



June 15, 2009  
For Immediate Release

## **Environment Minister Gets Ecosystem Restoration Briefing**

Federal Environment Minister Jim Prentice heard firsthand Saturday how his government is contributing to ecosystem restoration in the East Kootenay.

A federal government job creation grant to the Rocky Mountain Trench Natural Resources Society means 24 laid-off loggers and mill workers will be employed on restoration projects in the Cranbrook-Jaffray area and Columbia Valley until 2010.

Trench Society Coordinator Dan Murphy told Environment Minister Prentice the grant not only provides employment in a time of need but also benefits wildlife, species at risk and forest health.

Prentice, a Calgary MP, was in Cranbrook on the weekend at the invitation of Kootenay Columbia MP Jim Abbott.

The Trench Society began hiring unemployed forestry workers in February with a six-month Job Opportunities Program grant from the BC government. That funding provided jobs for 12 Cranbrook mill workers. Another JOP grant in March allowed the Society to hire a Columbia Valley crew, many of them loggers, for six months.

With this month's announcement of a Community Adjustment Fund grant from Ottawa, the Society can now guarantee the two crews work through to March 2010.

"These federal and provincial grants, totalling about \$1.68 million, have made 24 forest workers in the East Kootenay very happy," Murphy said. "They can continue to work in the area, they can support their families, they are contributing to the local economy, and they are doing valuable restoration work."

The crews are hand thinning Crown land sites where conifer regeneration has overpopulated open forests and spread onto grasslands.

*more ...*

Murphy described the multiple ecological, economic, social and cultural benefits of restoring the dry forests and grasslands of the Trench: better forage for wild ungulates and domestic cattle, improved habitat for at-risk species, forests less vulnerable to insects and disease, and reduced risk of wildfires.

The Rocky Mountain Trench Ecosystem Restoration Program, established in 1998, was the first program of its kind in BC.

“The planning that’s gone into the Trench restoration program gave us an edge in applying for the employment-bridging programs that are being offered,” Murphy said. “The Rocky Mountain Forest District’s five-year restoration plan provided us with plenty of worthwhile projects that could be implemented immediately.”

The Trench Society, a coalition of hunting, ranching, environmental and wildlife organizations, is one of nine government, industry and public partners responsible for the Trench restoration program. The goal is to restore about 116,000 hectares of Crown land over a 30-year period.

Visit [www.trenchsociety.com](http://www.trenchsociety.com) for more information on ecosystem restoration in the Rocky Mountain Trench.

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*Kootenay Columbia MP Jim Abbott, at left, Trench Society Coordinator Dan Murphy, centre, and Environment Minister Jim Prentice at the Royal Alexandra Hall, Canadian Museum of Rail Travel, Cranbrook, BC, Saturday, June 13, 2009.*

**Trench Society Member Organizations, Directors & Alternates**

- Cranbrook Archery Club / Marty Cloarec, Cranbrook
- East Kootenay Wildlife Association / Andy Pezderic, Golden / Glynn Killins, Kimberley
- Kootenay Livestock Association / Don Lancaster, Mayook / Jordy Thibeault, Cranbrook
- Rocky Mountain Naturalists / Peter Davidson, Cranbrook / Jim Duncan, Kimberley
- Southern Guides & Outfitters Assn / Bill DuBois, Windermere / Doug Goodwin, Edgewater
- The Land Conservancy of BC (Kootenay Region) / position temporarily vacant
- Waldo Stockbreeders Association / Gordon Edwards, Jaffray / Bob Bjorn, Wycliffe
- Wildsight / Dave Quinn, Kimberley / John Bergenske, Skookumchuck
- Windermere District Farmers Institute / Bill Coy, Dutch Creek