



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Province Cancels 1.35 Million Acres of Conservation Lands in Northwest B.C. Without Consultation

(Smithers, B.C.) – Between 2019 to 2020, the [provincial government cancelled over 1.35 million acres](#) (nearly double the size of Metro Vancouver) of land designated under the Provincial Land Act for conservation and recreational use in northwest B.C. that residents hold dear. These cancellations put valued habitats at risk of being removed from public lands, logged or impacted by industrial development, including popular recreational areas such as Klinger Lake, Tye Mountain, Atlin, and the Stewart estuaries.

These Land Act cancellation orders were made despite warnings against the move from government Conservation Lands personnel, and with no consultation with land and resource planning committees including the Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board (BVCRB), Kalum Plan Implementation Committee (KPIC), Indigenous Nations, Municipalities, Regional Districts and the public at large.

“The risk of incompatible development in these land parcels, that are contrary to their management direction, is worrying to many residents of the Skeena Region,” said Len Vanderstar, former Provincial Government Conservation Lands Biologist.

“The removal of these Land Act designations is already undermining the conservation status of these areas and is in violation of agreed upon plans and management directions. For example, BC Timber Sales already logged one of the cancelled conservation lands and has multiple cutblocks laid out in another parcel that overlaps an old-growth deferral area.”

“The provincial government did not follow its own procedure document, Management of Crown Lands for Conservation Purposes, which states: *“Prior to expiry or cancellation of Land Act conservation reserves/withdrawals by Land Authorizations staff, Conservation staff will be provided with an opportunity to provide a rationale or recommendation to either continue the reserve/withdrawal or allow the expiry of the reserve/withdrawal. **Those reserves/withdrawals identified by Conservation staff as no longer required will be cancelled or allowed to expire.**”*

The cancelled Conservation Lands were designated for fish, wildlife, conservation, recreational use, and as candidate protected areas of substantial size. The provincial government refused to disclose which parcels were cancelled and their rationales – information that should be publicly available – forcing a series of Freedom of Information requests to obtain an understanding of what took place, contrary to open and accountable governance.

“By removing legal status of these Conservation Lands under the Land Act, the provincial government has effectively gutted a critical component of the Land & Resource Management plans and previous plan agreements,” said Greg Knox, Executive Director of SkeenaWild Conservation Trust.

“I find this shocking since these cancellations took place without any community consultation, or notice to the local bodies that oversee implementation/compliance with strategic land use plans. There was also no documented consultation with Skeena Region First Nations that we are aware of.”

SkeenaWild, concerned public groups, and former government Conservation Lands personnel are insisting that these Land Act cancellations be immediately rescinded and given interim protection to ensure no further land development occurs in these environmentally sensitive, and beloved recreational areas until more secure legal designations are established.

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