

Media Backgrounder and Fact Sheet

Ministry of Environment
Government of British Columbia

ACCESSIBILITY IN B.C. PARKS

British Columbia is committed to providing access and recreation participation for people with a disability in B.C.'s incredible network of provincial parks, which is world renowned for its campsites, day-use areas and thousands of kilometres of trails. We welcome everyone to enjoy the beauty and serenity of B.C.'s magnificent parks, and we have made many investments and upgrades in recent years to make this vision a reality. Parks are constantly being reviewed for accessibility and many trails, campgrounds, facilities and services have been upgraded to consider accessibility and enjoyment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

- Between 2008 and 2010, the B.C. government upgraded many bridges and trails for accessibility, investing \$795,000 towards upgrades in Goldstream, Strathcona, Driftwood and Lakelse Lake Parks to provide access to the natural and cultural features in all of these beautiful parks.
- The B.C. government recently completed a \$600,000 project at Goldstream Provincial Park, which included building new washroom facilities that are now wheelchair-accessible. Located on southern Vancouver Island just 16 km from downtown Victoria, Goldstream Provincial Park offers various natural features, including old-growth Douglas firs more than 600 years old and the stunning Niagara Falls, which cascades down a rock cliff into a crystal clear canyon pool below.
- Goldstream Provincial Park is also the site of an annual chum salmon spawning run, which draws thousands of salmon – and visitors – every year. The B.C. government recently spent \$40,000 to upgrade the salmon viewing trail so that it's now accessible for wheelchairs, battery powered scooters, and families with strollers, so everyone can now view this amazing natural phenomenon.
- The B.C. government recently invested \$100,000 to upgrade and modernize washroom facilities for wheelchair accessibility in Gordon Bay Provincial Park, located on the shores of Lake Cowichan north of Duncan on Vancouver Island. This park is known for its beautiful sandy beach, great swimming opportunities and spectacular fresh-water fishing opportunities.
- Strathcona Provincial Park, located in the centre of Vancouver Island, is the oldest provincial park in B.C., designated in 1911. Look for BC Parks 100th anniversary activities at this magnificent park, which has wheelchair-accessible facilities available at the Driftwood Bay group site, Buttle Lake campground and Elk Portal entrance. The Crest Creek day-use area offers wheelchair accessible picnic tables and a pit toilet, and the new Paradise Meadows trailhead at Mt. Washington now offers a wheelchair-accessible trail. The B.C. government recently invested \$170,000 to build a new pedestrian bridge in Driftwood Canyon Park, allowing wheelchair access to fossil beds. Located northeast of Smithers, Driftwood Canyon is recognized as one of the world's most significant fossil beds, providing park users with a fascinating opportunity to understand the area's evolutionary processes of both geology and biology.

- The B.C. government has purchased new picnic tables and upgraded picnic shelters, information shelters and campground alignments in many parks to improve accessibility, including Driftwood Canyon, Naikoon, Babine River, Kikomun Creek, and Cultus Lake Provincial Parks, ensuring safe and accessible facilities.
- Assistance/guide dogs are welcome in BC Parks. We recognize the importance of assistance/ guide dogs for persons with disabilities, in terms of bringing a great deal of independence and confidence, as well as companionship into people's lives.

CONTACTS

Natasha Vander Wal

Manager, Communications
2010 Legacies Now
778-327-5189

http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/accessible_tourism/

Leading up to, and beyond, the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, 2010 Legacies Now is working with the Province of BC, Tourism BC, and numerous other partners to help make BC a premier travel destination for people with disabilities.

Paul Vallee

Executive Vice President
Tourism Vancouver
604-631-2815

http://www.tourismvancouver.com/visitors/travel_tips/accessibility

British Columbia is home to many vibrant and active communities accessible to persons with a disability. The city of Vancouver is considered to be one of the most accessible cities in Canada and a favourite travel destination for persons with a disability. Accessible options are available for transportation, accommodation and recreational opportunities.

Chloe O'Loughlin

Executive Director
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, BC Chapter (CPAWS-BC)
604-685-7445

chloe@cpawsbc.org

CPAWS-BC is a non-profit organization, helps to educate the public about the importance of parks and protected and wilderness preservation. CPAWS-BC works in partnership with BC Parks in a variety of areas including conservation initiatives and planning for the 100 year celebration of BC Parks in 2011.

Chris Edley

President

British Columbia Geocaching Association (BCGA)

250-744-1311

cedley@islandnet.com

BC Parks, the BC Geocaching Association (BCGA), and Project Blue Sky are collaborating to host GeoTrek 2009 - a fun, healthy, and environmentally friendly game, allowing participants to explore BC's spectacular provincial parks and celebrate the upcoming 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

VISUAL RESOURCES

- Images of BC Parks – contact BC Parks, Ministry of Environment for more info: Jim Gilliland at 250-356-6831, or Jim.Gilliland@gov.bc.ca; or Tammy Liddicoat at 250-356-7435 or Tammy.Liddicoat@gov.bc.ca

WEB RESOURCES

- BC Parks website offers a listing of all provincial parks, as well as a general outline of what BC Parks does for the province, services, and values. www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/index.html
- The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society is Canada's grassroots voice for wilderness. CPAWS-BC is a non-profit organization, helps to educate the public about the importance of parks and protected and wilderness preservation. www.cpawsbc.org/
- BC Parks, the BC Geocaching Association (BCGA), and Project Blue Sky are collaborating to host GeoTrek 2009 - a fun, healthy, and environmentally friendly game, allowing participants to explore BC's spectacular provincial parks and celebrate the upcoming 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. www.bcgeocaching.com/
- 2010 Legacies Now is working with the Province of BC, Tourism BC, and numerous other partners to help make BC a premier travel destination for people with disabilities. www.2010legaciesnow.com/accessible_tourism/
- Tourism Vancouver's vision is to be the global leader in destination sales, marketing and visitor experiences. Accessible options are available for transportation, accommodation and recreational opportunities. www.tourismvancouver.com/visitors/travel_tips/accessibility
- Whistler for the Disabled is the official organization for Whistler's accessibility and accessible tourism on the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic website. Accessible options are available for transportation, accommodation and recreational opportunities. whistlerforthe-disabled.com
- VANOC is committed to providing accessible venues and services for the Paralympic Winter Games. Venues have been reviewed for accessibility and include consideration for persons with vision impairment, blindness, hearing loss, deafness as well as mobility and/or agility impairments. www.vancouver2010.com/paralympic-games/spectator-guide/accessibility/
- Hello BC is the official travel planning site of Tourism British Columbia, where visitors can find the information and tools to plan and book the perfect BC holiday. Call toll-free 1-800-435-5622 to speak to a Travel Counselor for reservation or trip planning assistance. www.hellobc.com

MEDIA COVERAGE

Ministry of Environment Launches Outreach Cabins, Sourcews (Online), February 13, 2010

<http://en.sourcews.com/ministry-environment-launches-outreach>

Original Strathcona Expedition Being Re-enacted, Comox Valley Record, January 28, 2010

http://www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver_island_north/comoxvalleyrecord/community/82991022.html?period=W&mpStartDate=01-21-2010&

You are here: Geocaching brings attention to our Island, The Daily News (Nanaimo), October 01, 2009

<http://www2.canada.com/nanaimodailynews/news/story.html?id=c893618a-a9fa-4a7e-b41a-0bf3c708dbd4&p=1>

Mountain park will preserve 1,300 acres, The Daily News (Nanaimo), September 22, 2009

<http://www2.canada.com/nanaimodailynews/news/story.html?id=16a99168-8226-4075-9881-316fe9c51c2d>

- 30 -

For assistance or more information:

Suntanu Dalal

Ministry of Environment

250-387-9745

Suntanu.Dalal@gov.bc.ca