



British Columbia Chapter
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BC Budget Committee Recommends Increased Funding for BC Parks, Conservation Groups Applaud

Traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples/Vancouver, BC -- The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - British Columbia (CPAWS-BC), is celebrating the BC Budget Committee's recommendation [report](#) which advocates for an increase to the BC Parks budget.

Last Friday, the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, the Budget Committee, released their Report on the Budget 2021 Consultation. The Committee recommends to:

Increase operational funding for BC Parks and Recreation Sites and Trails BC to support staffing, monitoring and enforcement, maintenance, land management planning, oversight of public health and safety, and recreational infrastructure and services, including promoting and supporting volunteer efforts.

"We are thrilled to see this recommendation from the bi-partisan Budget Committee which recognizes the deep need for system-wide upgrades to BC's beloved but beleaguered parks," says Tori Ball, CPAWS-BC Terrestrial Campaigner. "Decades worth of underfunding is catching up with our parks, and the cracks in the system are showing."

The BC Parks budget remained stagnant for decades while the system grew in size and demand of outdoor experiences soared. Compared to the 1980's, the BC Parks budget and staffing levels have suffered a 90 percent decrease. The agency's budget saw a modest increase after the *BC Parks Future Strategy* was released in 2016 yet fell again in the recent 2020 budget.

"The BC government has added \$8.1 million this year as part of their efforts to address increased use during the pandemic, but this cannot cover the years of neglected infrastructure, unmonitored illegal activities and overflowing parking lots that have plagued the system for over a decade," explained Ball. "Parks and protected areas are seeing a record number of visitors this year, and this is only from domestic tourism. We need to fix these problems before international tourism returns and we have to shut areas down because we didn't prepare for the additional pressure."

CPAWS-BC recommends that the BC Parks budget be increased by \$60 million, and that parks and protected areas be used as a key driving force for economic growth and recovery during and post-pandemic.

“We are hopeful that BC Parks will see a \$60 million increase in the 2021 BC Budget,” continued Ball. “Outdoor experiences have been critical to the health and wellbeing of people throughout the pandemic, and support economic recovery for communities across the province. This will continue to ring true as people prepare for further lockdowns and distancing measures as part of the second wave of the pandemic this fall.”

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Resources:

[Report on the Budget 2021 Consultation](#), Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services



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About CPAWS-BC:

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - British Columbia (CPAWS-BC) is part of one of Canada's oldest non-profit conservation groups. We protect wilderness in every corner of BC and deep into the ocean. We have been defending BC since 1978, and are dedicated to keeping BC's natural environment thriving forever. Nature is BC's best hope.

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