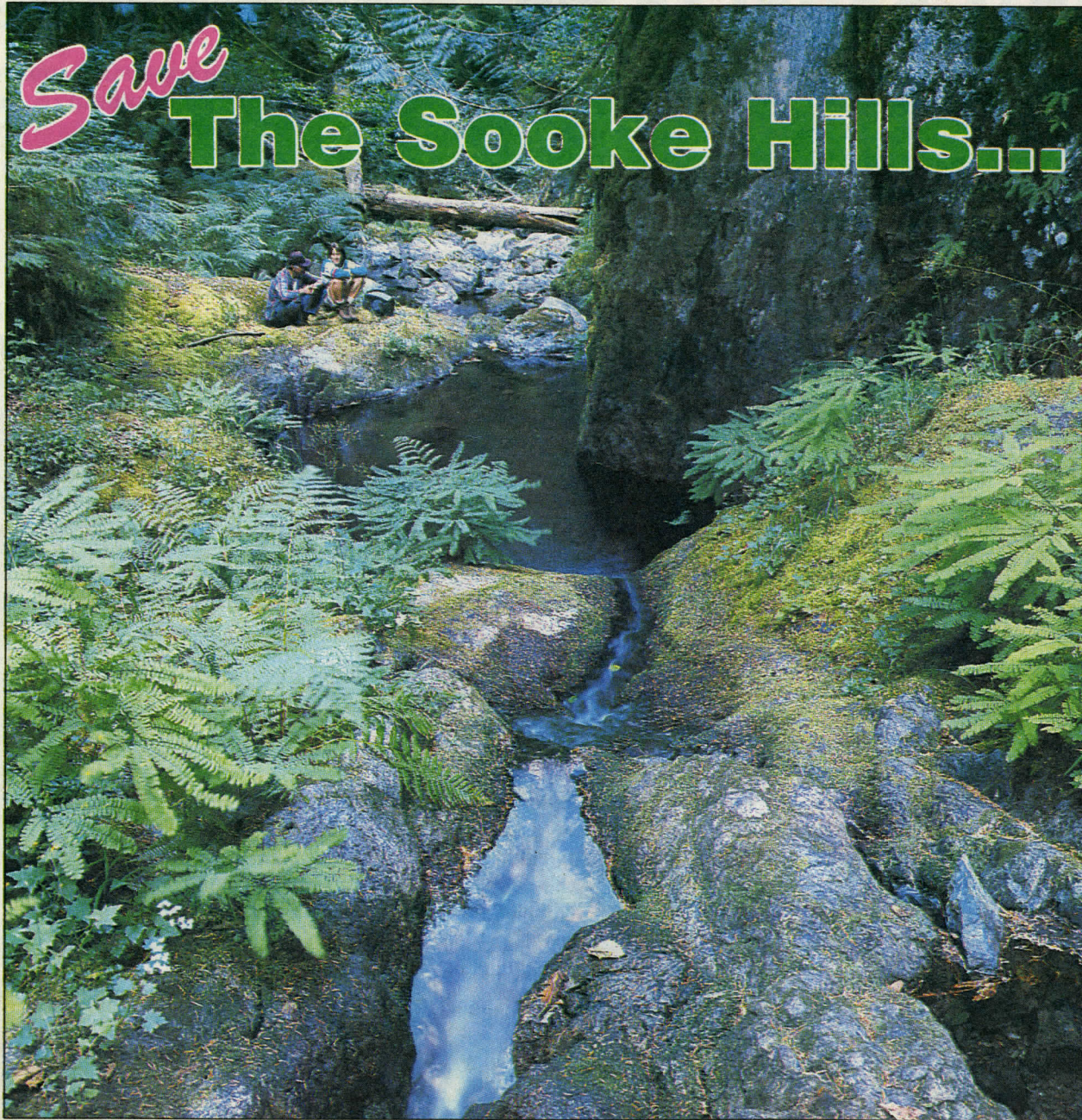




Save
The Sooke Hills...



Niagara Creek Watershed. We can preserve this biological treasure...
Graham Osborne photo.

from this!



...or lose it to urban sprawl or logging.
Dean Sheridan photo.

Rescuing an ecosystem from extinction

People living in the Greater Victoria region have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to preserve a wilderness area nearly one-and-a-half times larger than Carmanah Valley—the Sooke Hills Wilderness. This undeveloped land, stretching from Tod Inlet to Sooke Basin, is located only a half hour's drive away from Victoria City Hall. And preserving it won't cost a lot of money because 80 per cent is already publicly owned! Look west from any high vantage point in downtown Victoria and you will see the Sooke Hills greenbelt in the distance. It is Victoria's beautiful backdrop—

our backyard wilderness—and it is now under threat.

The Sooke Hills Wilderness—a greenspace that most Victorians have taken for granted—is now being eyed for housing developments and as a place for the forest industry to show off their "new, improved" logging practices in a 'community demonstration forest'.

Do we want these green, forested hills clearcut or covered with more urban sprawl? Or do we want this land protected as part of a

wilderness greenbelt, a biological refuge for future generations to treasure, and a place to hike in and escape from the pressures of high-paced city life? The choice is up to us.

Approximately 7,500 hectares of this 9,300 hectare proposed protected greenbelt are already owned by the people of our communities. These are public lands, our lands. They include the already protected Gowlland Range, Goldstream Park, Commonwealth Legacy Lands and Sooke Mountain Park, and much of the remaining unprotected Sooke Hills Wilderness.

Help save the Sooke Hills Wilderness

For the past three years, with support from many Greater Victoria citizens, Western Canada Wilderness Committee and other local environmental and community groups have campaigned hard to end logging on the Greater Victoria Water District lands, the source of our drinking water.

This campaign to protect our supply of drinking water by stopping logging in the watersheds was successful. In the spring of 1994, the Supreme Court of British Columbia ruled that the Greater Victoria Water District did not have the legislative authority to carry on commercial logging operations there.

With this success, we've proved that concerned citizens can make a positive difference in how public lands are managed.

Now let's succeed in saving the Sooke Hills Wilderness. Please turn to the back page to find out how you can support the campaign to save the Sooke Hills Wilderness—a greenspace which backs onto watersheds that provide your drinking water.



Some trees are 8 ft. wide. WCWC file photo.

The largest single landowner in the Sooke Hills Wilderness area is the Greater Victoria Water District (GVWD). It does not really need these lands because they are "off catchment"—they do not drain into our drinking water reservoir system. These are the lands at risk. They are not dedicated parkland and the GVWD may dispose of them at any time. (See map on back page.)

Preserving the Sooke Hills Wilderness would link existing parks and create a greenbelt corridor from Tod Inlet on Vancouver Island's east side to Sooke Basin on the west. It would increase the protection of the Nanaimo Lowlands Ecosystem, including several B.C. ecosystems that are close to extinction. More than 99 percent of this ecosystem has been developed. What's left must be saved.

Imagine what a Sooke Hills Wilderness Park would mean as a natural legacy to your children, and to their children as the population of Greater Victoria expands. Then help us make this dream come true.

OLDGROWTH COASTAL DOUGLAS FIR-- B.C.'S MOST THRE

Environment Canada's most recent report on biodiversity in B.C. states that Greater Victoria is at the heart of one of the most endangered ecosystems in North America.

Oldgrowth coastal Douglas fir forests once dominated what is known as the Nanaimo Lowlands Ecoregion. It stretches from Campbell River to Victoria on the east coast side of Vancouver Island. Today, more than 99 per cent of this ecoregion has been logged or converted into urban space and farmland. Only 0.5 percent has been protected.

There are pockets of rare Douglas fir oldgrowth in the Sooke Hills wilderness. Some of the forest giants there are eight feet in diameter! There are also deer, elk, bears, cougars and wolves.



*Big leaf maple
Bernadette Mertens photo.*

Industrial logging and housing development schemes suggested for the GVWD's "off catchment" lands, the heart of the Sooke Hills Wilderness, threaten this rare, Douglas fir ecosystem, and rare, very dry maritime Coastal Western Hemlock forests.

There is also a risk that the off-catchment lands may be logged as a 'community

demonstration forest'. The suggestion comes from a consortium that includes the IWA, and the Association of B.C. Professional Foresters.

British Columbians have seen enough demonstrations of how our forests can be logged. The Sooke Hills' forest needs to be preserved, not cut under the guise of progressive forest management. Surely, better forestry can be demonstrated on the 99

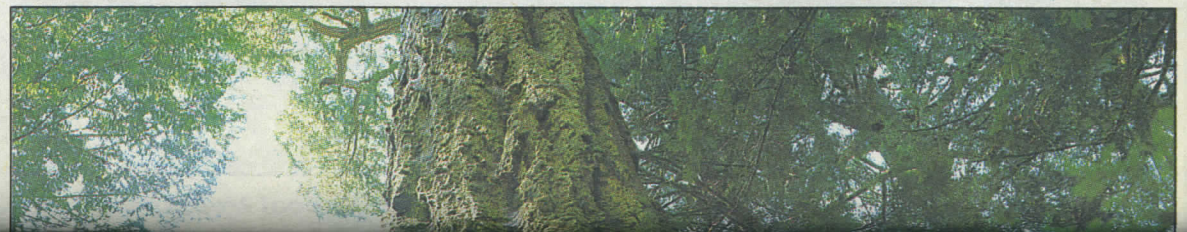
We need a long-term vision for nature protection in the Greater Victoria Region

Over the last couple of decades, intense development has diminished biological diversity on southeastern Vancouver Island. Meadows, shoreline, and forests have succumbed to blacktop and bulldozers. Uncoordinated growth is consuming familiar green spaces at an astounding rate and now threatens to diminish our quality of life.

Development pressures in Greater Victoria keep growing. The Capital Regional District (CRD) projects that our area's population will increase by nearly fifty percent to more than 400,000 residents in the next 20 years.

Because Victoria lies in the centre of the most threatened forest ecosystem in Canada--oldgrowth Coastal Douglas fir--there is an urgent need to establish a long-term vision that includes preservation of the regional lands that are still wild.

In most urban centres, opportunities to protect large forested areas have long since been lost. In Victoria we can still save rare Douglas fir ancient forest remnants growing just 15 kilometres from downtown Victoria on lands that are already predominantly publicly owned! Park designation for the Sooke Hills Wilderness, lands now held by the Greater Victoria Water District, is the cornerstone of a responsible long-term vision for future land use in Greater Victoria.





Calypso bulbosa
Jeff Garner photo.



Marasmius fungus
Bernadette Mertens photo.

"Disposal of more than 45 square kilometres of potential greenbelt should not be for the water board alone to decide. These lands are not merely a commercial commodity to be sold for logging or traded for other benefits, or taken out of the public domain. Instead, these lands must be dealt with as a non-renewable resource worthy of full protection and should be treasured for all time."

Rod Clack, former director - National Capital Commission and former Victoria City planner



Carmanah? Tsitika? No, Greater Victoria Water District surplus lands. Graham Osborne photo.

Why a Sooke Hills Wilderness greenbelt?

Currently, only 4.2 per cent of Greater Victoria's land base is protected in regional parks. This amount of protection is far short of what is necessary to meet human and ecological needs now and into the future.

Parks and greenbelts around cities provide a sense of place, open space and respite from the crowded bustle of urban life. They offer needed opportunities for recreation and outdoor activities. They also help protect air and water quality, vital for our health.

As population and development pressures have increased in Greater Victoria, parkland designation has not kept pace. Protecting the Sooke Hills Wilderness will help maintain the quality of life we all cherish.

THREATENED FOREST TYPE

percent of the Nanaimo Lowlands Ecosection already logged.

The NDP government established the Protected Areas Strategy (PAS) to address ecological concerns like those presented in the Sooke Hills Wilderness. The job of PAS is to identify places like Sooke Hills which present a rare and significant opportunity to protect part of an "under-represented" or threatened ecosystem type. The protection of these lands should be a top priority for the provincial government.

If enough people ask Environment Minister Moe Sihota, who has already protected Upper Carmanah and the Lower Tsitika Valleys, to save the Sooke Hills Wilderness, surely he will... especially when it is an endangered ecosystem in his own backyard!



Serious water conservation can help solve present and future water supply problems

- The long-term water supply plan developed by the GVWD is based on projected water consumption rates of 130 gallons per capita per day. This is a much higher rate than the 77 gallon per day Canadian average. The GVWD is not doing enough to encourage water conservation. Instead it proposes to increase the height of the reservoir dam at a cost of millions of dollars to store more water to meet increased consumption.
- This past summer, according to Water Commissioner Jack Hull, ad hoc water conservation by concerned citizens reduced consumption in Greater Victoria by 10 per cent. A comprehensive program could reduce the present consumption rate of about 120 gallons per capita per day to 90 gallons. With the present reservoir storage capacity and this lower consumer consumption rate, we would have enough water to serve a population of more than 550,000 people!

We must not let the GVWD sell or trade off its non-catchment (Sooke Hills Wilderness) lands to pay for unnecessary mega-projects to increase our drinking water supply or to construct more water treatment plants.





The people of Greater Victoria can influence the Water Board off-catchment lands decision: Will it be recreational use of a biological treasure, including Veitch Creek watershed (Bernadette Mertens photo above) ...or clearcut logging like that shown below by Deception Reservoir (WCWC file photo).



Veitch Creek Watershed. Bernadette Mertens photo.

"In preserving the Niagara, Veitch and Waugh Creek watersheds together with other lands of the Greater Victoria Water District, the people of southern Vancouver Island and British Columbia as a whole have an opportunity to do something for which they will be thanked by future generations for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. These areas are priceless vestiges of forests that once extended over all of southeastern Vancouver Island. They are a refuge for many species of plants and animals which can no longer be found in other places. If humans are to continue to survive as a species, it is imperative that we recognize our dependence on other lifeforms and take all the steps necessary to allow their coexistence with us. The cultural heritage value of these lands to First Nations of the region must also be recognized and respected."

Dr. Nancy Turner - Professor of Environmental Studies, University of Victoria.



A community demonstration forest? No, just logging by another name.
Jeff Garner photo.

How you can help

Get involved: Contact Western Canada Wilderness Committee - Victoria to find out how you can help save the Sooke Hills Wilderness. #301 - 19 Bastion Square, Victoria, B.C., V8W 1J1 or call 388-9292.

Write to the Greater Victoria Water District (GVWD). Let the board know what you think should be done with YOUR "off-catchment" lands--the Sooke Hills Wilderness. It may be considering trading these lands for private lands within the catchment area or selling them off to private developers for housing, or donating them to another level of government for a park. GVWD, 479 Island Highway, Victoria, B.C., V9B 1H7.

The GVWD operates under the Victoria, Saanich, Esquimalt and Oak Bay city councils. Send a copy of your letter to your local council.

IMPORTANT - Also send a copy of your letter to Moe Sihota, Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks, Legislative Buildings, Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4.

Speak out: GVWD board meetings are held the last Friday of every month at Victoria City Hall. Call 474-9600 to make a presentation.



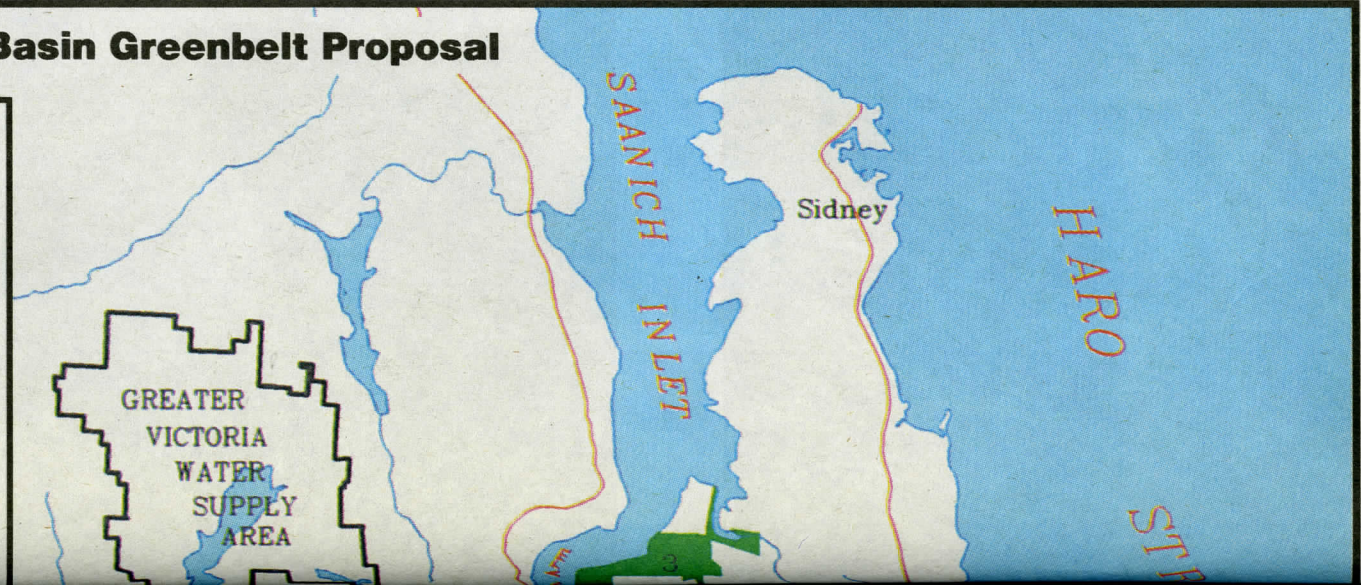
Help ensure that the opportunity to create a lasting biological legacy on the water district's surplus lands is not wasted. Bernadette Mertens photo.

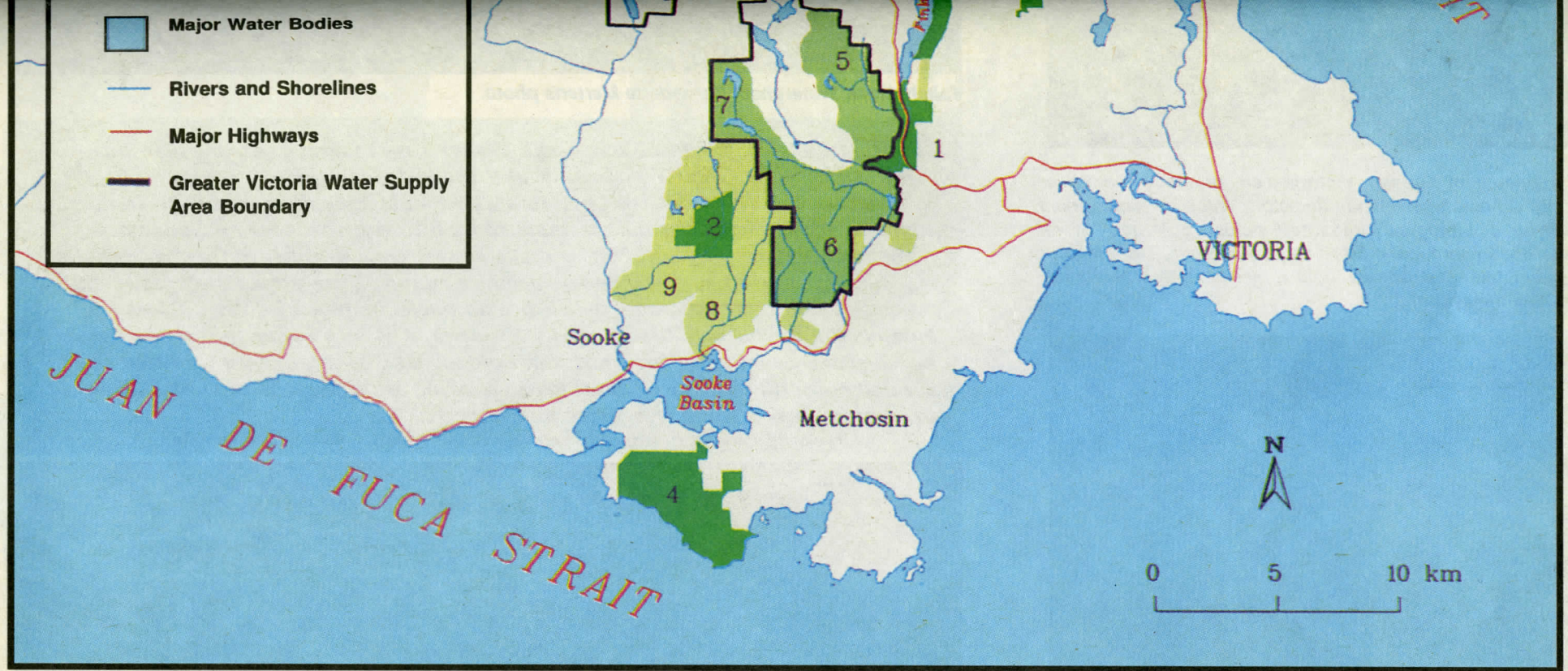
Finlayson Arm to Sooke Basin Greenbelt Proposal

- Existing Parkland**
 1. Goldstream
 2. Sooke Mountain
 3. Gowlland Range
 4. East Sooke

- Proposed Parkland (GVWD Surplus Lands)**
 5. Niagara Cr.
 6. Veitch Cr.
 7. Waugh Cr.

- Future Parkland and Private Lands with Compatible Uses**
 8. Ayum Cr.





Yes! I will help save the Sooke Hills Wilderness!

- I am writing a letter to the GVWD and Environment Minister Moe Sihota telling them how important I think it is to preserve the Sooke Hills Wilderness area.
- I will contribute to your campaign to save the Sooke Hills Wilderness. Here is my tax deductible gift of ___\$25 ___\$50 ___\$100 ___\$500 ___other to help you win this campaign. Revenue Canada Tax Reg. No. 0587113-21-28
- I want to become a Western Canada Wilderness Committee member. Enclosed is my \$30 annual membership fee.

Name _____ Address _____
 _____ City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Please clip and return to Western Canada Wilderness Committee - Victoria Chapter (WCWC-VIC), #301-19 Bastion Sq., Victoria, BC V8W 1J1. THANK YOU!

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