

Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

Meeting #22 Minutes

May 10, 2023

Via Zoom

Attendees		
Council Members:		Staff:
Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.)		Avril Nagel, Manager, Together for Wildlife Implementation
Nancy Wilkin		Lisa Tedesco, South Area Lead, T4W
Adam Ford		Michael Burwash, Chair PHTAT
Jasper Lament		Raychl Lukie, Coast Area Lead, T4W
Jason Northcott		Jenn Meilleur, Manager, Partnerships and Engagement, T4W
John Bergenske		
Kari Stuart-Smith		Guests:
Megan Hanacek		Celine Davis, A/Executive Director, Ecosystems Branch, WLRS
Mike Demarchi		Lindsey McCrank, Ecosystems Branch, WLRS
Shaun Hollingsworth		Sagarika Saha, Conservation Strategic Initiatives, WLRS
<i>Alyssa Lepka (regrets)</i>		Christina Waddle, Habitat, WLRS
<i>Andrea Barnett (regrets)</i>		
<i>Caylin Glasser (regrets)</i>		Consultants:
<i>Doug Heard (regrets)</i>		Derek Thompson
<i>Naomi Owens-Beek (regrets)</i>		Sairah Tyler
Purpose of Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To provide responses to requests from the BC Trappers Association and the Wild Sheep Society ◆ To get updated on the Conservation Lands Strategic Plan ◆ To discuss the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework ◆ To receive updates on the T4W budget and recent activities 	
Action items (from May meeting)	Lead	Status
Invite MWAC to Fisher workshop	Michael Burwash	Pending
Draft a response to BC Trappers Association for Council review.	Sairah Tyler, Nancy Wilkin	Complete
Prepare an advisory note to the Ministers on Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity for Council review	Nancy Wilkin, Adam Ford	Complete
Review responses to the 5-6 questions on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health asked by staff.	Kari Stuart-Smith, John Bergenske	Complete
Provide updated draft Framework to Council before the end of May, meeting with Strategies WG to be scheduled after this.	Celine Davis, Sagarika Saha	Pending
Connect with BC Conservation Foundation as they are convening something around wildlife connectivity, crossings and corridors	Adam Ford, Jen Psyllakis	Ongoing
Draft a response to the WSS that provides strategic support on some of the issues, for Council review	Logan Wenham, Nancy Wilkin	Complete
Expand briefing note scope beyond forestry roads	Adam Ford, Kari Stuart-Smith	Ongoing

Minutes	
1. Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Co-Chair Chief Harry Nyce opened the meeting with a welcome prayer, and confirmed the meeting agenda.
2. Approval of meeting minutes (March 2023)	<p>DECISIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Minutes from the March 2023 MWAC meeting #21: no changes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Moved by Kari Stuart-Smith, seconded by Shaun Hollingsworth to approve meeting minutes. Approved.</i> ♦ Action items from last meeting completed or in progress.
3. Changes to Fisher Regulations	<p>PRESENTATION</p> <p>Michael Burwash provided an update on conversations with the BC Trappers Association since MWAC received their letter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Regular conversations taking place to better understand concerns, and will continue moving forward. ♦ Coordination of a Fisher workshop is underway to discuss paths forward for fisher management. MWAC will be invited to that workshop once a date is set. Research WG may be best suited to take part. <p>DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ MWAC to provide a response to BCTA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ show support for the collaborative efforts ○ important for wildlife management and habitat management decisions to be collaborative, with a sound peer-reviewed science foundation ○ effective data sharing and direct involvement with stakeholders are key ○ Province has a responsibility to use the Precautionary Principle when it comes to Species at Risk <p>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Michael Burwash to invite MWAC to Fisher workshop ♦ Sairah Tyler / Nancy Wilkin to draft a response to BC Trappers Association for Council review
4. Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity Framework	<p>PRESENTATION / DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Celine Davies and Sagarika Saha provide updates on the proposed Framework. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council had provided responses to the Ecosystem Health team questions at the April Strategies WG meeting. ♦ Council discussed the proposed framework and offered advice to the Ecosystem Health Team. Staff will include this advice in the next draft of the Framework, due at the end of May. Public engagement is anticipated for late summer/early fall, with implementation beginning in the fall.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Council will prepare advice to Ministers on the need for an Office of Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity to help meet government commitments on the Old Growth Strategy and the proposed Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity Framework. <p>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Kari Stuart Smith and John Bergenske to review responses to the 5-6 questions asked by staff. ◆ Nancy Wilkin and Adam Ford to prepare an advisory note to the Ministers on Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity for Council review. ◆ Celine Davies to provide updated draft Framework to Council before the end of May, meeting with Strategies WG to be scheduled after this.
<p>5. Update: Conservation Lands Strategic Plan</p>	<p>PRESENTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Christina Waddle, Conservation Lands Specialist, WLRS provided an update on the consultant-led final product that was delivered to government at the end of March. ◆ Targeted engagement took place with the First Nations–B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum and Conservations Lands Partner Program as well as MWAC. <p>Key messages heard to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ensure / Increase linkage to 30 x 30 mandate and other Convention on Biodiversity (Global Biodiversity Framework) Targets (e.g., restore 30% degraded high-value conservation sites). ◆ Ensure First Nations role for prioritizing lands, planning, management, reporting ◆ Ensure conservation land designations evolve to new approaches such as IPCA’s, land settlements, etc. ◆ Link local planning for conservation lands to initiatives (i.e., Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees, Forest Landscape Planning, Land Use Planning). ◆ Consider amendments to <i>Wildlife Act</i> to reflect evolving approaches for conservation land planning. <p>Objectives and Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Target to increase administered conservation lands to 3% of B.C. (contributing 3% of the overall 30% or 2.8M hectares). ◆ Establish a fund to secure lands for conservation of \$50M annually until target is reached, including both private land conservation and buying out incompatible tenures. ◆ All lands have a management directive (basic management plan) in place, built collaboratively with First Nations. ◆ Increased resources to support B.C., First Nations and NGO capacity. ◆ Increased number of restoration and enhancement projects. ◆ Improved compliance and enforcement on conservation lands including increased investment. <p>Next Steps:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Engage with related programs e.g., Modernized Land Use Planning, CISF, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework, and other Ministries as appropriate, e.g., Forests and Environment (Parks and COS) (May – June). ♦ Finalize Plan and seek Treasury Board review prior to publication (July) re: implementation priorities, timing and the resourcing requirements to deliver on the plan. ♦ Seek final approvals on plan and external messaging (September). ♦ Post on Conservation Lands Program website (October). <p>DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Council supports the ambitious goal to go from 0.5% to 3%; building capacity within the province, and with First Nations and NGO partners; and annual \$50M for land acquisition. ♦ Ongoing funding required for land management; and it would need to scale up as more lands are secured – where will those funds come from? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Suggests an annual allocation based on a percentage of the annual \$50M acquisition budget (20-25%). ♦ Strong linkages with policy work around IPCAs is underway. ♦ Currently a gap in terms of linkages to B.C.’s migratory bird joint ventures, and B.C.’s contribution to continental and global migration plans/ventures – strong opportunity to include this.
<p>6. Update: wildlife crossings and corridors</p>	<p>PRESENTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Avril Nagel provided an update on steps taken to advance the priority of wildlife corridors, landscape connectivity and wildlife crossings. ♦ The T4W team has met with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and Ministry of Forests to discuss priority, current projects and possible partnerships / alignment; resulted in upcoming meeting (June 12) with regional infrastructure managers on priorities, opportunities and barriers to better scope options to mitigate impacts for wildlife crossings. ○ Parks Canada and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to discuss areas of shared priorities and alignment. U.S. priorities range from umbrella species like big game migration routes, to watershed planning to support riparian corridors, and physically identifying conservation priority areas that aid in connecting existing areas of biodiversity identified from state and tribal/First Nation priorities. ○ Parks Canada to further discuss their ecological corridors program. T4W will pursue a long-term agreement to work together on recognizing or designating important ecological and/or cultural corridors. This work is a part of the broader, and still emerging strategy to achieve the landscape ecosystem health and conservation targets in B.C. ○ B.C. Parks to discuss connectivity priorities for connecting protected areas and improve climate resiliency.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Resources have been secured to hire a short-term “Strategic Lead, Connectivity” to lead this work and put together a “plan” that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ meets the multidisciplinary needs to advance actions that are grounded in UNDRIP, ○ joins terrestrial and aquatic conservation, and ○ supports the coordination efforts necessary to achieve tangible outcomes, including conservation practices outside of designated areas. <p>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Adam Ford to connect with Jen Psyllakis as the BC Conservation Foundation is also looking at convening around wildlife connectivity/crossings/corridors
<p>7. Wild Sheep Society Symposium Document</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Jen Psyllakis, Hunter Lampreau, and Nancy Wilkin attended the Wild Sheep Society Symposium to present on T4W. ♦ WSS provided an Outcome document, which looks at sheep by region across the province and presents 6 issues; they are seeking Council advice. <p>DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Wild sheep are a key icon of B.C. This province is a global stronghold for wild sheep diversity and conservation – it is imperative to help ensure they survive and thrive into the future. ♦ Council discussed recommendations to make to the Ministers in relation to the 6 identified issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strongly support strengthening the commitments and support policy and regulation reforms that address disease risks and achieve effective separation of domestic and wild sheep; acknowledge collaboration and cooperation between Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Forests (joint ministry task force); MOF working with NGOs regarding sampling activities, surveillance of harvest, monitoring for disease, management techniques to reduce disease prevalence, coordination with other jurisdictions, separation work, education, highway mitigation efforts, etc.); Council could encourage the Ministers to seek a stronger level of involvement from Ministry of Agriculture. ○ Support government fully funding a permanent full-time Provincial Wild Sheep and Mountain Goat Specialist. ○ Support proactive regulation through PHTAT and other efforts (though MWAC does not work directly on any regulations). ○ Support increased license fees. ○ Support Stewardship Plans. ○ Acknowledge efforts to bring public awareness to the importance of the issue. <p>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Logan Wenham and Nancy Wilkin to draft a response to the Wild Sheep Society that provides strategic support on some of the issues, for Council review
<p>8. Updates on T4W and 23-24 working budget</p>	<p>T4W update</p> <p>Avril Nagel presented updates on T4W</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ T4W implementation activities since the March Council meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Forum In-person meeting ○ Wildlife Act Review ○ Phase 2 Funding Cycle ○ Preparation for the internal portion of the T4W Health Check ○ Engagement support to the Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity Framework ○ Guardians Training ○ Objective setting policy ○ Citizen Science Framework ○ Conservation Lands Strategic Plan ○ Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees ♦ Priorities for 2023/24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Supporting MWAC identified priorities ○ Mid-strategy review and performance measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reintroduce T4W ▪ Finalize performance evaluation system and baseline ▪ Health check on Strategy, Advisory Committees, and broader stakeholder groups: what is working well, what could be improved, and vision and alignment/integration in 2023 strategic context ▪ Iterative policy development to guide ongoing implementation ▪ Connecting to other strategic priorities to benefit wildlife ♦ Staffing updates: Rachyl Lukie as Coast Area Lead working on objective setting and shared decision making; Cheryl Rentz-Bennett as Business Operations and Engagement Coordinator; and Jennifer Meilleur as the Manager of Partnerships and Engagement <p>2023-2024 Working budget overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ 22/23 financial reporting is underway; finalizing funding for 23/24 projects ♦ Budget total is \$9,951,500: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Goal 1: \$800,000 ○ Goal 2: \$2,230,000 ○ Goal 3: \$2,762,000 ○ Goal 4: \$100,000 ○ Goal 5: \$1,059,500 ○ T4W Staffing and administration: \$3,000,000 <p>DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Suggest taking a very close look at what percentage of T4W budget is spent “on the ground” for habitat protection & restoration. For those dollars, it would be educational to track and report on the footprint of habitat improvements (in hectares). ♦ Would like to see what investments are happening outside of T4W as well

<p>9. Updates</p>	<p>Status of RWACs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ East Kootenay T4W Committee meeting had a good turnout with strong representation. Terms of Reference is close to completion. Discussed priorities and priority setting. Kootenay Conservation Program priorities have a strong overlap with those that the East Kootenay RWAC is interested in. ♦ Top three priorities are key habitat for wildlife, linear features, and objective setting for wildlife, and working group meetings are scheduled for each priority. ♦ Full table (just over 20 members) meets again in late June <p>Roads briefing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Kari Stuart-Smith prepared a draft briefing note on the issue of resource roads and the impacts they have on wildlife – currently focused on forestry roads. Intend to increase scope. ♦ Will continue work on this at the May Strategies WG meeting, with final draft to be shared with Council. ♦ Minister Ralston has requested an in-person meeting (upcoming) <p>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Adam and Kari to connect re expanding briefing note scope beyond forestry roads
<p>10. Other business</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ None
<p>11. Closing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Next scheduled meeting July 12, 2023 via Zoom