

To Hon. Christy Clark, Premier of British Columbia

cc:

Hon. Dr. Terry Lake  
Hon. Steve Thomson  
Hon. John Slater  
Hon. Bill Barisoff  
Cairine MacDonald  
Doug Konkin

Dear Premier,

RE: South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Feasibility Assessment Study

We are writing you this letter in light of our collective concern for the future of the South Okanagan-Similkameen. Urban encroachment and development are ever-increasing in the region and having detrimental effects on its sensitive ecological nature, its tourism potential and the ability for its ecological systems to deliver essential services to surrounding communities such as a clean and future water supply.

The purpose of this letter is to urge you to provide the necessary leadership for the Province to work in partnership with the federal government [Parks Canada] to establish a national park reserve in the region. The federal-provincial feasibility assessment for the South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park has come to a positive conclusion and it is time to move forward.

The situation is urgent and we must not get past the point of 'no return'. In particular, the large working ranches are at a vulnerable stage and they must stay intact to continue to conserve the landscape and accomplish the ecological vision envisaged through the feasibility study process. We understand that a number of the key ranchers in the study area are interested in negotiating their future with Parks Canada officials.

We recognize that the establishment of a national park reserve in this region will be complex, will necessitate working with a variety of public and private partners, and that not all local people are in support. However we wish to remind you that there is strong public support for a national park in the region as indicated by: i) the regional public opinion poll conducted in 2010 that showed more than 2:1 in favour of a national park, and ii) the 2008 petition of almost 20,000 names supporting the park tabled in the House of Commons and provided to the provincial Minister of Environment.

We are pleased to hear from federal officials that the First Nations are fully engaged in the process and have asked the Province to participate. There is good support for the national park reserve from each of the relevant bands and the Okanagan Nation.

In summary, we represent 10 groups with active memberships of over 500,000 members from both the province and across the country, and are quite concerned that the feasibility assessment process seems to have stalled. The situation remains urgent and now is the time to move forward. There is broad public support and encouraging interest from the ranchers and First Nations. We therefore urge you to provide the necessary leadership as soon as possible to work with the federal government and move the national park proposal forward.

Yours sincerely,

Casey Brennan  
Southern Rockies Program Manager  
Wildsight

Alex and Coral Brown  
Twin Lakes Aquifer Group and the Lower Nipit Improvement District

Andrew Gage  
Acting Executive Director  
West Coast Environmental Law

Stephanie Goodwin  
BC Director  
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Mat Hassen  
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Pierre Iachetti  
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Faisal Moola, PhD  
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David Suzuki Foundation

Dona Reel  
BC Spaces for Nature

Glenda Ross  
President  
South Okanagan Naturalists' Club

Christianne Wilhelmson  
Executive Director  
Georgia Strait Alliance

Please see letter sent to Minister Lake on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011 from the South Okanagan – Similkameen National Park Network (represented by Nature BC and their seven local naturalists clubs, Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society, The Land Conservancy, Conservation NorthWest, CPAWS and CPAWS-BC, Nature Canada, Sierra Club-BC, World Wildlife Fund, and Western Canada Wilderness Society).