



For Immediate Press Release

DEVELOPMENT THREATENS SANDPIPER SHORES-MOSQUITO BAY WETLANDS, NORTH PRIEST LAKE

Sandpiper Shores is a 72 acre wetland property on the west side of Mosquito Bay with 365 feet of shoreline at the mouth of the Thorofare, north Priest Lake. Currently, this property is listed as “pending” (<https://www.compass.com/listing/72-acres-sandpiper-shores-coolin-id-83821/874428818956934009/>) with the site having been previously approved for a 14 Lot major subdivision (<https://bonnercountydailybee.com/news/2012/feb/23/ruling-flattens-mosquito-bay-court-action-7/>). The developer purchasing the site is in the final stages of site inspection with plans to develop the site. At this time SCA does not know the extent to which the developer plans to develop the area.

Selkirk Conservation Alliance is very concerned over the potential development of the Sandpiper Shores – Mosquito Bay wetlands and is working to inform the public about the critical importance of preserving wetland ecosystems and the potential permanent loss of a critical Class I Idaho Panhandle wetland system on the north end of Priest Lake.

The Sandpiper Shores – Mosquito Bay Fen wetlands are one of only three remaining large, intact, functioning wetland ecosystems still hydrologically connected to Priest Lake. The Sandpiper Shores – Mosquito Bay Fen has been identified by the Idaho Conservation Data Center for Class I protection status https://idfg.idaho.gov/ifwis/idnhp/cdc_pdf/peatland04_reportpdf.pdf. Class I sites are the most outstanding, irreplaceable wetlands of highest conservation priority and have been identified by the state for maximum protection. The Mosquito Bay Fen wetland was identified by IDFG as the top, single most important wetland in Idaho for land acquisition.

The Sandpiper Shores – Mosquito Bay wetland ecosystem has been identified by IDFG as the single most floristically diverse peatland in Idaho containing over 140 species (130 vascular and 11 bryophytes), twenty of which are rare in Idaho. The Sandpiper Shores – Mosquito Bay wetlands are also within the ranges of several species listed as threatened and endangered under the Endangered Species Act; Southern Selkirk Mountains Woodland Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*), Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), and the Canada Lynx (*Lynx Canadensis*). Other species present include; Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) Elk, White-tail Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and Moose (*Alces alces*). In addition, many avian species such as; Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) and the great Blue heron (*Ardea herodias*) use the wetland for breeding or a stopover area during migration.

Why wetlands are so important: Wetland ecosystems are among the most biologically diverse and productive ecosystems on the planet. Wetlands provide habitat for thousands of species of aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals (including many rare and endangered species). In addition, wetlands provide many (FREE) ecosystem services to the public including flood control

and protection, water quality protection including water filtration, aquifer recharge and shoreline erosion control. Sadly, wetland ecosystems are also among the most threatened (and quickly disappearing) ecosystems on the planet. In Idaho, wetlands make up only one to two percent of the land mass and yet they are critical for the survival of 80 to 90 percent of the state's species. Currently only 44% of the original wetlands in the state of Idaho remain.

What you can do: The wise management of growth and development around the northern end of Priest Lake must be a top priority for Bonner County Commissioners responsible for and entrusted "to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of the state." Bonner County will be responsible for the review, issuing and oversight of many of the permits that would allow the Sandpiper Shores – Mosquito Bay wetlands to be developed.

1. Contact the Bonner County Planning Department (Director; Milton Ollerton & Floodplain Manager; Jason Johnson) at planning@bonnercountyid.gov, phone: **(208) 265-1458** and let them know you are opposed to developing the Sandpiper Shores – Mosquito Bay wetlands!
2. Contact Bonner County Commissioners Steve Bradshaw (District 1), Jeff Connolly (District 2) and Dan McDonald (District 3) at bonnercountyid.gov/contact-us and let them know you are opposed to developing the Sandpiper Shores – Mosquito Bay wetlands!
3. Sign SCA's online petition: <https://chn.g.it/Yzt8DfLZd6>
4. Join and support SCA. SCA works to cultivate an environmentally conscious and responsible public in the Priest Lake Basin. www.scawild.org

For the past 35 years SCA has engaged in the struggle to conserve, protect and restore the crucial and sensitive natural resources of the Selkirk Mountains, their watershed, forests, lakes, streams rivers and wetlands, in an area that encompasses the northernmost counties of Idaho. SCA advocates for regional natural resource stewardship and seeks to facilitate cooperative decision making on environmental issues through public education and the promotion of grassroots activism.

Thank you for your help to protect and conserve this exquisite place for future generations!

For the WILD,

SCA Staff and Board of Directors