



Press Release, For Immediate Release: Aug. 30, 2022

Local environmental groups fighting to save a sensitive wetland near Bridal Veil Falls

Unceded Xwchiyo:m (Cheam) Stolo Territory (Chilliwack, BC) - In an effort to save a small but important wetland, three local environmental groups are once again requesting that the Canada Energy Regulator (CER) reverse an earlier decision that permits Trans Mountain (TM) to install the pipeline through the wetland. In order to preserve the environments for the many important species that currently live and thrive in the wetlands, the groups have requested that the CER order TM to install the pipeline under, not through, this delicate terrain. See the [Notice of Motion here](#).

Trans Mountain has denied a request from these environmental groups to allow independent biologists into the wetland to document species at risk in the area. Ian Moore, a lawyer, made the request in writing several weeks ago. "This seems like a cover-up by Trans Mountain", said Peter Vranjkovic of Protect the Planet (PtP). "While they claim to have all the important information, we found several errors and inconsistencies in their environmental plan and have requested that independent biologists go to the site and investigate the discrepancies."

The three groups hired two biologists who were able to provide feedback without actually going into the wetland. The first biologist, Aimee Mitchell provided a report showing that there are several important species either federally "Threatened" or "Endangered" in the Critical Habitat located in Bridal Falls and the connected waterways: Coastal Giant Salamander, Barn Owl, Pacific Water Shrew, Oregon Forestsnail and the Roell's brotherella Moss. In addition to these species, the Red-legged Frog and Coastal Tailed Frog, both designated federally as "Special Concern", were also sighted.

The second independent biologist observed an abundance of birds in and around the wetland, including woodpeckers, western tanagers and juvenile house finches. Sofi Hindmarch noted that "the wetland has several larger snags with cavities suitable for woodpeckers and smaller owls, such as pygmy, saw-whet and Western screech-owls. The open grassy areas within the wetland are also suitable as barn owl hunting habitat. Overall, the habitat in this wetland is of high value to migrating and residential birds".

The value of this small area is even more crucial now that the neighbouring lands have been clearcut. In addition to nesting birds and amphibians, the area also has mature trees and rare species of plants, all crucial to threatened barn owls and other birds.

Earlier this year, Peter Vranjkovic of PtP filed a written complaint to the CER about Trans Mountain's destruction over the spring and additional information was filed on July 24. "I am not optimistic the complaints will change anything due to the conflict of interest. The pipeline is owned by the same people who control CER", said Vranjkovic."

The group's original "Notice of Motion" asked CER to order TM to put its pipeline under this critical wetland, similar to what it is doing for sensitive wetlands near Chilliwack and Surrey bend. A copy of the "Notice of Motion" was also filed with the British Columbia Environmental Assessment Office (BCEAO). The Assessment Office has not responded to date.

"In rejecting our Notice of Motion, the Commission referred us to the CER compliance and complaints division. Our groups don't have faith in that process because three Auditor General Reports have criticized the CER compliance process. This has forced us to write to the Commission explaining why it should oversee the matter", said Lynn Perrin PIPE UP Network Director.

Protect the Planet started a petition asking BC Minister Katrine Conroy to rescind a permit her department gave Trans Mountain to salvage threatened coastal giant salamanders in the area. "BC's own reports show that amphibian salvages have a high rate of mortality and should only be used as a last resort", said Vranjkovic. "The permit should not have been issued because it is not a last resort and because Trans Mountain had not even done an on-site wildlife survey before applying for the permit." The [petition](#) already has over 800 signatures.

Aimee Mitchell's independent report noted that her understanding is the province should apply permits in accordance with Recovery Strategy recommendations to limit or avoid the disturbance or destruction of Critical Habitat. That is not happening in this case. The groups requested a meeting with Minister Conroy on August 9 to discuss the wetland and the salvage permit, but have not heard back from the Minister's office.

In early June, the TM contractors at the site were ready to clear the land between South Popkum Road and the Bridal Falls Forest Service Road. A local resident stopped the work and requested help from the Community Nest Finding Network (CNFN) to help. After CNFN located and documented active bird nests, a biologist confirmed their presence and paused the work until the young birds fledge.

Sara Ross of CNFN, said, "It appears that TM's biologists are either given insufficient time to find nests and protect wildlife, or they are not motivated to find anything. Every time the CNFN has been on a TM site immediately prior to tree-felling, we have discovered nests where they are about to cut (or where they are already cutting). The most famous incident occurred on April

12th 2021, when an Environment Canada Officer witnessed the destruction of a hummingbird nest by TM contractors."

"The logging this spring is another violation, not only of environmental regulations, but also of the conditions TM agreed to as part of the approval of the Expansion project", said Ms. Perrin." In addition to the above grants from West Coast Environmental Law and other groups is supporting the biologists and an environmental lawyer, Ian Moore.

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Media Resources:

[Images and video footage available at this link](#)

Protect the Planet is part of a coalition opposed to tar sands expansion and the Trans Mountain Expansion pipeline.

For more info: StopTMX.ca • facebook.com/StopTMX • twitter@PPSTMX1

Background:

The Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) pipeline project was purchased from Texas oil giant Kinder Morgan by the federal government in 2018. On February 18 2022, Canadians received a cost update of approximately \$21.4 billion. The project is opposed by the Squamish-, Tsleil-Waututh- and Secwepemc Nations, as well as Coldwater Indian Band, who were denied leave to appeal by the Supreme Court of Canada. TMX conflicts with Canada's commitment to keep global temperatures from rising above 1.5 degree Celsius as per the Paris Climate Agreement.

The project would impact numerous drinking water sources along the route, Burrard Inlet and Tsleil-Waututh, Qayqayt and other First Nations, Burnaby Mountain and Simon Fraser University. It would also spell a 7-fold increase in tanker traffic in the Burrard inlet and an increased threat to the endangered Southern Resident Orcas. The Province of British Columbia, the State of Washington, and 20 municipalities oppose the pipeline project.

The existing Trans Mountain pipeline is already a major environmental and public health hazard with a [long history of disastrous spills](#). In June 2020, 50,000 gallons of crude [spilled](#) from a pump station above an aquifer that supplies the Sumas First Nation with drinking water. At the pipeline terminus, the thirteen 67-year-old tanks are so close together it will be impossible to put out a fire, according to Burnaby Fire Department. 240,000 people live within the 4.2 km radius of

the site that is considered an evacuation zone, including 32,000 members of the SFU community.

A [growing number](#) of insurers have pulled out of the pipeline project; those still involved [are facing pressure to divest](#). In November 2020, the Canada Energy Regulator [released a report](#) stating that there is no need for any pipeline expansion if Canada takes measures to curb GHGs, and [in Sept. 2020, economists warned](#) that the Trans Mountain project is no longer financially viable. Indigenous groups, as well as the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls have pointed out the connection between resource extraction man-camps and [violence against Indigenous women](#).

The Cities of New Westminster and Burnaby officially oppose the pipeline. The coalition of environmental groups supporting the Brunette protection camps includes, but is not limited to, Mountain Protectors, Protect the Inlet, Coast Protectors, Wilderness Committee, Climate Convergence, Dogwood, Burnaby Residents Opposing Kinder Morgan Expansion (BROKE), Burnaby Climate Hub, Babies for Climate Action, Extinction Rebellion Vancouver.