



c/o Heritage Centre
1620 Mt Seymour Rd
North Vancouver, BC V7G 2R9
604 985-3057 Fax 604 985-3059
www.bcnature.ca
manager@bcnature.ca

October 23, 2009

Select Standing Committee on Government Finance and Services
Government of British Columbia
Room 224, Parliament Buildings
Victoria BC V8V 1X4

financecommittee@leg.bc.ca

Dear Select Standing Committee:

A Plea for Increased Funding for Ministry of Environment and especially for BC Parks and Environmental Stewardship

BC Nature has presented in person to this Standing Committee each year since 2004 and regret we were unable to do so in person this year.

Once again, we strongly urge that the Standing Committee recommend: **An increase to the budget for BC Parks and Environmental Stewardship.**

Parks and Protected Areas provide refugia for wildlife and for people, protect and conserve biodiversity, play a vital role in keeping our air and water clean, provide essential services for food security (pollinators, predators), offer refuge for threatened species, and help provide buffers against the impacts of climate change.

Small increases were made to the Parks Budget in 2005 through 2007, but now the trend is downwards once again. Improvements are urgently needed to:

- encourage more people to visit parks thereby contributing to healthier lifestyles,
- connect kids, families and communities to nature
- help ensure meaningful, safe visits,
- increase spending by tourists
- ensure protection for the natural habitats of BC Parks.

The overall budget for BC Parks is a very small portion of the provincial budget. However tremendous benefit to the public would result from a relatively small (in terms of the overall provincial budget) increase of a few million extra dollars.

Government spending on public infrastructure throughout BC is working to create jobs in local communities. **This submission is a plea to government to recognize that BC Parks are an ideal venue in which to create jobs and strengthen communities.** Dollars spent in Parks contribute greatly to attracting tourists and encouraging active lifestyles of BC residents, which in the longer term will help reduce health costs.

BC Nature has coordinated Park Interpretation for the past six years in Provincial Parks. In partnership with the Park Facility Operators we have hired summer student interpreters. Last year, without a grant from the BC government, we managed to continue to coordinate these programs, but at a reduced level from 26 parks to 14 parks. Visitor attendance at programs consequently dropped from 133,198 people in 2008 to 120,872 people in 2009. Looking ahead to 2010 without funding support the continuation of this modest program is in jeopardy.

The BC Parks budget needs an increase: to fund additional Park Rangers and other key park staff which will provide visible presence to the public, to improve visitor information, to support interpretation programs, and to provide funds to adequately maintain park facilities.

Similarly, the budget for **Environmental Stewardship** needs to be well supported to maintain “healthy and diverse native species and ecosystems”, which scientists recognize to be essential to the maintenance of human economic and social wellbeing. Governments are required to maintain the health of ecosystems and natural resources and must not use tough economic times to justify cuts to the management of BC’s wildlife

Our natural heritage contributes immeasurably to the quality of people’s lives and it is our collective responsibility to ensure it remains intact future generations.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bev Ramey".

Bev Ramey
President, BC Nature (Federation of BC Naturalists)