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March 2, 2018

Alan E. Burger, President
BC Nature
c/o Betty Davison, Office Manager
Email: manager@bcnature.ca

Dear Dr. Burger:

Thank you for your letter of December 8, 2017, regarding the creation of a national park reserve in the South Okanagan-Similkameen area. I apologize for the delayed response.

The October 27, 2017, announcement focussed on a commitment of the provincial and federal governments, alongside the three southern communities of the Syilx/Okanagan Nation, to work together towards the establishment of a national park reserve in the South Okanagan. Although the announcement reflects a decision to pursue a national park reserve proposal, the official boundary, park concept and management details are still to be determined based on further tri-lateral discussions and through engagement with key stakeholders, interest groups and local communities. The renewed discussions will primarily focus on the areas of interest that were the subject of previous consideration and feasibility assessment for a national park reserve, but will continue to take all interests and uses into consideration.

The South Okanagan region is one of the most ecologically diverse and culturally significant areas in Canada. It contains a large number of federally listed species at risk, and offers a wide range of recreation and tourism opportunities. Our government understands the importance of strong and permanent measures to protect this unique and valuable area and will take the necessary time to ensure that all parties are engaged and that the appropriate consideration and time is given at each stage in the establishment process.

As the provincial government continues to chart the path forward for protecting our environment, advancing reconciliation and creating new and sustainable jobs for British Columbians, I assure you that working together with the federal government and the Syilx/Okanagan Nation communities to establish a national park reserve in the South Okanagan will be a key focus for achieving our goals. Towards this end, I appreciate the encouragement and offer of assistance from BC Nature and other organizations.

Thank you again for your interest and for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

George Heyman
Minister