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September 1, 2011 • For Immediate Release

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New Members Join Trench Society's Restoration Coalition

The Rocky Mountain Trench Natural Resources Society is pleased to welcome two new organizations to its coalition of hunting, ranching, environmental and wildlife groups working to restore the grasslands and open forests of the East Kootenay and Upper Columbia Valley.

The Cranbrook Community Forest Society and East Kootenay Wild Turkey Association are the newest Trench Society members, joining the Cranbrook Archery Club, East Kootenay Wildlife Association, Kootenay Livestock Association, Rocky Mountain Naturalists, Southern Guides & Outfitters Association, The Land Conservancy of BC, Waldo Stockbreeders Association, Wildsight and Windermere District Farmers Institute.

“The expertise and enthusiasm of these new members will make the Trench Society even stronger and more effective,” said Chair Peter Davidson, who represents the Naturalists on the Society's board of directors.

Grant Griffin, an agrologist and former range officer with the Rocky Mountain Forest District, will represent the Community Forest's 200 members while recently retired forester Mark Hall, now a wildlife artist, will represent the Wild Turkey Association's 230 members on the Trench Society board.

Both Griffin and Hall say their members sought to join the Society because ecosystem restoration tallies with their organizations' stewardship goals.

“The community forest is a wonderful recreational and educational asset for Cranbrook but it's in dire need of restoration treatments to remove forest ingrowth,”

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Griffin said. “Our 2,000 hectares need exactly the kind of restoration that’s taking place in the rest of the Trench. For us, it’s mainly about healthy ecosystems but forest thinning will also protect the city from interface wildfire.”

Griffin said the Trench Society’s support at community forest restoration work bees cemented the decision to apply for membership.

The East Kootenay Wild Turkey Association, an affiliate of the US National Wild Turkey Federation, sees opportunities to conserve and improve local wild turkey habitat.

“The tools, principles and philosophies of ecosystem restoration in the Trench are well suited for addressing wild turkey habitat,” said Hall, who worked on restoration plans during his career as a professional forester. “We want to incorporate wild turkey habitat needs into the mix of restoration objectives, particularly on sites where roosting habitat can be maintained.”

Grasslands and open forests are a vital part of the Rocky Mountain Trench, says Society Chair Peter Davidson, a retired wildlife biologist.

“They provide habitat for wild ungulates including deer, elk and bighorn sheep, and grazing for domestic livestock. They’re not the biggest part of the landbase yet grasslands and open forests contain nearly 70 per cent of the district’s rare and endangered species, and provide habitat for many other wildlife species,” he said.

“That’s why such a diverse group of organizations comes together at the Trench Society table. We may have different special interests but we’re all working for the same goal: protecting and enhancing these very important ecosystems.”

The Trench Society coalition, formed in 1996, has initiated many on-the-ground restoration projects over the years, in addition to fund-raising, communications, research and advocacy work.

The Society is a founding member of the Rocky Mountain Trench Ecosystem Restoration Program. This partnership of 24 government, industry and public agencies is restoring grasslands and open forests on Crown land, provincial and national parks, private conservation properties and First Nations reserves from Radium Hot Springs to the US border.

For more information, visit www.trenchsociety.com.

PHOTO: New directors.jpg (high res version attached to email)



CUTLINE:

Touring the Trench Society's 2,000-hectare Waldo North project near Jaffray are, from left: Randy Harris, ecosystem restoration team leader for the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations; Dan Murphy, Trench Society coordinator; Grant Griffin, Cranbrook Community Forest Society; Mark Hall, East Kootenay Wild Turkey Association; Travis McKinney, Rocky Mountain Naturalists; and this summer's restoration monitoring field crew, Kate Stevens and Ariana McKay.