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## **INTERNATIONAL MARKETING FOR VANCOUVER ISLAND TRAILS**

COURTENAY - Vancouver Island's beautiful trail systems are going to benefit from an integrated enhancement, signage and marketing strategy thanks to a \$60,000 investment to complete stage one of a three-stage development and marketing plan initiated by Tourism Vancouver Island.

"Vancouver Island is known for its abundant natural beauty and ease of access to the outdoors. It just makes sense to support an initiative that will take our amazing trail systems to the next level and market them internationally," said ICET Chair Phil Kent. "The related economic benefits from a project like this will undoubtedly have a positive impact on Vancouver Island communities."

The Vancouver Island Trails Strategy Project is being supported by the Island Coastal Economic Trust (ICET) contribution of \$30,000 through their Economic Development Readiness Program. A matching \$30,000 investment is coming from community members, municipalities and stakeholders.

The project's components - including the goal of creating a uniform trail difficulty rating system akin to that which is used by North American ski areas - could be exportable to other jurisdictions around B.C. and across Canada.

"The Vancouver Island Trails Strategy Project is exactly the kind of integrated approach we need to properly showcase our beautiful trail systems," said Minister of State for Tourism and Small Business Naomi Yamamoto. "Building a comprehensive inventory of our hiking trails and giving them standardized ratings enhances the tourist experience, and gives them more reasons to explore the Island."

Phase one of the Vancouver Island Trails Strategy Project will include working collaboratively with communities to research trails and develop an inventory to determine the top 100 hiking trails with the highest potential for marketability, assess their stage of development, determine their best use and identify any improvements needed.

Phase two of the project would expand the trail inventory and develop strategies for consistent mapping, trail rating, signage and interpretation, best practices, consistent messaging and effective marketing.

Phase three puts the strategies into action by creating consistent signage and interpretive information, and easy-to-use maps available both on a dedicated website and in print at tourism offices, visitor information centers and anywhere community and tourist information is provided.

"Vancouver Island is already rated the top Island destination in Canada and in the continental US, and providing an integrated trails resource will definitely add to our appeal as a destination," said Tourism Vancouver Island President and CEO Dave Petryk. "Developing a comprehensive trails strategy will contribute to the economic and social potential of our communities and I am excited to see it get underway."

### **About the Island Coastal Economic Trust**

The Island Coastal Economic Trust is a \$50 million endowment established in 2006 by the Government of British Columbia to help diversify the economies of central and northern Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

ICET is guided by a Board of Directors and two Regional Advisory Committees which include more than 50 locally elected officials and MLAs and five appointees. This exceptional team of leaders collaborates to set regional priorities and build vital multi-regional networks.

Through a community-centred decision-making process, ICET has approved \$47 million for over 100 economic infrastructure and economic development readiness projects on the Island and Sunshine Coast since implementing its grant program in 2007. ICET investments have leveraged over \$260 million in incremental funding into the region.

A full overview of ICET can be found at [www.islandcoastaltrust.ca](http://www.islandcoastaltrust.ca)

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