

South Okanagan – Similkameen National Park Network

A broad based network of like-minded individuals and conservation organizations of local and national scope, supporting a SOS National Park helping to conserve our national treasure of indigenous plants and animals while enriching people's lives. www.sosnationalpark.ca/ [<http://www.sosnationalpark.ca/>](http://www.sosnationalpark.ca/)

S33A C2 RR#1, Kaleden, BC, V0H 1K0

April 27, 2011

Honourable Terry Lake
Minister of Environment

Honourable Steve Thomson
Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

RE: South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Feasibility Study

We are writing this letter as a group of local citizens concerned about the future of the landscape we have grown to love, and who believe that the national park will be of strong positive benefit to the South Okanagan-Similkameen. Every day we see increasing development that is slowly but surely harming the ecological integrity of this region and the ability to provide the necessary ecological services to the towns and communities located here. These changes concern us greatly.

The federal-provincial feasibility assessment for the South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park has come to a positive conclusion. The purpose of this letter is to strongly encourage the Province to negotiate an agreement with the federal government to establish a new national park reserve for the region.

We support a phased-in approach for both the Southern Grasslands component (Kilpoola-Kobau-Chopaka) and the White Lake-Vaseux Lake complex that includes the LRMP-designated Grassland Protected Areas. This approach needs to include a high profile on-the-ground communications and management strategy that involves the public in all aspects of the proposed park to ensure their interests and concerns are thoroughly examined and continue to be informed and supportive.

The situation is urgent as vineyards and urban encroachment continue to advance through both valleys and vulnerable/ endangered ecosystems and species are being harmed. There is also a need to manage outdoor recreation as the intensity of use, and inappropriate use, is increasing. We must not get past the point of 'no return' and that point is fast approaching in a number of parts of the study area. In particular, the large working ranches are at a vulnerable stage and they simply must stay intact to 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 and will necessitate working with a variety of public and private partners. To this end we are pleased to hear from both federal and provincial officials that the conversations with the First Nations bands are going well and that there is good support for the national park reserve from each of the relevant bands and the Okanagan Nation.

There is strong public support for a national park in the region as indicated by the regional public opinion poll that showed support with more than 2:1 in favour of a national park, and the petition of almost 20,000 names supporting the park tabled in the House of Commons and provided to the provincial Minister of Environment. In summary, the situation remains urgent. There is broad public support to move forward and encouraging interest from the ranchers and First Nations. We therefore urge you to agree with the federal government on a renewed mandate to move the national park proposal forward.

Yours sincerely,
Doreen Olson, on behalf of the SOSNPN-CC

South Okanagan Similkameen National Park Network - Citizen's Committee

Peter Stockdale, Bob Lincoln, Chris Purton, Harry Neilsen, Harold King, Doreen Olson, Eva Durance, Ross Fitzpatrick, John and Mary Theberge, Denis St. John, John Lewall, Joe Scott, Jay Kehne, Mitch Friedman, George Scotter, Mel Woolley, Gwen Barlee, Alexander MacDonald.

(These people reflect the views of the following organizations as well as the concerns of local residents: 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, Western Canada Wilderness Society.)

cc Richard Carson, Parks Canada
Cairine MacDonald, Ministry of Environment