

---

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2024ENV0029-000925  
June 14, 2024

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

### **Major park expansion will better protect sacred sites, caribou habitat**

VICTORIA – A major expansion of Klinse-za Park, located west of Chetwynd and Hudson’s Hope in northeastern B.C., will better protect sacred sites and wildlife habitat, and contribute to the goal of protecting 30% of lands in B.C. by 2030.

The expanded Klinse-za/Twin Sisters Park (pronounced Klin-see’-za) will protect nearly 200,000 hectares of land, including two mountains known locally as the Twin Sisters, which are an area of cultural and spiritual significance for Treaty 8 First Nations.

“Protecting and recovering threatened species and their habitat is a shared responsibility and priority for B.C., Canada and First Nations that requires everyone to work together,” said George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. “The decline of caribou is a complex problem, and we continue our work to stabilize populations. Providing a large area that protects caribou and their habitat from development is a critically important step forward that is consistent with the agreements we first announced in 2020.”

During the last century, the number of caribou in B.C. declined by more than 55%. Increased predation linked to human-caused habitat disturbance has led to these declines. There are fewer than 4,000 southern mountain caribou, a threatened at-risk species, left in B.C.

The park expansion is the result of a historic 2020 partnership agreement between the governments of B.C, Canada, Saulteau First Nations, and West Moberly First Nations. The agreement commits all partners to take action to help stabilize and increase southern mountain caribou populations to self-sustaining levels in northeastern B.C., while considering the effects of this work on surrounding communities.

The expanded park, which is also home to at-risk species, such as fishers, bull trout, grizzly bears and wolverines, creates the largest provincial park established in B.C. in a decade. The park will help restore healthy ecosystems and watersheds, including vital caribou habitats, a key measure to recover caribou in the region.

“Since time immemorial our ancestors have lived in harmony with these lands, and we strive to continue to walk in these footsteps laid before us. The teachings were to leave no trace nor impact as you pass through the lands,” said Chief Roland Willson, West Moberly First Nations. “Times have changed and others have come seeking natural resources for economic development: forestry, oil and gas, large-scale hydroelectric, mining, and so on. They leave a much different footprint. Treaty No. 8 promises us the ability to carry on a way of life, free from forced interference, now and in future, as if we had never entered into Treaty. We will continue to pursue a better path towards recovering caribou and finding balance.”

Two existing maternal penning sites for caribou, operated by the Níkanêse Wah tzee

Stewardship Society – a collaborative, non-profit organization between West Moberly First Nations and Saulneau First Nations – will now be within the park’s boundaries. Direct recovery actions, including the maternal penning projects, have successfully grown the local Klinse-za herd from 36 caribou in 2013 to 138 today.

“Our sacred Klinse-za/Twin Sisters area will now be protected for our people forever,” said Chief Rudy Paquette, Saulneau First Nations. “This is another step in the process by which we are proving that we can recover endangered species and protect the sacred lands of First Nations people, while also providing for healthy ecosystems and diverse economies.”

The Government of Canada has provided \$46 million to support compensation for industries and tenure holders affected by the implementation of the Partnership Agreement, and \$10 million to support a regional economic diversification trust for the region.

“The Government of Canada is committed to the protection and recovery of southern mountain caribou and other species at risk in British Columbia,” said Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada. “By working with the Province of British Columbia, Saulneau First Nations and West Moberly First Nations, the Klinse-za/Twin Sisters Provincial Park has been expanded, which will protect critical habitat for this iconic species. We will continue to work together with our partners to recover species at risk and reverse biodiversity loss in Canada.”

The Province will work collaboratively with First Nations and other partners to develop a Klinse-za/Twin Sisters Park management plan that will also involve public engagement.

**Learn More:**

For more information about BC Parks, visit: <https://bcparks.ca/>

For more information about the provincial Caribou Recovery Program, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/wildlife-conservation/caribou/recovery-program>

Two backgrounders follow.

**Contacts:**

B.C. Ministry of Environment and Climate  
Change Strategy  
Media Relations  
envmedia@gov.bc.ca  
250 953-3834

Environment and Climate Change Canada  
Media Relations  
media@ec.gc.ca  
819 938-3338 or 1 844 836-7799 (toll-free)

---

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: [news.gov.bc.ca/connect](https://news.gov.bc.ca/connect)

---

## BACKGROUND 1

For Immediate Release  
2024ENV0029-000925  
June 14, 2024

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

### **What people are saying about the park expansion**

**Tori Ball, conservation director, Lands and Freshwater Program, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, B.C. –**

“We know that caribou need healthy forests to survive, and today the future of this iconic species is looking brighter. The expansion of Klinse-za Park, alongside the ongoing caribou recovery efforts led by West Moberly and Sauteau First Nations, will have a lasting impact on bringing back declining caribou populations from the brink of extinction. Stewarding lands to ensure healthy caribou and wildlife populations is vital for local communities to ensure environmental sustainability underpins resource development.”

**Michael Noonan, assistant professor and head of the Quantitative Ecology Lab at the University of B.C. Okanagan –**

“The Province’s expansion of Klinse-za Park is a very welcome development. Not only does it represent an important step towards meeting the international commitment Canada signed on to in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, but it strengthens the hard-earned successes that the West Moberly and Sauteau First Nations have had in reversing the declines of the Klinse-za southern mountain caribou herd. This is the type of responsible stewardship that will help protect our wildlife and ecosystems for future generations.”

**Tim Burkhart, director of landscape protection, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative –**

“The expansion of the Klinse-za/Twin Sisters protected area is an extraordinary milestone for caribou and communities. Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative commends the unwavering leadership of West Moberly First Nations and Sauteau First Nations, in partnership with the Province, and Environment and Climate Change Canada, on their commitment and collaboration to bring the Klinse-za caribou herd back from the brink of extinction. These critical habitat protections today give caribou a chance to thrive for generations to come.”

**Brian Sullivan, chief executive officer, Conuma Resources –**

“Conuma Resources Ltd. congratulates the Sauteau and West Moberly First Nations on their successful collaboration with the governments of British Columbia and Canada, along with local communities, in recovering caribou populations and fostering healthy ecosystems and balanced economies. We celebrate the expansion of Klinse-za/Twin Sisters Park and look forward to our efforts to help grow caribou herds and advance habitat conservation and restoration.”

**Cole Burton, associate professor, Department of Forest Resources Management and Canada research chair in terrestrial mammal conservation –**

“The Klinse-za/Twin Sisters Park expansion is a monumental step forward for caribou conservation and an inspiring example of collaborative wildlife stewardship in British Columbia. Habitat loss has driven declines of many caribou populations, so steps like this to increase habitat protection and recovery are vital. And the expanded park will also provide needed protection for many other wildlife species that require large areas with minimal disturbances from people, including grizzly bear, wolverine and fisher.”

**Rachel Plotkin, boreal project manager, David Suzuki Foundation –**

“At this moment in time, when it’s so critical to protect and restore nature, we’re encouraged to see progress in on-the-ground measures to advance caribou recovery, and to recognize the rights, title and Treaties of the West Moberly and Saulneau First Nations.”

**Contacts:**

B.C. Ministry of Environment and Climate  
Change Strategy  
Media Relations  
envmedia@gov.bc.ca  
250 953-3834

Environment and Climate Change Canada  
Media Relations  
media@ec.gc.ca  
819 938-3338 or 1 844 836-7799 (toll-free)

---

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: [news.gov.bc.ca/connect](https://news.gov.bc.ca/connect)

---

## BACKGROUND 2

For Immediate Release  
2024ENV0029-000925  
June 14, 2024

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

### **Continued support for caribou recovery in B.C.**

In 2017, the Province established the Caribou Recovery Program, which it supports with more than \$10 million each year. Between 2020 and 2026, the federal government has also committed nearly \$20 million to support the program throughout B.C., in addition to funding on-the-ground recovery actions by multiple First Nations.

The Caribou Recovery Program aims to ensure that self-sustaining herds thrive long into the future. It is focused on making collaborative stewardship decisions based on western science and Indigenous knowledge, engaging First Nations in decision-making, addressing the public interest and the interests of stakeholders, and applying effective recovery tools that contribute to long-term ecosystem health, and promote and enable community well-being and economic resilience.

The Province will work collaboratively with First Nations and other partners to develop a management plan for the expanded Klinse-za/Twin Sisters Park, which will also involve public engagement. The plan will include restoration aimed at returning forest roads and logged areas back to natural habitat and mitigating the risk of wildfire. All industrial activities have been restricted in the area since 2019.

Additionally, the plan will include protections for Treaty rights and Indigenous cultural values, and outline how certain recreation activities can continue in a sustainable manner. Snowmobiling has been restricted in most areas of the park since 2021 to support the health and recovery of caribou and their habitat. No further restrictions are proposed at this time.

#### **Contacts:**

B.C. Ministry of Environment and Climate  
Change Strategy  
Media Relations  
envmedia@gov.bc.ca  
250 953-3834

Environment and Climate Change Canada  
Media Relations  
media@ec.gc.ca  
819 938-3338 or 1 844 836-7799 (toll-free)