
BACKGROUND

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Ministry of Environment

AMENDMENTS TO THE PARK ACT AND PROTECTED AREAS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA ACT

Amendments to the Park Act:

The Park Act is being amended to create a new designation called a “conservancy.” This new designation is being implemented to protect special areas recently announced as part of the government’s decisions for the Central Coast and North Coast Land and Resource Management Plan areas.

During the government-to-government negotiations with First Nations on the Central Coast and North Coast land use plans, many First Nations expressed concern with the Class A park designation. These concerns included the need to recognize traditional Aboriginal uses and to provide flexibility to ensure that opportunities for low impact, compatible economic activities were not lost. The Province has responded to those concerns by creating the new conservancy designation.

Conservancies and Class A parks are not the same. They are separate designations, but both conservancies and Class A parks provide a high level of protection to ecosystems, biological diversity and recreational values.

The purpose of a conservancy designation explicitly recognizes the importance of these areas to First Nations for social, ceremonial and cultural uses. A wider range of low impact, compatible economic opportunities may be permitted in a conservancy than in a Class A park. In a Class A park, economic activities are essentially limited to those related to recreation and tourism.

Commercial logging, mining, and hydro electric power generation, other than local run-of-river projects, will not be allowed in conservancies. A park use permit may be issued for local run-of-river projects within conservancies for the purposes of supplying power for approved uses in a conservancy or to nearby communities that do not have access to the power grid. For those conservancies listed in Schedule F, a park use permit may be issued for the construction of a road for the purpose of providing access to natural resources lying beyond the conservancy.

Amendments to the Protected Areas of British Columbia Act:

Two new schedules – E and F – are being added to the Protected Areas of British Columbia Act in order to establish 24 new conservancies. As the conservancy is a new designation, new schedules need to be added.

There is only one difference between the two schedules. A park use permit may be issued for the construction of a road through a conservancy listed in Schedule F to provide access to natural resources lying beyond the conservancy. The Kt’Il/Racey Conservancy is the only conservancy being included in Schedule F at this time. Access through conservancies to reach natural resources beyond these areas was discussed during the land use planning processes and subsequent government-to-government negotiations with First Nations.

The 24 conservancies are being established at this time by being listed in the new schedules to the Protected Areas of British Columbia Act. These conservancies comprise about 541,000 hectares – approximately 506,000 hectares of land and approximately 35,000 hectares of marine foreshore. Government’s decisions respecting the two coastal LRMP areas recommended approximately 110 areas equalling about 1.22 million hectares of Crown land for protection. The 85 or so remaining conservancies are expected to be established by the end of 2007.

Considerable time and resources are required to complete the necessary legal boundaries to list the conservancies in the schedules. This work also includes completing consultations with First Nations and other government ministries as the boundaries are refined. Once all the conservancies are established, 1.22 million hectares of Crown land will be protected. This is in addition to the existing 600,000 hectares of protected areas already found within the Central Coast and North Coast LRMP areas.

The 24 New Conservancies in the Central Coast and North Coast Areas:

The following 13 conservancies are being established in the Central Coast LRMP area:

- Calvert Island
- Fiordland
- Hunwadi/Ahnuhati – Bald
- Kitasoo Spirit Bear
- K'lgaan/Klekane
- Koeye
- K'ootz/Khutze
- Kt'll/Racey
- Mahpahkum-Ahkwuna/Deserters-Walker
- Moksgm'ol/Chapple - Cornwall
- Pooley
- Q'altanaas/Aaltanhash
- Tsa-Latl/Smokehouse

The following 11 conservancies are being established in the North Coast LRMP area:

- Banks Nii Luutiksm
- Bishop Bay
- Crab Lake
- Gitxaala Nii Luutiksm/Kitkatla
- K'Mooda/Lowe-Gamble
- K'nabiyaxl/Ashdown
- Ksi Xts'at'kw/Stagoo
- Lax Ka'gaas/Campania
- Lax Kul Nii Luutiksm/Bonilla
- Lax Kwil Dziidz/Fin
- Monckton Nii Luutiksm

Descriptions of the Conservancies (in Alphabetical Order):

Banks Nii Luutiksm Conservancy (19,121 hectares – 15,585 hectares of upland and 3,546 hectares of foreshore): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the North Coast LRMP area. Banks Nii Luutiksm Conservancy is part of the greater Banks Island, a large, isolated, exposed and wild island with a number of scenic, safe inlets and anchorages. Banks Island is part of Milbanke Strandflat, a flat low plain, underlain by granite. The topography of this large coastal island is low-lying, but rugged and striated by frequent well-marked lineaments occupied by large expanses of muskeg, where drainage is poor. The conservancy also contains a number of small lakes. This area is important for the traditional harvest of intertidal marine resources by the Gitxaala First Nation. The conservancy is 20 km south of Kitkatla/Gitxaala and 60 km southwest of Prince Rupert.

Bishop Bay Conservancy (2,699 hectares – 2,291 hectares of upland and 408 hectares of foreshore): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the North Coast LRMP area. Bishop Bay Conservancy protects one of the most popular anchorages on the Inside Passage route. A particularly attractive feature of this conservancy is the naturally occurring hot spring and associated bathhouse. This very popular recreation site includes a dock facility, boardwalk, tenting platforms and a picnic shelter. The conservancy is in the asserted territories of the Haisla, Gitga'at and Gitxaala First Nations. Bishop Bay is accessible by boat and located 50 km east of Hartley Bay, 75 km south of Kitimat and 170 km southeast of Prince Rupert.

Calvert Island Conservancy (18,558 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the Central Coast LRMP area. This conservancy is located on Calvert Island on Fitz Hugh Sound. Calvert Island protects a wide diversity of habitats for a wide variety of wildlife species, including wolves, black bears, mink, river otters and over 100 species of birds. It also protects the remainder of Calvert Island as an extension to Hakai Luxvbalis Conservancy area. Calvert Island is located 55 km south of Bella Bella, 118 km southwest of Bella Coola and 95 km northwest of Port Hardy.

Crab Lake Conservancy (12,789 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the North Coast LRMP area. This conservancy protects a scenic upland lake and the headwaters of Crab River. The Crab River area is important to the Haisla Nation as it historically contained a village site that demarcated the traditional territories of two different tribes that are presently amalgamated as the Haisla Nation.

Crab Lake Conservancy represents some of the more spectacular characteristics found in the higher elevations of the Kitimat Ranges Ecoregion, including massive rounded mountains of monolithic granite, a fringe of the higher elevation variant of the Coastal Western Hemlock zone that is characterized by old growth conifer stands of western hemlock, western red cedar and amabilis fir, and forests representative of the Mountain Hemlock zone. Above the Mountain Hemlock zone, the Alpine Tundra zone begins where forested patches give way to intermittent patches of krummholz western hemlock, yellow cedar and subalpine fir in a matrix of heath and herb meadow communities.

The conservancy is 25 km northeast of Hartley Bay and 50 km south of Kitimat.

Fiordland Conservancy (84,417 hectares – 76,825 hectares of upland and 7,592 hectares of foreshore): This existing recreation area is being converted to a conservancy as a result of recent government land use decisions in the Central Coast LRMP area. This conservancy is in the asserted territories of the Heiltsuk and Kitasoo First Nations. Fiordland Conservancy encompasses Kynoch and Mussel Inlets, including their estuaries and the surrounding mountainous landscape. The area includes one of the finest examples of glacially gouged fiords on the British Columbia coast, where sheer granite cliffs rise more than 1,000 metres. From the water, there are soaring Coast Mountain peaks, dense coastal forests, imposing waterfalls and lush river estuaries. Recreation opportunities in this conservancy include boating. Moderate anchorage is available in Culpepper Lagoon, Desbrisay Bay and David Bay. Fiordland is located 60 km north of Bella Bella, 80 km northwest of Bella Coola and 30 km west of Klemtu.

Gitxaala Nii Luutiksm/Kitkatla Conservancy (28,029 hectares – 12,245 hectares of upland and 15,784 hectares of foreshore): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the North Coast LRMP area. This conservancy is adjacent to the community of Gitxaala. Other nearby settlements include Oona River and Hunts Inlet on Porcher Island itself. The largest nearby community is Prince Rupert which is located 55 km to the northeast.

Gitxaala means “people of the salt,” which is a reference to the ocean-front location of the Gitxaala community on Dolphin Island. Nii Luutiksm means a special or treasured area. Gitxaala/Kitkatla Inlet provides a wealth of traditional resources that have for millennia sustained the Gitxaala. Traditional harvesting of seaweed, roe-on-kelp, cockles and salmon are some of the practices that continue to occur within this inlet. The area’s oral history, stone fish-weirs and cache pits within this conservancy represent a history that predates European contact. Protection of cultural uses and values is a dominant feature of this conservancy.

The shorelines on the outer coast of the conservancy are steep and rocky, polished by glacial ice and more recent wave action, with limited shelter. One exception is the big beach at Oval Bay. Gitxaala Inlet is a small inland sea with strong tidal currents ensuring good nutrient exchange.

Gitxaala Inlet has a very high habitat rating for waterfowl. Threatened and endangered bird species recorded in these waters include trumpeter swan (overwintering), Brant, long-tailed duck, western grebe, Pacific loon and great blue heron. A large herring spawn occurs in the inlet. A grey whale rubbing beach is also a special feature within this protected area.

Recreation values are very high, with camping, kayaking, fishing and diving opportunities. Oval Bay offers a long sandy/pebble beach.

Hunwadi/Ahnuhati – Bald Conservancy (34,532 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the Central Coast LRMP area. This conservancy is in the asserted territories of the Da'naxda'xw, Kwicksutainenk-Ah-Kwaw-Ah-Mish and Mamalikikula-Que'Qwa'Sot'Em First Nations. This conservancy is located on Knight Inlet and connects to Tribune Channel/Bond Sound. It protects a largely intact old growth ecosystem that supports grizzly bears, salmon and marbled murrelets. It also captures representative watersheds in the Northern Pacific Ranges. The conservancy provides opportunities for remote backcountry commercial tourism and recreation. The conservancy is 125 km east of Port Hardy and 270 km northwest of Vancouver.

Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy (102,875 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the Central Coast LRMP area and is within the asserted territories of the Kitasoo and Heiltsuk First Nations. Located primarily on Princess Royal Island, surrounding Laredo Inlet and adjacent to the K'ootz/Khutze Conservancy, Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy protects the Kermodé (Spirit) Bear, habitat for marbled murrelets and bald eagles, and special and rare ecosystems. This conservancy provides excellent recreation and tourism opportunities, including wildlife viewing and boating. Kitasoo Spirit Bear is located 15 km west of Kemtu and 130 km south of Kitimat.

K'lgaan/Klekane Conservancy (18,272 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the Central Coast LRMP area. Located on the west side of Princess Royal Channel, the conservancy is joined to the south by the Q'altanaas/Aaltanhash and K'ootz/Khutze conservancies. The Klekane valley has three known undeveloped hot springs. This conservancy protects grizzly bears, salmon and marbled murrelets and low elevation Sitka spruce forests. It also provides for excellent hiking and sport fishing recreation activities and a protected anchorage adjacent to the main Inside Passage route. The conservancy is 40 km southeast of Hartley Bay, 130 km north of Bella Bella and 90 km south of Kitimat. The conservancy is within the asserted traditional territories of the Gitga'at, Kitasoo, Haisla, Heiltsuk and Gitxaala First Nations.

K'Mooda/Lowe-Gamble Conservancy (14,454 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the North Coast LRMP area. Located adjacent to Lowe Inlet Marine Park on the Grenville Channel, the conservancy protects a large network of lakes and alpine forest areas. It offers canoe routes and recreational fishing opportunities in scenic and mountainous coastal topography. Many of the lakes contain white sandy beaches and excellent camping and hiking opportunities. First Nations historically fished, hunted and trapped in the area, using the trail system stretching from Kiskosh Inlet to Lowe Inlet. The conservancy is within the traditional asserted territories of the Gitga'at and Gitxaala First Nations. The conservancy is 15 km northwest of Hartley Bay and 100 km southeast of Prince Rupert.

K'nabiyaaxl/Ashdown Conservancy (727 hectares – 454 hectares of upland and 273 hectares of foreshore): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the North Coast LRMP area. The conservancy is within the traditional asserted territories of the Gitga'at and Gitxaala First Nations. The conservancy is 40 km south of Hartley Bay, 160 km southeast of Prince Rupert and 120 km southwest of Kitimat. The island is important culturally to First Nations, who rely on the seaweed harvested in the intertidal area around the island as well as the community fisheries from nearby waters. Located within the Hecate Lowland Ecoregion, this rocky island supports important migratory bird winter habitat. The conservancy also protects an important seal and sea lion rookery.

Koeye Conservancy (18,752 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the Central Coast LRMP area. Located northwest of Rivers Inlet on Fitz Hugh Sound, Koeye Conservancy protects grizzly and black bears, waterfowl, marbled murrelets and all provincial salmon species. This area includes low elevation, highly productive old growth temperate rainforests and a very productive estuary and wetlands. Koeye also protects important archaeological sites and other cultural features. This conservancy provides recreation opportunities for wildlife viewing and important Inside Passage anchorage. Situated in the asserted traditional territories of the Wuikinuxv, Nuxalk and Heiltsuk First Nations, Koeye Conservancy is located 45 km southeast of Bella Bella and 115 km north of Port Hardy.

K'ootz/Khutze Conservancy (34,168 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the Central Coast LRMP area. Khutze Inlet is located adjacent to Princess Royal Island along the east side of the Princess Royal Channel. The conservancy protects high value grizzly bear habitats, mountain goats, moose and deer habitats. With very high scenic values for fiords and mountains, there is a high potential for low-impact ecotourism opportunities. Situated within the traditional asserted territories of the Kitasoo, Gitga'at, Heiltsuk and Gitxaala First Nations, K'ootz Conservancy is located 75 km southeast of Hartley Bay, 45 km north of Klemtu, 100 km north of Bella Bella and 110 km south of Kitimat.

Ksi Xts'at'kw/Stagoo Conservancy (11,555 hectares – 11,430 hectares of upland and 125 hectares of foreshore): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the North Coast LRMP area. Ksi Xts'at'kw/Stagoo Conservancy is located on the east side of Observatory Inlet. The conservancy protects low elevation productive forests with estuaries and riparian habitats. This remote area also protects grizzly bear habitat. The conservancy is located 35 km northeast of Gingolx, 40 km west of New Aiyansh and 115 km northeast of Prince Rupert and is within traditional territories of the Nisga'a Lisims government and the Metlakatla First Nation.

Kt'll/Racey Conservancy (1,261 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the Central Coast LRMP area. Kt'll/Racey Conservancy is located on the west side of Princess Royal Island adjacent to Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy. It protects a number of small lakes and wetlands used by wildlife and migratory birds. It also protects First Nations' cultural heritage values, including seasonal camps and traditional harvesting resources. Kt'll/Racey Conservancy is located 65 km south of Hartley Bay, 50 km north of Klemtu and 130 km southwest of Kitimat.

Lax Ka'gaas/Campania Conservancy (20,504 hectares – 17,075 hectares of upland and 3,429 hectares of foreshore): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the North Coast LRMP area. The southern portion of the island is particularly flat and low-lying. North of this is the small, rounded intrusion of Mount Pender, which rises to approximately 700 metres. The lowland topography resumes to the north of this mountain and is characterized by well marked lineaments. In the island interior, these lineaments are occupied by large expanses of muskeg and occasional shallow lakes and wetlands; along the outer coast of the island they are submerged, forming long narrow inlets often connected by shallow lakes. Most of the upland is non-forested muskeg with limited cedars – shorepine forest, and exposed bedrock. The shallow development of some of the muskeg bog provides an open tundra-like landscape. Several rare and unusual plant communities occur within this conservancy.

The area also contains important First Nation cultural sites. Recreationally, a number of safe anchorages and excellent recreation opportunities, including day hikes, exist. The spectacular white sandy beaches along the Island's west coast are a particular attraction. The conservancy is located 65 km south of Hartley Bay, 120 km southwest of Kitimat and 145 km southeast of Prince Rupert

Lax Kul Nii Luutiksm/Bonilla Conservancy (1,584 hectares – 741 hectares of upland and 843 hectares of foreshore): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the North Coast LRMP area. Lax Kul Nii Luutiksm/Bonilla Conservancy is a rocky island off the northwest coast of Banks Island. The island is subject to heavy battering during storms, and receives significant rainfall. The area is home to a pre-contact Gitxaala village site. The area supports some isolated productive seabird colonies, which unlike colonies on larger islands, do not experience predation by mink.

On the west side of the conservancy is the Bonilla Island Lighthouse Station which was the last light house to be established in British Columbia in 1960. The adjacent rocky islets are used as sea lion haul-outs. The conservancy is located 40 km southwest of Gitxaala/Kitkatla and 95 km southwest of Prince Rupert.

Lax Kwil Dziidz/Fin Conservancy (1,902 hectares – 1,234 hectares of upland and 843 hectares of foreshore): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the North Coast LRMP area. Located at the south end of the Douglas Channel, Fin Island protects high archaeological, cultural, as well as bio-diversity values. This conservancy has very high intertidal values, including a highly productive spit. The island has several safe anchorages popular with local boaters and with travellers on the Inside Passage. The conservancy is within the traditional asserted territories of the Gitga'at and Gitxaala First Nations. The island has an extensive history of First Nations occupation and use. Extensive clam beds supported seasonal harvesting activities and in recent times a commercial clam cannery. The conservancy is 20 km south of Hartley Bay, 100 km southwest of Kitimat and 130 km southeast of Prince Rupert.

Mahpahkum-Ahkwuna/Deserters-Walker Conservancy (931 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the Central Coast LRMP area. Located north of Port Hardy, this conservancy protects several small islands and provides ecosystem representation in the Queen Charlotte Strait Ecoregion. Situated in the asserted traditional territories of the Gwa'Sala, Nakwaxda-xw and Kwakiutl First Nations, Mahpahkum – Ahkwuna/Deserters-Walker Conservancy is located 50 km northwest of Alert Bay and 20 km north of Port Hardy.

Moksgm'ol/Chapple - Cornwall Conservancy (29,116 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the Central Coast LRMP area. Located on the northwest corner of Princess Royal Island and connected to KITASOO Spirit Bear Conservancy, the conservancy protects the habitats of the Kermode (Spirit) Bear and a rare karst forest ecosystem. A number of small inlets are contained within this conservancy. One such inlet, Emily Carr Inlet/Duckers Islands, contains high biodiversity values, including rare plant species, known caves and karst topography. The forest is atypical of outer coastal forests, being exceptionally productive due to the presence of limestone.

The conservancy and adjacent areas are utilized for tourism. Floating lodges, fishing, heli-hiking and bear viewing are some of the recreational uses. The area also contains numerous areas of First Nation cultural significance, including many old village sites and traditional use areas. One village site, Kyel, is still used by the Gitga'at people in the spring as a seaweed harvesting and fishing site. The conservancy is within the traditional asserted territories of the Gitga'at and Gitxaala First Nations. The conservancy is 35 km south of Hartley Bay, 105 km southwest of Kitimat and 155 km southeast of Prince Rupert.

Monckton Nii Luutiksm Conservancy (24,775 hectares – 22,251 hectares of upland and 2,524 hectares of foreshore): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the North Coast LRMP area. This conservancy, at the interface of the Hecate Lowlands and Kitimat Ranges ecoregions, protects Buchan, Port Stephens and Monckton Inlets. The low-lying coastal portion contains a number of small lakes connected by low gradient streams. To the east, the terrain becomes steeper and more rugged as it rises to meet the Kitimat Ranges.

It is believed that the first contact between Europeans and the Tsimshian occurred in 1787 at Calamity Bay within this conservancy. The conservancy is located 30 km west of Hartley Bay, 60 km southeast of Kitkatla, 100 km southwest of Kitimat and 110 km southeast of Prince Rupert.

Pooley Conservancy (3,269 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the Central Coast LRMP area. Located on Mathieson Channel adjoining the westerly boundary of Fiordland Conservancy, Pooley protects Kermode (Spirit) Bears and traditional First Nation resources, and maintains wolf and deer interactions and watershed integrity. It also provides backcountry recreation and wildlife viewing opportunities. The conservancy is situated within the asserted traditional territories of the Heiltsuk and KITASOO First Nations, and is located 20 km northwest of Klemtu, 45 km north of Bella Bella and 110 km northwest of Bella Coola.

Q'altanaas/Aaltanhash Conservancy (18,767 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the Central Coast LRMP area. The conservancy, adjoining K'lgaan and K'ootz conservancies and immediately northeast of Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy, is within the asserted territories of the Gitga'at, Kitasoo, Heiltsuk and Gitxaala First Nations. The Aaltanhash Valley has a known undeveloped hot spring.

Aaltanhash is an important traditional use area for First Nations. It was inhabited year-round as recently as the 1930s, when resident families hunted and trapped in the area and travelled to Butedale for supplies. Evidence of long historical use is found by the extensive historical fish traps near the Aaltanhash River estuary.

The conservancy is located 60 km southeast of Hartley Bay, 60 km northeast of Klemtu, 95 km south of Kitimat and 175 km southeast of Prince Rupert.

Tsa-Latl/Smokehouse Conservancy (37,891 hectares): This new conservancy is being established pursuant to recent government land use decisions in the Central Coast LRMP area and is within the asserted traditional territory of the Gwa'Sala-Nakwaxda'xw First Nation. Located east of Cape Caution and north of Seymour Inlet, this conservancy protects a representative example of the North Pacific Ranges Ecosection. It protects important grizzly bear-sockeye salmon interactions and a range of ecosystems from estuary to alpine tundra, including Long Lake. Tsa-Latl/Smokehouse Conservancy provides opportunities for remote backcountry commercial tourism. This conservancy is located 80 km north of Alert Bay, 70 km northeast of Port Hardy and 350 km northwest of Vancouver.

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