From:

[WRITE YOUR NAME HERE]

[WRITE YOUR ADDRESS and email HERE]

**To**: The Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

**Subject**: URGENT: Purchase and protection of threatened Sickle Point, Skaha Lake, Okanagan Valley, BC

Dear Minister Conroy:

I am writing to you to request your Ministry’s and the BC government’s financial support for the purchase of the Skaha Lake foreshore marshes and riparian habitat that constitute Sickle Point. This is the last piece of such land remaining on Skaha Lake and one of the few still left in the Okanagan. At present, the 4.8 acres (1.95 ha) are privately owned, but in receivership and other private developers are showing interest. The local community has been strongly against the private development of the Point since the 1990s. We now have what is likely the last opportunity to have this important wildlife habitat, also of considerable cultural significance for the Sylix First Nations, preserved in perpetuity primarily for its natural features.

I feel that conservation of Sickle Point is urgent for the following reasons:

[a number of the critical reasons are outlined in the attached sheet, but feel free to add your own.]

To date, over 300 people, some who do not even live in the immediate area, have pledged over $300,000. While this amount is a long way from the approximately $2.5 million asking price for the property, it indicates the importance of this piece of land to people in the Okanagan. To save this precious, increasingly rare, type of lakeshore land in the Okanagan before the opportunity disappears, we need the help of your government to purchase it so that it may be restored to its former glory as wildlife habitat.

If possible, I also request that there be an immediate stay on any development of Sickle Point under the Environment and Land Use Act**,** to protect this last example of a rare habitat before it is lost forever.

**Yours Truly**

**[Your name]**

**Cc**: Hon. John Horgan, Premier Premier@gov.bc.ca

**Cc**: Hon. Rob Fleming, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Rob.Fleming.MLA@leg.bc.ca

**Cc**: Hon. George Heyman, Minister Environment and Climate Change ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

**Cc**: Hon. Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation IRR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

**Cc**: Roly Russell, MLA, Boundary Similkameen Roly.Russell.MLA@leg.bc.ca

**Cc**: Richard Cannings, MP, South Okanagan West Kootenay Richard.cannings@parl.gc.ca

**Cc**: RDOS Board of Directors info@rdos.bc.ca

**Cc**: Save Sickle Point Committee savesicklepoint@gmail.com

**Reasons for Protecting Sickle Point from Development:**

**a) The bottom line**

- As long as the land remains in private hands, especially if building is allowed, the chances of its value for wildlife returning are essentially zero.

- While there has been very serious degradation of the Point’s natural habitat values, such wetland-riparian areas can be restored quite rapidly through natural re-growth combined with knowledgeable restoration action.

**b) Ecological significance**

- Sickle Point is the last wetland-riparian area left on Skaha Lake and one of the few remaining in the Okanagan.

- In the South Okanagan Similkameen Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, Sickle Point is given its highest ranking for ecological values.

- The Provincially endangered (Red-listed) Water Birch - Wild Rose community covering part of the property is critical habitat for the federally listed (Endangered) Yellow-breasted Chat. Other Species at Risk (SAR) at Sickle Point are Lewis’s Woodpecker, Western Rattlesnake, Pallid Bat, Gopher Snake, and Western Screech-Owl. As well, the Point has areas of shallow water that support cattail and bulrush stands now rare along the Okanagan lakes chain and critical habitat for a wide range of wildlife and fish.

- A hydrological study (February 2020) done for the Okanagan Basin Water Board concluded that flooding of Skaha Lake is likely to increase significantly as climate change continues. Recent mapping estimates there is a 15% chance that the area of the Point will be flooded within the next 30 years. Fully functioning wetlands help prevent flooding and shoreline erosion. They also filter pollutants from water.

b) **Cultural importance**

 - Sickle Point is culturally important to the people of snpink'tn, Syilx Nation having been used for hundreds of generations for a variety of purposes. The place name for Sickle Point in the nsyilxcen language is: ncaquq?wltn which means a place to land or park a canoe. The people of snpink'tn have been opposed to development at ncaquq?iwltn ever since this became an issue.

- The KVR trail is an extremely important amenity for non-motorized recreation for both local people and visitors; however, since it is the only possible access to the Sickle Point property, if the property were build on, hikers, bicyclists, and horseback riders would have to contend with vehicles. Aside from being dangerous it would most certainly would seriously reduce the value of the trail for recreation.

- The Sickle Point site holds great possibility for future public education and school programs on the ecology of the valley

c) **Current situation**

Since 1991, actions of different owners have devastated Sickle Point’s ecological and habitat values. These include:

- an unauthorized road built through the Crown wetlands between the Kettle Valley Railway (KVR) right-of-way and the lake;

- further unauthorized, clearing of the regrown vegetation and dumping of fill in the same area;

- wholesale levelling of the Ponderosa pine, (threatened) Black cottonwood, and riparian shrubbery on the main part of the property and into the Crown Provincial lands of the shoreline; and

- no control of non-native invasive plant species that make it difficult for native species to regrow and provide new habitat for wildlife including nesting birds.