

## Declaration on the Principles of Parks

Posted by

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Every once and a while my friends surprise me. They reach beyond the immediacy of their local circumstances and clearly define 'what it is that we should be doing' - clearly stated, well-formed and simply true - in a global context . I want to thank the wonderful folks at the Valhalla Wilderness Society for having devoted their valuable resources towards this new parks declaration (press "read more" for the text ). This is a message that the world and its errant leaders need to hear. Please consider signing your organization/personal endorsement of the Declaration on the

Principles of Parks. ( da  
ni, PEJ Earth Editor)

[info@vws.org](mailto:info@vws.org)

At the turn of the previous century, amidst the rapid settlement of land, shooting of wildlife and cutting down of forests by settlers, there emerged a vision of preserving large areas of wildlands in their natural condition, with little or no modification by humans. Originally born out of the human response to scenic grandeur and wildlife, these areas are now the last refuges for many native species.

Today, scientists warn that major damage to ecosystems endangers life on this planet, including human life. Science recognizes that fully protected areas play a critical role in the survival of species. Ecologists urge that parks be kept as natural as possible, with natural ecological processes, because they are living textbooks on the science of ecosystem health.

Today, the dissonance and alienation of a troubled world, dominated by the pursuit of economic gain, encroach upon the peace and sanity of individuals and societies. Parks have become sanctuaries where the human spirit can refresh itself amidst the space, beauty, and solitude of a fully natural world. There, uninjured by industrial inroads, or the intrusions of entrepreneurial- or

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entertainment-based uses, nature - left undivided - teaches wholeness by the experience, itself.

These facts are the basis for the profound determination of the public - born of a sense of urgency, and asserted many times over the years - to create ample protected areas and to hold them sacred for the survival of species and for future generations of humanity.

There have always been those who claim that the purpose of parks is private economic gain. But these views misrepresent the higher human imperatives that have fought for parks, paid for them, and defended them for nearly 100 years.

Society spends many years, at great cost, weighing the economic values versus the preservation values of every park proposal. Each park represents a decision that preservation best serves the public interest. The value of living things, of their ecological life support system, of the human experience of nature and wilderness, must never again be weighed against the dollar in these sanctuaries.

We, the undersigned, wish all to know that the following tenets are the true principles that should guide park management:

1. Parks have a dual mandate: The preservation of land in its natural condition, and outdoor recreation based upon the appreciation and enjoyment of nature.

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2. The goals of the dual mandate are to foster all the holistic values of completely natural areas, including: environmental health, survival of species, protection for animal and plant life, physical and spiritual health of people, tourism, cultural values and scientific knowledge.
  
3. Preservation is the highest form of protection for land and resources. The removal, damage or pollution of natural features are totally prohibited. This means no logging, mining, drilling, hydro development, or human settlement.
  
4. The only human modifications allowed are for the essential needs of public recreation and resource protection. Preservation is the source of a unique and valuable kind of recreation based upon natural attractions, with minimal commercial intrusion. Guiding businesses that provide this kind of recreation are compatible. Commercial development should be located outside of parks, where it will concentrate tourism expenditures in local communities. It is well known that this kind of recreation richly profits businesses across the land.
  
5. Parks are a shared, public good to be held in trust by governments, and not to be sold or privatized. This requires an institutional legacy of experienced public servants. This legacy must remain stable as governments come and go.
  
6. Ecosystem health and the survival of species are the top management priorities. Fully protected areas fill a universal need for health and survival that is shared by all species, cultures and generations.

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7. Parks should be fully supported by taxes. The government has a duty to maintain sufficient staff and funding to manage every aspect of the park system.

8. Parks should be administered in an unbiased manner, free of conflict of interest. Private interest control through leases of park land or privatization must be avoided.

9. The public has a right to know how its parks are being managed, and to participate in open, transparent planning procedures.

10. Wilderness - large, undeveloped, roadless areas - should be maintained as wilderness in all our parks. Such areas best represent the ecological, health, and scientific values of parks, while including many intangible values of importance to people - values such as remoteness, pristine qualities, solitude, and natural quiet.

11. Parks are for perpetuity. They contain priceless biological, cultural and historical legacies. Unmaking parks or changing park laws to weaken protection violates a sacred trust belonging to all those in the past and present who fought and paid for our parks, as well as future generations. Parks laws should be changed to better honour these principles, never to undermine them.

Alberni Environmental Coalition  
Allan Brooks Nature Centre Society  
Applied Conservation GIS

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Applied Ecological Stewardship Council of B.C.  
B.C. Pathways  
Bert Riggall Environmental Foundation (AB)  
Bragg Creek Environmental Coalition (AB)  
Canadian EarthCare Society  
Canadian Reforestation and Environmental Workers Society  
Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition (AB)  
Chetwynd Environmental Society  
Coalition to Save Forest Recreation in B.C.  
Comox Valley Land Trust  
Comox Valley Naturalists  
Cortes Land Conservancy  
Denman Conservancy Association  
Environmental Investigation Agency (U.S.A./U.K.)  
Federation of Mountain Clubs  
Fins in the Forest  
ForestEthics  
Fraser Headwaters Alliance  
Friends of Caren  
Friends of Clayoquot Sound  
Friends of Cortes Island Society  
Friends of Gabriola  
Friends of Strathcona  
Friends of the Nemaiah Valley  
Friends of the Stikine  
Friends of the Tlell  
Georgia Strait Alliance  
Get Bear Smart Society  
Golden Outdoor Recreation Association  
Granby Wilderness Society  
Grand Forks Watershed Coalition  
Greenpeace  
Kettle Range Conservation Group (U.S.A.)  
Labour Environmental Council  
North Cascades Conservation Council (U.S.A.)  
North Okanagan Naturalists Club (Vernon)  
Northern Ecology Watch

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Northwest Ecosystem Alliance  
Okanagan Similkameen Parks Society  
ParkWatch (U.S.A.)  
ProTerra  
Purcell Alliance for Wilderness  
Quadra Island Conservancy and Stewardship Council  
Quesnel River Watershed Alliance  
Raincoast Conservation Society  
Salt Spring Island Conservancy  
Save Our Parklands Association  
Selkirk Conservation Alliance (U.S.A.)  
Shuswap Environmental Action Society  
Sierra Club of British Columbia  
Society Promoting Environmental Conservation  
South Okanagan Naturalist Club  
Southside Economic Development Association  
Sustainable Environment Network Society  
Tetrahedron Alliance  
Tuwaneke Ratepayers Association  
Travel Just  
Valhalla Wilderness Society  
West Kootenay Coalition for Jumbo Wild  
Western Canada Wilderness Committee  
Wild Wilderness (Oregon, U.S.A)