

LANDmark

\$64.7 Million Sooke Land Purchase Announced

TLC assisted deal is largest-ever by a BC regional government

*by Kathleen Gibbard
Manager, External Relations*

On August 8, 2007, TLC and the Capital Regional District (CRD) announced a land purchase agreement of historic proportions: a deal has been struck with Timber West to buy more than 9,700 hectares of land in Sooke; valued at \$64.7 million.

Two separate parcels of land are involved in the purchase. With the support of TLC, 932 hectares are being purchased to create new regional park land. Located just east of the Sooke Potholes, and nearly 15 times larger than the existing Sooke Potholes Regional Park, this purchase builds on past TLC projects in the Sooke Hills and the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt (see Talarico Campaign).

A further 8,791 hectare parcel is being purchased to protect the future of the capital region's drinking water supply. Valued at \$58.9 million, CRD is purchasing the Leech River watershed, which will ensure long-term water supplies for the capital region, and avoid the need to build costly water treatment facilities as the communities on southern Vancouver Island continue to grow. ■



Vancouver Island's beautiful Sooke Hills. The recently announced purchase builds on previous TLC projects aimed at protecting this vital natural area. Photo by Don Benn

Larry Talarico Memorial Campaign

Larry Talarico loved the Sooke Hills. An avid hiker and nature lover, “Larry lived and breathed these hills,” says Alison Talarico, Larry’s wife.

Sadly, while hiking with friends on July 7, 2005, Larry suffered a heart attack and passed away. But Larry's spirit lives on, and TLC is proud to announce the launch of the Larry Talarico Memorial Campaign to help protect the land that Larry cared for so deeply.

The area of the Sooke Hills in which Larry had been hiking is part of CRD's vision for a Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt. Once completed, the belt will create a continuous protected area from Salt Spring Island to the

Sooke Basin; providing habitat for wildlife (like black bear, cougar and elk), and an incredible network of lands for recreational pursuits like hiking and horseback riding. The goal of the Larry Talarico Memorial Campaign is to raise the \$750,000 needed to finalize the purchase of the 932 hectares mentioned above, and to allow *TLC* to continue working to make the Sea-to-Sea Green Blue Belt a reality. The Talarico family has already pledged \$150,000 towards this dream. “Larry would have been proud to be involved in this campaign,” says Alison. “He would not want this any other way.”

To make your gift to the Larry Talarico Memorial Campaign, call 1-877-485-2422, or use the coupon on the back of this newsletter. (Please write Larry Talarico Memorial Campaign on the coupon, so that we can be sure of your wishes.)

Executive Director's Message



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Earlier this year, *TLC* began celebrating its 10th Anniversary, and in the summer edition of the *LandMark*, we reflected on some of the key projects that *TLC* has completed since 1997.

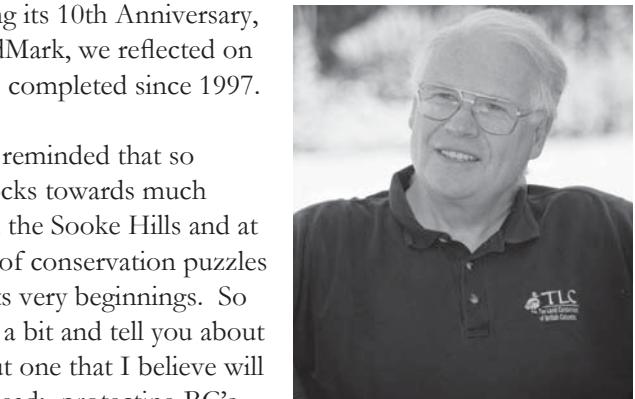
Looking back on these projects, I was reminded that so many of them are actually building blocks towards much larger visions. The recent successes in the Sooke Hills and at Gerald Island, for instance, are pieces of conservation puzzles that *TLC* has been working on since its very beginnings. So in this issue, I wanted us to shift gears a bit and tell you about one of *TLC*'s lesser-known visions, but one that I believe will become a major issue in the decade ahead: protecting BC's farm land.

Since our inception, *TLC* has placed great importance on partnering with BC's farmers and ranchers to protect special places. Some of *TLC*'s earliest work centred on connecting with ranchers in BC's interior to protect grassland ecosystems, which are home to one-third of BC's endangered species. In 2001, we launched our Conservation Partners Program, through which *TLC* works to promote local farmers who are exceptional stewards of their land (see facing article). More recently, we've also been involved in projects where agricultural land and BC's cultural heritage intersect: Keating Farm Estate in Duncan, with its spectacular 'Great Hall' being the prime example.

Of course, as vital as agricultural land is to BC's wildlife habitat and heritage, it is critically important for the food it produces. *TLC*'s work to protect agricultural land for agriculture's sake has been limited so far but, as awareness of the impacts of shipping food great distances (with respect to carbon costs and climate change) continues to grow, the role that *TLC* can play in ensuring the local lands are available for agriculture becomes clear.

BC's agricultural lands are very special places. With your help, we can protect them forever, for everyone.

TLC's Keating Farm Estate - an important agricultural and cultural heritage site in Duncan - played host to Vancouver Island's *Feast of Fields* celebration in September 2007.
Photo by Carla Funk.



Bill Turner,
TLC's Executive Director



Agriculture + Ecology = Agroecology

How TLC works with Conservation Partners to protect habitat on BC farms

by Paula Hesje
Agricultural Program Coordinator

Agroecology. When hopping out of the truck, donning my rubber boots and grabbing my clipboard to visit a TLC Conservation Partner farm, it's always the first thing on my mind. This is a fancy way of saying that I look at the ecological aspects of the farm, the agricultural practices, and how these interact with each other. I look at the 'whole farm as natural habitat'.

TLC's Conservation Partners are exemplary farmers, ranchers and vineyard owners who have a long-term vision of land stewardship. They use their land

not only to produce food, but also to protect natural habitat and biodiversity. Your support as a TLC Member allows me (and other TLC staff) to work with these partners and help them sustain and improve their efforts to balance agriculture and ecology on their land – efforts which are critical to the health of natural ecosystems all across BC.

When I'm visiting a farmer's land, the farmer and I will explore key wildlife habitats – riparian areas along streams, forested areas, connections between natural areas, and hedgerows – and discuss how best to maintain the integrity of these areas. We look at options for enhancing biodiversity by planting native vegetation to attract beneficial insects, and installing mason bee boxes to aid crop pollination.

TLC's Conservation Partners are also leaders in employing agricultural and farm management practices that promote healthy ecosystems. During my visits, farmers tell me about more specialized strategies, like using cover crops that improve soil fertility and create bird habitat; how they sell products locally to minimize energy consumption; and ways of eliminating or reducing the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers.

What results from these farm walkabouts is a picture of how the farm's natural features help with the production of crops, and how this in turn relates to the profitability of the farm, and other goals (like agri-tourism) that the farm may have. In short, they demonstrate how conservation and agriculture can go hand in hand, and

how paying attention to agricultural lands is vitally important to the long-term viability of food production and ecosystem health in BC.

Thank you for making this work possible!

Editor's note: Find out more about TLC's Conservation Partners at www.conservancy.bc.ca/conservationpartners



Paula Hesje is TLC's Agricultural Program Coordinator and the point person for TLC's Conservation Partners Program.

Photo by Carla Funk



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Protecting Farming, Food and Wildlife

Your support helps save farm near 100 Mile House

by Rosemary Collard
Agricultural Programs Assistant

In the heart of BC's South Cariboo near 100 Mile House, the clear waters of Horse Lake stretch east to west in an 18 kilometre arc framed by rolling hills of deciduous and coniferous forest.

At the north-east reach of the lake sits a 54 hectare farm. For more than a century the land has been harvested and cared for by pioneers and farmers. Affectionately called The Betty Place, after Elizabeth (Betty) Johnson – owner of the property since 1989 – the farm is an important source of locally-grown food, as well as a vital habitat area for endangered American Badgers, deer, bear, moose, and at least 45 different bird species.

The Betty Place was once one of many farms in the area but, like many places in BC, agricultural land near Horse Lake is under intense development pressure. Rising land prices, expanding urban and suburban populations, and increasing demand for recreational properties have sparked a dramatic sell-off; resulting in alarming losses in prime agricultural land and the local food it produces.

Having watched many adjacent farms become lakeside subdivisions, Betty was adamant that when the time came to sell her farm it would continue to operate as a farm, and she contacted TLC for help. TLC, in turn, joined forces with the local community to establish the Horse Lake Community Farm Co-operative – a group that will oversee continued farming operations to provide food for the local community, care for the wildlife habitat on the property, and facilitate the eventual purchase of the site for TLC.

Farms like The Betty Place illustrate how protecting farmland is so important to BC's wildlife and our future local food supply, as well as to BC's farming community. With your continued support TLC can save these special places forever, for everyone. ■

Editor's note: For more information on TLC's efforts to protect BC's farmland, contact Ramona Scott at (250) 479-8053.



Workers check crops at Horse Lake Farm. An important source of local produce, TLC worked with local residents to save this farm from becoming a lakeside subdivision.

Photo by Ramona Scott.

Protect Your Farm Land

Many BC farmers have been caring for their land for generations, and would like to see it remain in agricultural production for future generations. To explore options for protecting your land with TLC call Carla at 1-877-485-2422.



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Ranching and Conservation?

How TLC is working to find a balance in the Horsefly River Valley

by Barry Booth
Regional Manager, Northern Region

One of the challenges of TLC's work is that some of BC's best agricultural lands are also some of its richest wildlife habitat areas. Striking a balance between the two isn't always easy, but TLC is working to do just that in places like the Horsefly River Valley – an area near Williams Lake renowned for its sockeye salmon, grizzly bears, and other wildlife.

TLC first started working along the Horsefly River in 1998 to protect some of the best sockeye spawning habitat in all of North America. But recently, TLC has been working with the local community on two new projects that will both further enhance the wildlife habitat and maintain important ranching areas in the Valley.

In 2004 a strategic land purchase allowed TLC to shift some haying activity from an area immediately adjacent to river, to an upland area better suited for hay production. This move allowed TLC to restore a vital piece of riverfront habitat while also providing an agricultural setting that is more compatible with the fish and wildlife values of the valley.

Last year, TLC purchased another 22 acre site containing an oxbow lake that has been cutoff from the main stem of the Horsefly River by a containment dyke. Breaching this dyke will allow the river's flood waters to once again recharge the lake – enhancing rearing habitat for salmon (especially Coho) – and re-establish the natural flood plain process on this section of the river. Hayfields on



Each year, thousands of salmon make their way up the Fraser River system to spawn at TLC's Horsefly River property. TLC's work in the area is attempting to balance the needs of the salmon, the bears that feed on them, and the ranchers that work the surrounding lands. Photo by Cornelius Iwan.

this new property will be made available to a local rancher, in exchange for the rancher allowing the dike breach to occur, as the dike is on his property. This will increase the amount of land under active agriculture in the valley, while at the same time protecting and enhancing wildlife habitat found there.

These projects illustrate how TLC can work with ranchers to both sustain

agriculture and protect some of the best sockeye salmon spawning habitat in North America, which in turn saves grizzly bears and other wildlife which rely on the salmon for food. There is still much more work to do in the Valley but, with projects like these, we hope to continue working towards finding a balance between agriculture and conservation in the Valley and throughout BC. ■



Grizzly bear
© David Tipling

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www.conservancy.bc.ca

See enclosed insert to find out how.

Peak Nears for Skaha Bluffs Campaign

Public support brings fundraising goal closer as deadline nears

by Heather Skydt
External Relations Specialist

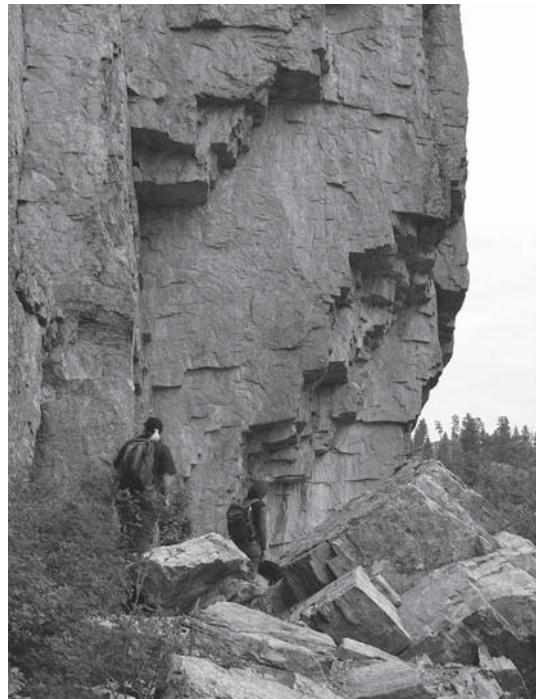
Climbers, outdoor enthusiasts, naturalists and TLC are gearing up for a final push to close the deal on Sub Lot 18 – a purchase that would secure a permanent access route to one of Canada's premier climbing destinations: Skaha Bluffs in Penticton.

In July, TLC was successful in negotiating a three-month extension to the campaign in order to raise the \$500,000 that was still needed to purchase the site. While some foundation and government support still

remains unconfirmed, public support has been tremendous; giving hope that the funds can be raised in time.

Stay tuned to future LandMarks for a complete update, or visit www.conservancy.bc.ca/skaha

Editor's note: *Skaha Bluffs are located in the South Okanagan-Lower Similkameen area – one of Canada's four most endangered ecosystems – and are believed to be among the oldest rocks in BC. Over the centuries, the Bluffs have been weathered and ground-down, re-compressed and covered with solid ridges and deep ravines making them excellent conditions for rock climbing. The area is also ideal habitat for California Bighorn Sheep, Pallid Bat and Desert Night Snake.* ■



Climbers explore Skaha Bluffs. TLC has been working to secure permanent access to this site since March 2007. Photo by Carla Funk.

Island habitat protected

Project brings larger marine park closer to fruition

by Kathleen Gibbard
Manager, External Relations

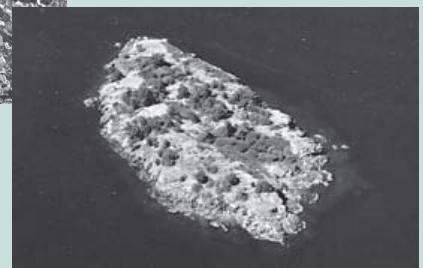
A partnership between TLC and the B.C. government has protected Gerald Island: an 11.65 hectare island in the southern Strait of Georgia. One of the largest islands in the Ballenas-Winchelsea Archipelago (a group of 13 islands and numerous islets located near Nanoose Bay), Gerald Island is set for future designation as a provincial marine park. This exciting development builds on the success of TLC's initial purchase in 1998 of South Winchelsea Island;



BC Environment Minister Barry Penner, Bill Turner & Nanaimo-Parksville MLA Ron Cantelon celebrate the protection of Gerald Island (shown below). Photos by Kathleen Gibbard (left) and Dave Scott (below).

continuing TLC's work towards the protection of the entire archipelago through the purchase of private lands, and the protection of crown properties.

Gerald Island itself is significant as a home to northern and California sea lions, bald eagles, and a variety of other bird and marine species. It is also a prime example of the rocky coastal bluff ecosystem, which is now rarely found undisturbed in this area. ■



TLC's role in this project was to negotiate the purchase of the property, which was then financed by the province. This is an excellent example of how TLC works behind the scenes building partnerships to protect special places. ■

Saving Special Places - it's in the bag!

Penticton grocery store helps environment and special places

by Kathleen Gibbard
Manager, External Relations

Saving special places are in – in the bag that is. Earlier this year, Whole Foods Market in Penticton introduced an exciting new program that is helping protect local special places, and the planet: a 10 cent ecology fee for all plastic shopping bags distributed to its customers.

"By launching this program, we're helping to further educate our customers," says Whole Foods Manager, Richard Hunt. "The initiative is intended to provide customers with an alternative to using plastic bags and to further educate shoppers how, by such a minimal effort, they can make a difference in their community."

By encouraging customers not to use plastic bags, Whole Foods is helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions created by the production and transportation of single-use plastic bags, as well as reduce

the litter and landfill garbage created once the bags are discarded. Since the program was launched on Earth Day in April 2007, Whole Foods has distributed only 1,440 bags versus their projected distribution of over 50,000!

Whole Foods is donating all the proceeds from the program – \$144 so far – to TLC for the protection of environmentally sensitive and endangered land in the Okanagan Valley which, over time, will provide a significant boost to conservation efforts there.

In addition, the Market stocks and sells a variety of reusable shopping bags, and has sold several hundred such bags since the Earth Day introduction of the ecology fee.

Kudos to Whole Foods Market for going above and beyond to protect their community and the environment! And remember, the next time you purchase your groceries, the key to saving BC's special places might be in the bag. ■

Editor's note: Find out more about other businesses that are helping to save BC's special places at www.conservancy.bc.ca/advantage



Whole Foods Market in Penticton is encouraging customers to find alternatives to single-use plastic grocery bags, and raising funds for TLC projects in the Okanagan. Photo by Sarah Jeremy.

Community Action Hero Update: Superheroes in Action

In every city, town and village TLC Community Action Heroes are hard at work. These superheroes build community spirit, raise awareness for TLC's work, and help save BC's special places – all at the same time!

TLC Member Sue Hara is one such Community Action Hero. Inspired by the article "Local Superheroes Save Special Places" in the last issue of the LandMark, Sue decided to take action. "I am a long time fan of all that TLC does," she wrote. "My garage sale cleared away a tidal wave of accumulations, and it gave me great pleasure to be able to pass along the proceeds to TLC."

Thank you to all those Community Action Heroes out there. Your super powers are saving BC's most special places!

Are you a TLC Community Action Hero? Be sure to send us pictures and stories from your fundraising event by October 15, 2007 and we'll share some of the best ones in the next issue of the LandMark.



Community Action Hero Sue Hara helped save special places by holding a garage sale for TLC. Photo courtesy Sue Hara.

Your personal TLC contacts:

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Thank you so much for your support!

Tom + Wendy

Tom and Wendy, your TLC Member Care contacts, can be reached anytime by calling 1-877-485-2422, or by e-mail at membership@conservancy.bc.ca.

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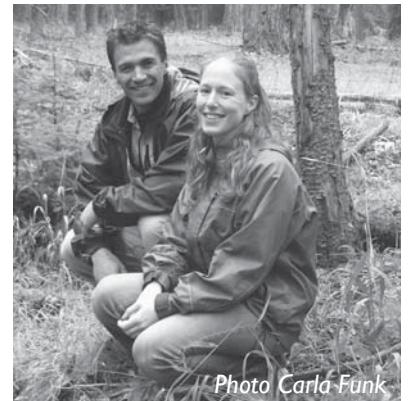


Photo Carla Funk

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