

Living Rivers Trust Funding Announcement

Premier Gordon Campbell

May 1, 2006

Check Against Delivery

Thank you all very much for coming today. I'm sorry that Chief Ernie Campbell, the Chief of the Musqueam First Nation can't be with us today. These are traditional lands of the Musqueam. Known as the "People of River Grass", the Musqueam have lived here at the mouth of the Fraser River for thousands of years.

I'm very pleased to be here today with so many people that have done so much to improve our salmon habitat and the lifeblood of the province – the river systems of British Columbia.

Our partners in protecting B.C.'s rivers include John Woodward, who's the chair of the Living Rivers Advisory Group, George Hungerford, the chair of the Pacific Salmon Foundation, Patrick Reid, the chair of the Fraser Basin Council, Dianne Ramage, chair of the Pacific Stream Keepers Federation and Rick Hansen, chair of the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society and chair of the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund. I also want to acknowledge the work of the B.C. Conservation Foundation and the Georgia Basin Steelhead and Salmon Recovery Initiative.

I want to also thank the people from Fisheries and Oceans Canada who've been a critical partner as far as we're concerned in making sure that our river systems are not just protected but are restored as much as we can so we can improve our salmon habitat.

By me is the Fraser River. It's the longest river that's wholly in the province of British Columbia, and nothing symbolizes better just how important our rivers are to our province.

You know, for me this is an important day because it was 15 years ago that as mayor of Vancouver I asked all of the mayors from the Fraser to come together in what we called the Fraser Cities Coalition to talk about how we could improve the quality of the Fraser River. The mayors came together, and we enlisted the work of the late Dave Worthy, an MP for the Cariboo for the federal government. We worked to say: how can we bring all levels of government together, how can we bring communities, how can we bring first nations together to make sure we protect this incredible natural endowment for the province of British Columbia?

We recognized two-thirds of our population is in the Fraser Basin. The area drained by the Fraser Basin is nearly one-quarter of our province. It supports two-thirds of our economy and sustains almost half of British Columbia's farmlands. But rivers everywhere and waterways everywhere are vital to the lifeblood of British Columbia, not

just our natural endowments and our wildlife but our industrial endeavours and our community endeavours as well.

If you look at a map of British Columbia without all the communities and just look at the rivers, you'll see that it is just like the capillaries of life that you see when you look at each of us closely under a microscope.

Today I'm glad to be joined by my colleague Barry Penner, the Minister of Environment, John Yap, the MLA for Richmond-Steveston and Dave Hayer, the MLA for Surrey-Tynehead in announcing that we will continue our commitments to the Living Rivers Trust in British Columbia.

In 2002 we established the Living Rivers Trust Fund with a \$2-million endowment. In 2004 we provided an additional \$5 million to the Living Rivers Trust. Last spring we committed to triple that. Today I am proud to tell everyone here in British Columbia that we will add \$14 million to protect B.C.'s rivers and waterways and restore them, which will bring the total for the Living Rivers Trust to \$21 million for British Columbia.

The Living Rivers Trust will provide river and watershed research, establish the sustainable use of water and help undo past damage. But it's important to note that this trust will be used to build on the partnerships which already exist across the province. We will bring together first nations and the groups that I've mentioned before to make sure that we maximize the benefits and lever the benefits of the Living Rivers Trust so that we can improve the quality of water and life in British Columbia.

Rivers like the Cowichan and Squamish, named for first nations they have sustained here for thousands of years and rivers like the Fraser and the Thompson that are part of our history in our province are so critical to wildlife and, most importantly, our salmon in the province of British Columbia. They are the life-sustaining component for our giant cedars and for our forests across this great province, for our farmlands and for our meadows across this great province. They are critical to the future of British Columbia.

Today, on behalf of all British Columbians whose commitment this actually reflects, let me say thank-you to our partners. Let me say thank-you to everyone who says that they want to keep the quality of our streams and our rivers for the future. Let me say thank-you to people who think of generations to come, generations not just of people but generations of wildlife and generations of the valuable salmon that have been such an important part of our history.

Thank you for being here. Working together, we will make British Columbia a beacon of environmental and water stewardship around the world.

Thank you very much.