

# Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

## Meeting #28 Minutes

February 28, 2024 12:30 – 3:30 pm

Via Zoom

<b>Attendees</b>		
<b>Council Members:</b>		<b>Staff:</b>
Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.)		Jen Walker, Director, Strategic Initiatives
Nancy Wilkin		Avril Nagel, Manager, Together for Wildlife Implementation
Adam Ford		Jennifer Psyllakis, A/ADM, Resource Stewardship Division, WLRS
Alyssa Lepka (regrets)		Mariana Nagy-Reis, North Area Lead, Together for Wildlife
Andrea Barnett (regrets)		
Cailyn Glasser (regrets)		<b>Consultants:</b>
Doug Heard		Derek Thompson
Jasper Lament		Judith Cullington
Jason Northcott		
John Bergenske		<b>Guests:</b>
Kari Stuart-Smith		Cait Nelson, BC Wildlife Health Program, WLRS
Megan Hanacek		Caeley Thacker, Wildlife Veterinarian, WLRS
Mike Demarchi		
Naomi Owens-Beek		
Shaun Hollingsworth		
<b>Purpose of Meeting</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Prepare for meeting with Minister</li> <li>◆ Review T4W updates</li> <li>◆ Discuss Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)</li> </ul>		
<b>Action items (from February meeting)</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Status</b>
Share documents from the Wild Sheep meeting.	Nancy Wilkin	Complete
Provide a summary of the work the Province has underway.	Michael Burwash	Complete
Prepare a letter to the Minister suggesting urgent action to address spread of disease to wild sheep.	Co-Chairs	Complete
Prepare a letter to the Minister to advocate for additional testing capacity for the BC Agriculture Lab.	Judith Cullington/ Michael Burwash	In progress
Share the draft Control of Species document and seek interest in participation.	Judith Cullington/ Adam Ford	Complete/in progress
Follow up with Michael Burwash, Logan Wenham and Jennifer Psyllakis to discuss the COS.	Adam Ford	In progress
Consider RWAC-Council interactions and review the <a href="#">draft MWAC communications</a> in preparation for the next meeting.	All Council members	Complete

<b>Minutes</b>	
<b>1. Welcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.) provided a welcome prayer.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Approval of January 2024 meeting minutes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Action items from last meeting completed or in progress.</li> </ul> <p><i>Moved by Mike Demarchi, seconded by John Bergenske to approve the January 2024 meeting minutes. Approved.</i></p>
<b>3. Co-chairs report</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Nancy Wilkin attended a recent Wild Sheep meeting in Kelowna. She noted excellent opportunity for collaboration with Okanagan Nation Alliance, Wild Sheep Society and others to address spread of disease to wild sheep. There is a need for urgent action (prior to Wildlife Act Review).</li> <li>♦ Nancy Wilkin noted that several members will be seeking re-appointment to the Council, but some will be leaving after many years of service, and proposed an in-person meeting and celebration in June 2024.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Nancy Wilkin to share documents from the Wild Sheep meeting (Yukon sheep control order and ONA resolution).</li> <li>➤ Provincial staff to provide a summary of the sheep disease work the Province has underway.</li> <li>➤ MWAC co-chairs to prepare a letter to the Minister suggesting urgent action to address spread of disease to wild sheep.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Tripartite Framework Agreement</b>	<p><b>PRESENTATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Jen Walker provided an <a href="#">update</a> on the Tripartite Framework Agreement (formerly referred to as the Nature Agreement).</li> <li>♦ This is a precedent-setting agreement to support biodiversity, building on existing stewardship actions in B.C. including Together for Wildlife (T4W). It includes more than 60 commitments, creating considerable challenges!</li> <li>♦ A tripartite group is meeting frequently to address meeting the targets.</li> <li>♦ Part of this work includes identifying gaps (and overlaps) in funding sources to meet the targets.</li> <li>♦ Greater internal and external communications are planned for the near future.</li> </ul> <p><b>DISCUSSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Members asked questions about funding for land securement, wildlife corridors, and finding permanent, dedicated funding for T4W goals.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)</b>	<p><b>PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Cait Nelson provided an <a href="#">overview</a> of their work to detect and limit the spread of CWD in cervids.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ CWD has now been detected in the Kootenays. It can be spread by the deer themselves, also by carcasses and even hay. In other areas, CWD has caused significant population reduction.</li> <li>♦ A collaborative team (ministry staff, First Nations, technical advisors) has been implementing a CWD surveillance and response plan. A CWD response area has been identified for the highest risk area. A general order has been issued to control the movement of carcasses from this area. Additional sampling is needed to better understand the disease prevalence and geographic scope.</li> <li>♦ They have been learning from other jurisdictions. Illinois focused on hunter harvest and increasing harvest capacity, and supplemented that with post-season sharpshooting events to remove target animals mostly to be infected. This approach resulted in sustained low disease prevalence and continued hunting opportunity.</li> <li>♦ Carnivores and scavengers that eat dead deer can also spread the disease (even if they are not themselves infected).</li> <li>♦ Testing has been challenged by long wait times due to lack of local facilities. The BC Agriculture Lab (Abbotsford) is now offering to support this work, but faces capacity issues.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Council to prepare a letter to the Minister to advocate for additional testing capacity for the BC Agriculture Lab.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Working Group Updates</b></p>	<p><b>RESEARCH WORKING GROUP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Adam Ford spoke about his discussions with Forum co-chair Hunter Lampreau regarding the control of species policy. There is a need for a coordinated response from the T4W advisory groups, including PHTAT. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adam shared a <a href="#">draft document</a> intended to begin development of a shared vision statement and guidance for future policy discussions.</li> <li>○ Several members indicated an interest in participating in this discussion.</li> </ul> </li> <li>♦ Adam Ford noted that this has been a very tough year for the Conservation Officer Service (COS), with a very high number of black bears killed, and negative public reaction in response. This is affecting morale and recruitment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jennifer Psyllakis noted that there have been regular meetings between the COS and Wildlife Branch to review and update their response matrix. Rodrigo Solis-Sosa is leading this initiative.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Judith Cullington/Adam Ford to share the draft Control of Species document and seek interest in participation.</li> <li>♦ Adam Ford to follow up with Michael Burwash, Logan Wenham and Jennifer Psyllakis to discuss the COS.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>STRATEGIES WORKING GROUP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Kari-Stuart Smith spoke about the very positive meeting they had had with Ian Meier of the Premier’s Expert Task Force on Emergencies.</li> <li>◆ The WG will be continuing its discussions with Ian Meier and Thom Porter at the next meeting, March 20<sup>th</sup>.</li> <li>◆ The sub-group met with Doug Donaldson and Kevin Kriese with POLIS Project to share ideas on draft recommendations.</li> <li>◆ Council members supported the proposed recommendations as outlined. These will focus on concrete actions for 2024, as well as longer-term considerations.</li> </ul> <p><b>FUNDING WORKING GROUP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Jasper Lament noted that the working group discussed ways to provide advice on the expenditure of funds, notably the BC Conservation Fund. Kaaren Lewis (BC Parks Foundation) will be attending the Funding WG meeting on March 4<sup>th</sup>. Following that, the group plan to prepare advice for consideration.</li> </ul> <p><b>JOINT WILDLIFE ACT REVIEW WORKING GROUP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ John Bergenske and Jason Northcott noted that this group has now been formed. Members from PHTAT are Chris Barker and Scott Ellis, and Forum members are Ryan McKay and Hauwa Yaro-Biki. They will be engaging in in-depth reviews of proposed aspects of the Wildlife Act Review, building on areas identified as important at the November 2023 joint meeting of the advisory bodies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Together for Wildlife Updates</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Avril Nagel provided an <a href="#">update</a> on progress on each of the five T4W goals. Highlights included:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Joint Wildlife Act Review Working Group is now meeting regularly</li> <li>○ RWACs have been/are being established for East Kootenay, Okanagan Boundary and Lillooet.</li> <li>○ Rodrigo Solis-Sosa will be leading phase two of the community science framework, building on the <a href="#">work</a> by Starzomski et al.</li> <li>○ Waiting for engagement process with Rights and Title holders on the draft objectives-setting policy to be confirmed.</li> <li>○ Staff and Nations have been discussing protection of wildlife habitat features in the West Coast region.</li> <li>○ Staff are looking at the performance measurement framework being developed under the Tripartite Framework.</li> <li>○ The Forum has approved the Shared Decision-making Policy and Ethical Space policy, and is working on a three-year strategic plan.</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ There was not enough time to discuss RWAC interactions with MWAC or MWAC Communications as originally planned. These will be discussed at an upcoming MWAC meeting.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Council members to consider RWAC-Council interactions (early thinking found in the <a href="#">PowerPoint</a>) and review the <a href="#">draft MWAC communications</a> in preparation for the upcoming discussion.</li> </ul>
<b>8. Other Business</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ n/a</li> </ul>
<b>9. Closing</b>	<p>Upcoming meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Council meetings April 10 (new), May 8, 2024 via Zoom. Intent to have an in-person meeting in June</li> <li>♦ Meeting with Minister – April 17<sup>th</sup></li> <li>♦ Funding WG meeting March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1 – 2 pm</li> <li>♦ Strategies WG meeting March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1 pm</li> <li>♦ Research WG March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1 – 3 pm (<i>cancelled</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>10. Closed session</b>	<p>Council continued discussions in closed session.</p>