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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New youth jobs program bolsters conservation and recreation in BC, says conservationists

Traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples/Vancouver, BC -- The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - British Columbia (CPAWS-BC) is praising a new provincial program that will give youth opportunities to work in conservation and recreation. These jobs will help to launch careers in wilderness stewardship while preparing BC's vast outdoor recreation network to host record visitor numbers through another pandemic summer.

"We're thrilled to see this much needed capacity lift for nature and outdoor recreation in the province," says Tori Ball, Senior Campaigner with CPAWS-BC. "We can all breathe a sigh of relief knowing that the province is preparing to better support the health and wellbeing of British Columbians by providing more access to parks, trails and camping opportunities."

This is the second youth-focused work program the BC government has launched in the last year, both of which included conservation-specific opportunities. Hiring youth to improve parks and nature stewardship will help to meet the increasing need for more trails and campgrounds as people look to escape locally during the pandemic.

Long-standing budget constraints have created bottlenecks in BC's parks system, from delays in planning to visitor facilities in need of maintenance or waiting to be built. Unfortunately, this resulted in BC's provincial parks being forced to shut down last spring due to concerns with understaffing and overcrowding.

"Spending time outdoors has been a consistent public health recommendation during the pandemic, and we're encouraged that the BC government is taking measures to ensure there are safe, well-managed places for people to get outside," says Ball.

"As people invest in outdoor gear for the long-haul, we hope to see more long-term investments and programs of this kind coming down the pipe to support the vast and diverse nature and recreation systems in BC," she adds.

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Resources

As a part of the Stronger BC Future Leaders Program, the BC government is investing in youth conservation jobs to accommodate and support growing demand for outdoor recreation:

- The Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development will invest more than **\$11 million for over 220 jobs in the Natural Resource Youth Employment program** and the Recreation Sites and Trails program.
- The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy will **invest \$4.6 million to create 37 positions with BC Parks and 46 positions with the Conservation Officer Service**, to work in a variety of fields to gain experience and help protect the environment.
- The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy is creating opportunities for up to **180 young people to help tackle marine debris and plastic pollution in coastal communities**. An investment of \$5 million in the Clean Coast, Clean Waters program is aimed at youth employment, including youth in Indigenous communities.
- **More information:** <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/StrongerBC-FutureLeaders>

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. Learn more: cpawsbc.org

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