

Thursday, January 17, 2008

**Permanent access to B.C. climbing area finally secured**  
***Effort begun by MEC two years ago ends with land purchase***

Vancouver—Two years after Mountain Equipment Co-op™ (MEC) initiated activities to secure permanent public access to a premiere climbing destination in British Columbia's South-Okanagan Similkameen, the outdoor retailer's efforts have met with success.

Access to Skaha Bluffs is now guaranteed with the announcement today by The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC), the Government of British Columbia and the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) that the deal to purchase a 304-hectare property adjacent to the Bluffs has been finalized.

"This is a great day for the climbing community and for conservation in Canada," said MEC CEO David Labistour. "We extend our gratitude to TLC for their hard work to pull the deal together and to all parties who contributed to the land purchase, including the federal and provincial governments, NCC, the Climbers' Access Society of BC and the hundreds of MEC members who donated to the campaign."

MEC itself donated over \$350,000 to the \$5.25 million land purchase. MEC's contribution includes a \$250,000 land grant and \$100,000 that it matched in donations made by MEC members. Seven-hundred-and-forty-five individual MEC members contributed more than \$140,000 to the campaign.

MEC Community Program Manager Laurie Edward said, "Whether selling gear or working with the community to conserve wild places and protect access to critical recreation areas, MEC is committed to supporting people in their pursuit of outdoor recreation. The Skaha Bluffs campaign has been a great opportunity for MEC and our members to act on our passion and secure this win."

The climbing community has worked for several years to establish permanent public access to Skaha Bluffs. Mountain Equipment Co-op and The Land Conservancy became involved in 2006 in order to bolster local efforts at securing the land purchase.

Local climber and guidebook author Howie Richardson said, "This is truly a landmark deal, the culmination of 20 years of effort that came to fruition because of the shared vision and generosity of many individuals and organizations. Climbers and conservationists will be elated that they and their children are now assured of enjoying this jewel of the Okanagan in the future."

MEC is Canada's leading retailer of outdoor clothing and equipment, providing quality products and services for self-propelled activities like hiking, climbing and skiing. Established in 1971, MEC has more than 2.7 million members throughout Canada and around the world.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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