

Petition to Establish a South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Reserve

Whereas:

There are more species at risk in the South Okanagan-Similkameen Valleys than in any other part of BC, including canyon wrens, white-headed woodpeckers, burrowing owls, badgers, tiger salamanders, spadefoot toads, pallid bats, spotted bats, scorpions, and many other species.

The South Okanagan Valley contains the antelope brush ecosystem, also known as Canada's "pocket desert," which is one of the most endangered habitats in the country.

Bunchgrass and Ponderosa pine ecosystems are greatly threatened and have very limited distributions in BC. They deserve much greater inclusion in our protected areas system.

Parks Canada has a goal of establishing at least one national park in each of Canada's 39 major terrestrial regions, yet there is no national park in BC's Interior Dry Plateau natural region where the South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Reserve is proposed.

As the human population in the South Okanagan rapidly increases, the native ecosystems are under increasing threat by excessive development pressures such as suburban sprawl and agricultural expansion.

National Parks greatly benefit local economies by increasing tourism revenues, enhancing local property values, and providing employment for local people.

National Parks greatly enhance the quality of life for local people and all Canadians by protecting exceptional scenic, educational, and recreational opportunities such as hiking, horseback riding, bird-watching, nature exploration, camping and fishing.

Therefore, we the undersigned call upon the government of Canada to commit to the establishment of a sizeable national park reserve in the South Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys that:

- 1.) Upholds the standard of protection afforded by the National Parks Act.
- 2.) Protects at least 100,000 hectares of land in total, including significant tracts of currently unprotected Crown lands in the grasslands and forests of the region.
- 3.) Includes a \$50 million parks acquisition fund to purchase private lands for protection, to buy out grazing leases on Crown Lands, and to provide conservation financing for local First Nations.
- 4.) Encompasses the existing provincial parks and protected areas in the region including in the highly ecologically important Vaseux and White Lake Protected Areas.

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Return to: Western Canada Wilderness Committee - Victoria Office
651 Johnson St Victoria BC V8W 1M7
Download more petitions at www.okanaganpetition.org

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