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Wilderness Tourism does not support the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion

(Campbell River, BC; April 15, 2015) – With its submission today of a Letter of Comment to the National Energy Board hearings, the Wilderness Tourism Association of BC (WTABC) has stated that it does not support the proposed expansion of the Kinder-Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline. “Based on our analysis of this project and the nature and probability of minor and catastrophic oil spills on land or at sea, the WTABC does not support this project as it is presently proposed” said Jim DeHart, President of the WTABC.

Although the WTA has identified a number of impacts and risks that would arise from the expansion of the pipeline, most concerning is the increase in crude tanker traffic on the coast. The proposal would result in a tripling of existing pipeline capacity, increasing annual tanker traffic from 60 to 408 vessels navigating BC’s pristine coastal waters. “The recent spill in English Bay only heightens our concern about increased tanker traffic and associated risk of a spill,” said DeHart.

Tourist destinations that have suffered from oil spills in the past have experienced significant and lasting impacts on traveller perceptions of those regions. It is feared that a spill in B.C. would affect the entire provincial tourism industry and the perception of Canadian tourism at large. The pristine waters are the backbone of a thriving tourism industry on the coast. With the region’s tides and currents known for their strength and severity, particularly near Haro Strait, the spread of crude oil or diluted bitumen products in the event of a spill would be immediate, unmanageable, and catastrophic.

WTABC Letter of Comment states that ‘we do not support the present project as it is constituted, and believe that the risks to businesses in our sector are immense, with little or no regard being given, to date, to preventing and mitigating these potential risks.’ “We urge the NEB to consider tourism and recreation values and interests as one of the primary areas of risk related to the project, and develop mandatory mitigation strategies to be put in place in the event that the project is authorized to proceed”, says DeHart.

- 30 -

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About the Wilderness Tourism Association

The Wilderness Tourism Association of BC (WTA) represents approximately 900 stakeholder businesses and associations operating in BC. Direct tourist expenditures on wilderness tourism products in BC is approximately \$1.5 billion dollars and provides the equivalent of over 26,000 full time jobs. Wilderness tourism is also a major driver of BC’s \$13 billion plus tourism industry.