



Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

"Wildlife and their habitats thrive, are resilient, and support and enrich the lives of all British Columbians"

January 16, 2024

Minister Nathan Cullen, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Dear Minister Cullen,

Re: Dedicated Revenue for Wildlife and Habitat Stewardship

Happy New Year! Thank you for attending the 2023 Dialogues sessions, and for your letter updating Council on progress with our recommendations.

We are writing to encourage the Province to take rapid action to increase wildlife licence fees, surcharges, and fines, and to ensure that these revenues go to a dedicated fund supporting wildlife and habitat.

Council's Recommendation #8 (November 2021) speaks to a doubling of the surcharge on hunting and species licences:

"Enact regulatory changes to double the surcharge on hunting and species licenses for resident and non-resident hunters, effective immediately and with regular cost of living updates to the surcharge (the last increase was in 2004 and inflation has substantially eroded the purchasing power of these dollars). Council supports the BC Wildlife Federation 2021 resolution on this matter."

In your response to this recommendation (December 2023), you noted that Compliance and Enforcement and Funding are key themes in the review of the Wildlife Act. This is excellent, but we would suggest there are more immediate steps that could be taken to increase fees, surcharges and fines, with revenue from these sources placed in funds dedicated to wildlife and habitat.

We want to emphasize two important aspects of our support for a more encompassing increase to licences fees, surcharges, and fines.

First, we believe these monies should go into a dedicated fund for on-the-ground projects to maintain and restore wildlife and habitats. This is consistent with Action 13 of the Together for Wildlife Strategy to "*ensure sufficient, **dedicated**, long-term funding for wildlife and habitat stewardship in British Columbia.*" In our most recent Dialogues session, stakeholders told Council they want to see immediate action to boost dedicated funding for wildlife and habitat.

Second, it is imperative that First Nations are supportive of these changes and that a portion of the increased revenue be allocated to First Nations capacity building and on-the-ground projects.

We believe there is backing for these measures. As part of our public outreach, Council Co-Chair Nancy Wilkin has met with the Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Coalition. The Coalition has expressed strong support to the Council for an increase to surcharges and dedicating this revenue. This has also been demonstrated through research conducted at UBC Okanagan (see attached summary).

While these measures will add a relatively small amount of funds compared to the overall need, these actions would be considered “wins” along the way to implementing the Together for Wildlife Strategy and putting dollars on the ground for wildlife.

The Together for Wildlife Strategy is more than three years into its critical mandate to making a difference for wildlife and habitat in B.C. Wildlife stakeholders are losing patience and want to see immediate progress on the Strategy, and in particular Action 13. Council believes that regulation changes could be implemented this year, with longer term changes left for the renewal of the Wildlife Act.

We look forward to your response on Council’s recommendation to increase and dedicate funding for wildlife.

Sincerely,

Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.) and Nancy Wilkin

Co-Chairs, Minister’s Wildlife Advisory Council

Cc: Minister George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Minister’s Wildlife Advisory Council
First Nations – B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum
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David Muter, ADM, Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects, WLRS
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Logan Wenham, Executive Director, Wildlife, WLRS
Michael Burwash, Associate Director Wildlife, Fish & Wildlife Branch
Jen Walker, Director, Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships, WLRS
Avril Nagel, Manager, Together for Wildlife Implementation

Attached: Zeman, J. 2022. Resident Hunters’ Preferences and Willingness to Pay for Moose and Wildlife Management in British Columbia. UBCO. Full report available from <https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0417444>

**RESIDENT HUNTERS' PREFERENCES AND WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR MOOSE AND
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

by

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B.B.A (Hons). Okanagan College and The University of British Columbia, 2006

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Abstract

British Columbia is suffering from a dramatic decline of funding for fish and wildlife management as a proportion of the provincial budget. In 1954, the proportion of the provincial budget dedicated to fish and wildlife management was 0.63%, and by 1994 it had declined to 0.08%. Since then, the budget for fish and wildlife has been unreported. Declines in funding limits the Province's ability to monitor and conserve fish and wildlife. At the same time, changing social expectations and legislation have made fish and wildlife managers' jobs more complicated. Fish and wildlife populations are also in decline. Hunters are disproportionately affected by declines in wildlife. For rural communities, hunting plays a significant role in terms of food security, economic vitality, and is an important source of recreation for those who hunt. The number of moose harvested by resident hunters in British Columbia was 10,894 in 1976, peaked at 13,045 in 1979, and declined to 4,017 in 2018. To sustainably manage wildlife, funding, science, and governance are needed. Resident hunters (those who reside in British Columbia and purchase hunting licenses) are one group that could play a role in increasing funding and ultimately improving wildlife management in British Columbia. To estimate resident hunters' preferences and willingness-to-pay for wildlife and moose management, this thesis employed a survey and choice experiment (n=2,104). The survey included a discrete choice experiment as well as qualitative pre- and post-choice experiment questions related to choice experiment attributes. The choice experiment attributes were: harvestable surplus; trade-off between opportunity and harvest, proportion of license fees dedicated to wildlife management, and governance; the payment vehicle was moose license price. Both the qualitative survey questions and quantitative choice experiment results found strong preferences for an increase in the harvestable surplus of moose, a focus on maximizing the opportunity to hunt versus the likelihood of harvesting a moose, changes to governance, and dedicating revenue from license fees towards moose and wildlife management. In contrast, results indicated respondents are

dissatisfied with the existing governance structure of elected officials managing wildlife, preferring first a Game Commission or second a Multi-stakeholder, Multi-Government Commission. The findings suggest that changes to moose management in British Columbia could result in substantially more funding while increasing resident hunters' utility.

Lay Summary

Funding, staffing levels, and science for fish and wildlife conservation in British Columbia are all in decline as a proportion of the provincial budget. Fish and wildlife populations are also in decline in British Columbia, and this decline is felt especially by people who hunt and fish. In North America, researchers have looked at hunters' willingness-to-pay for changes in the hunting experience and wildlife populations, but it is usually about a small area. My research looks at resident hunters' preferences and willingness-to-pay for changes in the moose populations, governance, where hunting license fees go, and how often hunters can go hunting for moose across the province of British Columbia. To figure out what hunters' preferences are and how much they're willing to pay to change moose management, we used an online survey. I hope this research helps hunters and policy makers, but most importantly the conservation of fish and wildlife in British Columbia.