



September 13, 2017

The Honourable George Heyman  
Minister of the Environment  
PO Box 9047, Stn Prov Govt  
Room 112, Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC  
V8W 9E2

By email [ENV.minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:ENV.minister@gov.bc.ca) and mail

Dear Minister Heyman,

**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 wish to see a national park reserve created in the South Okanagan Similkameen. Many individuals and clubs as well as BC Nature itself have written letters of support over the 14 years since the park was initially proposed and have participated in the local efforts to have it established.

I wish to congratulate you on being appointed Minister of the Environment and Climate Change in the BC NDP government. We are encouraged already by actions of your government since taking power on behalf of our natural environment and its wild inhabitants. We urge you to move forward with Parks Canada as quickly as possible to establish a national park reserve in the South Okanagan Similkameen, support for which was part of the NDP's election platform.

Under your leadership, this could be one of the first election promises that come to fruition. Your government has the opportunity to establish a national park reserve that is of international stature, protects and restores endangered species, and provides species with the habitats and conditions they need to adapt to climate change. The park will also have significant economic benefits in the local region.

The Liberal 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 from the national park reserve. We urge you to have this area, called Txasqin by the Sylix (Okanagan) people, included in negotiations with Parks Canada. From an ecological viewpoint, this area is critical for the protection and restoration of populations of endangered species inhabiting it and to provide connectivity with areas further north and at higher elevations as species move in response to climate change.

The protection of this grassland-dry interior forests ecosystem is crucial as well for the economic well-being of communities in the surrounding area which depend greatly on tourism. 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. With Mount Kobau included, the national park can be designated a Dark Sky Preserve, providing additional benefits to wildlife and bringing an international audience to an already established internationally-acclaimed astronomy site.

Professional polls of individuals in the South Okanagan Similkameen and resolutions and letters from business organizations, the Okanagan Nation Alliance, and local governments indicate a very high and increasing level of support for the park.

We look forward to your government negotiating with Parks Canada a national park reserve in the South Okanagan Similkameen which you and all who value our unique natural ecosystems and their wild inhabitants can be proud of. It will be an achievement for which future generations will remember your government with gratitude.

Yours truly,



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

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