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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **New report highlights opportunity to put nature protection at the heart of economic recovery in Canada**

**Traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples/Vancouver, BC** -- A new report from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) recommends that nature protection is put at the heart of Canada's COVID-19 recovery strategies. The report highlights the enormous potential of BC's provincial parks to provide accessible and affordable outdoor activities, and outlines urgent challenges posed by decades of underfunding.

"It's become very clear that BC's parks are essential to our health and well-being. Safe, accessible outdoor recreation in parks is a proven way to boost mental health and reduce stress," says Tori Ball, Terrestrial Campaigner with CPAWS-BC.

"Unfortunately, decades of funding for BC's parks has left communities with inequitable access to nature, and continues to put wildlife at risk," she says.

The BC Parks budget was cut by 4% this year, exacerbating issues such as understaffing across the province. This has restricted or cut core functions such as monitoring and enforcement, research, and education.

The provincial and federal governments are making decisions on spending to restart the economy and recover from the economic downturn caused by COVID-19. CPAWS-BC is advocating for an investment of economic recovery funding into BC's parks to better support the needs of communities across the province.

"This is our chance to get it right. We know that nature conservation is a driver of economic growth and provides essential community benefits that help build a resilient global economy," says Ball.

"Now more than ever, we need to invest in these places so that our communities will be more resilient and better supported in the long run," adds Ball.

CPAWS-BC's recommendations to the Government of British Columbia:

- **Invest immediately in BC Parks**, increasing staff capacity for visitor management, ecological monitoring, and management planning to better recognize the critical role that parks play in supporting our health, our communities, and our environment.
- **Support Indigenous-led conservation initiatives** that enable reconciliation with Indigenous nations, protection and recovery of species at risk, and build sustainable long-term jobs in rural and remote communities

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**Resources**



Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. (July 15 2020). *Healthy Nature Healthy People*. <https://cpawsbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CPAWS-Parks-Report-2020-ENG.pdf>

**About CPAWS-BC:**

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – British Columbia Chapter (CPAWS-BC) protects wilderness in every corner of BC and deep into the ocean. CPAWS-BC supports the creation of large, well-managed, connected protected areas where native plants and animals thrive, now and forever; and where people and communities can live off the land and ocean without impacting the ability of future generations to do the same.

In the past 50+ years, CPAWS has played a lead role in protecting over half a million square kilometres – an area bigger than New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador put together!