

## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

### **Land use plan charts course to prosperity**

GOOD HOPE LAKE – Certainty for natural-resource development and environmental stewardship in northern B.C. was confirmed today, with the formal signing of a Strategic Land Use Planning Agreement between the government of British Columbia and First Nations represented by the Kaska Dena Council.

Minister Steve Thomson joined Kaska Dena Council Chair George Miller and other First Nations representatives in a ceremony to mark the occasion during the gathering of First Nations at the Kaska Dena's Annual General Assembly. The agreement, first announced by Premier Christy Clark in January, was formalized at today's signing event that took place at the Rapid River Gathering Site in the heart of the Kaska Dena's traditional homeland near Good Hope Lake.

The land use planning agreement is the third significant agreement signed this year with the Kaska Dena First Nations, and provides a framework for future land-use planning that will create economic certainty, spur investment and promote job creation in northern B.C. The agreement will guide future resource-development planning within the Kaska Dena traditional territory in those areas not already covered by the Sustainable Resource Management Plan announced earlier this year.

The Strategic Land Use Planning Agreement will help ensure the important cultural and environmental values held by the Kaska Dena are planned for and protected for future generations. Among other measures, the agreement confirms the government's commitment to establish the new Ne'ah protected area, also known as Horseranch Range, which preserves several sites of cultural interest to Kaska Dena First Nations, as well as sensitive wetlands and wildlife habitat.

The agreement also confirms the value of the Gu Cha Duga management area to the Kaska Dena First Nations as an area with a large number of sacred areas, and high wildlife diversity and abundance. Gu Cha Duga means 'for the grandchildren' in the language of the Kaska Dena First Nations.

#### **Quotes:**

#### **Steve Thomson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations –**

"This agreement establishes clear ground rules for development between the B.C. government and Kaska Dena Council, and provides the forest, minerals, tourism and energy sectors the blueprint they need to invest and explore with confidence in northern B.C. "

**Mary Polak, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation –**

“This agreement builds upon several others recently signed across the Northwest. Together, these agreements are providing First Nations with more immediate economic benefits and a greater say in decisions that affect their traditional territories.”

**George Miller, chair of the Kaska Dena Council –**

“This agreement ensures that the values important to the Kaska Dena regarding resource development, including revenue sharing and environmental monitoring, will form part of all future planning in our traditional territory. It also confirms the Horseranch Range will become an officially protected area. The Horseranch Range is a place of plenty that our people would historically go to when food was scarce, and our elders have called for this recognition for many years.”

**Quick Facts:**

- The Kaska Dena Council represents the Kwadacha, Daylu Dene and Dease River bands. The council was a full partner in developing the plan, with all decisions made by consensus.
- The signing of the Strategic Land Use Planning Agreement represents yet another step in an ongoing engagement process with the Kaska Dena on resource management and sustainability:
  - Phase 1 of the Dease-Liard Sustainable Resource Management Plan (SRMP) was concluded in 2005, with a focus on legal objectives for forestry, wildlife and biodiversity.
  - Phase 2 of the SRMP was signed earlier in 2012, providing overarching direction for over 2.3 million hectares of Crown land between the B.C.-Yukon border and Dease Lake (the area known as Dease-Liard), and containing five new chapters on tourism and recreation, minerals and aggregates, oil and gas, plus access and protection.
  - The Kaska Dena Strategic Engagement Agreement was also signed earlier this year setting out government-to-government decision-making processes for reviewing proposed development activities in Kaska Dena territory.
- The Kaska Dena Strategic Land Use planning Agreement encompasses all of the Kaska Dena First Nations traditional territory in British Columbia, roughly 7.4 million hectares from the Dease-Liard region to Mackenzie.

**Learn More:**

- To learn more about the Dease-Liard SRMP visit: <http://www.ilmb.gov.bc.ca/slrp/srmp/north/dease-liard/index.html>
- To learn more about the Kaska Dena council visit: <http://www.kaskadenacouncil.com/>

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