

Premier David Eby

Honourable Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

Honourable Josie Osborne, Minister of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship

Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests

Honourable Bruce Ralston, Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation

RE: ENGO support for Ashnola sPA

We would like to express our support for the sməłqmíx/Similkameen Peoples, Lower Similkameen Indian Band (LSIB) and the Ashnola sməłqmíx Protected Area (sPA). We urge you to support LSIB in their efforts to secure federal funding through the Indigenous-led area-based conservation program for the implementation of the Ashnola sPA and to respectfully engage with the sməłqmíx/LSIB at a strategic government-to-government level to implement the sPA.

The sməłqmíx, the syilx people of the Similkameen Valley, have conserved and stewarded their traditional territories since time immemorial and continue to exercise their leadership today. The Ashnola sməłqmíx Protected Area encompasses important ecological and cultural areas, including high concentrations of species at risk, which are in need of added protection through sməłqmíx management.

The Ashnola Watershed in its entirety has been [declared protected](#) in sməłqmíx/syilx law. The Ashnola River Corridor faces multiple threats - from forestry activity, a surge of mining claims, unauthorized residential development and irresponsible recreational users, while gates block access into the Cathedral Lakes area. These all raise questions about water quality, sməłqmíx access and wildfire management in this critical ecosystem. The Ashnola sPA will provide exceptional habitat connectivity for wildlife movement and connects two provincially significant protected area complexes – Skagit and Manning Provincial Parks with Cathedral Provincial Park and Snowy Protected Area.

The sməłqmíx declaration of protection for the full Ashnola Watershed provides a historic opportunity to advance conservation and reconciliation with the peoples and lands of the Similkameen Valley.

We hope to see BC respectfully engage with the sməłqmíx/LSIB at a strategic government-to-government level, including providing resources, to advance their sməłqmíx Protected Area vision for the Ashnola Watershed and beyond. Doing so is an important opportunity to make good on your commitments under the BC *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act* and subsequent DRIPA Action Plan.

Signed by



Tori Ball, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - British Columbia



Candace Batycki, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative




Jessica Clogg, West Coast Environmental Law



Charlotte Dawe, Wilderness Committee



Robyn Duncan, Wildsight



Mitch Friedman, Conservation Northwest



Ian Graham, Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society



Doreen Olson, South Okanagan-Similkameen National Park Network

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'TJ Watt', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

TJ Watt, Ancient Forest Alliance

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Wu', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ken Wu, Endangered Ecosystems Alliance