
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Environment

NEW CONSERVANCIES AND NEW PARKS FOR BC

VICTORIA – In advance of Earth Day, Environment Minister Barry Penner introduced legislation today that will establish 41 new conservancies and three new Class A parks, while making additions to 16 existing parks and three conservancies. Bill 24, entitled the Parks and Protected Areas Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, received first reading this morning.

“Bill 24 continues our government’s work of expanding B.C.’s parks and protected areas system, including the establishment of conservancies on the Central Coast and North Coast,” said Penner. “It will further the implementation of last year’s historic land-use decisions that will protect some of the most significant, spectacular and ecologically diverse landscapes and coastal areas in the world.”

One year ago, First Nations, conservation groups, industry and communities stood together with government to protect the largest intact coastal temperate rainforest in the world. B.C. now has one of the highest percentages of protected land of any jurisdiction in the world.

The 41 new conservancies protect about 165,030 hectares – 161,618 hectares of land and 3,412 hectares of marine foreshore. Twenty-four conservancies were established last year. With today’s legislation, a total of 65 conservancies will have been established in the Central Coast and North Coast planning areas.

“The creation of these protected areas is taking place in the broader context of a land and resource management plan that will also provide certainty for land use to support economic opportunities for coastal communities,” said Pat Bell, Minister of Agriculture and Lands. “This balancing of environmental stewardship with economic development is based on a historic collaboration that has taken place between First Nations, industry, conservation groups, local governments and many other stakeholders.”

The three new parks totalling 933 hectares are located in the Kootenays (Gilpin Grasslands Park and Boothman's Oxbow Park) and Skeena region (Anderson Flats Park).

Bill 24 also modifies the boundaries of nine existing parks and one conservancy, transfers two Class A parks and a portion of another established by order-in-council (OIC) under the Park Act to the schedules of the Protected Areas of British Columbia Act, converts one existing protected area established by OIC under the Environment and Land Use Act to a Class A park, and enacts new boundary descriptions for eight parks.

The legislation also contains amendments to the Park Act and Forest Act that will create a legislated mechanism for the deletion of, and compensation for, forest tenure rights that are displaced by the creation or enlargement of parks and conservancies. These provisions are being added to put in place a clear, proactive framework respecting impacts on the rights of forest tenure holders that occur when protected areas are established on Crown land that up to that point had been available for timber harvesting.

Since 2001, the B.C. government has established 46 new parks, 65 conservancies, one ecological reserve and eight protected areas, and expanded more than 50 parks, three conservancies and six ecological reserves, protecting more than 800,000 hectares. Today, 13.8 per cent (or more than 13 million hectares) of British Columbia land is protected - more than any other province in Canada.

For more information about the amendments, please visit:

www.mediaroom.gov.bc.ca//DisplayEventDetails.aspx?eventId=360

For more information on B.C.'s provincial parks, please visit: www.bcparks.ca

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