

Together for Wildlife
Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees
Discussion Paper
January 2023



TOGETHER
FOR WILDLIFE



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees

Discussion Paper

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Introduction

This document is intended to support discussions among B.C. Government staff, Indigenous Nations and stakeholders about implementation of Action 2 in the Together for Wildlife strategy, which commits to the following:

*“By 2022, we will create or expand existing Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees (RWACs) to **represent a variety of perspectives** and provide **opportunities for collaboration** to improve **wildlife stewardship**.*

We will tailor committees to meet the unique needs and priorities of each region and ensure the committees can influence and be involved in processes that affect wildlife stewardship (e.g., land use planning, cumulative effects assessments, wildlife and habitat monitoring, etc.).

*Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees will provide **opportunities for dialogue** with provincial government programs, industry, stakeholders, local governments, and the public that complement the government-to-government relationships the Province is committed to pursuing with Indigenous governments. Indigenous governments will be encouraged to join Regional Advisory Committees as the Province’s government-to-government partners”.*

The commitment to Action 2 is founded on a principle that **wildlife stewardship is a shared responsibility** and requires that everyone have a voice. Through inclusive and cooperative governance structures, improved transparency, and new relationships, we expect to **build new partnerships and work more effectively together** (e.g., coordinate funding and resources, align jurisdictions and authorities, reduce competing or conflicting activities). The enhanced collaboration will **improve outcomes for wildlife stewardship** and build trust and confidence that we are doing the best things to ensure wildlife and their habitats thrive and are resilient.



RWACs will provide opportunities to bring communities together for dialogue, strengthen relationship with the land, and work collaboratively towards **common goals and shared objectives**.

Background

The purpose of this document is to outline general strategic guidelines for the development and implementation of RWACs while allowing flexibility for regions to tailor content to meet unique and diverse needs and circumstances of the regions.

It is expected that pathways toward inclusive governance will not be a “straight line” and adaptation will be needed to meet communities where they are at. What is not flexible is the need to create and maintain a safe space of dialogue. **Regional ‘readiness’ must be recognized and respected.** “Readiness” includes addressing capacity issues for Indigenous Nations and stakeholder organizations as well as regional staff. The building of trusting relationships is an essential first step.



The document’s content is derived from engagement feedback obtained through the creation of Together for Wildlife and workshop discussions with Ministers’ Wildlife Advisory Council (MWAC), the First Nation – B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum, the Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team, and provincial government staff (Together for Wildlife RWAC Workshop June 8, 2022; Together for Wildlife Workshop and Celebration September 21, 2022).

The intent is for this paper to be a “living document” that captures options for RWAC membership, spatial scale, and scope. This document is expected to be amended over time based on additional regional and provincial engagement. Following this document, a procedures paper will be drafted and will cover more operational topics such as guidance on RWAC recommendation approach, RWAC advising role, communications strategy, resourcing, and regional ‘readiness’ assessment.

Vision

RWACs are focused on **promoting healthy ecosystems** (e.g., biodiversity, wildlife and their habitat, ecosystem function), with the vision of **achieving thriving and resilient wildlife** and highly effective habitat stewardship in British Columbia through an **Ethical Space**.



This means that the process targets wildlife and habitat while supporting inclusiveness through respectful and trust-based collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. A variety of perspectives are represented and heard in the process, through dialogue with Provincial programs,

industry, stakeholders, local governments, Indigenous governments, and the public. RWAC recommendations are evidence-based, which will include information from Indigenous Knowledge, local perspectives, citizen science, and western science.

Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees (RWACs)

The following aspects have been identified as key roles and functions for the RWACs while maintaining the goals and actions of the Together for Wildlife strategy:

- RWACs are tailored to meet the unique and diverse needs and priorities of each region but are built from a similar foundation. (See Appendix for a Draft Terms of Reference that can be modified as required).
- RWACs identify policy barriers and opportunities, inform and are informed by land use decisions that relate to wildlife and habitat, and are involved in broader processes that affect wildlife stewardship (e.g., land use planning, forest landscape planning, cumulative effects, wildlife and habitat monitoring, etc.).
- RWACs provide clear lines of communication, ensure linkages, and build synergies and efficiencies among advisory bodies that relate to ecosystem health and wildlife stewardship, both regionally and provincially (see Linkages and Dependencies).
- RWACs are built collaboratively with Indigenous Nations and serve as an advisory body that complement (and do not supersede) the government-to-government relationships the Province is committed to pursuing with Indigenous governments.
- RWACs collaboratively identify regional shared priorities and goals, including wildlife and habitat objectives, and support the development of Regional Action Plans that guide the implementation of the Together for Wildlife strategy in both the short and long term and set the context for performance management and accountability.
- RWACs operate in a transparent process in which recommendations from RWACs are made publicly available, detailing RWACs' rationale for their recommendations and advice, while maintaining the confidentiality of any information/knowledge that has been shared in confidence, or with consent from the individual/groups who provided the confidential information.
- RWACs represent a raised profile for wildlife and have a positive on-the-ground impact on wildlife, habitat, and ecosystems.

- RWACs are highly functional, which includes active participation, diversity of knowledge and expertise at the table to support advice, clear goals tied closely to Together for Wildlife priorities, clear and respectful communication, trust and respect, continuous learning, and good measures of success.

Current State

- Most regions of British Columbia have Hunting and Trapping Advisory Committees, including resident hunters, guide outfitters, and trappers. The main purpose of these committees has been to support the biennial regulation process under the *Wildlife Act*; therefore, they have focused heavily on population management and sustainable use. Some of these committees have broadened their scope to include habitat information sharing, and some have Indigenous participation. There is a [Hunting, Trapping and Angling Regulation-Setting and Stakeholder Engagement policy](#)¹ that describes the purpose and structure of these committees.
- Many other tables that relate to wildlife and habitat stewardship exist in regions, including land use planning, cumulative effects, forest landscape planning, caribou herd planning, etc. Most regions also have regional Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forum tables, typically linked to First Nations agreements (e.g., Environmental Stewardship Initiatives, government-to-government tables, Strategic Engagement Agreements; see inventory of existing tables in Appendix).
- There are limited examples or opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to come together at a landscape level to collaborate at an operational and technical level on shared wildlife and habitat stewardship priorities.

Indigenous Rights and Title

- There are several instances of case law confirming infringement on Indigenous rights as a result of resource development, as well as instances where provincial laws are not aligned with indigenous laws. These historic wrongs and misalignments continue to have negative impacts on shared values and relationships.

Fostering Reconciliation

- Today, the mandate of the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship sets the development of a path forward with Indigenous Nations to build co-managed land and resource management regimes. This paradigm shift is expected to advance reconciliation and improve

¹https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/natural-resource-policy-legislation/fish-and-wildlife-policy/4-7_-_hunting_trapping_and_angling_regulation_setting_and_stakeholder_engagement.pdf

ecosystem health through improved collaboration and application of both indigenous knowledge and science.

- Reconciliation must also extend beyond government-to-government relationships. The value of wildlife is often shared among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people therefore a way to connect these communities in their shared interest of land and wildlife stewardship. This can be an equally divisive topic when discussion turn to allocation and use, particularly when demand exceeds the supply and opportunity.
- Creating a dialogue space to share information outside of government-to-government relationships is also a key need to support the advancement of shared-decision making, which further represents a chance to reach long-term solutions for shared values.
 - Achieving reconciliation will depend on a deep understanding of the Indigenous Law ([visit website](#)² and [additional resources](#)³).
- Ethical Space frameworks ([watch video](#)⁴) consider bridging western worldviews and Indigenous worldviews by opening a culturally-safe environment in which the western written culture and knowledge and the Indigenous oral culture and knowledge come together to allow learning and understanding one another.
- Because Ethical Space is a foundational piece of RWAC establishment and operation (see Desired State), Ethical Space training is fundamental in early stages of the process.

Menu of Options

Structure

It is expected that RWAC members make recommendations and provide advice that is in the best interest of wildlife and habitat stewardship in accordance with the goals and actions of the Together for Wildlife strategy. It is imperative that the members of the RWACs believe healthy ecosystems (e.g., biodiversity, wildlife and their habitat, ecosystem function) are paramount, support the shared goals of the RWAC and overarching goals and actions of the Together for Wildlife strategy, have the ability to commit the necessary time, are collaborative, have a stake in the region, are accountable to RWAC's goals and objectives (i.e., apolitical where possible), and facilitate linkages to other regional committees

²<https://ilru.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Indigenous-Law-101-With-Resources.pdf>

³<https://ilru.ca/resources-2/>

⁴<https://www.esa.org/tek/resources/> (Sep 24 Recording - Ethical Space, Science, Indigenous Knowledge: Conflict and Reconciliation in Ecological Management, by Gwen Bridge)

and provincial advisory bodies where appropriate. Membership needs to be large enough to be inclusive but small enough to be functional (12 – 20 people; 13 – 15 ideally).

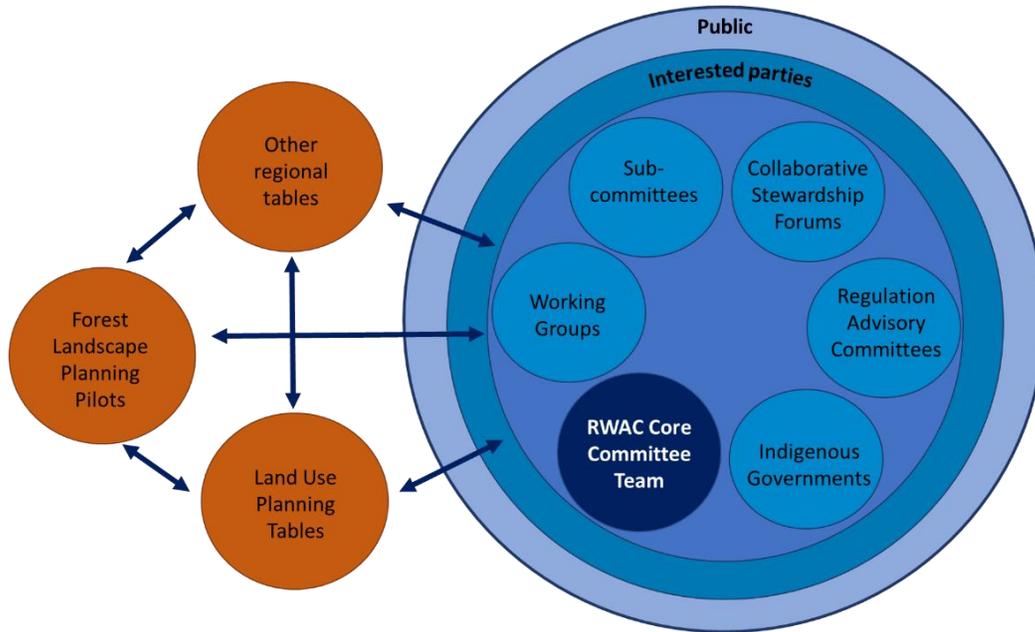
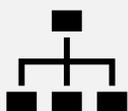


Fig. 1 – Conceptual structure for the Regional Wildlife Advisory Committee (RWACs). RWAC would be structured around a diverse main table (core committee team) connected to associated tables in the area, which could be sub-committees, working groups, existing collaborative tables (e.g., Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums, Regulation Advisory Committees, etc), and Indigenous Governments – if and how Nations and members see fit (actual structure and membership should be developed through regional engagement). RWACs would maintain links and good communication with other existing regional tables, decision makers and other individuals that need regular communication, as well as the public.



RECOMMENDATION FOR STRUCTURE

To facilitate discussions and ability to function effectively, RWACs could have a core committee table, in which higher-level discussions take place (e.g., defining “ends”/“what”), and are directly connected to other tables, where targeted discussions on specific recommendations occur at a finer spatial scale (e.g., defining “means”/“how”). Such associated tables could be either sub-committees (e.g., First Nations sub-committee, regulations sub-committee, human dimensions and community resilience sub-committee, restoration and enhancement sub-committee, etc.), specialized working groups (for specific topics that are focused and time-bound) or existing engagement tables (Fig. 1). The main table would gather input from associated tables and other regional tables, put forward high-level recommendations for wildlife and habitat stewardship (e.g., priorities, opportunities, and challenges), which would then loop back to the RWAC associated tables and other regional tables. The decisions would happen at the decision-making authority level (e.g., government-to-government tables) and implementation happens through multiple roles and partnerships (e.g., Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums, guardian programs, provincial staff, ENGOs, Universities, etc). Therefore, RWACs would be expected to maintain links and good communication with other existing regional tables, decision makers and other interested parties, as well as the public, through the process.

Membership

Membership can be representative or non-representative (see table below) and the choice of the representation model is closely linked to the spatial scale in which RWACs are thought to operate (see Spatial Scale). Regardless of the representation model adopted, there should be education around Ethical Space and cultural safety, and participation in RWACs must involve a culturally appropriate ‘onboarding’ to ensure that members are operating from a place of shared understanding of Canada’s colonial history and the continued impact and implications of this. Members should have a clear understanding of the importance and implications of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, and the evolving government-to-government relationships. Members should be accountable to the set of standards and expectations outlined in the Terms of Reference. Membership should be inclusive:

- Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (if non-representative) / Nations (if representative)

- Youth
- Various wildlife and habitat interests
 - E.g., hunters, trappers, guides, naturalists, environmental NGOs, etc.
- Industry
 - Appropriate to region
- Government staff
 - For administrative and technical support (e.g., secretariat role, subject matter expertise)
 - From the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship as well as from the Ministry of Forests

 Membership	 Opportunities and Advantages	 Challenges
<p>Representative (organizations have a “seat” on RWACs and select their own representative(s); RWAC members are accountable to their organization)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse perspectives • Clear communication mechanism to broader organizations • Local organizations feel confident they have a voice at the table • Paid support through employer and consistent participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would result in very large committees if all Indigenous Nations in a region are represented at one committee • Need to balance all voices (Indigenous, non-Indigenous, type of organizations being represented) • Require clear criteria to determine which organizations (e.g., NGOs, industry) to include • Would require members to check in with their organizations, which could challenge recommendation process • Members have to balance priorities of the organization with the wildlife and habitat priorities of the committee • Need to make sure members have a good communication system with the groups they represent
<p>Non-representative (members are appointed based on their background and expertise as individuals, not as representatives of an organization)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted membership based on interest and expertise • Members are accountable to the committee, with a clear mandate to focus on wildlife and habitat first • Ensure that members have the freedom to act in the best interest of the committee, and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging for inclusion of Indigenous knowledge holders • Requires a clear application process (e.g., criteria for appointments, decision authority) and a system to avoid conflict of interest

wildlife stewardship more broadly

- Increase the likelihood that the members are able to achieve consensus by acting independent from organizations and simplifying the recommendation process
- Foster public trust and confidence, which may be compromised if members represent and are beholden to specific organizations
- Members hold interest groups accountable to goal and objectives of Together for Wildlife
- Allows non-aligned members of the public to participate

RECOMMENDATION FOR MEMBERSHIP



Main/core RWAC table composed of non-representative but inclusive members and associated tables (e.g., sub-committees, working groups, existing engagement venues) could be either representative or non-representative depending on existing structures and regional needs.

A co-chair model with one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous person is recommended. B.C. Government staff should focus on assisting with administrative support as needed and providing subject matter expertise when appropriate. An independent facilitator should be considered, particularly at early stages of implementation, to support communication among different groups in an unbiased manner and to help build trust among parties. In order to achieve that, the facilitator needs to be neutral and have a strong understanding of the Together for Wildlife strategy, as well as government legislation, goals and objectives, ensuring discussions fall within the RWAC scope.

Spatial Scale

When choosing the spatial scale in which RWACs will operate under, it is important to be mindful of the size and diversity of Indigenous Nations, ecosystems and threats to wildlife and habitat in each region, as well as, pre-existing regional tables. Some other limitations include capacity and staff/resource availability, engagement fatigue, potential barriers to traveling to meetings, the spatial scale in which wildlife operates (e.g., some species require broader areas for survival and reproduction), other existing administrative or collaboration boundaries, and the spatial scale in which decisions are made.



RECOMMENDATION FOR SPATIAL SCALE

Four main spatial scale options have been identified, each containing a specific combination of opportunities and challenges (see table below). However, given the limiting factors listed above and the variability across and within regions, there can be no single approach for defining spatial scale. A more appropriate framework would be utilizing a multi-scale approach, in which higher-level discussions such as priorities and objectives would be set at a broader spatial scale in a main/core RWAC table, directly connected to associated tables such as sub-committees, working groups, or existing engagement venues (see Membership), where there would be targeted discussions on specific recommendations at a finer spatial scale (e.g., at the scale of Indigenous territories or ecosystems). This flexible multi-scale approach would facilitate alignment between the spatial scale of the RWAC recommendations and the spatial scale of the decision making (e.g., government-to-government), which may vary depending on the scope of the decision (e.g., targeted species/habitat). There might also be value in starting small (e.g., with existing engagement venues and regional wildlife and habitat tables – see Appendix for complete inventory) and then scaling up towards building a multi-scale structure.

 Spatial Scale	 Opportunities and Advantages	 Challenges
Provincial designations (Ministry regions or sub-regions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows structure already in place for many government operations • Consistent grouping for government decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't reflect heterogeneity and complexity within regions • May lack flexibility to accommodate localized issues or contrasting perspectives

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many Indigenous Nations would need to participate in more than one committee if their traditional territories span regions
Indigenous territories (Indigenous territory, language groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports reconciliation efforts by shifting away from colonial structures • Build on conflict resolution processes • Strengthen work with Indigenous knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge of overlapping territories • May require several committees depending on the number of Indigenous territories in a region, which may impose resource constraints on B.C. Government staff and/or stakeholders
Ecological designations (based on ecosystems/eco-regions, watersheds, or habitat representation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps address regional heterogeneity, complexity, and connectivity • Helps build biodiversity-focused strategies • Supports more local decisions • Allows focus on wildlife and habitat • Could be aligned with water boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the ecological scale chosen (e.g., broad eco-regions), might risk losing some flexibility to accommodate more localized issues or contrasting perspectives at the Indigenous Nations level (unless a finer ecological scale is utilized) • Capacity concerns for Nations and B.C. government since would likely mean many more committees
Existing tables' boundaries (start with existing regional tables and expand the scope of the work and/or the spatial extent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradual implementation • Learning as expanding existing initiatives • Leverages existing structures and systems already working, helping with time and resource efficiency • Alleviates administrative capacity of staff and might not require new capacity from Indigenous Nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential disruption of existing relationships if not done carefully • Acknowledging and including Nations that are not yet part of existing committees in a respectful manner

Scope

RWACs have an advisory role and are responsible for making recommendations, such as regional priorities and funding allocations, to decision makers (e.g., government-to-government). The specific suit of decision makers to whom RWACs advise will vary depending on the suite of recommendations being put by the RWACs. RWACs are not a decision-making body within the context of the *Ministry Act*, the *Wildlife Act* or any other provincial legislation or regulation. RWACs do not have authority over any ministry personnel, financial expenditures or deal with day-to-day operational issues. Therefore, RWACs do not have the authority to make the decisions themselves but they may provide specific guidance and

have a commentary role in implementation of decisions pertinent to the advice given. For example, they may play a role in funding allocations by supporting and endorsing Regional Action Plans. Although topics such as socio-economic considerations, which may include Indigenous view of socio-economics, are for consideration on a region-by-region case, some general guidance around what is in or out of scope for the RWAC recommendations includes:

	 In Scope	 Out of Scope
Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory role • Guidance and commentary role in implementation of decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making authority
Wildlife and habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildlife species, habitat, and biodiversity • Setting wildlife and habitat objectives with co-managing partners • Ecosystem/habitat restoration and conservation (identification of priorities) • Access management (identification of priorities) • Regional habitat and ecosystems priorities and concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding and priority advise for aquatics, fisheries and red-listed species at risk (out of scope for Together for Wildlife as funding for these program areas stem from other funding programs – but see Linkages and Dependencies) • Developing methods for achieving objectives • Application of restoration weighted against competing objectives (e.g., species at risk) • Specific restoration site selection, prescriptions, and project implementation
Data and knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities in data collection and monitoring • Identifying data gaps and groups to fill gaps • Weaving of Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science • Innovative options and refinement of standards • Provide regional groups with expertise related to data collection • Identifying opportunities to improve mobilization of knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing methods for data collection • Data collection, analysis and interpretation • Indigenous Rights and Title

Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic priorities for funding (e.g., values, as opposed to specific projects) • Facilitate connections to support and encourage seeking internal and external funding • Building local capacity, especially within Indigenous Governments (e.g., support fund development program for providing capacity to Indigenous Nations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision around funding allocation* • Administration of funding*
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of policy barriers and opportunities (to elevate to the Ministers' Wildlife Advisory Council and/or refer to regional staff to collaboratively propose changes) • Advising on regional policy needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy change decisions • Application of legislation and policy related to structured decision making
Linkages and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the development of regional action plans and species plans • Supporting public reporting of performance measures linked to regional action plans • Input into natural resource and land use planning and management processes • Input to hunting and trapping regulations and allocations (e.g., information sharing and communication) • Communication (within the RWAC, within the region, across regions, with public) • Linkages to other regional bodies (e.g., cumulative effects, land use planning, forest landscape planning) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafting regional action plans and/or species plans • Items outside of legislative authority • Hunting and trapping regulation and allocation decisions • External communication with public through media (e.g., press release)

*In circumstances where members of RWACs themselves raise funds for specific projects, they maintain decision-making authority over those funds if mechanisms to ensure fiduciary duty are in place.

Linkages and Dependencies

RWACs should be aligned with other existing provincial initiatives and programs that operate at the regional level, particularly those whose work supports the implementation of the Together for Wildlife strategy (see table and figure below).

The recovery of species at risk, in particular, will require alignment between topics discussed at the RWAC tables (e.g., species objectives, habitat enhancement/management, hunting regulations, predator management) and recovery objectives (e.g., caribou). Broader discussions that may involve species at risk (e.g., umbrella/proxy species for ecosystem health) or ecosystems linked to the aquatic environment (e.g., wetlands) are in scope for RWAC, and linkages with corresponding tables (e.g., species recovery tables, aquatics tables) should be established so RWAC perspectives can be shared.

Existing Regulation Advisory Committees should be connected to RWACs either through the main table or as a sub-committee. In earlier stages, while transitioning into this new model, alignment between RWAC and the Regulation Advisory Committees will be fundamental.

Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums are encouraged to be a connected part of the RWACs (see Fig 1 and 2) with Indigenous Nations as recognized governments – if and how Nations see fit. In regions where Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums are not yet in place, existing or new Government to Government relationships should be closely aligned with RWACs.

 Initiative	 Provincial Focus
✓ Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pilot to test how partnerships to generate trusted information reflecting Western and Indigenous knowledge can enhance natural resource decision-making through a collaborative land stewardship approach.
✓ Cumulative Effects Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A set of policies, procedures, and decision-support tools that helps identify and manage cumulative effects consistently and transparently across BC's natural resource sector.
✓ Environmental Stewardship Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A collaboration and partnership between the Province and Indigenous Nations, designed to produce high-quality, accessible, and trusted environmental information.
✓ Forest Landscape Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process of establishing clear objectives and outcomes for the management of forest resource values over a defined area. • Management objectives will bridge the gap between Strategic Land Use Planning and Operational/Site-level Planning.
✓ Modernized Land Use Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use planning establishes broad and specific objectives to clearly articulate the desired use land and expectations for stewardship which is

	currently targeted to selected areas throughout the province on provincial public land and waters.
✓ Old Growth Strategic Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review sets initial old growth management priorities for new policy development intended to meet objectives for economic, conservation, and cultural values.
✓ Species and Ecosystems at Risk Recovery Planning and Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recovery planning process creates a plan of action for species and ecosystems at risk that will help stop/reverse decline and remove any threats to long-term survival (e.g., caribou recovery).

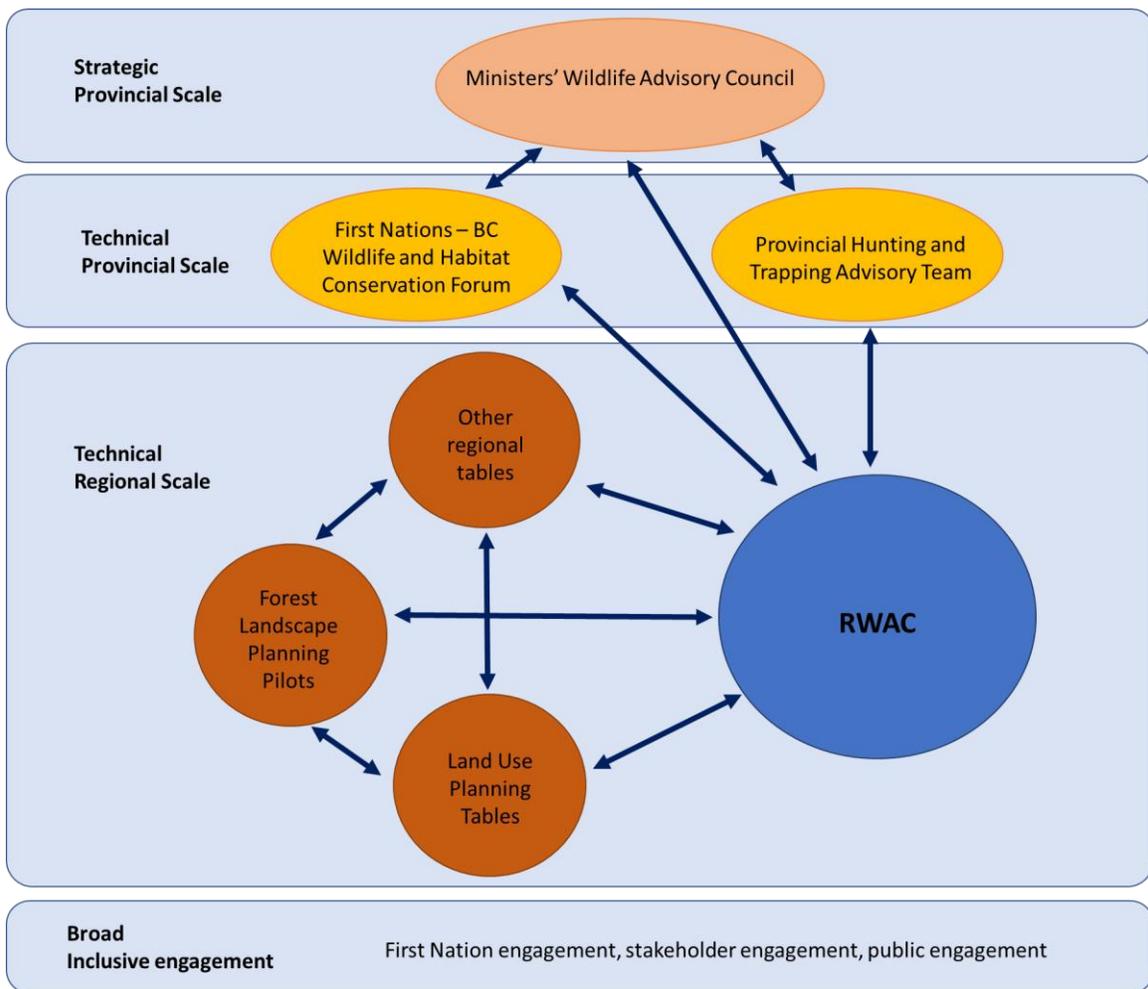


Fig. 2 – Evolving governance of Together for Wildlife advisory bodies and proposed linkages between the Regional Wildlife Advisory Committee (RWAC) and other initiatives at the regional and provincial scales. Lines of communication and associated strategies to be explored in RWAC Procedures Paper.

Appendix

The following Draft Terms of Reference (TOR) is intended to support the creation of a TOR by the Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees (RWACs) as tables are established. The TOR may be tailored to meet the unique needs and circumstances of each region (while remaining within the scope of the Together for Wildlife strategy) and ensure RWACs can provide input and be involved in existing and future processes that affect wildlife and habitat stewardship at the regional level.

The inventory of existing wildlife and habitat tables (page 26) may be used to support strategies to connect RWACs to existing regional efforts as well as a mechanism for regions to identify existing engagement venues for RWAC implementation/development.

Regional Wildlife Advisory Committee Draft Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference are a DRAFT for adjustment (as needed) and final approval by the Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees (RWACs).

VISION

RWACs are focused on promoting healthy ecosystems (e.g., biodiversity, wildlife and their habitat, ecosystem function), with the vision of achieving thriving and resilient wildlife and highly effective habitat stewardship in British Columbia through an Ethical Space. This means that the process targets wildlife and habitat while supporting inclusiveness through respectful and trust-based collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. A variety of perspectives are represented and heard in the process, through dialogue with Provincial programs, industry, stakeholders, local governments, Indigenous governments, and the public. RWAC recommendations are evidence-based, which will include information from Indigenous Knowledge, local perspectives, citizen science, and western science.

PURPOSE

RWACs provide opportunities for collaboration to improve wildlife and habitat stewardship in British Columbia by setting an Ethical Space in which a variety of perspectives are represented and heard. RWACs set a place for dialogue with provincial government programs, industry, stakeholders, local governments, Indigenous governments, and the public. RWACs can provide input and be involved in processes that affect wildlife and habitat stewardship (e.g., land use planning, cumulative effects assessments, wildlife and habitat monitoring, etc.). RWACs are built collaboratively with Indigenous Nations and serve as an advisory body that complement (and do not supersede) the government-to-government relationships that the Province is committed to pursuing with Indigenous governments.

RWACs will focus on oversight of government work to implement the Together for Wildlife strategy at the regional level. In so doing RWACs will work to develop recommendations on how to optimize the ecological and cultural value of wildlife and their habitat for British Columbia, as well as ways advance reconciliation, based on scientific data, Indigenous knowledge, local concerns, knowledge, and citizen science.

RWACs will identify regional priorities and support the development of Regional Action Plans, advise on wildlife and habitat objectives, inform land use decisions that relate to wildlife and habitat, and identify policy barriers and opportunities. Any recommendations from the RWACs will be made publicly available, detailing RWACs' rationale for their recommendations and advice, while maintaining the confidentiality of any information or Indigenous knowledge that has been shared in confidence, or with consent from the individual who provided the confidential information or Indigenous knowledge. In doing so, partnerships and individual entities will be empowered to contribute to activities that are expected to have meaningful and positive impacts to healthy ecosystems, wildlife and their habitat.

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

Insert a description of the "region".

MEMBERSHIP

Standards and Expectations

It is expected that RWAC members make recommendations and provide advice that is in the best interest of wildlife and habitat stewardship in accordance with the goals and actions of the Together for Wildlife strategy. It is imperative that the members of the RWACs believe healthy ecosystems (e.g., biodiversity, wildlife and their habitat, ecosystem function) are paramount, support the shared goals of the RWAC and overarching goals and actions of the Together for Wildlife strategy, have the ability to commit the necessary time, are collaborative, have a stake in the region, are accountable to RWAC's goals and objectives (i.e., apolitical where possible), and facilitate linkages to other regional committees and provincial advisory bodies where appropriate.

RWAC members must be willing to adopt and respect this Terms of Reference including the Charter in Appendix B, which defines the more detailed expectations members have for themselves and each other regarding how they will work together, as well as steps that will be taken if expectations consistently go unmet. There should be education around Ethical Space and cultural safety, and participation in RWACs must also involve a culturally appropriate 'onboarding' to ensure that members are operating from a place of shared understanding of Canada's colonial history and the continued impact and implications of this. Members should have a clear understanding of the importance and implications of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, and the evolving government-to-government relationships across B.C.

[Option 1, Non-representative]

Membership will be persons recruited from throughout the region who have a wide range of experience in natural resource stewardship and passion for wildlife and habitat. They will be drawn from Indigenous Nations, wildlife/habitat/conservation organizations, the general public, local government, academia, natural resources and other industry sectors, and the provincial government, as outlined in the membership criteria (Appendix A: Membership Criteria). RWAC members are not appointed as advocates of a particular Indigenous Nation, stakeholder or constituent group, and do not represent any other entity when they are acting as RWAC members. RWAC members provide expertise and are expected to build recommendations, and not advocate for a position or their individual interests. They will have a fiduciary duty¹ to the RWAC and to advancing the RWAC's priorities. Member appointments will be made based on review of nominations and applicants assessed against membership criteria (Appendix A); that include the principles of gender, age, and cultural diversity balance as well as robust regional representation. Members are not paid for their work, although expenses will be covered, and honoraria may be made available to support involvement of individuals if required.

[Option 2, Representative]

Ministry will identify governments and organizations throughout each region (e.g., Indigenous Nations, the general public, local and provincial governments, conservation organizations, academia, and natural resources/other industry sectors), and then organizations will select their representative. RWAC members are partisan and represent specific group interests while providing expertise and are expected to build recommendations, and not advocate for a position or their individual interests. Member appointments will be made by each organization and principles of gender, age, and cultural diversity balance as well as robust regional representation are highly recommended. Members are not paid for their work, although expenses will be covered, and honoraria may be made available to support involvement of individuals if required.

¹Without being legally precise, a fiduciary duty is duty to act for the benefit of another, like a trustee. It is expected that RWAC members make recommendations and provide advice that is in the best interest of wildlife stewardship in accordance with the goals and actions in the Together for Wildlife strategy.

CO-CHAIRS

RWACs will be co-chaired by two persons widely respected in the region or spatial area of the committee. To reflect the role of Indigenous Nations as government-to-government partners in wildlife and habitat stewardship, one co-chair shall identify as Indigenous, or work for or lead an Indigenous government; the other shall be a non-Indigenous person. B.C. Government staff should not chair the RWACs but may provide a secretariate function or provide subject matter expertise when appropriate.

Co-chair appointment process to be determined. The co-chairs are jointly responsible for:

- Communicating on behalf of the RWAC to other relevant regional operations/tables, government-to-government, and the Ministers' Wildlife Advisory Council;
- Preparing meeting agendas in consultation with members;
- Chairing meetings; and
- Members' conduct as it relates to the RWAC's guiding principles (see Guiding Principles section).

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTEXT

- RWACs are advisory and not a decision-making body within the context of the *Ministry Act*, the *Wildlife Act* or any other provincial legislation or regulation. It does not have authority over any ministry personnel, financial expenditures or deal with day-to-day operational issues;
- RWAC members are initially set for two-year periods and are extendable for up to two additional terms to a maximum of 6 years per person (members should sign a code of conduct and the facilitator and/or co-chairs oversee adherence to standard);
- Over time it is intended that appointment times will be staggered so that all members terms do not end at the same time;
- Members will attend meetings regularly, read materials in advance of meetings and come prepared, and provide support to any working groups established as and when needed;
- Members will not miss more than 25% of meetings in any calendar year. If attendance becomes an issue, RWAC members may request the resignation by quorum vote;
- Advice, recommendations, and activities of RWACs, as well as these Terms of Reference, are not intended to, and will not, fetter statutory decision makers in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, or Indigenous Nations or Indigenous leadership in their decision-making processes;
- Participation is without prejudice or judgement;

- Participation does not diminish the Province's Duty to Consult. RWACs are an additional forum for engagement and will not replace or diminish any right of any individual Indigenous Nation to be consulted and accommodated by Government;
- The Ministry will make budgetary provisions to cover RWACs' administration, including any payments to RWAC members that are consistent with Treasury Board directives (to be confirmed);
- RWAC members will meet a minimum of two times per year and may meet at other times including remotely (e.g., by phone/virtual call); and
- Any sub-committees will endeavor to meet virtually to manage costs.

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEES

RWACs will provide advice and recommendations to regional decision makers on regional wildlife and habitat issues. In particular, RWACs will:

- Provide advice on the regional wildlife species, habitat, and ecosystems priorities and concerns to appropriate body
- Identify policy barriers to government staff and opportunities to elevate them to the Ministers' Wildlife Advisory Council (MWAC) if provincial in scope
- Support regional objective-setting, particularly for wildlife populations and their habitat
- Provide advice, insights, ideas and recommendations on regional strategic priorities and progress of the implementation of the Together for Wildlife strategy goals and actions while supporting the development of Regional Action Plans
- Work to assist the regions to advance reconciliation with Indigenous people by setting Ethical Spaces, by bridging western and Indigenous worldviews, knowledge, customs and laws, and by seeking and offering advice on wildlife stewardship and conservation, including ecological, social or economic, as provided by Indigenous participants on RWAC and other Indigenous persons or experts
- Identify strategic priorities for funding (e.g., values) to support wildlife stewardship priorities, including identifying opportunities for new funding sources
- Support building local capacity, especially within Indigenous Governments
- Facilitate communication, within RWAC, with MWAC, within and across regions
- Facilitate coordination and strategic alignment across regions located in the same area (South Area, Coast Area, North Area)

- Provide recommendations and information to support land use decisions that relate to wildlife and habitat

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ♦ **Interconnectedness:** Wildlife, biodiversity, and ecosystem health are a priority for RWACs. Recognize that all living and non-living elements and communities are interconnected and are integrally dependent on each other.
- ♦ **Reconciliation and Indigenous values:** Advance reconciliation and work respectfully with Indigenous peoples to understand and act on Indigenous interests, worldviews, rights and title, as it relates to wildlife and wildlife habitat stewardship. Contribute to advancing co-management and effective reconciliation programs.
- ♦ **Trust and respect:** Build relationships based on mutual trust, confidence, and respect for shared stewardship of wildlife and habitat in British Columbia. Trust and confidence through our actions while fostering and promoting reciprocity and respect among involved parties by creating a space for all voices to be heard and multiple interests to be considered.
- ♦ **Transparency:** Improve accessibility to information across all aspects of wildlife stewardship, including rationale for recommendations and advice. Open communication and commitment to frequent and regular updates.
- ♦ **Evidence-based recommendations:** Wildlife and habitat stewardship recommendations are based on a mutually agreeable body of evidence through an unbiased lens. Trusted information and values shall include shared understandings, Indigenous Knowledge, local perspectives, citizen science, and western science through a focus on common goals.
- ♦ **Ethical Space:** A diversity of perspectives are represented and heard through respectful and inclusive collaborations that adequately capture regional uniqueness and are grounded in an Ethical Space and two-eye seeing.

COORDINATION

RWACs and any sub-committees will have a facilitator assigned to support establishment of business agendas, manage reference material, and record RWAC decisions and ensure all meeting agendas, minutes and reports are made publicly available.

INVITATIONS

RWACs may invite other ministries (e.g., Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy), agencies, individuals and parties to make presentations to, and participate in, RWAC discussions, including to provide matter expertise as needed.

REPORTING AND COMMUNICATIONS

High-level, non-attributed RWAC meeting summaries or minutes will be generated after each meeting and circulated to members as soon as possible, but at least within 1 month of the meeting. The minutes will be publicly available once approved.

The RWACs may generate a number of different outputs related to its purpose, roles and responsibilities. Those products will be publicly available. Media are not invited to participate in RWAC sessions and any press releases generated will be by consensus of the RWAC and with spokespeople identified. Any other media interactions, including social media, are to be non-attributed and reflect only the perspective of the individual and not the views of RWAC as a whole.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

The co-chairs shall attempt to resolve disputes in a timely manner using the following steps:

1. Confirm that there is a dispute by referencing these Terms of Reference and available information about the dispute; and
2. Speak to all affected parties prior to bringing the issue to the table and work to resolve it by:
 - Clarifying what the disagreement is;
 - Establishing a common goal for affected parties;
 - Discuss ways of meeting the goals;
 - Determine barriers to the goals;
 - Agree on the way to resolve the barriers / conflict; and
 - Determine responsibilities each party has in the resolution.

Only if the dispute is unresolved by the co-chairs should the issue be brought to the RWAC membership seeking direction (e.g., to seek budget for conflict resolution facilitator, or request that members with conflict select someone else to participate in RWAC). Co-chairs can recuse themselves from the conflict resolution process and to nominate, or seek volunteers, to stand in their place for resolving the conflict (e.g., they are part of the conflict, or there is a conflict of interest for their participation). Once the dispute is resolved, the resolved issue shall be shared with the table for transparency.

APPENDIX A: MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

Members of the Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees (RWACs) should meet the following criteria:

- History of effective and diverse collaboration (e.g., with the Province of British Columbia, stakeholders, Indigenous Nations), preferably on wildlife and habitat issues;
- Demonstrated ability to focus on a range of issues as opposed to single issues;
- Demonstrated ability to work effectively with others, even if opposing views;
- Hold a wide range of experience in natural resource stewardship and passion for wildlife and habitat; and,
- Ability and intent to advance the British Columbia's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the province's reconciliation intentions.

All member appointments to the RWACs will aim to achieve and maintain balance under the following principles:

- Gender, age, and cultural diversity; and
- Robust regional representation.

The collective list of nominated individuals will be reviewed to achieve a diversity of perspectives associated with:

- Indigenous culture, knowledge, rights, and interests
- Wildlife science
- Traditional knowledge systems
- Resident hunters
- Guide outfitting
- Commercial trapping
- Commercial and recreational wildlife viewing
- Natural resource industry practices (e.g., forestry, oil and gas, mining)
- Naturalist societies
- Environmental stewardship
- Local governments
- Agriculture and range use
- Policy development and implementation
- Emerging leaders and underrepresented demographics

APPENDIX B: CHARTER

The purpose of the Charter is to promote productive discussion and create a positive and supportive environment for that discussion. The Charter defines the expectations members of the Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees (RWACs) have for themselves and each other regarding how they will work together.

RWAC members should:

1. Maximize the exchange of information among parties and minimize misunderstandings by:
 - Speaking clearly, listening carefully and asking for clarification if a point is not understood;
 - Sharing information related to the issues at hand;
 - Respectfully presenting perspectives as concisely and briefly as possible; and
 - Ensuring proper opportunity to clarify the agenda prior to the commencement of meetings.
2. Ensure that all participants have the opportunity to speak, and all perspectives are taken into account by seeking the participation of all RWAC members.
3. Maintain a respectful atmosphere by:
 - Respecting each other's values and interests (being hard on ideas and soft on people);
 - Confronting the problems, not the people, and abstain from accusatory language, rude behaviour and stereotyping;
 - Listening to what others have to say without interrupting;
 - Arriving at meetings on time;
 - Staying on topic as per the agenda whenever possible; and
 - Seeking a better understanding of other perspectives with an open mind.
4. Ensure accountability to constituencies by:
 - Making every effort to attend meetings regularly, read materials in advance of meetings, and come prepared, or sending an informed alternate as agreed upon by constituents;
 - Communicating pertinent information to their constituencies regularly and seeking support for work products and recommendations;
 - Following up on action items in a timely manner; and
 - Acting quickly to raise and resolve any concerns regarding the accountability of the process or the failure of any of the members to protect the integrity and trust of the group.
5. Facilitate agreements across the full spectrum of rights and interests by:
 - Collaborating/negotiating in good faith, building as much agreement as possible;
 - Avoiding participation in activities that may undermine RWAC;
 - Focusing on underlying interests or objectives, including understanding the interests of others, rather than focusing on positions;
 - Recognizing the legitimacy of all interests;
 - Treating issues as problems to be solved not as personal or group conflicts;
 - Allowing participants the freedom to test ideas without prejudice to future discussion or negotiations — do not hold tentative suggestions or agreements against those who made them;
 - Seeking creative solutions that accommodate all interests; and
 - Positively supporting consensus agreements once they have been reached.

Inventory of Existing Regional Wildlife and Habitat Tables

The inventory of existing regional wildlife and habitat tables is currently in a separate document and can be shared upon request.