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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Environment  
The Land Conservancy of British Columbia  
The Nature Conservancy of Canada

### **SKAHA BLUFFS LAND PURCHASE COMPLETE**

PENTICTON – The B.C. government, The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC) and the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) through the NCC-Government of Canada Natural Areas Conservation Program have partnered with Mountain Equipment Co-op and other supporters to acquire a 304-hectare property adjacent to the popular Skaha Bluffs recreational rock climbing area.

The newly acquired land falls within the proposed Skaha Bluffs Provincial Park recommended in the Okanagan Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan and will be managed for its important conservation and recreation values as a Class A provincial park. The property is made up of coniferous forest, riparian areas, rugged terrain and some shrub-steppe grasslands. This habitat helps support up to 15 species-at-risk, including California bighorn sheep.

“This purchase was made possible through the co-operation of many partners and their unwavering dedication to seeing the project through,” said B.C. Environment Minister Barry Penner. “I had a chance to hike through the property and see the Skaha Bluffs first-hand last summer and, with the encouragement of MLA Barisoff, enthusiastically authorized the provincial financial contribution to secure public access to great recreational opportunities and protect a special part of the Okanagan.”

The Nature Conservancy of Canada participated in this project thanks to support from the Government of Canada through the Natural Areas Conservation Program, a new matching funds initiative to conserve ecologically significant lands across southern Canada over the next five years.

“The Government of Canada is pleased to be able to play an important part in this land acquisition through the Natural Areas Conservation Program,” said the Honourable Stockwell Day, Minister of Public Safety and MP for Okanagan-Coquihalla, on behalf of the Honourable John Baird, Minister of the Environment. “Prime Minister Stephen Harper committed \$225 million to support the work of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and here is another example of real results for Canadians. Protecting the important lands near the legendary Skaha Bluffs is a great example of what we can achieve when we work together to preserve our natural heritage.”

The acquisition of the property marks the successful culmination of an ambitious fundraising campaign to raise the \$5.25 million necessary to purchase the land. To reach this goal, B.C.’s Ministry of Environment provided \$1.25 million, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, with support from the Government of Canada, provided \$2.3 million and The Land Conservancy raised \$1.7 million.

TLC’s executive director, Bill Turner, was the lead negotiator on the acquisition. TLC’s partners in fundraising included: Mountain Equipment Co-op and its members; the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund; the BC Trust for Public Lands; the B.C. Ministry of Transportation’s Environmental Enhancement Fund (\$200,000); the Nature Trust of British Columbia; and an eco-gift from the vendor under Environment Canada’s Ecological Gifts Program.

“The purchase of this property recognizes the importance of providing recreational access and, at the same time, protecting a vital area for the conservation of wildlife,” said Turner. “The successful completion of the campaign could not have happened without support from the climbing community, and the many wildlife and conservation groups and individuals who are dedicated to B.C.’s wildlife.”

These wildlife and conservation groups included: the Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia, the Wild Sheep Society of British Columbia and the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep – Wyoming Chapter.

“The purchase of this property is great news for our region,” said Bill Barisoff, MLA for Penticton-Okanagan Valley. “With the certainty surrounding public access now secured by this new property, the Skaha Bluffs can continue to be a world-class climbing destination. The entire South Okanagan region will continue to see enhanced economic benefits from this great natural attraction that also promotes a healthy lifestyle.”

The B.C. government has made a capital investment of more than \$65 million over the past three years to improve park facilities and acquire new lands. Since 2001, the provincial government has established 46 new parks, 65 conservancies, one ecological reserve and eight protected areas, and expanded almost 50 parks and six ecological reserves, protecting more than 800,000 hectares. Today, almost 14 per cent (or more than 13 million hectares) of British Columbia land is protected – more than any other province in Canada. To learn more about the BC Parks system, visit [www.bcparks.ca](http://www.bcparks.ca).

TLC is a registered charity and land trust protecting wilderness areas and cultural landmarks in B.C. Since 1997, TLC has protected over 40,000 hectares of sensitive and threatened lands around B.C., involving more than 200 projects. TLC has grown to include over 7,000 members, and is now part of an international network of national trusts with over seven million members. For more information, visit [www.conservancy.bc.ca](http://www.conservancy.bc.ca).

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is a national non-profit conservation organization that works to protect Canada’s natural habitats. Its plan of action is to build partnerships and develop creative conservation solutions with individuals, corporations, community groups, conservation groups and government bodies. Since 1962, NCC and its supporters have helped to protect close to 765,000 hectares of ecologically significant land across Canada. For more information, visit [www.natureconservancy.ca](http://www.natureconservancy.ca).

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