstanding conservation and wilderness recreation resources focused on the alpine and sub-alpine grasslands, forest ecosystems and the small alpine lake systems of the Central and Southern Chilcotin Ranges. The park protects high-value habitats for grizzly bear, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, deer and wolverine. It offers a wide range of wilderness recreation opportunities including hiking, mountain-biking and horse riding on an extensive network of interconnected trails, ski touring, snowmobiling and heli-skiing. The park is located in the Gold Bridge/Bralorne area, approximately 75 kilometres west of Lillooet and 70 kilometres north of Pemberton.

Tyhee Lake Park: This park, located approximately two kilometres northwest of Telkwa and 12 kilometres south-east of Smithers, is being expanded by 5.6 hectares as a result of a private land acquisition. The addition is located on Tyhee Lake and protects a large cattail and reed complex that hosts a high concentration of breeding loon pairs, grebes, other waterfowl and songbirds. It contributes to maintaining the lake's water quality and an ecologically functional shoreline. This area provides excellent canoeing and bird watching opportunities. The total area of the park will be 39 hectares.

Valhalla Provincial Park: This park, situated on the west shore of Slocan Lake approximately 16 kilometres south of New Denver, is being expanded by 62.7 hectares purchased through a collaborative effort between the B.C. government, The Land Conservancy of BC, Valhalla Foundation for Social Justice, Columbia Basin Trust, BC Hydro Fish and Wildlife Compensation Fund, BC Trust for Public Lands, the Regional District of Central Kootenay, Toronto-Dominion Friends of the Environment Foundation and donations from members of the public. This property is surrounded on three sides by Valhalla Provincial Park and fills an important gap in the park boundary. It consists of a low elevation old-growth cedar and hemlock rainforest and a 1.7 km lakefront shoreline with sandy and pebble beaches and a small cove. The upland protects the habitat for a variety of species including grizzly and black bears, cougars, wolverines, mule deer and great blue herons. A total of 18.3 hectares of foreshore are also being added to the park. The total area of the park will be 50,060 hectares.

Yalakom Park (8,941 hectares): This new “Class A” park is being established as a result of the Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan. It protects the whole of the basin of Yalakom Creek and much of Nine Mile Ridge, providing extensive representation of the Camelsfoot Range including old growth forests, a mosaic of dry and streamside forests and wetlands, high elevation aspen and krumholz forests and alpine grasslands. It also protects bighorn sheep, mountain goat and deer migration corridors. There are many trails throughout the area offering backcountry recreation opportunities. Yalakom Park is located approximately 60 kilometres northwest of Lillooet.

*The Lillooet Land and Resource Management Plan covers an area that includes traditional territories of the St’at’mic, Secwepemc, Nlaka’pamux and Tsilhqot’in First Nations.

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