



For immediate Release

Nature Conservancy of Canada launches new biodiversity study in British Columbia

Media event in Victoria on April 30th

VICTORIA, April 12th, 2007 – The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is launching a groundbreaking ecological study of British Columbia's Central Interior ecoregion and Fraser Basin watersheds from the headwaters down to the Fraser Canyon. This study will be the first to identify the most important places for biodiversity conservation within the region and to develop support tools for land use planning and natural resource management of the area. To date, NCC has completed the same kind of study for the Okanagan, North Cascades and Pacific Ranges, and Pacific Northwest Coast ecoregions. The media is invited to find out more at a special event on April 30th at Canoe Brewpub Marina Restaurant, 459 Swift Street, Victoria, 4-6 p.m.

“This is the last major landscape in British Columbia for NCC and its partners to study and will take just over two years to complete,” said Pierre Iachetti, NCC’s Director of Conservation Science and Planning and one of the lead scientists on the project. “The Central Interior and Fraser Basin are experiencing large-scale ecological and economic impacts due to the current mountain pine beetle epidemic. We hope our work in the area will help ensure that critical environmental values are secured for future generations.”

The Central Interior ecoregion and Fraser Basin watersheds are nourished by the waters of the mighty Fraser, Skeena and Nass Rivers. The area contains the flat to rolling Chilcotin, Cariboo and Nechako Plateaus. It also encompasses the Chilcotin Ranges west to the centre of the Pacific Ranges, the Bulkley and Thatsa Ranges, and the southern extent of the Northern Rocky Mountain Trench. NCC qualifies this area as a world treasure and as one of the most beautiful and unique landscapes in Canada.

“We were very lucky that several years ago, we recognized the incredible ecological values in the region and began our work through land purchases in the Tatlayoko Valley, which is proving to be critical migratory bird and grizzly bear habitat,” says Jan Garnett, Vice President of NCC in British Columbia.

NCC uses the best available scientific information to inform its decisions about how it works in a region. It has completed biodiversity conservation assessments for eight of the province’s twelve ecoregions, which has resulted in the protection of over 450,000 acres of ecologically significant land and water in British Columbia.

“With climate change a reality, it is important to truly understand the environment and the needs for animals and plants to adapt to the inevitable change,” adds Garnett. “ We have a big job ahead of us and we need community support. We hope decision-makers, land managers, the scientific community, industry and even philanthropists wanting to support conservation in the ecoregion recognize the importance of science-based conservation planning and the role NCC can play in helping to conserve the Central Interior and Fraser Basin’s biodiversity for generations to come.”

NCC is undertaking these projects with numerous collaborators including: provincial ministries of Forests and Range, Agriculture and Lands, and Environment; The Nature Conservancy (U.S.); Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife; GeoConnections; the Fraser Basin Council; and the Pacific Salmon Foundation. The study teams consist of scientists and planners from NCC, provincial, state, and federal governments, the universities of British Columbia, Victoria, and Northern British Columbia, and also include expertise from the Canadian Forest Service, FORREX, NatureServe, University of Colorado and the Klamath Center for Conservation Research.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is a national non-profit conservation organization that works to protect Canada's natural habitats. Its plan of action is to build partnerships and develop creative conservation solutions with individuals, corporations, community groups, conservation groups and government bodies. Since 1962, NCC and its supporters have helped to protect more than 1.9 million acres (765,000 hectares) of ecologically significant land across Canada. For more information, visit www.natureconservancy.ca/bc.

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