

News Release

## The Nature Trust of BC purchases 252 more acres in the Okanagan to protect biodiversity and fight climate change

*This newly conserved land adds to a sprawling conservation complex in BC's most endangered ecosystems*

**Vancouver, BC (XX)** – The Nature Trust of BC, a leading non-profit land conservation organization, announced today that it has purchased an additional 252 acres of ecologically important land that will be added to the White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch conservation complex in the South Okanagan. Connectivity of wildlife habitats is critically important for fostering biodiversity. Conservation of this property, known as Park Rill Creek DL 1995, will expand habitat for endangered wildlife.

The native grasslands of the South Okanagan are a hotspot for biodiversity, hosting a huge number of BC's at-risk species. Grasslands are also one of the rarest and most important types of land, covering less than 1% of BC's land base, with few intact swaths of open plains remaining. The land consists of valuable sensitive ecosystems such as coniferous woodland, wet meadow, riparian, and mature forest, each of which contribute to carbon sequestration. The conservation of this property will not only help sustain biodiversity, it will help mitigate the effects of climate change.

"We are very grateful for the land owner's wish to conserve this property and for our passionate funders. Protecting Park Rill Creek DL 1995 will expand our White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch complex and create a more resilient landscape in the face of climate change," said Jasper Lament, CEO of The Nature Trust of BC.

The newly conserved property is directly adjacent to The Nature Trust of BC's White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch Complex, an extensive conservation complex covering 20,317 acres (8,222 hectares) in the Okanagan near the community of Willowbrook. The property adds to The Nature Trust's conservation holdings and expands this large and contiguous protected area between the White Lake Grasslands Protected Area and provincial Wildlife Habitat Area. This landscape connectivity is critical for supporting healthy populations of organisms and allows them to relocate in response to environmental changes.

"Like The Nature Trust of BC, Wheaton recognizes the importance of taking action to reduce humanity's impact on climate change and ensure the protection of lands for future generations," said Randy Smallwood, Wheaton's President and CEO. "The conservation of the Park Rill Creek property in the South Okanagan will not only help sustain biodiversity in the region but will also help mitigate the effects of climate change through its carbon rich ecosystems. Wheaton is proud to support The Nature Trust of BC and its important role of protecting, managing, and restoring these and other critical habitat types throughout our home province."

White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch – Park Rill Creek DL 1995 supports many designated at risk species under the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA), including Western Tiger Salamander (Southern Mountain population), Lewis's Woodpecker, Pallid Bat, Great Basin Spadefoot, Great Basin Gophersnake, and Western Rattlesnake. Other species that thrive in the diversity of ecosystems present in the White Lake

Basin are Mule Deer, particularly winter range, and Bighorn Sheep, which are Blue-listed, and of conservation concern in British Columbia.

With the conservation of White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch – Park Rill Creek DL 1995, the habitat for these species and many more will be protected in perpetuity. Expanding the protected areas within Okanagan grasslands will serve to maintain its rich biodiversity for generations to come.

Financial support for the conservation of this property has been provided by the Government of Canada's Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund. This project has also been made possible by Wheaton Precious Metals, Grayross Foundation and many individuals.

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**Notes to Editors:**

**FACTS:**

- The Nature Trust of BC's White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch has been expanded to 20,317 acres (8,222 hectares) with the addition of the 252 acres (102 hectares) of Park Rill Creek DL 1995.
- The White Lake Basin Biodiversity Ranch – Park Rill Creek DL 1995 supports many designated species at risk under the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA), including Western Tiger Salamander (Southern Mountain population), Lewis's Woodpecker, Pallid Bat, Great Basin Spadefoot, Great Basin Gophersnake, and Western Rattlesnake. Other species that thrive from the diversity of ecosystems are Mule Deer, particularly winter range, and Bighorn Sheep, which are Blue-listed, and of conservation concern in British Columbia.
- The property contains four ecosystems that are sensitive and in their natural state contribute to carbon sequestration: grasslands, riparian, mature forest, and open coniferous woodland.
- The Western Tiger Salamander (Southern Mountain population), which inhabits Park Rill Creek DL 1995 is an endangered species restricted to the southern Okanagan region of BC. These amphibians occupy a variety of open habitats, including grasslands, parkland, subalpine meadows, and semi-deserts that are near wetlands for breeding. In the Okanagan Valley, there has been rapid habitat loss due to housing and vineyard developments and associated pollutant run-off, which is degrading salamander breeding habitat.
- The property contains Ungulate Winter Range for Mule Deer, and the BC Wild Mountain Sheep Registry identifies that this property falls within the known current distribution of Bighorn Sheep.

**You can view the media kit for the Park Rill Floodplain announcement [here](#).**