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Press release

Rocky Mountain Rain Forest Protected

The East Kootenay Environmental Society (EKES) congratulated the British Columbia government for its decision to designate a new provincial park today, the 14,700 hectare Cummins River Valley, an endangered Rocky Mountain Rain Forest.

The Cummins River Valley, one of the few remaining BC interior rain forests, is located 140 kilometers north of Golden, BC. The 6400 hectare upper portion of the valley, with spectacular twin lakes and waterfalls, received protected status in March, 1995. Now, the lower valley joins it in one 21,000 hectare contiguous rain forest preserve, encompassing ancient hemlock-cedar forests and lush wetlands, home to grizzly bear, moose, and caribou. Protection of the Cummins watershed provides a critical low-elevation link to Jasper National Park. This announcement marks a successful result to 25 years of advocacy by local conservationists.

A decision on the Cummins River Valley was previously deferred, pending a reconciliation of issues facing the forest industry in the town of Golden.

"This was a hard decision but the right one," said Ellen Zimmerman, EKES campaign coordinator for the Cummins. "The government has insured a legacy of biological diversity by saving this pristine ecological treasure. The new Cummins Park is a step forward in environmental commitment."

Conservationists applauded the protection of the Cummins. George Smith, National Conservation Director for Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) acknowledged that the Cummins Valley represents an important ecological milestone.

"With this announcement, the BC government has put in place a vital piece of the province's biodiversity puzzle," said Smith. "Protecting the Cummins has been a priority for conservationists throughout BC, Canada and the United States. Accolades for the BC government for this environmental coup will echo across both countries." .

Zimmerman stated that Columbia River- Revelstoke MLA, Jim Doyle never stopped advocating protection for the Cummins. "Jim Doyle's campaign promise to protect the Cummins resulted in today's announcement. His support and integrity have been invaluable, " she said.

Zimmerman added that the MLA found a strong ally in the Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks, Cathy MacGregor, who recognized the ecological value of the remote, untouched valley.

"The Cummins Valley is a place of true wilderness. Protecting the Cummins insures a legacy of biodiversity and an inheritance of wild land for future generations," said Zimmerman.

The campaign to save the Cummins River Valley has been the top issue for the East Kootenay Environmental Society, a grass roots organization with branches throughout the Kootenays.

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