

Beautiful Mountain Road Forest Protected for Generations to Come

Nov 30, 2021

Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) and the Capital Regional District (CRD) are thrilled to announce the successful completion of the purchase of the Mountain Road Forest property on November 29th, 2021. This nearly-50-acre property, a stunning example of a mature urban forest located just a few minutes from downtown Victoria, will be protected forever for people and wildlife alike.

This gem of a property has been owned by a local family for half a century and is a magnificent example of a mature, second growth Coastal Douglas-fir forest. The property also contains a Garry Oak meadow, rock outcrop, and arbutus strands, all of which are some of Canada's most rare and imperiled ecosystems. The property is home to several species-at-risk, including the Western Screech Owl and Common Nighthawk, and serves as part of the headwaters for the regionally-important Colquitz River system via Excelsior Creek.

The successful conservation outcome at Mountain Road Forest was the result of a dedicated effort involving numerous community partners. The CRD provided \$2 million for the purchase using its Land Acquisition Fund. The majority of the remaining purchase price was contributed by HAT through a major fundraising campaign that culminated in the participation of over 1,440 individual donors and community members.

"The CRD recognizes the values of the Mountain Road property," said Colin Plant, CRD Board Chair. "This purchase will ensure its natural beauty can be protected for future generations. Thank you to the Habitat Acquisition Trust for working with us to secure this sensitive ecosystem."

Commenting on the successful acquisition and completion of the Mountain Road property, Katie Blake, Executive Director of HAT, noted, "This was truly a community-led effort. The number of people who contributed to save this forest demonstrates the importance that people place on keeping nature a part of their lives and their community. Thank you as well to the CRD for working together with us on this purchase."

The outstanding balance between the property's purchase price and the funds contributed by the CRD and HAT was generously donated by the family that owned the land for 50 years. They stated: "We are delighted that our father's 30+ year love affair with this wonderful forest, and our dream of preserving it as green space in perpetuity in his memory, have both been honoured. We will always be extremely grateful to the many individuals and organizations who helped make it possible." This donation was facilitated by Canada's Ecological Gifts Program. The Program provides income tax incentives to landowners who protect ecologically sensitive, privately-held land, by donating all or a portion of the land to eligible recipients such as land trusts or government bodies.

"From the bottom of my heart, thank you to all of the community members who generously gave their resources and their time to preserve this very special forest forever," added HAT Executive Director Katie Blake. "This is a monumental accomplishment, and we couldn't have done it without you."

The property will become a regional park within CRD's Regional Parks system. The next step is for the CRD to initiate a management planning process for the area. Existing trails and access points on the property will continue to be open to the public, as they have been for many years.