

Private land conservation in Canada receives major boost

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and its partners applaud a new federally-funded \$100 million program to safeguard important habitats for species at risk. The Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP), announced recently by Catherine McKenna, Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate

Change, will support privately protected areas in ecologically sensitive landscapes, from forests and endangered grasslands to wetlands and coastal regions.

The NHCP will result in new conservation of 200,000 hectares (more than 490,000 acres) over the next four years. That's an area three times the size of the City of Toronto. The program will directly contribute to Canada's Target 1, the nationwide initiative to protect at least 17 per cent of our land and freshwater and 10 per cent of our marine areas by 2020.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada will oversee the NHCP with contributions from program partners Ducks Unlimited Canada and Canada's land trusts (Canadian Land Trusts Working Group). Wildlife Habitat Canada will administer the local land trust portion of the program. Collectively, the partners earned the opportunity following a federal call for proposals.

The NHCP partners are keen to continue momentum protecting ecologically sensitive areas through the conservation of private lands and by securing interests in lands across Canada.

They will work closely with landowners, families, communities and businesses to encourage conservation.

?We are grateful for this investment in nature conservation, which will bring

Canadians together to protect the places we love. We are fortunate to embark on this challenge with great partners who share a track record for protecting habitat and species at risk,? said Lounds. ?As partners we know our real job is just beginning. The conservation community is ready to work with Canadians from all walks of life to raise an additional \$200 million to maximize our conservation impact.?

?We look forward to working with the Nature Conservancy of Canada to provide effective and efficient grant administration services for land trusts,? said

Cameron Mack, executive director of Wildlife Habitat Canada. ?The land trust community will play a key role in conserving private lands and helping to meet

Canada's international protected areas and biodiversity targets.?

?Regional and community land trusts across Canada can now protect more private lands, thanks to the new Natural Heritage Conservation Program. We are excited to work with our NHCP partners and local communities to protect Canada's natural spaces and increase habitat resilience to climate change,? noted Susan Walmer, Canadian Land Trusts Working Group.

The Natural Heritage Conservation Program is a \$100-million, four-year federal government commitment to support private land conservation. Every federal dollar will be matched by NCC and its delivery partners with at least two dollars of non-federal contributions.

The NHCP will conserve at least 200,000 additional hectares (more than 490,000 acres) of important conservation lands. The NHCP will focus on multi-species at risk conservation, including establishing habitat for the 25 Canadian terrestrial species at risk that are currently not found in any public or privately protected areas. This new program will focus on conservation in the settled landscapes of southern Canada, where most Canadians live, work and play. It is also where most of Canada's species at risk are found. The

NHCP will encourage Canadians to entrust their lands to conservation. Government support is meaningful to families who are searching for conservation solutions for privately owned natural areas. Conservation is an important element of any strategy to help Canadians mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The new program continues important momentum. It builds upon the previous Natural Areas Conservation Program (NACP), under which NCC and partners (DUC and land owned by The Nature Conservancy of Canada trusts) conserved 446,000 hectares (1.1 million acres) of habitat for 210 species at risk. Together, the partners achieved nearly \$1-billion in conservation outcomes.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is the nation's leading land conservation organization, working to protect our most important natural areas and the species they sustain. Since 1962, NCC and its partners have helped to protect 2.8 million acres (more than 1.1 million hectares), coast to coast.