

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Environment
Islands Trust Fund

PROPERTY ACQUIRED FOR ADDITION TO SQUITTY BAY PARK

VICTORIA – As part of the B.C. government’s efforts to enhance the network of protected areas in the Strait of Georgia, the Ministry of Environment has partnered with conservation organizations to purchase 38.5 hectares of oceanfront property intended for addition to Squitty Bay Provincial Park, Environment Minister Barry Penner announced today.

“A number of organizations partner with the Ministry of Environment to help us acquire additional lands for park purposes,” said Penner. “This year, with the help of the Islands Trust Fund and the Lasqueti Island Nature Conservancy, as well as the local community, we are now in a position to quadruple the size of a valuable provincial park.”

The ministry acquired the \$1,518,000 property on Nov. 15, 2007, thanks, in part, to \$250,000 raised by the community. The Islands Trust Fund and the Lasqueti Island Nature Conservancy succeeded in raising the funds through contributions from individual donors and a number of conservation organizations, including the BC Trust for Public Lands, BC Marine Parks Forever Society, the Nature Trust of British Columbia and the Land Conservancy of British Columbia.

“This successful fundraising campaign shines as an example of what can be done when a community pulls together to protect a special place,” said Sheila Malcolmson, chair of the Islands Trust Fund board. “We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the donors who gave so generously to protect this spectacular Gulf Island property.”

The B.C. government contributed \$1.09 million towards the property acquisition from the Ministry of Environment’s Land Acquisition Capital Account, and the property owners, Ingrid Iversen and Terry Tyler, gifted land certified as an ecological gift through Environment Canada’s Ecological Gift Program in the amount of \$178,000.

“The B.C. government’s acquisition of this extraordinary property for the expansion of Squitty Bay Provincial Park is exciting news for the region,” said Ron Cantelon, MLA for Nanaimo-Parksville. “Not only will a larger park serve to protect important coastal habitat, but it will provide increased recreational opportunities for locals and visitors.”

Protecting the property will result in a four-fold increase in the size of Squitty Bay Provincial Park, from 13 hectares to more than 51 hectares. The proposed addition would further protect the coastal Douglas fir biogeoclimatic zone, including uncommon plant communities and foreshore habitats. Only 4.7 per cent of Lasqueti Island’s land base is currently protected.

“Conservation legacies begin with people who care,” said Melinda Auerbach, a director of the Lasqueti Island Nature Conservancy. “Ingrid Iversen and Terry Tyler had a dream that their piece of land could be protected forever. I hope their commitment to nature inspires others to do what they can to protect their lands.”

Earlier this year, the Ministry of Environment invested almost \$1.4 million to purchase 11.65 hectare Gerald Island near Nanoose Bay in the Strait of Georgia for future designation as a provincial marine park.

The B.C. government has made a capital investment of more than \$65 million over the past three years to improve park facilities and acquire new lands.

Since 2001, the provincial government has established 46 new parks, 65 conservancies, one ecological reserve and eight protected areas, and expanded almost 50 parks and six ecological reserves, protecting more than 800,000 hectares. Today, almost 14 per cent (or more than 13 million hectares) of British Columbia land is protected – more than any other province in Canada.

To learn more about B.C.’s provincial parks, visit www.bcparks.ca.

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