



NEWS RELEASE

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***TLC* The Land Conservancy of BC Purchases Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area Thanks to Community Support**

TRAIL, B.C. – The rich wildlife, history and recreational opportunities found within Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area are now saved from future development thanks to The Trail Wildlife Association (TWA), Kootenay Wildlife Heritage Fund (KWHF) and other concerned citizens. *TLC* is proud to announce they are now the official owners of this 964 hectare property.

TWA and KWHF each donated \$4,500, and several generous community members chipped in to complete the final payment for Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area in December 2008. “This contribution from TWA, KWHF, and concerned citizens shows how important Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area is to local hunters, hikers, and naturalists,” says Kathryn Martell, *TLC*’s Kootenay Area Manager.

Since 2006, *TLC* has been working with Teck Cominco Metals Ltd. to create the Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area. In September 2006, Teck announced that they would sell the valuable lands to *TLC*. As part of the deal, Teck donated one million dollars of the land’s purchase price under the federal Ecological Gifts program. With support from Columbia Basin Trust, Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP), and the B.C. Trust for Public Lands, *TLC* purchased the first phase of the Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area from Teck in December 2007.

“Early in 2008, we received support from B.C. Conservation Foundation and Habitat Conservation Trust Fund for the second phase, critical habitat areas along the Columbia River,” explains Martell. “As our December deadline drew nearer, we were still \$10,000 short and that is when TWA and KWHF stepped in.”

Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area is 964 hectares and runs for more than 8 km along one of the last free-flowing sections of the Columbia River. The property has many unique features – such as grasslands, dry forests, cliffs, caves, and dry rocky slopes. It contains the largest intact area of a rare ecological zone unique in B.C., and is home to a number of species-at-risk including Common Nighthawks, Canyon Wrens, Townsend’s Big-Eared Bats, and Racers. The flat benches are valuable winter range for Mule Deer. The property was also once the site of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Fort Shepherd trading post from 1857-1870. The fort was a trading place for the Sinixt people who used the flat benches as a base for hunting and fishing, and Sinixt and Métis were involved in running the Fort and the gold rush brigade trails.

Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area is managed by a Stewardship Council with members of TWA, *TLC*, FWCP, and Teck. The Council has been working to develop on an official access

management policy which will be released early this spring.

TLC is a registered charity and land trust protecting natural areas, historic sites, farms and ranches, and places of recreational importance. Since 1997, *TLC* has protected over 125,000 acres of sensitive and threatened lands around the province, involving more than 300 projects. With offices in Victoria, Burnaby, Penticton, Kimberley and Prince George, *TLC* has grown to include over 7,000 members, and is now part of an international network of National Trusts with over 7.5 million members.

The Trail Wildlife Association is a local conservation organization established in Trail in 1926. TWA has been conducting habitat enhancement at Fort Shepherd and seeking protection of this property for more than 30 years. Through a formal agreement with *TLC*, the TWA continues to do on-the-ground management of Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area and assists *TLC* in managing the area to balance recreational use and wildlife habitat protection.

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