



September 13, 2017

The Honourable Catherine McKenna
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada
Via email: Ec.ministre-minister.ec@Canada.ca

Dear Minister McKenna,

Re: South Okanagan Similkameen National Park

I am writing on behalf of BC Nature, the umbrella organization representing more than 6300 naturalists in 53 clubs in the Province, regarding our earnest wish to see a national park reserve created in the South Okanagan-Similkameen. We were very encouraged by your announcement last January that the Province of BC had invited you to reopen discussion on the park proposal. We thank you for your support, and with the new NDP provincial government now in place, we anticipate the process will move forward with dispatch.

This new national park reserve will be of international importance, protecting and restoring the numerous endangered species in the South Okanagan/Similkameen. Protection of these critical and unique Interior grasslands and dry forests will provide habitat connectivity that will heighten the probability of all the wild inhabitants to adapt to climate change. In addition, the park will yield considerable economic benefits for the surrounding region and communities.

The previous BC government's 2016 proposal for a combination of national park reserve and provincial conservancy in the South Okanagan/Similkameen has a number of serious flaws, one of them being the exclusion of Mount Kobau and the surrounding area within the national park reserve. We urge you to have this area, called Txasqin by the Sylix (Okanagan) people, included in negotiations with the NDP government. From an ecological viewpoint, this area is critical for the protection and restoration of populations of endangered species inhabiting it and as noted above, to provide connectivity with areas further north and at higher elevations as species in response to climate change.

The protection of these grassland and dry interior forest ecosystems is important to improve the economy of communities in the surrounding area. All local and regional tourism organizations, the South Okanagan Chamber of Commerce, and local communities support the inclusion of all three of the former government's proposed areas in a national park reserve. Professional polls of individuals in the South Okanagan/Similkameen, resolutions and letters from business organizations and the Okanagan Nation Alliance, and local governments indicate a very high and growing level of support for the creation of a national park reserve.

We look forward to your government through Parks Canada negotiating a national park reserve in the South Okanagan/Similkameen that you and all of us who value our unique natural ecosystems and their wild inhabitants can be proud of. It will be an achievement for which future generations will be grateful to both federal and Provincial governments.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alan E. Burger". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Yours truly,".

Alan E. Burger, PhD
President: BC Nature
(Federation of BC Naturalists)