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Montana and BC: Agreement Imminent to Fund MOU Protecting the North Fork

(HELENA) – Governor Brian Schweitzer today announced the imminent signing of an agreement to consummate the Memorandum of Understanding he signed one year ago with British Columbia Premier Gordon Campbell.

The 2010 MOU laid the groundwork for protecting the Flathead watershed from the effects of coal mining and other mineral development, and had also been attested to by representatives of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in Montana, and the Ktunaxa Nation in British Columbia.

The partnership was referenced in today's Throne Speech in Victoria, British Columbia.

"This is a great day for the people in both the Montana and Canadian Flathead," said Governor Schweitzer. "This has been a long time coming and this announcement finally seals the deal. I have to thank Premier Campbell who has done the heavy lifting. Years ago he gave me his personal commitment to work with us to protect the Flathead, and he has stuck to it through thick and thin."

The latest agreement will provide funding commitments to British Columbia to compensate its current mineral tenure holders for their past sunk costs related to exploration.

"Today, I want to give credit to Premier Campbell, The Nature Conservancy of Montana, Nature Conservancy Canada, and Canadian Ambassador Gary Doer," said Governor Schweitzer. "The Premier, Ambassador Doer, and these organizations have worked with us to secure the money, and for that I am very grateful. They knew what was at stake in this special place—Flathead Lake, the Flathead River, the entire Columbia River system, Glacier National Park, and forest lands where we hunt, fish, hike, and camp."

For its part, British Columbia will formalize its previous commitment to disallow mineral development in the BC Flathead watershed. Additionally, the state and the province, along with the tribes and first nations and interested federal agencies, will continue to act on other provisions in the original MOU dealing with cross-border stewardship and cooperation.

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