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PRESS RELEASE

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HEARTLAND OF THE KHUTZEYMATEEN GRIZZLY BEAR SANCTUARY THREATENED BY PROPOSED PRINCE RUPERT GAS LNG ROUTE

New protected areas created as part of the BC government's 2006 Great Bear Rainforest decision are secretly being surveyed as part of the route of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) pipeline that would be the largest ever in Canada. The Kwinimass Conservancy and the Khutzeymateen Inlet Conservancy are currently being invaded by helicopters as crews survey the route for a 4-foot diameter pipeline that would require a 200-foot right-of-way. The Conservancies were created to enlarge the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary, protecting areas vital to the ecological integrity of the sanctuary. The sanctuary is a Class A Park, and is one of the most famous grizzly bear viewing areas in Canada.

"The pipeline corridor will shatter the ecological integrity of the whole area, and is a threat to every grizzly bear for miles around," says Wayne McCrory, a professional bear biologist and one of the central figures in gaining protection for the Khutzeymateen. "The survey is apparently being carried out with no park use permit, but with endorsement from the Premier's office. However, a permit will be required for the next stage of creating drilling pads, and may soon be issued by the government; yet the public has been kept totally in the dark, only learning of the surveys from commercial bear viewing operators in the Khutzeymateen Inlet.

"This is a shocking and unconscionable betrayal of the bears, the Park Act, and the Great Bear Rainforest decision of 2006," says McCrory. "How can they even allow survey crews in the protected areas for a pipeline that would require a 200 foot wide right-of-way and a major industrial road, as well as a compressor station and a large industrial staging area? They would have to put the pipeline for 1.7 km under the Khutzeymateen Fiord and through marine foreshore habitat vital to grizzly bears and world-class bear viewing. The whole purpose of the new conservancies was to protect the grizzly bears and adjacent marine habitats. Instead the government is allowing huge gas corporations to take a hammer to the protected areas."

Hidden deep in a remote fiord on the BC north coast, the Khutzeymateen grizzly bear sanctuary received legislative protection by BC in 1994 after an exhaustive 9-year battle with the timber industry. The grizzly bear population is unique in that it has also been protected from trophy hunting since 1982 by a large no-hunting reserve. As a result of a provincial land use plan in 2006 and First Nations initiatives, three more large protected areas (conservancies) were added around the sanctuary, making it one of the most protected grizzly bear heartlands in western Canada. Thousands of people have come from afar to safely view and photograph the famous protected Khutzeymateen grizzlies. The BBC filmed a major documentary there.

The fact that the provincial government is allowing such pipeline surveys should come as a shock to the thousands of Canadians who thought the Khutzeymateen-Kwinimass Grizzly Bear Sanctuary Complex would remain a pristine legacy for all generations of bears and people forever.

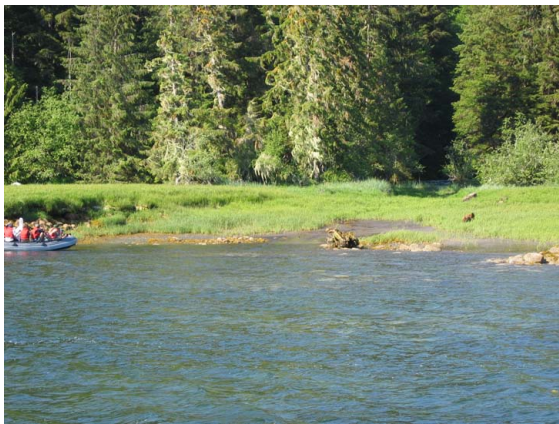
"No protected area is sacred or safe anymore from our government's wide open policies on rampant

LNG development and the race of gas companies to get to the BC coast.” states McCrory. “We can expect major road construction in the conservancies, including along the grizzly-salmon Kwinimass River. This will have significant, adverse environmental impacts on grizzly bears, the wilderness, bear viewing operations, and First Nations cultural/heritage values in these special areas. Not only that but establishing a new utility corridor through these protected areas sets a bad precedent for all our parks, and opens the door for additional pipelines or transmission lines to be built along the new corridor. No pipelines should be allowed through these conservancies. This is a severe violation of Section 10 of the Park Act where park use permits cannot be issued for commercial logging, mining and most hydro-electric developments (except Run of the River near First Nations communities). Section 5 (3.1) of the Park Act states that a park use permit cannot be issued for other purposes where such would inhibit or restrict the protected goals stated in the Park Act. Allowing pipeline surveys in the conservancies means that the provincial government is no longer honouring the Park Act. Apparently the pipeline company does not even have permits yet, nor should they be granted any. This is crazy. They should just stay out of these protected areas.”

Photos available upon request

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Grizzly bear viewing along Khutzeymateen Inlet at Site of Proposed Pipeline Crossing [Photo by Sarah Elmeligi]



VWS map by Baden Cross showing Pacific Northwest pipeline route (red) through Khutzeymateen-Kwinimass protected areas

