

NEWS RELEASE

SkeenaWild Conservation Trust: A bold vision for the future of the Skeena watershed

October 30, 2007 (Terrace, BC) – A diverse group of Northwest BC residents has launched SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, an initiative aimed at making the Skeena River Watershed a global model of sustainability. SkeenaWild plans to reach this goal by facilitating community-based salmon management and enhancing economic benefits to the people of the region.

“The Skeena is the last major watershed in British Columbia in which good will and hard work could ensure human communities and wild salmon co-exist into the future,” said Dr. Ray Chipeniuk, SkeenaWild’s Senior Research and Planning Advisor “If we sustain salmon, we sustain our cultures.”

SkeenaWild is governed by a group of trustees drawn from a wide range of backgrounds including First Nations, natural resource law, ecology, and tourism.

“Accelerating global climate change is already presenting unprecedented challenges for salmon management,” said Dr. Jim Pojar, one of SkeenaWild’s trustees. “We must develop management systems precautionary enough to account for future climate impacts on salmon.”

The threat climate change poses to salmon was highlighted in a recent report from the Pacific Fisheries Resource Conservation Council, which demonstrated the need for immediate protective action before stocks collapse. SkeenaWild plans to address the climate threat by working to ensure the federal Pacific Wild Salmon Policy is fully implemented as soon as possible.

SkeenaWild’s initial projects include:

- Map-based inventory of the cultural and ecological assets of the Skeena wild salmon ecosystem.
- Collection of baseline wild salmon habitat data in the Skeena headwaters area.

At 51,200 square kilometers, the Skeena watershed is home to all five species of wild salmon, as well as steelhead. Together, they support a vibrant First Nations culture, British Columbia’s second-largest commercial salmon fishery and a world-renowned commercial angling sector. An IBM Business Consulting study estimated Skeena wild salmon contribute \$110 million per year to the economy.

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Backgrounder attached. Digital photos available by request: (250) 847-9293

BACKGROUNDER: SKEENAWILD VOLUNTEER BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Trustees provide overall leadership and decision-making and are legally obliged to set aside any personal interests that might interfere with pursuit of the Trust's mission.

Gerald Amos, First Nations conservation leader

Gerald Amos is a former Chief councilor of the Haisla and was employed as the Haisla Treaty Negotiating Team's Chief Negotiator. He has also served as the Speaker for the B.C. Aboriginal Fisheries Commission, a senior First Nations organization dealing with fisheries and ocean resource issues at provincial and national levels. Gerald currently is part of the Headwaters Initiative, a conservation organization which provides environmental education and leadership in the Skeena watershed.

Gladys Atrill, Tourism manager and operator

Gladys owns and operates an ecotourism business based out of Smithers where she also acts as the tourism coordinator for Smithers Tourism. She is Vice-chair of the Northern BC Tourism Association. She has worked as an outdoor educator for the past 20 years focusing on Wilderness First Aid, Canoeing, Backcountry Cooking and Guide/Client Relations.

Walter Joseph, First Nations fisheries manager

Walter Joseph is the Fisheries Manager for the Office of the Wet'suwet'en's where he has been instrumental in the development of all aspects of their fisheries program. He works closely with Wet'suwet'en chiefs and communities as well as other First Nations groups in the Skeena watershed to improve fisheries management, social and economic benefits from salmon. Walter is also a board member on the Skeena Fisheries Commission – an organization comprised of all Skeena watershed First Nations focusing on fisheries management, science and conservation issues.

Tara Marsden, First Nations tribal council manager

Tara Marsden is a member of the House of Gamlaxyeltxw, in the Lax Ganeda (Frog/Raven) Clan of Gitanyow. She grew up in Kitwanga, Hazelton and Prince Rupert before moving to Prince George to complete her Bachelors and Masters of Arts Degrees in First Nations Studies and Political Science at the University of Northern BC. She has also completed the BC Legislative Internship Program, and subsequently worked with the BC Government Caucus. Tara most recently wrote her master's thesis in Political Science on consultation and accommodation between First Nations in Northern BC and the Province of BC. Tara currently works for the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council in the Treaty Department as a Communications Officer. Previously, she also held the positions of Treaty Policy Analyst and Land Use Planning Coordinator for the tribal council.

Richard Overstall , Natural resource lawyer

Richard Overstall practices law with the firm Buri, Overstall in Smithers, with a particular interest in aboriginal and natural resource law. Richard is a graduate geologist and worked in mining exploration in northwestern Canada and Ireland for

more than ten years. After a stint as a sawmill worker in the Bulkley Valley, he joined local efforts to improve forest practices and ensure a sustainable timber supply. For the past 25 years, Richard has acted as a researcher, negotiator and lawyer for a number of aboriginal groups. In the course of this work, he helped design a number of effective programs, including those in restorative justice, wildlife habitat mapping and ecosystem-based territory management.

Dr. Jim Pojar, Ecologist

Jim Pojar is an ecologist and forester who lived and worked in British Columbia for over 30 years before moving to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, where from 2004 – 2007 he was Executive Director, Yukon Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS). Jim earned a Ph.D. in Botany from UBC in 1974. In 1978 he moved to the Bulkley Valley, where he was Forest Ecologist & Research Officer for the B.C. Forest Service. Major contributions have been in ecological land classification, knowledge-based resource management, sustainable forestry, conservation and protected areas, and education. Lately Jim has concentrated his ecological work in four main areas: applied conservation biology, resource management, forest ecology, and education. Dr. Pojar is a professional biologist, registered professional forester and certified senior ecologist. He is a founding director of the Bulkley Valley Centre for Research and Management and of the Northwest Institute for Bioregional Studies. Jim recently moved back to the Bulkley Valley.

Mariusz Wroblewski , International conservationist

For nearly ten years Mariusz Wroblewski managed the Ponoï and Yokanga River Atlantic salmon operations of Frontiers International and Shackelton International on Russia's Kola Peninsula. Mariusz was instrumental in working with the Atlantic Salmon Federation and the Murmansk Polar Institute of Marine Fisheries and Oceanography to establish the first Russian Atlantic salmon conservation and monitoring program based exclusively on data from sport fishing. Since 2006 Mariusz has been working for Ecotrust in Portland, Oregon. Mariusz holds a PhD candidate degree in Slavic Literatures and Languages from UC Berkeley.