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## NEWS RELEASE

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July 19, 2011

Office of the Premier  
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation  
Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

### **Jobs and land protection balanced in new agreement**

VANCOUVER – Premier Christy Clark and Taku River Tlingit First Nation spokesperson John Ward signed an agreement today that creates 13 new protected areas and provides resource development opportunities and investment certainty in more than three million hectares (approximately 11,500 square miles) in the Atlin Taku region of northwestern B.C.

“This agreement represents a clear shift from conflict to collaboration between B.C. and the Taku River Tlingit First Nation,” said Premier Clark. “This balanced approach means a brighter future for families in the Northwest and opens the territory for business, bringing new jobs and opportunities, while protecting key environmental and cultural values.”

The Taku River Tlingit have already begun to work co-operatively with mining developers in the area on potential resource development projects. It’s expected that future resource extraction projects could support 350 jobs during construction and 280 operations jobs.

“The Taku River Tlingits have looked forward to this day for a very long time,” said spokesperson Ward. “I wish to congratulate and thank the members of my First Nation for their hard work and dedication in bringing our ‘Tlatsini Vision’ to life in Government to Government Agreements, which will protect our lands and Tlingit Khustiyxh, our way of life, and help make our dreams of a prosperous and sustainable future a reality.”

“I extend our thanks and appreciation to the Premier and government of British Columbia for their efforts and the political will to successfully conclude the Atlin-Taku Land Use Plan and Government-to-Government Agreement, and to everyone who participated and supported the work of the TRTFN in reaching this important milestone in BC-First Nations’ relations. It is a win for the TRTFN, for B.C. and indeed for the country.”

The Land and Resource Management and Shared Decision-Making Agreement is the first of its kind in British Columbia. It gives formal effect to the Atlin Taku Land Use Plan and establishes Government-to-Government (G2G) decision-making structures and processes, to guide future land and resource management, engaging the community of Atlin and a cross-section of environmental and industry stakeholders. The agreement was developed collaboratively by the Taku River Tlingit First Nation and B.C.

The TRT gave the task of choosing Tlingit names for the land use plan and G2G agreement to a distinguished community elder. The land use plan, Wóoshtin wudidáa, means “Flowing together;” the G2G agreement was named Wóoshtin yan too.aat meaning “Walking together”. The inspiration is the confluence of the Sloko and Nakina Rivers at the heart of Taku territory – two rivers with different headwaters, coming together to flow as one.

“After three years of negotiations, the Taku River Tlingit and B.C. have achieved agreements that send a clear signal internationally that this is a place where government and First Nations can work together co-operatively, with respect, in consultation with local stakeholder groups,” said Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Mary Polak. “While the most sensitive areas critical to the Taku River Tlingit culture have been protected, a significant portion of the planning area is open for potential resource development. The certainty achieved through this Land Use Plan will establish an improved investment climate considerate of Taku River Tlingit cultural values.”

Including the current Atlin Park, the plan brings the protected area up to 26.2 per cent of the Land Use Plan area; 800,000 hectares (3,088.82 square miles) – equivalent to the size of 2,000 Stanley Parks – is fully protected. Some 90 per cent of the areas of highest mineral potential remain available for mineral exploration and potential development.

“This is another significant milestone in land use planning in British Columbia, fully protecting an additional 800,000 hectares and providing certainty for investors over three million hectares in an area of the province rich in natural beauty and natural resources,” said Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Steve Thomson.

The Land Use Plan area is close to the size of Vancouver Island and includes the Taku Watershed, one of B.C.’s most significant salmon watersheds. It supports the largest commercial salmon run in south-eastern Alaska. The Plan area is recognized internationally as home to salmon, grizzly bears and caribou, and is rich in culture, biodiversity and boreal forest.

“Atlin is a place of great natural beauty, with a long and diverse history and strong sense of community,” said Joint Land Forum representative Asa Berg. “Those who choose to live in Atlin do so because they are truly connected to the land — it is their source of income, their source of recreation and their way of life. The Atlin Taku Land Use Plan will protect the areas of great importance to the community — such as the Atlin River and Monarch Mountain, while also creating economic opportunities that will facilitate community revival. The land use plan will allow for the diversity of Atlin to continue in a balanced way that will support both economic growth and protect the natural beauty to ensure that our children and families can continue to thrive in this remote northern community.”

From 2000 to 2004, the Taku River Tlingit and B.C. were involved in litigation at the Supreme Court of Canada. The completion of the Land Use Plan and G2G Agreement represent a clear shift toward greater collaboration between the First Nation and B.C.

The Taku watershed has been one of the last remaining regions in B.C. without a land-use plan. Some 17.8 per cent of the plan area will be recommended for designation as new protected areas, to bring the total in the land use plan area to 26.2 per cent. This will protect areas of exceptional conservation value and strong Aboriginal and community interest, including the mainstem of the Taku River and a significant proportion of its major tributaries, the Nakina, Inklin, and Sheslay.

The Land Use Plan resolves long-standing access, protection, and mineral development issues in the Taku watershed, and provides clarity with respect to the values and objectives to be considered in resource management decision-making. Prohibiting commercial forestry in a large proportion of the plan area conserves critical caribou habitat. Salmon habitat conservation measures in the Taku watershed support its continued role as a salmon stronghold for both B.C. and Alaska.

**Learn More:**

To find out more about the land and resource management and shared decision-making agreement, go to:

[http://www.newrelationship.gov.bc.ca/agreements\\_and\\_leg/engagement.html](http://www.newrelationship.gov.bc.ca/agreements_and_leg/engagement.html).

To view a map of the area showing the Land Use Plan, go to:

[http://www.ilmb.gov.bc.ca/slrp/lrmp/smithers/atlin\\_taku/index.html](http://www.ilmb.gov.bc.ca/slrp/lrmp/smithers/atlin_taku/index.html).

Photos of the Atlin Taku region can be viewed at: <http://flic.kr/s/aHsjtWoHfT>

A backgrounder follows.

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# BACKGROUND

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Resource Operations

## **Creating land use certainty on three million hectares**

### **The Taku River Tlingit**

The Taku River Tlingit First Nation's traditional territory covers over four million hectares (15,444 square miles) across B.C., Yukon and Alaska, including the Taku River watershed, and the area surrounding Tagish, Atlin, and Teslin Lakes. The main Taku River Tlingit community of about 375 members is located in Atlin, B.C.

### **Financial Elements of the Agreement:**

The Taku River Tlingit will receive up to \$650,000 over three years to implement the agreement. This total breaks down as:

- \$300,000 for Taku River Tlingit capacity for efficient and effective engagement in land and resource discussions.
- \$150,000 to support a Taku River Tlingit fish and wildlife management program that will allow for more effective management of harvest levels.
- \$150,000 to support Taku River Tlingit participation in review of major projects.
- Up to \$50,000 to support Taku River Tlingit participation in collaborative projects with B.C. agencies.

### **Strategic Planning Elements of the Agreement**

The G2G Agreement establishes the processes that will support collaboration between the Taku River Tlingit and B.C. agencies on land and resource matters. The agreement is consistent with other strategic engagement agreements with the Province.

The agreement includes commitments to work together to implement the Land Use Plan. The agreement also establishes a framework for co-operation between the Taku River Tlingit and B.C. on land and resource applications, which will make the permitting process more streamlined and predictable. The Tlingit name for the agreement is "Wóoshtin yan too.aat" [wooj-tin yown-too-aht], which means "walking together".

The three million hectares in the agreements represents the traditional territory of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation within B.C. where the Taku River Tlingit claim Aboriginal rights. The Taku River Tlingit territory coincides with a broad area for which a provincial Land Use Plan had not previously been developed.

The Atlin Taku Land Use Plan provides guidance for resource management in the Atlin Taku region of northwestern B.C. It has been developed through a collaborative process between the Taku River Tlingit First Nation and B.C., with participation by a full cross-section of community and sector stakeholders. The community and stakeholder engagement process included seven workshops in Atlin, as well as consultation with individual stakeholder groups.

The plan represents a balanced outcome of protection and areas open for economic opportunities. Key elements of the Land Use Plan include the establishment of 13 new protected areas equalling 564,782 ha (2,180.6 square miles), including the protection of Atlin River and Monarch Mountain – key areas of interest to the local community – and 11 resource management zones totalling 473,684 ha (1,829 square miles).

The Tlingit name for the Land Use Plan is "Wóoshtin wudidaa" [wooj-**tin** w-**jee**-dah] or “flowing together like two branches of a river”, which symbolizes the joint work and relationships between Taku River Tlingit and B.C.

### **Government-to-Government Forum**

Six people will be selected – three appointed by Taku River Tlingit First Nation and three by B.C. – to participate in a Government-to-Government forum that will oversee collaborative work on protected area management planning, research and monitoring activities in the watershed and a wildlife working group. The forum will act as a one-stop shop for strategic discussions with the Taku River Tlingit – and potentially other Tlingit First Nations – around issues related to development. The forum will oversee all discussions between B.C. agencies and the Taku River Tlingit, from parks to mines to wildlife management.

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