



For Immediate Release

Sage and Sparrow Expansion

The Nature Conservancy of Canada adds lands to South Okanagan grassland conservation area

March 26, 2015, Osoyoos, BC – The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and its partners are pleased to announce the addition of 320 acres (130 hectares) to the Sage and Sparrow Conservation Area in the South Okanagan Similkameen. Now spanning 3,340 acres (1,350 hectares), this conservation area is a world class refuge for many rare and endangered grassland species.

Named “Kit Carr” after the property’s original homesteader, Christopher (Kit) Donahue Carr, these lands represent the fourth parcel to be included in the growing Sage and Sparrow Conservation Area.

Kit Carr adds more than just grassland habitat to Sage and Sparrow. The new acquisition enhances the ecological profile of the conservation area by contributing a 10-acre (4-hectare) lake and mature Douglas-fir forest. Lakes and their associated wetlands are precious in this dry bunchgrass steppe environment, and the forest provides habitat for flammulated owl, several species of woodpecker and other rare species.

With more than 50 species at risk documented on the Sage and Sparrow lands, expanding the conservation area is seen as critical to efforts to conserve BC’s vanishing native grassland ecosystems.

Located south-west of Osoyoos, the Sage and Sparrow Conservation Area sits in the middle of a migratory corridor for species moving between the desert areas of the western United States and the dry grassland interior of British Columbia.

The \$750,000 expansion initiative was supported by the Government of Canada through the Natural Areas Conservation Program, Sitka Foundation, Burrowing Owl Winery, South Okanagan Naturalists’ Club, Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society and other private donors. These funds cover project development costs, purchase price and an endowment for the long-term care and management of the property.

QUOTES:

“I didn’t want to see this land changed,” said George Thompson, the selling landowner. “I know the Nature Conservancy of Canada will take good care of it.”

“We are so pleased to have been able to add the Kit Carr lands to the Sage and Sparrow Conservation Area,” said Barb Pryce, BC Southern Interior Program Director, Nature Conservancy of Canada. “The grasslands of the South Okanagan are an

ecological treasure, containing many plants and animals that are found nowhere else in British Columbia. Conservation in this part of the province is a top priority.”

“Our Government is committed to preserving Canada's long-term prosperity by conserving and restoring our lands and waters, and connecting Canadians to our natural and unique spaces,” said Dan Albas, Member of Parliament for Okanagan-Coquihalla. “This important investment highlights our commitments announced in the National Conservation Plan.”

FACTS:

- This grassland ecosystem is one of the four most endangered ecosystems in Canada.
- The area is home to a diverse range of amphibian, reptile, bird and mammal species, some of which are not found anywhere else in Canada, nor in the world.
- This landscape is a crucial migratory corridor for species moving between the desert areas of the western United States and the dry grasslands of interior British Columbia.
- Kit Carr’s mature Douglas-fir forests are important for flammulated owl, various woodpeckers and more.
- Kit Carr Lake is a rare and important feature in this dry region, providing critical habitat for waterfowl and at-risk species such as Great Basin spadefoot, western painted turtle and western tiger salamander.
- This project was funded as part of the Government of Canada’s National Conservation Plan. The Natural Areas Conservation Program (NACP) is a unique public-private partnership led and managed by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). To date, \$245 million has been invested in the NACP by the Government of Canada, with more than \$400 million in matching contributions raised by NCC and its partners to secure our natural heritage. An additional \$100 million was announced in May 2014 under the National Conservation Plan for NCC to continue this program.

ABOUT:

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is the nation's leading land conservation organization, working to protect our most important natural areas and the species they sustain. Since 1962, NCC and its partners have helped to protect more than 2.7 million acres (over 1 million hectares), coast to coast. More than one quarter of these acres are in British Columbia. www.natureconservancy.ca/bc

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