



Ministers Wildlife Advisory Council

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

Minister Nathan Cullen, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Minister Bruce Ralston, Forests

September 15, 2023

Dear Ministers Cullen and Ralston,

Re: Urgent Action Needed to Address Wildfire, Wildlife, and Ecosystems

Your Ministers Wildlife Advisory Council convened on September 13th, where we had preliminary discussions regarding wildfires in B.C. We share a deep concern, not only as advisors but as citizens, for those who have lost everything in the devastating fires of 2023. Our heartfelt condolences go out to the affected communities and those exposed to the looming threat of wildfire.

Most of B.C. is forested, which means that most of our wildlife species are forest-dwelling. And while our primary role is to advise on wildlife and habitat matters, we recognize the urgency of responding to the current wildfire crisis and shifting gears from reactive damage control to proactive stewardship. As you address the aftermath of these fires and the need for us to manage fire risks more effectively in future, we advise you to include the importance of wildlife populations and ecosystem robustness in your discussions, speeches, and actions. This is crucial, especially given the upcoming Union of BC Municipalities meeting and the Premier’s expert task force for climate emergencies, which requires an advocate for wildlife and ecosystems.

The record-setting scale and severity of this year's wildfires make it imperative to rethink our approach. We must set aside preconceived notions and embrace new research, knowledge, and actions. For example, Indigenous members of Council have highlighted the importance of integrating fire into land and forest management, which likely could have mitigated the severity of fires in some regions.

We discussed how conservation lands (e.g., Wildlife Management Areas), which conserve wildlife and species at risk, have been heavily impacted by fire. This necessitates immediate funding for wildfire recovery efforts via an efficient and effective allocation of resources

through existing land management partnerships involving the province, NGOs, and First Nations.

Council will convene a special meeting on October 3rd to develop more comprehensive advice. We will also gather in Victoria in mid-October and welcome your attendance where this topic will surely be discussed. However, due to the current focus on reactive measures and lest the risks to wildlife and ecosystem values be overlooked, we felt compelled to reach out immediately.

In closing, we appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to assisting further in addressing this critical issue that appears to have become all too pervasive in the lives of people who call B.C. home.

Sincerely,

Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.) and Nancy Wilkin
Co-Chairs, Ministers Wildlife Advisory Council

CC: Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship
Rick Manwaring, Deputy Minister, Forests
Ministers Wildlife Advisory Council
First Nations – B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum
Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team
David Muter, ADM, WLRS
Jennifer Psyllakis, Executive Director, WLRS
Logan Wenham, A/Director of Fish and Wildlife, MOF
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