

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 29 2020

New survey shows British Columbians want increased funding for BC Parks

Traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples, Vancouver BC -- A new online survey from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - BC Chapter (CPAWS-BC) confirms that parks are a key priority for British Columbians, and that 73% want the BC government to increase funding. Parks present affordable and accessible opportunities to spend time outdoors, which has consistently been a top recommendation from BC's Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry.

"As more people turn to parks through this pandemic, concerns for the health of our parks are becoming increasingly connected with concerns for the health of British Columbians," says Tori Ball, Terrestrial Campaigner with CPAWS-BC.

"This week saw a record-breaking number of camping reservations with BC Parks and widespread challenges in accessing the online reservation system because of the surge in interest," says Ball. "This, along with the new survey results, underscores the important role parks are playing in supporting communities through the current public health crisis."

It also highlights an urgent need to address long standing issues with chronic underfunding of the parks system. For decades, the province has struggled with increasing visitation, while trying to protect wildlife and nature in these special places. BC Parks once again had its budget cut by 4% this year, leading to understaffing across the province that has restricted or cut core functions such as monitoring and enforcement, research, and education.

"Decisions are being made right now about how BC will spend \$1.5 billion in economic stimulus funding. This is a huge opportunity for the province to recognize the value of parks for the province's health, and economy," says Ball.

"Investing some of this funding into the park system to better support what British Columbians are asking for is a no-brainer, and something that will pay off in the long run," she adds.

Key findings of the survey include:

- **Access to nature provides mental health benefits.** 94% of respondents said access to nature is important to their mental health.
- **Supporting parks supports communities.** 75% of respondents ranked the reopening of parks as a priority in BC's pandemic response plan.

- **Investing in parks should be part of BC’s Restart Plan.** 71% of respondents support an immediate investment of economic stimulus funding into BC Parks for jobs and park infrastructure projects that will improve visitor experience and better support health and safety of park users.
- **British Columbians support a long-term investment in parks.** 73% of respondents support more funding for BC Parks in the long term to protect wildlife and nature, and to support visitor health and safety.

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Additional Resources:

[Photos and survey graphic are available for you here](#)

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About CPAWS-BC:

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society – British Columbia Chapter (CPAWS-BC) protects wilderness in every corner of BC and deep into the ocean. CPAWS-BC supports the creation of large, well-managed, connected protected areas where native plants and animals thrive, now and forever; and where people and communities can live off the land and ocean without impacting the ability of future generations to do the same.

In the past 50+ years, CPAWS has played a lead role in protecting over half a million square kilometres – an area bigger than New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador put together.

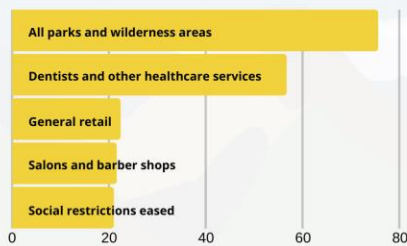
PARKS ARE ESSENTIAL

to the health and well-being of BC communities

Canadian Parks and Wilderness, BC Chapter asked a thousand British Columbians how they felt about parks and other parts of our province reopening. Here's what they said.

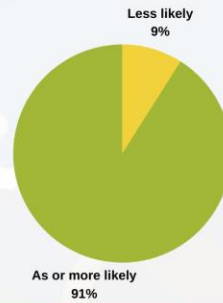
PARKS ARE A PRIORITY

When asked about top priorities for the government lifting restrictions, 75% of respondents selected "re-open all parks and wilderness areas".



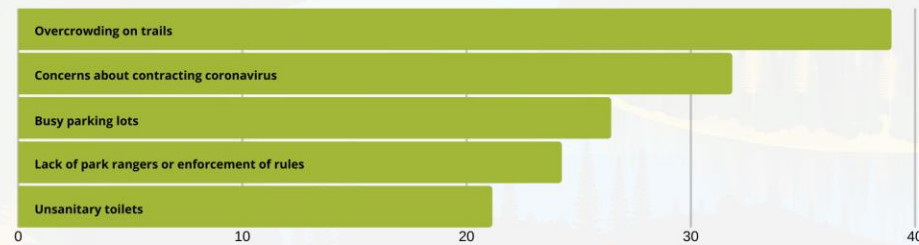
MORE PEOPLE IN PARKS

Despite the pandemic, 91% of respondents said they were as or more likely to visit a BC provincial park now compared to before coronavirus.



WORRIES ABOUT RETURNING

These were the top reasons why British Columbians said they would delay their return to local parks.



73% OF RESPONDENTS SUPPORT INCREASED FUNDING IN BC PARKS TO SUPPORT THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF VISITORS



71% OF RESPONDENTS AGREED THAT THE PROVINCE SHOULD USE SOME OF THE ECONOMIC STIMULUS FUNDS TO INVEST IN BC PARKS

 **CPAWS**
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