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VANCOUVER AQUARIUM SUCCESSFULLY BREEDS AND RELEASES TADPOLES OF ENDANGERED B.C. AMPHIBIAN OREGON SPOTTED FROGS

VANCOUVER, B.C. – Tadpoles recently hatched at the Vancouver Aquarium from egg masses of Oregon spotted frogs will be released into the wild as part of the Aquarium’s conservation efforts for this species, considered one of the most endangered in Canada.

As part of B.C.’s Oregon Spotted Frog Recovery Team, the Vancouver Aquarium became the first aquarium in the world to breed this species in 2010, and has successfully bred these animals each year since then for release of tadpoles to establish wild populations.

The Oregon spotted frog tadpoles will be released tomorrow at a site on crown land near Agassiz, B.C., representing an important conservation milestone for a species that is in peril in British Columbia and along the Western coast of North America.

“As amphibians continue to face the largest mass extinction since the dinosaurs, propagation programs such as this one for the Oregon spotted frog are critical in the conservation of this and other endangered and threatened species,” says Dr. Dennis Thoney, Vancouver Aquarium’s director of animal operations. “There are only four wild populations of Oregon spotted frogs left in B.C., and so the continued success of our conservation efforts around the Oregon spotted frog is key to preventing this species from disappearing altogether.”

Oregon spotted frogs have vanished from 90 per cent of their range in British Columbia. Historically, Oregon spotted frog populations had occurred throughout the Fraser Valley, from South Surrey to Hope. But loss of habitat resulting from the draining of wetlands in the Fraser River floodplain for agriculture and the conversion of agricultural land to housing and urban development, along with the arrival of invasive species, such as reed canary grass and bullfrogs, and industrial activity have decimated the populations.

“As indicators of environmental health, amphibians play an important role in the local ecology,” says Dr. Thoney. “Removing a species from its ecosystem creates an imbalance that may negatively impact other species, which is why the B.C. Oregon Spotted Frog Recovery Team, of which the Vancouver Aquarium is a part, is committed to protect this and other amphibian species that are in danger of disappearing.”

The Recovery Team is working towards key goals of maintaining and expanding existing populations, and establishing six additional self-sustaining populations in B.C. Between 2011 and 2013, over 10,000 tadpoles and juvenile frogs produced in human care were released into suitable habitats to increase small existing populations in the wild.

Since 2009, Aquarium staff has been collecting Oregon spotted frog eggs to establish an aquarium-based assurance population.

The Oregon Spotted Frog Recovery Program includes habitat management, monitoring, research, and restoration that is conducted in partnership with the B.C. Ministry of Environment; B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations; Canadian Wildlife Service; Department of National Defense; Seabird Island Band; Stó:lo Tribal Council; District of Kent; Fraser Valley Regional District; Greater Vancouver Zoo; Toronto Zoo; Vancouver Aquarium; Mountain View Conservation Centre; Grouse Mountain Refuge for Endangered Wildlife; Wildlife Preservation Trust Canada; Simon Fraser University; University of British Columbia; B.C. Conservation Foundation; and Fraser Valley Watersheds Coalition.

The Vancouver Aquarium is also part of a worldwide effort, along with other zoos and aquariums, to conserve other amphibian species under the Amphibian Ark (AArk) project.

This year's breeding program at the Vancouver Aquarium is being supported by the Earth Ranger's *Bring Back the Wild* program.

Vancouver Aquarium

The Vancouver Aquarium is a non-profit society dedicated to the conservation of aquatic life.

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Editors: Photos and b-roll footage are available upon request.

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