



## Media Release

For Immediate Release  
December 1, 2020

### **HAT is Banking on an Earth Day Deposit with Natural Capital Returns**

**Victoria, BC-** Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT), Victoria's local land trust, has joined forces with the Capital Regional District (CRD) to acquire and create a new regional park at 4692 Mountain Road in Saanich. The almost 50-acre (20 hectare) forested property near Prospect Lake has been owned by the same family since 1971. The family had been actively seeking a permanent 'green' outcome for over a decade, for the much visited and treasured "parkland", which was originally purchased by their conservation-minded father. Though private property for almost 50 years, the family has welcomed recreational use by the property's neighbours and the general public. Most people assumed the land, with its established walking trails, was already a park and it came as a surprise to many to learn that the property is privately owned and is at risk of being sold and developed.

"The wild, 49-acre natural area of cliffs, massive trees, mosses, ferns and wildflowers has been shared with the community for half a century. In return, the community has kept the forest safe," according to long-time area resident and forest caretaker, Lorrie Adam. Mr. Adam purchased five adjacent acres fifty years ago from the same patriarch whose family is now selling the land to the CRD. "This is one of the last stands between Interurban Road and Prospect Lake that is available for protection and survives as a mature example of our diminishing South Island forests."

When the owners made the difficult decision to list the property for sale, the news began to circulate among the local community that this forested haven was at risk of being developed if a conservation outcome could not be secured. This prompted the formation of the "Friends of Mountain Road Forest", whose members mounted a letter-writing campaign urging Saanich and the CRD to take a serious look at acquiring the property as parkland for permanent protection. This groundswell of public support attracted the attention of CRD—whose board just last month approved a \$2M commitment toward the purchase of this property. This represents the public funding portion of the project, but \$1.4M still needs to be raised through private donations to complete the sale and conversion to park.

Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) has come forward to oversee a fundraising campaign to secure the remainder of the purchase funds. Katie Blake, HAT's Executive Director, says "HAT is excited to play a part in protecting this beloved forest. Not only is it a beautiful place to enjoy nature, it is an important part of the globally imperiled Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem, and home to lots of wildlife. HAT was able to come forward quickly to fill this need, and we have faith that the community will rally to save this place."

Neighbours to the property will be key in the fundraising campaign's success. These conservation ambassadors know the trails and trees and ferns personally, having stewarded and safeguarded this natural backyard asset for decades. Many are willing to provide appropriately distanced walking tours for interested donors to showcase the beauty of the parcel.

(Continued)

“My parents bought an adjacent lot in the 1970's and built our family home there,” says Tim Ennis—one of the property’s neighbours and now an eco-system restoration expert. “Both myself and my children have had the tremendous fortune of growing up in the Mountain Rd. Forest. As a child it seemed like a limitless expanse of unspoiled wilderness inhabited by all manner of creatures, from frogs and salamanders to bats and bears. Now, as a conservation biologist, I understand in other ways just how valuable and irreplaceable this special place is to the preservation of globally-at-risk ecosystems. It is truly a jewel in the crown of biodiversity in Saanich.”

As the Greater Victoria area population grows and endangered original habitats disappear to make way for commercial and residential developments, numerous species are at risk of being squeezed out and lost forever. Marian McCoy is a vegetation ecologist and neighbour who regularly visits the Mountain Road forest property. She notes that this property is an increasingly rare piece of healthy second-growth Coastal Douglas-fir forest that contains several old veteran trees, a stream, and a range of healthy ecological communities, two of which the BC Conservation Data Centre considers at risk of extinction. “This property plays many ecological roles, supporting wildlife and cycling nutrients,” said Ms. McCoy. “I believe protecting it is imperative to retaining native biodiversity in our region, especially as we lose more forest canopy due to climate change.”

To jump-start the private fundraising campaign, which has a target completion date of Earth Day (April 22) 2021, less than five months away, the family that currently owns the property has made a commitment to match—dollar for dollar—the first \$200,000 raised in private donations to ensure the permanent conservation outcome the family envisions for this land. Forest lovers, walkers & hikers, citizen scientists and budding naturalists are encouraged to become part of this historical acquisition of a truly unique forest complex in the heart of the Greater Victoria region. All financial contributions are charitable and donation receipts will be immediately issued by HAT that donors can use for their 2020 or 2021 tax filing purposes.

- For more information, please visit the project website at: [www.mountainroadforest.ca](http://www.mountainroadforest.ca) or contact Habitat Acquisition Trust.
- For a short feature video of the property, please view: <https://vimeo.com/483883388>
- This media release is accompanied by a 2-page project backgrounder, a map (jpeg format) and a feature photo.
- On site photo opportunities and tours available for the media by contacting [michael@hat.bc.ca](mailto:michael@hat.bc.ca) / 250-880-7816.

*Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) is a regional land trust that works for the conservation of natural areas on southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands through protection, collaboration, stewardship and education. Since 1996, HAT has helped to conserve more than 1600 hectares of land and engaged thousands of Island residents to help them understand and care for nature close to home.*

-30-

**For media inquiries, please contact:**

Katie Blake, Executive Director

Habitat Acquisition Trust

Tel: 250.995.2428

Cell: 250.217.2718

<https://www.hat.bc.ca/>