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BCWF ANNOUNCES INNOVATIVE OUTDOOR PASSPORT PROGRAM

Vancouver, BC – An innovative program to improve access to private lands for hunting, angling and other outdoor recreation activities was announced today by the BC Wildlife Federation (BCWF).

The Outdoor Passport program is the BCWF's newest education program. "The Outdoor Passport program joins nine other programs such as Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Education (CORE), Angling Ambassador and Wetlands Education aimed at improving our understanding of wildlife and conservation issues in British Columbia," said Executive Director Patti MacAhonic. "What makes this program unique is the collaborative approach to working with ranchers and landowners."

The Outdoor Passport program is only available to BCWF members who successfully complete an online orientation program on the BCWF website (www.bcdf.bc.ca). The passport includes an identity card to introduce members and landowners as well as an access pass which records conditions to access property. A copy of the access pass with contact information is left with the landowner to ensure ease of follow-up with both parties.

By participating in the Outdoor Passport program, BCWF members demonstrate a willingness to act as good stewards of the environment and the land. "As part of the online orientation members learn more about conservation and outdoor recreation ethics," said past BCWF president Mel Arnold.

Arnold is a passionate supporter of the new program. "We really listened to what landowners had to say about issues accessing private land and looked for workable solutions. This program ensures that our members understand that access to private land is a privilege and pledge to work in partnership with landowners."

The Outdoor Passport program offers potential benefits to the agriculture industry as well. "We see BCWF members with an Outdoor Passport assisting farmers and ranchers to mitigate crop damage and loss of income due to wildlife issues," said Greg Norton, chair of the Agriculture Environment Initiatives with the BC Agricultural Research and Development Corporation (ARDCorp).

Jeff Morgan, Manager of the Wildlife and Private Land Stewardship Program with the BC Ministry of the Environment agrees with Norton and provides some context for the program: "The BCWF and the British Columbia Agriculture Council have long recognized that hunting can, and should, be used as wildlife management tool in private land settings. In partnering in the development of the Outdoor Passport, both organizations have signalled that they would like

to foster healthy relationships between landowners and hunters to pursue mutually beneficial wildlife management solutions.”

Another unique aspect of the new Outdoor Passport program is that it includes liability insurance to protect both BCWF members and the landowners who participate in the program, The insurance premium is included in the passport fee paid for by the passport holder. There is no additional cost to landowners.

The Outdoor Passport program is designed for a high level of voluntary compliance. If there is need for follow-up with either the BCWF member or the landowner, the information on the passport access pass allows both parties to be contacted quickly. Complaints or issues will be dealt with fairly either by an applicable enforcement agency (such as a conservation, fisheries or police officer) or by the Outdoor Passport Review Board.

The BCWF wishes to acknowledge the financial support of the Agri-Food Futures Fund, Agriculture Environment and Wildlife Fund (AEWF) and the following organizations for making the Outdoor Passport Program possible: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the BC Ministry of Agriculture, the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC, the BC Agricultural Research and Development Corporation (ARDCorp) and HUB International.

The BCWF is British Columbia's largest and oldest conservation organization with over 38,000 members passionately committed to protecting, enhancing and promoting the wise use of the environment for the benefit of present and future generations. To learn more about becoming a member of the BCWF and participating in the Outdoor Passport program visit <http://www.bcwfca.ca>.

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A backgrounder with additional details on the Outdoor Passport program is attached.

Media Contacts:

Patti MacAhonic, Executive Director
604.291.9990 ext 230 office or 604.308.1941

Mel Arnold, Past President
250.833.1155 office or 250.833.1155

Greg Norton, Chair, Agriculture Environment Initiatives
Management Committee
250.498.4669 office or 250.498.7820