

Ministers Wildlife Advisory Council

Meeting #25 Minutes

October 11, 2023 9:50 – 4:30 pm

In person (Victoria) and Via Zoom

Attendees	
Council Members:	Naomi Owens-Beek
<i>Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.) (regrets)</i>	Shaun Hollingsworth
<i>Nancy Wilkin (regrets)</i>	
Adam Ford	Staff:
<i>Alyssa Lepka (regrets)</i>	Jen Psyllakis, Executive Director, Wildlife, Habitat & Species at Risk
Andrea Barnett	Avril Nagel, Manager, Together for Wildlife Implementation
Caylin Glasser	Pam Doerksen, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Wildlife Act Review
<i>Doug Heard (regrets)</i>	Jen Walker, Director, Strategic Initiatives
Jasper Lament	
Jason Northcott	Consultants:
John Bergenske	Derek Thompson
Kari Stuart-Smith	Judith Cullington
Megan Hanacek	Sairah Tyler
Mike Demarchi (chair)	

Purpose of Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prepare for joint session on October 12th ◆ Discuss T4W funding for 2024-25 	
Action items (from October meeting)	Lead	Status
Forward draft responses to recommendations Council, noting that these are incomplete and not for distribution	Judith Cullington	Complete
Distribute the T4W budget presentation; Council to provide input by October 31, with further discussion at the November meeting.	Judith Cullington, Council	Complete
Staff to share the updated draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework with Council.	Sagarika Saha	Complete
Identify dates for Council to meet face to face with the Minister(s).	Avril Nagel / David Muter	In progress
Follow up on discussions with DM Halls, including ways to increase public communications.	Council	Via Strategies WG

Minutes	
1. Council only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time was allocated for Council-only discussions.
2. Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mike Demarchi welcomed members and staff. Avril Nagel gave a territorial acknowledgement.
3. Approval of September 2023 meeting minutes	<p>DECISIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most action items from last meeting completed or in progress. <p><i>Moved by Shaun Hollingsworth, seconded by John Bergenske to approve September 2023 meeting minutes. Approved.</i></p>
4. Responses to Council recommendations	<p>DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avril Nagel provided a draft document that identifies updates and responses to each of Council's recommendations to Ministers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process has required significant outreach with Ministry partners. Staff also anticipate an official response from the Ministers. Council expressed concern at the time taken to get responses to recommendations. <p>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judith Cullington to forward the draft responses to Council, noting that this is incomplete and not for distribution.
5. 2024-2025 T4W Funding Priorities	<p>PRESENTATION</p> <p>Avril Nagel provided an update on T4W funding priorities for 2024-25.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This focuses on identified Council priorities heard to date: in partnership with First Nations or Nation-led; increased investment in on-the-ground stewardship with focus on road restoration and wildfire recovery; increased investment in accountability, reconciliation and filling knowledge gaps. There will be other funding opportunities alongside T4W, including the Nature Agreement, collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Frameworks, Guardian Programs, Wildfire Recovery, Forest Enhancement Society, Conservation Finance mechanisms, and more. Council's input on funding priorities can influence the direction and priorities across other funding pots as well as the T4W budget. Staff are seeking Council input on priorities to help make decisions when considering projects. <p>DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council requested clarification on several items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative budget: preference to see as much as possible support on-the-ground funding.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concern that a Nation accessing funding under the collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework may impact their ability to access other T4W funding. Noted that this should not be an issue. ◆ Direction/priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stay focused on orders of magnitude funding increases for wildlife and habitat – lifting Goal 3 to hundreds of millions of dollars per year. ○ Provide funding to create resilient ecosystems to reduce risk of catastrophic fires. Funding for fire prevention should be from legislative and policy changes, not T4W. Wildfire prevention (not just response) and ensuring wildlife is strongly integrated in both proactive and reactive aspects. ○ Urgency for getting regional wildlife advisory councils in place. ○ Addressing knowledge gaps to ensure wildlife populations can be appropriately managed – best balance between surveys and projects to be determined as well as who will be responsible for filling survey gaps (note that MWAC can support RWACs in identifying research gaps). ○ Aligning proactive wildlife and habitat management across policies. <p>ACTIONS / NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Judith Cullington to distribute the T4W budget presentation; Council to provide input by October 31, with further discussion at the November meeting.
<p>6. Wildlife Act Review</p>	<p>PRESENTATION</p> <p>Pam Doerksen, Director of Strategic Initiatives for the Wildlife Act Review, gave an update on the Wildlife Act Review process, and an overview of how the Day 2 of the joint meeting breakout sessions will work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Phase Two of the Review has begun: targeted engagement with rights and title holders, advisory bodies, stakeholders and other areas of government. ◆ Discussion paper on the Wildlife Act Review uses the T4W vision as its vision. It is based on conversations from past years’ engagement processes as well as a more recent pre-engagement phase. The discussion paper outlines guiding principles, challenges and opportunities for the six policy theme areas. <p>DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Council questioned the availability of funding to achieve Wildlife Act review’s end goal of ‘more critters on the land’. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff noted that dedicated funding is an enabling mechanism to achieve the outcomes of the policy intentions and the required strategic shifts. Funding will come through multiple sources including conservation financing mechanisms, the Nature Agreement and other sources. ◆ Concern was raised re timelines for reconciliation and objective setting in relation to engaging rights and title holders, as this requires significant capacity and time.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff noted that the conversations will be ongoing, particularly when it comes to objective setting. <p>Council then prepared for the following day's breakout sessions.</p>
<p>7. Other Business</p>	<p>David Muter, ADM of Land Use Policy, Planning and Ecosystems Division joined Council to listen and to respond to questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Council noted their desire to provide advice where this assistance is valued, and expressed some frustration that Council is still waiting for an official response to the recommendations provided to date. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ David Muter acknowledged responses to Council's recommendations have been slow. He reminded Council that this work is substantial, and will require decades of work to get it done the right way. He noted that Council has been highly effective in thoughtfully addressing the message of detractors in a non-confrontational way, and supports advancing that work further. ○ Council should be 'constructively impatient'—pushing for urgent action while focused on long term goals. ◆ Council noted the recent positive conversation with DM Lori Halls where she detailed areas she felt Council could provide highly valued advice. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussion items included the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework, Wildlife Act Review, engaging with the Wildfire Task Force, DRIPA implementation, modernizing land use planning in forestry and the 30x30 target, and long-term funding to secure the future of T4W and beyond. ◆ Council was encouraged to 'find your public voice' in communications and education. A paradigm shift of this magnitude cannot occur via legislation, guidance and targets alone. ◆ Ideas from Council for immediate action included increasing BC Hydro's funding to the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program by an order of magnitude, and increasing funding to address wildfire impacts on the Conservation Lands portfolio. ◆ Council inquired regarding the range of provincial support for co-governance and co-management as a long-term government-to-government partnership. David Muter outlined several ways in which that will occur. Good case studies include the Environmental Stewardship Initiative. ◆ Council noted that wildfire patterns show increased severity, resulting in the removal of all organic matter and soil, with devastating impacts on drinking water, and communities of both wildlife and people. They urged more focus on wildlife, alongside the people, as they are intricately linked. Noted the need to enable the forestry industry to help reduce biomass on the landscape and the role of the government to help fund pre-commercial thinning as part of good stewardship.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ David Muter noted government is seeking input, and encouraged Council to work with the Wildfire Task Force; this is also an opportunity to build trust with communities about the government's response. ○ Council noted that First Nations were asked to stop burning practices more than 150 years ago, and knowledge has been lost. Funding in education is required to bring this back. ◆ Council highlighted the Treaty 8 Wildlife Working Group and a potential link to RWACs as a potentially high impact connection. ◆ Council noted that one way to serve the desire for a louder public voice is to meet more regularly face-to-face with the Ministers. It would be empowering to see some of the recommendations acted on before the meeting to be assured that Council time is well spent. <p>ACTIONS / NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Staff to share the updated draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework with Council. ◆ Avril Nagel / David Muter to identify dates for Council to meet face to face with the Minister. ◆ Council to follow up on discussions with DM Halls, including ways to increase public communications.
<p>8. Closing</p>	<p>Upcoming meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Council meeting November 8, 2023 via Zoom ◆ Wildlife Dialogues December 1st (9 am) and December 5th (6 pm) via Zoom ◆ Student Research Symposium, December 12th (pm)