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 sməlqmíx/Similkameen Peoples, Lower Similkameen Indian Band (LSIB) and the Ashnola sməlqmíx 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 sməlqmíx/LSIB at a strategic government-to-government level to implement the sPA.

The sməlqmíx, 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 sməlqmíx Protected Area encompasses important ecological and cultural areas, including high concentrations of species at risk, which are in need of added protection through sməlqmíx management.

The Ashnola Watershed in its entirety has been declared protected in sməlqmíx/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, sməlqmíx 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 sməlqmíx 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 sməlqmíx/LSIB at a strategic
government-to-government level, including providing resources, to advance their sməlqmíx
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
TJ Watt, Ancient Forest Alliance

Ken Wu, Endangered Ecosystems Alliance