



c/o Fraser Basin Council
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Hon. Tamara Davidson
BC Minister of Environment & Parks
Sent by e-mail to ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Hon. Ravi Parmar
BC Minister of Forests
Sent by e-mail to FOR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

22 July 2025

Re: Urgent need for accelerated re-forestation in wildfire-impacted areas of the Shuswap watershed

Dear Ministers,

We are writing on behalf of the Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) to express urgent concern regarding the devastating impacts of the 2023 Bush Creek East and Adams East wildfires, and to call for accelerated reforestation and ecological restoration in Tsútswecw Provincial Park and the surrounding Adams River watershed.

The environmental impacts of these wildfires are well documented. They include the loss of forest canopy and organic ground cover, the development of hydrophobic soils, increased erosion and sedimentation, elevated risk of landslides and debris flows, degradation of aquatic habitat, and long-term consequences for water quality and drinking water sources. Reforestation and ecological restoration play a vital role in stabilizing disturbed ecosystems. They help regulate the water cycle, improve soil retention, reduce sediment runoff into rivers and lakes, and promote the return of biodiversity.

For Secwépemc communities, the damage caused by wildfire is not merely ecological. It directly affects cultural lifeways, traditional food systems, and stewardship practices grounded in Secwépemc law. Medicinal plant harvesting, ceremonial access, and culturally significant species such as salmon are all under threat. For Secwépemc people, restoration is not only an environmental necessity, but a cultural and spiritual imperative. The land is alive with stories, teachings, and ancestral presence. The forests and rivers of the Adams River corridor are part of sacred geography, with deep connections to identity, ceremony, and law. The responsibility to care for these places flows from traditional governance systems and is carried forward across generations.

We emphasize that reforestation in this region must be Indigenous-led, with Secwépemc communities and law at the center of planning and implementation. This aligns with the Province's commitments under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) and its obligations to uphold Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). In particular, we highlight:



- Article 25: the right of Indigenous Peoples to maintain and strengthen their spiritual relationship with traditionally owned or otherwise occupied lands and waters;
- Article 29(1): the right to conservation and protection of the environment and productive capacity of Indigenous lands;
- Article 32(1-2): the right of Indigenous Peoples to determine and develop priorities for use of their lands and to be consulted through their own institutions in good faith to obtain Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) before undertaking restoration activities that affect them.

We invite you to attend an upcoming meeting of the Shuswap Watershed Council to discuss how the Province intends to prioritize wildfire restoration in the Adams River corridor and Tsútswecw Provincial Park. Our next scheduled meetings are on **September 10th** and **December 10th**. We also welcome the opportunity to explore:

- Provincial funding commitments for Indigenous-led reforestation;
- Pilot projects or restoration contracts delivered by Secwepemc communities;
- Opportunities to coordinate across agencies in support of a watershed-level recovery strategy.

We look forward to a meaningful dialogue and to seeing swift action that reflects the urgency and significance of this issue.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Rhona Martin".

Rhona Martin
Chair, Shuswap Watershed Council

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cliff Arnouse".

Cliff Arnouse
Tk'wemi'ple7 (Councillor), Adams Lake Indian Band

Attachment: 2023 Shuswap watershed fire perimeter map.



About the Shuswap Watershed Council

The SWC was established in 2014 as a watershed-based partnership of several organizations with an interest or responsibility for protecting water quality. There are up to 19 members that represent local governments, the Secwepemc Nation, Provincial government agencies, science and academia, and youth. The SWC is a collaborative, non-regulatory group that focuses on strategic initiatives to protect, maintain, and enhance water quality and promote safe recreation in the Shuswap.