



Reference: 269224

February 1, 2022

VIA EMAIL: nancywilkin@gmail.com

Nancy Wilkin, Co-Chair, and
Chief Harry Nyce Sr., Co-Chair
Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

Dear Nancy Wilkin and Chief Nyce:

Thank you for your letter of November 15, 2021 and our meeting on December 2, 2021, to further discuss important issues regarding wildlife and habitat.

I appreciate your initiative to hold Wildlife Dialogue sessions with Indigenous Nations and stakeholders and your collaborative efforts with key technical advisory bodies (e.g., First Nation-BC Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum, Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team). These actions reflect the spirit of providing a voice for all British Columbians for wildlife and habitat stewardship and will support the work we do together.

Many of your recommendations touch on improving the collaboration, transparency, and accountability of wildlife and habitat stewardship in British Columbia. In that theme, I would appreciate your advice on the following priorities as you embark on strategic planning for the year ahead:

- Provincial and regional engagement, planning, prioritization, objective-setting, and resourcing wildlife and habitat stewardship, with a focus toward on-the-ground actions; and
- Measuring the success of Together for Wildlife and improving outcomes reporting.

I would also like you to continue to advise on:

- Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and pathways to shared decision-making;
- Feedback on the prioritization approach, review process, and proposed changes to the *Wildlife Act*;
- Continued integration across initiatives (e.g., *Forest and Range Practices Act* amendments), particularly with respect to objective-setting;
- Ensuring sufficient and dedicated funding, including more creative options and ways to better leverage funds that support wildlife and habitat stewardship; and
- Ensuring data and information support better decisions.

Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

I appreciate the time and energy you invested in gathering background information and connecting with other government initiatives and advisory bodies to arrive at a suite of recommendations. These recommendations reflect your ability to establish consensus over the past year and half and provide valuable insights into areas where we can do better.

I accept the intent of all your recommendations and commit staff to reporting back to council on progress. Staff have worked across divisions and ministries to compile more detailed responses to each recommendation which are attached in an appendix.

I look forward to meeting with you again to continue our discussions and seek your trusted advice on improving wildlife and habitat stewardship in BC.

Sincerely,



Katrine Conroy
Minister

Attachment: Appendix 1

pc: Honourable Nathan Cullen, Minister of State for Lands and Natural Resource
Operations
Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
David Muter, Assistant Deputy Minister, Resource Stewardship Division
James Mack, Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Sustainability Division,
Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Jennifer Psyllakis, Executive Director, Species at Risk Recovery Branch
Michael Burwash, A/Director, Wildlife and Habitat Branch
Tara Szkorupa, Manager, Provincial Operations and Together for Wildlife
Implementation

Appendix 1

Table of Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council ("Council") recommendations from November 15, 2021, Ministry response, next steps and timelines. In general, the Ministry accepts the intent of all recommendations; however, additional discussions are required across government, with Indigenous Nations and with stakeholders to determine the most appropriate course of action and timing. The next steps and timeline provided below will guide staff resourcing and priority-setting and will support further discussions across business areas. Next steps and timelines will depend on priorities across government and new emerging priorities.

Council Recommendation	Ministry Response	Next Steps and Timelines for Ministry Staff
Objective-setting		
<p>1. By June 2022, complete a Wildlife Stewardship Planning and Objective-Setting Policy, jointly with the Forum.</p>	<p>Staff will work collaboratively with the First Nation-BC Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum to draft this policy in the coming year. The First Nation Forum is currently advising on many policy areas that intersect, and this work will need to be aligned and sequenced with their other priorities. As committed to in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Draft Action Plan, we will engage with all Indigenous Nations in BC on the draft policy when appropriate. We will also seek input from stakeholders and local governments to ensure alignment with other objective setting processes (e.g., Land Use Planning).</p> <p>Council's paper "Towards a Policy for Wildlife Stewardship Planning and Objective-Setting in B.C." is an excellent starting point for the policy development.</p>	<p>Engage on Council's "Towards a Policy for Wildlife Stewardship Planning and Objective-Setting in B.C." (spring 2022).</p> <p>Review feedback, draft proposed policy and procedure, and seek approval for consultation (summer 2022).</p> <p>Execute consultation plan (fall 2022)</p>
<p>2. By Fall 2023, enact legislation that legally establishes objectives for wildlife and habitat stewardship and key ecosystems as a priority that applies to all sectors.</p>	<p>This recommendation is key to supporting the paradigm shift to prioritizing ecosystem health and resilience in B.C. Government accepted a similar recommendation from the Old Growth Strategic Review Panel. We are working across ministries, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, to consider options for changes to the legal framework, including establishing new legislation and/or amending existing legislation (e.g., recent changes to the <i>Forest</i></p>	<p>Seek input from Council on policy and legislation (ongoing).</p> <p>Provide updates to Council on policy and legislation (ongoing).</p>

	<p><i>and Range Practices Act</i> as a start). Staff will continue to seek your advice on legislation and policy changes related to wildlife and habitat, and specifically on the <i>Forest and Range Practices Act</i> to ensure wildlife and habitat values are appropriately included in Forest Landscape Planning.</p>	
<p>3. Establish diverse and collaborative Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees to support the development of local wildlife stewardship plans. Significant progress must be made towards establishing these committees by Spring 2022.</p>	<p>Staff will seek Council’s strategic advice on establishing regional committees. It is important that these committees, or alternative regional engagement structures, be built collaboratively with Indigenous Nations, and respect the time, space and capacity needed to work together. It is also critical that any new committees or engagement structures be aligned with other regional engagements to be respectful of everyone’s capacity and ensure strong connections across all our work.</p> <p>In addition, over the coming year, staff will also be engaging with Indigenous Nations and stakeholders in regions to collaboratively develop regional action plans for Together for Wildlife implementation. These plans are intended to clarify priorities, support partnerships, align programs and ensure robust performance management.</p>	<p>Seek strategic advice from Council on establishing regional committees (spring 2022).</p> <p>Explore opportunities to support trust and relationship-building at a regional scale (ongoing)</p> <p>Report to Council on progress (ongoing)</p>
<p>4. Develop local wildlife stewardship plans collaboratively with Indigenous governments, and with stakeholder engagement through Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees, in all regions of the province.</p>	<p>Collaborative local stewardship planning is important, particularly to shift from a reactive to proactive management approach aimed at achieving specific objectives. Wildlife Stewardship Plans should also support local decisions on activities that affect wildlife and their habitat. As noted in the responses to recommendations 1-3 above, there are multiple ways to improve the planning process. Staff will work with Indigenous Nations and stakeholders to prioritise species and areas for planning and are committed to making progress on developing these plans.</p> <p>At a provincial scale, work is currently underway to collaborate with Indigenous Nations on provincial wildlife stewardship frameworks for grizzly bear and thinhorn sheep.</p>	<p>Collaboratively draft a schedule for developing and updating provincial and regional wildlife species plans (by end of 2022).</p> <p>Initiate highest priority local wildlife stewardship plan(s) (in 2022).</p>

<p>5. Develop and implement monitoring programs and performance measures to determine if objectives are being met for key ecosystems on all public and private lands, including Conservation Lands.</p>	<p>Monitoring and evaluating objectives for key ecosystems is a vital component of wildlife stewardship in B.C. To support this, staff will develop and begin to implement a cost effect and integrated performance management framework for Together for Wildlife in 2022.</p> <p>Staff will also ensure that monitoring and reporting work underway is enhanced and improved over time. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forest & Range Evaluation Program monitors 11 resource values identified under the Forest & Range Practices Act, including biodiversity and wildlife. • The Cumulative Effects Framework undertakes province-wide assessments of the condition of grizzly bear and moose habitat, forest biodiversity, old growth forests and aquatic ecosystems. • The 2020 FLNRORD 2020 Service Plan commits to increasing wildlife habitat conservation, restoration and enhancement, and monitoring progress annually. • The Conservation Lands Program is undertaking a strategic planning process that will include performance measures, targets and monitoring. • The first phase of Together for Wildlife Action #10 (comprehensive review of land designations that contribute to conservation) is nearing completion. The second phase will focus on more detailed assessments. • B.C. is reporting to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database on protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures. 	<p>Seek advice from Council on performance measures for Together for Wildlife (spring 2022).</p> <p>Develop and begin to implement a performance management framework for Together for Wildlife (summer 2022).</p>
<p>6. By June 2022, increase transparency by establishing a public registry for wildlife stewardship planning.</p>	<p>Transparency and accountability are core principles in Together for Wildlife and a priority for all of government. Staff will review existing platforms and approaches in B.C. and other jurisdictions, and will establish an approach for wildlife stewardship planning in B.C.</p>	<p>Expand existing or create a new repository for wildlife stewardship planning (by summer 2022)</p>
<p>Funding</p>		

<p>7. Support the Council's recommended principles with respect to long-term, stable, and dedicated funding for wildlife and habitat.</p>	<p>Staff will ensure that the principles recommended by Council guide development of options for sufficient, dedicated, long-term funding, as committed to in the Together for Wildlife strategy.</p>	<p>Report to Council on progress (ongoing).</p>
<p>8. Enact regulatory changes to double the surcharge on hunting and species licenses for resident and non-resident hunters, effective immediately and with regular cost of living updates to the surcharge.</p> <p>9. Together with your colleague Minister George Heyman, undertake a review, rationalization, and increase of the fines levied under the <i>Wildlife Act</i>.</p>	<p>Staff will undertake an analysis of policy options for both recommendations and will advance these for a government decision.</p>	<p>Report to Council on progress (by fall 2022).</p>
<p><i>Research</i></p>		
<p>10. Work with your Environment and Land Use Committee colleagues to establish the funding needed to complete the BioHUB Initiative, which has the potential to transform the management and accessibility of wildlife data in B.C. (estimated at \$5.5 million). "Open access" principles must become the norm, with independent oversight on data security.</p>	<p>In July 2011, the B.C. Government introduced its Open Information and Open Data Policy, becoming the first province in Canada to publish its data under an open license. Significant progress continues as this principle underlies all of B.C.'s work on data and information management systems.</p> <p>Our Ministry supports the vision and work needed for BioHub and staff will provide updates to Council on decisions, funding and progress.</p>	<p>Report to Council on progress (ongoing).</p>

<p>11. Work with your colleague, Minister George Heyman, and his team from the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) to formulate an improved policy that better incentivizes data sharing with FLNRORD.</p>	<p>Staff will follow up with the Environment Assessment Office and Knowledge Management Branch to identify and review options for requiring data submissions, based on a review of the full environmental assessment and regulatory process.</p>	<p>Report to Council on progress (ongoing).</p>
<p>12. Integrate management targets with rigorous monitoring to track progress towards these goals. Funding for stewardship efforts must include support for monitoring and account for cumulative impacts of human activity on wildlife, not just project specific impacts.</p>	<p>As a principle, defining performance measures and tracking progress is a core part of Together for Wildlife implementation. With many competing priorities, it is important that we are monitoring response and adaptively managing to ensure our investments are making progress towards the desired outcomes.</p> <p>Funding will continue to be made available for monitoring from various sources, including Together for Wildlife and the Land Based Investment Strategy.</p>	<p>See response to recommendation #4 above.</p> <p>Include performance measures in the next Together for Wildlife Director's Report (summer 2022).</p>
<p>13. Support the work underway by the Research Working Group to develop options for the creation of a scientific advisory team (or similar body) to support information needs of provincial advisory bodies (PHTAT, Forum, MWAC), support the prioritization and coordination of wildlife science needs across regions, and facilitate interactions among governments (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and non-government scientists.</p>	<p>Staff will continue to support your working group, and ensure alignment among related policy recommendations, and with existing provincial research initiatives, such as the FLNRORD Research Program and Conservation Science Unit.</p>	<p>Continue to support and seek advice from Council on options for a scientific advisory body or other structure (on-going).</p>

<i>Additional Recommendations</i>		
<p>14. That government establish an interdisciplinary, collaborative team to ensure that wildfire recovery management actions (e.g., salvage, retention, reforestation) are developed with Indigenous Nations, informed by the best available information (Indigenous knowledge, science, professional assessments), inclusive of stakeholder input, and implemented with enforceable tools.</p> <p>15. That post-fire decisions clearly balance the priority for wildlife and wildlife habitat, together with ecosystem health and resilience, with other values and economic drivers.</p>	<p>Another devastating year of wildfires, catastrophic floods, a deadly heat dome and other extreme weather events highlights the urgency of the climate crisis and the need to adapt our management approaches. For wildfire recovery, regional and provincial staff will coordinate subject matter experts to revise and improve existing guidance, collaboration, decision support and decision documentation.</p> <p>Staff will further explore a programmatic approach to wildfire management to mitigate negative impacts and maximize benefits of wildfires to wildlife and habitats.</p>	<p>Report to Council on progress (summer 2022).</p> <p>See response to recommendation #16 below.</p>
<p>16. That government prioritize the implementation of cultural and prescribed fire to proactively reduce the severity of future wildfires and improve wildlife habitats.</p>	<p>As part of government’s response to the report “Addressing the New Normal: 21st Century Disaster Management in British Columbia”, we initiated the Cultural and Prescribe Fire Program. One of the objectives of this program is to support cultural and prescribed fire to enhance and restore habitat for priority wildlife, including species at risk. A task team was established in the Northeast and staff will work to achieve benefits for wildlife in this and other areas of the province.</p>	<p>Report to Council on progress (summer 2022).</p>
<p>17. The implementation of a stumpage appraisal mechanism that enables the</p>	<p>Staff from the Wildlife and Habitat and Timber Pricing Branches will further review this recommendation and prepare a more detailed response.</p>	<p>Report to Council on progress (spring 2022).</p>

<p>holder of a cutting authority to fairly and equitably recover the costs incurred of carrying out beneficial forestry roads rehabilitation work.</p>		
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