

Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

Meeting #21 Minutes

March 7 – 8, 2023

In person (525 Superior St, Victoria) and via Teams

Attendees		
Council Members:		Staff:
Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.) (online)		Jennifer Psyllakis, Executive Director, WLRS
Nancy Wilkin		David Muter, ADM
<i>Adam Ford (regrets)</i>		Avril Nagel, Manager, Together for Wildlife Implementation
<i>Alyssa Lepka (regrets)</i>		Michael Burwash, Chair PHTAT
Andrea Barnett		Pam Doerksen, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Wildlife Act Review
Caylin Glasser (online)		Danica Crystal, Wildlife Policy Specialist, MOF
Doug Heard (online)		Lisa Tedesco, South Area Lead Together for Wildlife
Jasper Lament		Catherine Denny, Wildlife Biologist, Stewardship Planning, T4W
Jason Northcott (online)		
John Bergenske		Guests
Kari Stuart-Smith		Hunter Lampreau, Co-Chair Forum
Megan Hanacek (online)		Morris Prosser, Co-Chair Forum
Mike Demarchi		Brian Bawtinheimer, Executive Director, Provincial Stewardship Strategies & Planning, WLRS
Naomi Owens-Beek (online)		
Shaun Hollingsworth		Tony Pesklevits, BC Wildfire Service, MoF
		Sarah Budd, BC Wildfire Service, MoF
		Celine Davis, A/Executive Director, Ecosystems Branch, WLRS (online)
		Consultants:
		Derek Thompson (online)
		Judith Cullington
Purpose of Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Meet with Minister(s) to build relationships and discuss their priorities ♦ Receive updates on provincial priorities, and provide strategic advice 	
Action items (from March meeting)	Lead	Status
Set up a joint WG meeting including Forum and MWAC members, to discuss how best to support the reconciliation paradigm shift to build relationships, trust and collaboration.	Judith Cullington and Chief Nyce	
Provide a detailed budget update at the next meeting.	Jen Psyllakis and Avril Nagel	Complete
Provide a recommendation to the Ministers in support of interim measures, and determine how best to provide advice for the <i>Wildlife Act</i> review.	Council	Discuss at Strategies WG

Members of MWAC and the Forum should hold a joint working session to review the vision, guiding principles, and content of the Wildlife Act discussion paper.	MWAC and Forum Co-Chairs	
Discuss possibilities for expanding the approach to OECMs in B.C.	Strategies WG	Discuss at Strategies WG
Host a discussion with MWAC in mid-April, and provide some advance materials.	Celine Davis	Complete
Arrange for a WG discussion to formulate Council's input on this topic.	Judith Cullington	Complete
Prepare a proposal for work on the wildlife crossings and corridors and submit to Ministers.	Jen Psyllakis, Council	
Invite Colin Ward to a future meeting to talk about his work on conservation financing measures.	Jen Psyllakis	Presentation to May meeting
Review and update MWAC Terms of Reference, including potential for ex-officio participation from the Forum and PHTAT.	Shaun Hollingsworth, Jason Northcott and Derek Thompson	For presentation to July MWAC
Arrange for a special meeting to discuss performance measures.	Avril Nagel	

Minutes

Tuesday, March 7th, 2023

1. Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Co-Chair Chief Harry Nyce opening the meeting with a welcome prayer.
2. Approval of meeting minutes (January 2023)	<p>DECISIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Minutes from the January 2023 MWAC meeting #20: no changes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Moved by Shaun Hollingsworth, seconded by Kari-Stuart-Smith to approve meeting minutes. Approved.</i> ♦ Action items from last meeting completed or in progress.
3. T4W Updates	<p>PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION</p> <p>Jennifer Psyllakis and Avril Nagel provided an update on T4W.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ COP 15 and the Global Biodiversity Framework and the work of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) provide opportunity to align B.C.'s work with international efforts. These could result in transformative change. ♦ The federal 30x30 initiative (protecting 30% of lands by 2030), supported by the conservation financing mechanism, could lead to big commitments for conservation and restoration in collaboration with Indigenous Nations. ♦ WAWFA provides opportunities for collaboration on transboundary wildlife corridor protection. ♦ At the same time, there needs to be action on the "other 70%" of the land base. The policy framework on ecosystem health and biodiversity will be part of this.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ T4W has welcomed several new members to their staff team. Avril Nagel provided an update on progress on the T4W action items. This includes over 40 on-the-ground projects. The intent is to conduct a mid-strategy check-in this Fall. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Objective setting draft policy paper is expected to be ready for engagement in late Spring; may be combined with <i>Wildlife Act</i> engagement. Objectives should be linked to wildlife populations. A challenge will be to determine “how much is enough”. RWACs will play a role, MWAC could also provide guidance. ○ The Conservation Lands Strategic Plan is almost complete. ○ The Economics study is focusing on two cases studies; still needs additional work. ○ Ethical space workshops are planned for regions. ○ Principles for performance measures are under development. These should align with international standards to allow for comparison. Tracking investments to performance measures informs how best to invest funds. ○ Information on the wildlife stewardship plans is available on the Ministry website. ○ Staff are working on increases to fines and surcharges; also changes to the BC Hydro Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP). ♦ In all of this work, there is a very important role to support reconciliation through healthy conversations. Partnerships are essential for the successful delivery of T4W. ♦ Many of the transformative changes will take time to put in place. There needs to be focus on the interim measures. ♦ T4W is an important source of funding for many projects. There is no surplus anticipated for this year. <p>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Judith Cullington and Chief Nyce to set up a joint WG meeting including Forum and MWAC members, to discuss how best to support the reconciliation paradigm shift to build relationships, trust and collaboration. ♦ Jen Psyllakis and Avril Nagel to provide a detailed budget update at the next MWAC meeting.
<p>4. Wildlife Act Review</p>	<p>PRESENTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Danica Crystal provided an overview of work towards reviewing the <i>Wildlife Act</i>. The Environment and Land Use Committee (ELUC) has given approval for the engagement approach. A confidential draft was shared with Council. ♦ The draft discussion paper is being reviewed with the Forum prior to engagement. ♦ The expectation is for engagement to begin in the Fall, with legislation introduced in 2026. <p>DISCUSSION</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ The Act should be clear that ecosystem health and biodiversity take priority. A clear aim should be world-class, healthy, and resilient wildlife populations. ♦ With respect to wildlife, we have been “dipping into capital, rather than living off the interest.” There should be abundance to enable “living off the interest”. ♦ Changes to the Act will take time. There needs to be a transition plan that identifies significant interim measures. ♦ There is a need for clarity of what aspects of the existing Act will remain; what will change. <p>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ MWAC should provide a recommendation to the Ministers in support of interim measures, and determine how best to provide advice for the <i>Wildlife Act</i> review. ♦ Members of MWAC and the Forum should hold a joint working session to review the vision, guiding principles, and content of the <i>Wildlife Act</i> discussion paper.
<p>5. Land use planning, 30x30, and conservation financing</p>	<p>PRESENTATION</p> <p>Brian Bawtinheimer, Executive Director, Provincial Stewardship Strategies & Planning, WLRS provided an overview of work on land use planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Land Use Plans help to connect Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) and the 30X30 activities. The approach to conservation management includes discussion on what co-management and governance of these lands looks like. ♦ The conservation financing mechanism is a new tool to bring funds to the table to support conservation. ♦ Lands included in the 30x30 must meet international definitions of “conserved”. ♦ There is also a role for Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs), which can support biodiversity. Work on OECMs is ongoing, including engagement with First Nations to create a made-in-B.C. approach. ♦ There is a need to recognize a diversity of IPCAs. They can be considered as a form of land use plan, and will be a key driver of conservation and stewardship in B.C. <p>DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ The IUCN definition of OECMs is too rigid in the B.C. context. For example, a large, forested area could make a good OECM. ♦ There needs to be stewardship of “protected” areas to maintain their ecological values. ♦ The Province needs to support areas protected by NGOs, e.g., by extinguishing mining rights through update to <i>Minerals Act</i>. ♦ The risk factor in OECMs needs to be low. If this land has high biodiversity value, it should be fully protected. <p>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ The Strategies WG should discuss possibilities for expanding the approach to OECMs in B.C.

6. Cultural and Prescribed Fire	<p>PRESENTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ Tony Pesklevits, BC Wildfire Service (BCWS), MoF provided an overview of the approach to cultural and prescribed fire. The aim is to expand the use of “good” fire with First Nations.♦ This is a very strategic, purposeful approach (not about “random acts of fire”). The aim is to reintroduced fire to the landscape in ways that make sense with the ecology and traditional practices.♦ The approach is based on on-the-ground collaboration and delivery, based on four principles:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Guided by communities○ Delivery through partnerships○ Start where you are○ Learn by doing, together♦ This work is being supported through policy changes that allow government to assist with cultural fires when requested by First Nations; adjusting burn planning requirements for cultural fires; and clarifying circumstances in which government provides exemptions from legislative requirements for cultural fires.♦ More information is available at www.prescribedfire.ca <p>DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ Strong communications and sharing of success stories support this work.♦ Every fire, every partnership is different. There may be multiple objectives to be met.♦ BCWS has a research program that includes academia and Indigenous Knowledge. They will set up trial plots to test different options and monitor responses.♦ Where needed, BCWS will thin and remove fuel load before a burn.♦ There is a need to understand the risks of NOT burning (uncontrolled wildfires and smoke).
7. Ecosystem Health Declaration	<p>PRESENTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ Celine Davis, A/Executive Director, Ecosystems Branch, WLRS, provided an update on the work to develop a policy framework on ecosystem health and biodiversity.♦ This work includes engagement with First Nations, multi-sector groups and regions. The intent is to hold one–one meetings with key groups (including Council) in April.♦ A draft framework is in preparation. It will be a provincial policy but with regional flexibility. The policy will lead to proposed legislation <p>DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">♦ “Policy framework” does not convey a strong commitment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Legislation takes time to develop; the Province also needs to have clear short-term commitments. <p>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Celine Davis will host a discussion with MWAC in mid-April, and will provide some advance materials. ♦ Judith Cullington to arrange for a WG discussion prior to this this, to formulate Council’s input on this topic.
8. Meeting with Minister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Council determined the topics they wished to discuss with Ministers Cullen and Ralston. ♦ Those who attended the in-person meeting provided a post-meeting debrief. <p>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Council and staff to prepare a proposal for work on the wildlife crossings and corridors and submit to Ministers. ♦ Council to invite Colin Ward to a future meeting to talk about his work on conservation financing.
9. Next steps	<p>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Shaun Hollingsworth, Jason Northcott and Derek Thompson to review and update MWAC Terms of Reference, including potential for ex-officio participation from the Forum and PHTAT. ♦ Avril Nagel to arrange for a special meeting to discuss performance measures.
10. Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Next scheduled meeting May 10, 2023 via Zoom