



TOGETHER
FOR WILDLIFE



Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

Summary of Wildlife Dialogues January 2025

Indigenous Dialogues January 24, 2025

Stakeholder Dialogues January 28, 2025



Contents

- Contents i
- 1. Purpose of Dialogues 1
- 2. Format and Attendees 1
- 3. Introductory Presentations 2
- 4. Breakout Session Discussions 5
 - Advice from Indigenous Participants 5
 - Advice from Stakeholder Participants 9
- 5. Next Steps 17
- 6. Appendices 19
 - A: Participants 20
 - B: Wildlife Dialogues PPT Presentation 23
 - C: Indigenous Dialogues Notes 30
 - Question 1: How can nations/stakeholders contribute to the momentum to create dedicated funds for wildlife? What support would you need to make this happen? 30
 - Question 2: What are examples of practical solutions that would improve stewardship of forests for the benefit of wildlife AND the forest sector? 31
 - Question 3: How can we (collectively) improve communications and education to raise the profile of wildlife and habitat in British Columbia? 33
 - D: Stakeholder Dialogues Notes 37
 - Question 1: How can nations/stakeholders contribute to the momentum to create dedicated funds for wildlife? What support would you need to make this happen? 37
 - Question 2: What are examples of practical solutions that would improve stewardship of forests for the benefit of wildlife AND the forest sector? 42
 - Question 3: How can we (collectively) improve communications and education to raise the profile of wildlife and habitat in British Columbia? 48
 - E: Survey Responses 55

Thank you!

To all of the Indigenous and stakeholder participants who contributed their time, their thoughts and their ideas on ways to improve wildlife in B.C. your contributions are greatly valued.

1. Purpose of Dialogues

The Wildlife Dialogues were created by the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council (Council) as an opportunity for people to learn more about Council's activities in the past year and for Council, in collaboration with the First Nations–B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum (Forum) and Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team (PHTAT), to seek input from First Nations and stakeholders as we move collaboratively towards new ways of managing wildlife in B.C.

The January 2025 Dialogues were the fourth annual Wildlife Dialogues.

2. Format and Attendees

Two Dialogues sessions were held, both in a virtual format:

- January 24, 2025 (Indigenous Dialogues)
- January 28, 2025 (Stakeholder Dialogues)

Invitations were sent to all Nations in British Columbia (Indigenous Dialogues) and to a broad list of stakeholder groups with a vested interest in wildlife and habitat (Stakeholder Dialogues). Over 20 people attended the Indigenous Dialogues, and more than 60 individuals with diverse perspectives participated in the Stakeholder Dialogues (Appendix A).

The Dialogues began with a welcome prayer from Chief Harry Nyce, and an introduction from Minister Randene Neill, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. This was followed by presentations on the work of the Council, Forum, PHTAT, and Regional Wildlife and Habitat Advisory Committees, as well as a report on the input from last year's Dialogues. The PowerPoint slides are in Appendix B.

Participants were then divided into breakout groups to discuss:

- How can Nations/stakeholders contribute to the momentum to create dedicated funds for wildlife? What support would you need to make this happen?
- What are examples of practical solutions that would improve stewardship of forests for the benefit of wildlife AND the forest sector?
- How can we (collectively) improve communications and education to raise the profile of wildlife and habitat in British Columbia?

3. Introductory Presentations

Welcome from Minister Randene Neill, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Minister Randene Neill (Water, Land and Resource Stewardship) joined both Dialogues discussions, noting the importance of biodiversity and wildlife to the Ministry. She expressed the ongoing importance of the Together for Wildlife Strategy and the *Wildlife Act* Review. She expressed appreciation for diverse expertise at these sessions, and the importance of collaboration.

Together for Wildlife Updates

Shared Initiatives

Hunter Lampreau, Indigenous Co-Chair of the First Nations–B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum (Forum), spoke to the collaborative initiatives in which the Together for Wildlife Advisory Bodies (the Forum, PHTAT, and the Council) have been involved, including:

- Shared values in Together for Wildlife
- The *Wildlife Act* Review
- Guidance for regional wildlife advisory committees (recognizing many important on-the-ground issues are best addressed at the regional level)
- Advancing co-governance by making efforts to set aside differences of opinion
- Prioritizing issues and providing advice on an ecosystems-first approach

Hunter emphasized the importance of shared initiatives and presenting a united front when making requests from political representatives. The advice and opinions given show alignment amongst collaborators, Indigenous Nations and communities—because wildlife need us to show up for them now more than ever.

He noted the worldviews of all those participating are respected and seen as equal, and highlighted a need to work on communication that ensures inclusivity of all.

Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

Nancy Wilkin, Co-Chair of the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council (Council) described the role of the Council in providing strategic advice to Minister Neill. Recent Council activities include:

- Presented recommendations with respect to wildlife to the Premier's Expert Task Force on Emergencies
- Supported increasing funds for wildlife, and continued work towards dedicated funding for conservation through fees and surcharges
- Pursued wildlife objectives by supporting collaborative wildlife and habitat stewardship planning
- Supporting implementation of the Old Growth Strategy and Forest Landscape Planning

- ◆ Supporting wildlife health with a focus on chronic wasting disease activity in cervids, and the impacts of MOVI¹ on wild sheep
- ◆ Supporting ongoing implementation of Together for Wildlife with a highlight of the 26 awards distributed through the Together for Wildlife Scholarship Program

Council is looking forward to working directly with the Minister and her office to support:

- ◆ *Wildlife Act* renewal
- ◆ Dedicated funding (doubling the surcharge); increasing the budget in the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund
- ◆ Release and implementation of the Conservation Lands Strategic Plan
- ◆ The Tripartite Nature Agreement (to which Together for Wildlife was a part of B.C.'s commitment in the agreement with Canada and the First Nations Leadership Council)
- ◆ Pushing for greater government transparency, particularly around the budget for Together for Wildlife
- ◆ Co-governance and shared decision-making
- ◆ Exploration of a cooperative research model and ongoing guidance for the implementation of Together for Wildlife Action 5, which aims to build stronger partnerships between independent and government researchers
- ◆ Ongoing collaboration with the Forum and PHTAT

First Nations–B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum

Hunter Lampreau, Indigenous Co-Chair of the Forum, reviewed its purpose of the Forum and noted:

- ◆ The Forum is comprised of provincial government staff and participants from 39 First Nations from across British Columbia
- ◆ The Forum's primary intent is to provide advice to the Province that advances Together for Wildlife with a focus on reconciliation
- ◆ The need for alignment is emphasized on topics like the *Wildlife Act* Review to ensure our advice is inclusive

Recent work includes:

- ◆ Contributions to Bill 14 *Wildlife Act* amendments
- ◆ Assisting the Province in the *Wildlife Act* Review
- ◆ Prioritizing shared decision-making
- ◆ Drafting principles for co-governance from the perspective of the Forum (putting ecosystems first and ensuring co-governance is inclusive and occurs in an ethical space)
- ◆ Finalizing Forum strategic plan and ensuring our priorities are transparent

¹ *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*

- ◆ Ongoing collaboration and joint work with the MWAC and the PHTAT

Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team

Michael Burwash, Chair of the Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Committee (PHTAT) outlined the role of PHTAT and noted:

- ◆ PHTAT is comprised of members who represent from a range of hunting and trapping organizations
- ◆ The purpose of PHTAT is to facilitate information exchange and dialogue pertaining to sustainable game species use and management
- ◆ Conversations use science-based wildlife management and Indigenous knowledge to inform decision-making
- ◆ Recommendations go to the Director of Wildlife and to the Minister (e.g., recent work involved reviewing the hunting regulation changes to address chronic wasting disease)
- ◆ Help expand engagement on hunting and trapping management including Reconciliation in wildlife management decisions
- ◆ Going forward, PHTAT is supporting shared priority efforts with the Forum and the MWAC

Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees

East Kootenay Wildlife and Habitat Advisory Committee Co-Chairs Jim Turner and Alan Duffy provided updates on the on the Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees (RWACs):

- ◆ Following the Together for Wildlife initiative, and in collaboration with the Province, RWACs are bringing people together with a common cause
- ◆ The East Kootenay committee has sent recommendation letters to the Kootenay Boundary region regarding three primary areas: protecting high quality habitats (supporting the Province's goal of protecting 30 percent of land and waters by 2030), linear features (guiding the appropriate and sustainable access around front and back country areas, improving habitat quality and avoiding habitat degradation), and objective setting for wildlife (to create clear measurable objectives which starts with creating landscaping and wildlife stewardship plans)
- ◆ Focus has been on elk, sheep, mule deer and post-burn assessments
- ◆ Committee members continue to meet around operational priorities, refining reporting as advocates to local government, regional access management, establishing policies, and prioritizing on-the-ground activity

Members of the other regional wildlife and habitat advisory committees were introduced.

2023 Dialogues

Judith Cullington outlined the input received from the previous Dialogues sessions in December 2023.

- ◆ Both Indigenous and Stakeholder sessions spoke to the importance of reconciliation, joint decision-making, the need for strong legislation and increased funding for wildlife

- ♦ In response to a question on ways to ensure a successful introduction of a renewed *Wildlife Act*, feedback noted the need for connections with First Nations communities, regional groups, decision-makers, and industry. As well, there is a need for strong public education component about the Act itself and the benefits it would bring
- ♦ Input from the [2023 Dialogues](#) has been used extensively to support staff as they move to the *Wildlife Act* Review process
- ♦ Stakeholders asked for a body that would represent recreational groups; this is a work in progress and Council has advanced this message to the Ministry

4. Breakout Session Discussions

The breakout session discussions were identified through a survey sent to all registrants prior to the Dialogues. This survey asked for the level of agreement with the Council's identified priorities, with an opportunity to add other ideas. The survey showed that respondent priorities were strongly aligned with Council's, with the top two being funding and wildlife/forestry. Communications was identified as an additional priority. Survey responses can be seen in Appendix E.

Participants at both sessions were divided into small breakout groups to discuss the following questions:

- ♦ How can Nations/stakeholders contribute to the momentum to create dedicated funds for wildlife? What support would you need to make this happen?
- ♦ What are examples of practical solutions that would improve stewardship of forests for the benefit of wildlife AND the forest sector?
- ♦ How can we (collectively) improve communications and education to raise the profile of wildlife and habitat in British Columbia?

More detailed notes from these breakout discussions are included in Appendix C and D. These summaries and the notes are reflective of those in attendance and do not represent the full spectrum of opinions on these topics.

Advice from Indigenous Participants

Question 1: How can Nations/stakeholders contribute to the momentum to create dedicated funds for wildlife? What support would you need to make this happen?

Establish dedicated funding for wildlife

- ♦ This could include funds from surcharges, fees, and fines, as well as philanthropic contributions

Challenges accessing funding

- ♦ Important to have long-term, sustainable funding that can be accessed by First Nations
- ♦ Accessing funds takes a lot of time and effort

- ◆ The timelines create barriers—e.g., by the time funding is available, the window for field work is over. There should be a way to bridge fiscal years

Guardian program

- ◆ This program needs long term sustainable funding, including funding to build capacity

Other funding sources

- ◆ First Nations have access to funds that can be used to leverage matching funds
- ◆ Suggestions for increasing funds included:
 - A tax to support a conservation fund
 - Levies on industries who activities impact land and water
 - Contributions from recreational users

Question 2: What are examples of practical solutions that would improve stewardship of forests for the benefit of wildlife AND the forest sector?

Indigenous Management and Control

- ◆ Indigenous communities to have control and management over their forest lands
- ◆ Collaborative decision-making
- ◆ Inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, knowledge and practice in forest management

Long-term and Landscape-level Planning, Forest Stewardship Plans

- ◆ Landscape and watershed level thinking and planning
- ◆ Incorporate wildlife needs from the start in forest landscape planning
 - Include proactive measures for large wildlife (deer, elk, moose)
- ◆ Include treaty rights in planning
- ◆ Speed up the Forest Landscape Planning process

Economic Feasibility and Value Recognition

- ◆ Recognize that standing forests may hold more value for ecosystem services and cultural significance than for timber extraction
- ◆ Economic models should prioritize ecological health and sustainability

Wildlife management

- ◆ Legislated protection for species at risk
- ◆ Need for proactive decision making
- ◆ Improve communications around management decisions (e.g., translocation of elk)

Monitoring

- ◆ Align monitoring and regulating to align with Indigenous laws and values
- ◆ Apply Indigenous practices on the landscape
- ◆ Monitor and use adaptive management

Restoration as a Priority

- ♦ Advocate for a restoration industry/economy, repairing damaged ecosystems

Wildfire management, cultural and prescribed burns

- ♦ Implement cultural and prescribed burns
 - Important in old growth forests to avoid high-intensity wildfires and loss of habitat

Linear features and road deactivation

- ♦ Deactivate and reclaim resource roads
- ♦ Include road deactivation and invasive plant treatment, in the appraisal manual

Education and Outreach:

- ♦ Inform the public and policymakers about the historical and cultural significance of forests to Indigenous communities

Question 3: How can we (collectively) improve communications and education to raise the profile of wildlife and habitat in British Columbia?

Potential Role of Minister

- ♦ Minister is very experienced in communications
- ♦ Help to educate government with landscape-level knowledge

Communications challenges

- ♦ Many urban dwellers lack understanding of wildlife and habitat management challenges in rural and resource-dependent areas
- ♦ Conduct surveys to better understand the barriers to communications and education

Education and Awareness of Indigenous practices

- ♦ Need for education and awareness about Indigenous cultures, laws, and traditional practices
 - Includes educating government officials, decision-makers, and the public to foster a deeper understanding and respect for Indigenous perspectives
- ♦ Reverse roles in meetings with government officials, where Indigenous representatives present their knowledge and practices to an audience of ministers and officials
- ♦ Government to take a stronger role in communicating its responsibilities rather than leaving FN representatives to educate the public

Audiences

- ♦ Urban population important
- ♦ Avoid the 'echo chamber'
- ♦ Communicate across silos
- ♦ Outreach to tourists
- ♦ Youth education

Honest and Transparent Messaging

- ◆ Truthful storytelling and sharing of Indigenous histories is important to counteract misinformation and build trust

Ways to communicate

- ◆ Indigenous storytelling
- ◆ Podcasts
- ◆ Social media
- ◆ Articles
- ◆ TV stories

Sharing research and reports effectively

- ◆ Need public communication of surveys and conservation recommendations
- ◆ Province to help share and incorporate First Nations-led research into policy discussions

Capacity for First Nations communications

- ◆ First Nations need capacity to participate meaningfully

Collaboration Across Ministries

- ◆ Encourage collaboration across different government ministries to break down silos and ensure cohesive communication strategies
 - Ministries to work together to understand the impacts of their actions on Indigenous territories and wildlife

Collaborations for communications

- ◆ Have integrated communications platforms (government and non-government).
- ◆ Work with NGOs, working in coordination with First Nations, to do messaging

Regional approach

- ◆ RWACs, working in collaboration with First Nations – regional focus makes for better communications

Governance and decision-making authority

- ◆ First Nations have rights and title, they should not be treated as stakeholders—should be signatories on key decisions

Hunting and wildlife allocation concerns

- ◆ Calls for localized hunting management rather than province-wide licensing, to ensure sustainability in First Nations territories

Wildlife inventory and monitoring

- ◆ First Nations-led surveys have successfully gathered data on caribou, moose, and mountain goat populations

- Need more government funding to support and use these studies in decision making

Advice from Stakeholder Participants

Question 1: How can Nations/stakeholders contribute to the momentum to create dedicated funds for wildlife? What support would you need to make this happen?

Frustration and challenges

- ◆ Wildlife is in deep trouble in this province, there is not enough funding for wildlife in the province
- ◆ Dedicated funding has not been approved (so far)

Challenge accessing funds

- ◆ Organisations spend a lot of time looking for funding and building relationships
- ◆ There is a growing need for funding

Dedicated funds

- ◆ Would increase willingness to pay if it is clear the funds support wildlife
- ◆ There is increased trust when money goes outside government

Surcharge

- ◆ The surcharge for hunting and trapping should be doubled (and placed in a dedicated fund)
- ◆ Regional advisory bodies could support this request

Increased provincial funding

- ◆ Concern that Province spends very little on wildlife and conservation
- ◆ Current non-governmental funding sources exist but are highly competitive and limited.

Strategic approach

- ◆ Need for a strategic approach to funding, with a shared vision
- ◆ Conservation Lands strategic plan could set benchmarks for funding needs and help to understand overall funding needs

Diversify funding recipients

- ◆ Nations should be able to access funding streams
- ◆ Funding should go to a variety of projects, including those to educate on the intrinsic importance of wildlife

Diversity funding sources

- ◆ Diversify the sources to maximize funds, but centralize the body that makes the decisions on how the resources are used and distributed

Examples from elsewhere

- ♦ Many U.S. examples of successful approaches, e.g., tax on outdoor equipment, surcharges on recreational users

“Beyond hunters”

- ♦ All users should pay, not just hunters and trappers
- ♦ Include all backcountry users
 - Example of adding a fee at Mount Washington to support marmot recovery

Enforcement fees

- ♦ Enforcement fees should be included in wildlife funding although this is complicated as those fees belong to the Ministry of Environment
- ♦ Fines should be further increased, and enforcement increased
- ♦ Administrative monetary penalties should be applied, and directed into dedicated fund
- ♦ Mitigation and offset policy implementation could be a source of funding, with court awards from contravention of statutes
- ♦ Enforcement should be strengthened

Industry

- ♦ Industries and developments that affect the landscape should pay compensation for loss of habitat
- ♦ Create a wildlife habitat bond for industries impacting ecosystems

Corporations

- ♦ Use ICBC funding towards prevention of wildlife collisions
- ♦ BC Hydro contributions (like Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program)

Local government

- ♦ Property tax surcharges to support a conservation fund (everyone benefits from biodiversity)
- ♦ Funding from developers through permitting process

Other funding sources

- ♦ Licence plates (similar to B.C. Parks)
- ♦ Private donations
- ♦ Surcharges or percentage-based funding mechanisms linked to GDP growth

Need for greater pressure

- ♦ Need to make funding for wildlife a government priority
- ♦ Collaborative approach - we are stronger together

Build resilience

- ♦ Explore multi-pronged approach with a model that includes a few funding sources, an entity in the middle, and a few outgoing sources
- ♦ Create a mechanism for long term, stable, consistent funding

- Think about barriers and whether work is actually likely to happen in one year vs multi year
- ◆ Non-partisan approach

Question 2: What are examples of practical solutions that would improve stewardship of forests for the benefit of wildlife AND the forest sector?

Chief Ecologist

- ◆ Create Chief Officer for biodiversity in the province
- ◆ Prioritize ecosystem-based approach

Inter-ministry cooperation

- ◆ Need better cooperation between Ministry of Forests and Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
- ◆ More cross communication and alignment between ministries
- ◆ More integration between foresters and ecologists

Regulatory and policy frameworks

- ◆ A lot of what prevents us from doing good work on the ground are policy and legislation
- ◆ Need clear and consistent guidelines from the government to manage forests effectively
 - Existing frameworks, like wildlife habitat areas (WHAs), could be better utilized or reformed to protect multiple species and habitats
- ◆ Support for 30 by 30, wildlife corridors, and Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework
- ◆ A provincial species at risk act needed to better highlight needs of species

Landscape level planning

- ◆ Address wildfire resilience and ecosystem restoration in larger context (e.g., Old Growth Strategic Review recommendations and Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework)
- ◆ Better consideration for watershed scale processes in the cut level and wildlife populations

Biodiversity and habitat conservation, ecosystem-based approach

- ◆ New approach to forestry with emphasis on ecosystems (not just logging)
- ◆ Look at how timber harvesting occurs and revise to accommodate multiple values
- ◆ Consider habitat connectivity
- ◆ Annual allowable cuts: adequately assess wildlife species and populations - particularly ones that are at risk
- ◆ Implement the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework

Incentives

- ◆ Provide incentive to resource extractors to incentivize them to go beyond for wildlife (e.g., a break in stumpage if they beyond basic regulations)

- ◆ Incentive could be phrased as a habitat management incentive rather than a wildlife incentive; once the government has wildlife objectives, they can come up with ways to incentivize habitat management for forest licensees
- ◆ Reward the good players
- ◆ In North America a lot of our habitat goals can be met through forestry practices because they manipulate the landscape, they are essentially the wildlife managers
- ◆ Example of program in Kamloops area that incentivises landowners to enhance ecological values on their land

Relationships, partnerships

- ◆ ENGOs need better relationships with foresters, not just government
- ◆ Collaborate and bring together industry, First Nations, and stakeholders

Stakeholder engagement, transparency

- ◆ Important to involve various stakeholders, including local communities and indigenous groups, in forest management decisions
- ◆ More transparency with what is going on and decision making
 - Following government to government discussions, stakeholders rarely get information on the decisions and their rationale

Forest management practices

- ◆ Logging should be balanced with the preservation of forest patches to maintain ecological health
 - Includes planning for natural pest control services provided by wildlife
- ◆ Nations can provide best management practices advice to licensees
- ◆ Silviculture – a new approach / look at case studies (e.g., Bulkley Valley)
- ◆ Get rid of pesticides as silviculture tool, prioritize wildlife and habitat

Community forests

- ◆ Look to community forests for potential solutions
- ◆ Community forest model: they manage above and beyond stewardship requirements, and this model offers a lot of solutions
 - Communities and First Nations need control of the resource management. They want to look after the watershed and not just collect money and this allows for diverse management. This allows for managing for different values, e.g., old growth and caribou
 - Mandate letter for Ministry of Forests highlighted expansion of community forest program

Old growth

- ◆ Support for Old Growth Strategic Review and implementation of it
- ◆ Push for old growth recommendations to be implemented, action on the ground
- ◆ Logging in B.C. to move exclusively to second growth forests

Wildfire

- ♦ Wildfire should be used as a tool
- ♦ Wildfire response strategy: consider pros and cons of fire (e.g., how does a fire benefit ecosystems and wildlife)
- ♦ Better communication and strategies are needed to protect remaining old-growth forests and wildlife habitats after forest fires and subsequent logging

Road density and access

- ♦ Need a more integrated approach to planning road networks
- ♦ ID / manage / restore road with emphasis on ecosystem values and tie to stumpage fees
- ♦ Deactivate roads so that trucks can't get through, but quads and snowmobiles can. This reduces pressures on the land base but still provides access to trappers
- ♦ No incentive for road rehabilitation

Funding habitat restoration

- ♦ Industry should pay for habitat restoration through stumpage and fines
- ♦ Create a restoration economy or workforce, so restoration of sites is an opportunity to bring in other good paying jobs and people
- ♦ If we know these are the population targets and the habitat we need, then we know what we need to maintain, restore, rehabilitate that habitat. And work in collaborative transparent groups.
 - RWACs may be a good place for those discussions

Communication and education

- ♦ Improving communication within government agencies and with the public is crucial
 - Better transparency and engagement with non-consumptive users of forest resources to build trust and support for conservation efforts
- ♦ Involve everyone at the table; RWACs would be a good place for that

Citizen science

- ♦ Examples of citizen science:
 - Gain Creek Valley; through UVic, the objective was to inventory species at risk in old growth blocks designated for cutting with the idea to give the Ministry of Forest a better idea of what is inside the cut blocks

Build on existing programs

- ♦ Leveraging existing conservation programs and groups that focus on specific species or habitats was suggested as a practical approach to enhance stewardship efforts
- ♦ Don't create new things; this group should push hard for the government to continue to be doing what they are doing – a lot of work needs to be implemented

Question 3: How can we (collectively) improve communications and education to raise the profile of wildlife and habitat in British Columbia?

Challenges

- ◆ Attention spans, lack of time, lack of trust, who do people believe in?
- ◆ Wildlife stewards feel they have to ‘start over’ when there is turnover in government staff or elections
 - Legislation is a way to provide resiliency to wildlife values, can surpass change over time
- ◆ Even when there is a focus on communications, such as with Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in the Kootenays, still lots of community members unaware – how to reach them?

Potential Role of Minister

- ◆ We have a benefit that the Minister is a communication expert, and we need to support her expertise in this area.
- ◆ Have the Minister attend regions for group conversations with staff, PHTAT and RWAC.

Cross-ministry communications

- ◆ More collaboration between ministries on communications is needed
- ◆ Ensure that WLRS is not the only Ministry, but it is the lead Ministry
 - Connect with Ministries of Environment, Agriculture, Forests, Tourism
- ◆ Contradictory policies and mandates within the government can undermine communication efforts
 - Need for improved communication within government agencies—ensuring that different departments and levels of government are aligned and informed about ongoing projects and policies
- ◆ Recognize the role of tourism (economic benefits) and the importance of old growth forests and biodiversity to tourism in B.C.

Address government bureaucracy in communications

- ◆ Government approval processes have watered down messaging, reducing impact
- ◆ Stakeholder groups need greater autonomy in distributing factual, non-partisan information

Transparency and trust

- ◆ More openness and transparency builds trust
- ◆ Improving transparency in government actions and decisions related to wildlife and habitat management is crucial for building public trust
 - Includes clear communication about plans, policies, and the rationale behind them
- ◆ Provide more opportunities for public feedback and participation in decision-making processes
 - Includes extending timelines for public consultations and ensuring that feedback mechanisms are accessible and well-publicized
- ◆ T4W website is confusing to navigate.
 - Hard to see how different committees are connected, work together, how often they meet

Audiences

- ◆ Identify key stakeholders and decision-makers who need to be engaged.
- ◆ Public facing information doesn't raise wildlife issues, we 'preach to the choir' when communicating wildlife issues, but fail to reach the broader public
- ◆ Communications is two buckets:
 - 1. Those who are already supportive, who may just need more scientific info
 - 2. Other folks who are more disconnected from nature for different reasons
- ◆ Broaden engagement efforts to include all users of forest resources

Youth

- ◆ We need to get our point across to younger people. Our current methods are not working
- ◆ Never too early to build connection to wildlife
- ◆ Involve youth:
 - Schools
 - Use of iNaturalist

Clear messaging

- ◆ Focus on delivering clear, concise, and consistent messages
- ◆ Economic arguments, values of wildlife and wildlife habitat is high, maybe the best way to the public is through the pocketbooks/economy
- ◆ Be more clear about what actions we want from the audience, and the purpose – general raising of awareness can be a bit unclear
- ◆ All the groups could come up with consistent messaging and push it up to government and further push it to community

Strategic communications

- ◆ Develop a strategic approach to communication that includes coordinated efforts across different organizations and sectors
 - Create joint communication campaigns or initiatives to raise awareness about wildlife and habitat issues
- ◆ Our voice needs to be amplified next to other speaking groups that have opposite ideas
- ◆ The secret is tying people and communications to the reality of the land and how it is today and what are the challenges for the future; the problem is we don't have a solution

Highlighting economic and cultural value

- ◆ Emphasize B.C.'s biodiversity as a unique and valuable asset
- ◆ Position wildlife conservation as a benefit across multiple government sectors, including tourism and economic development
- ◆ Educate the public and visitors about the science of biodiversity and take away the politicization of environment

Communication methods

- ◆ Citizen science can engage the public in wildlife and habitat stewardship and raise profiles. This also provides people with a stewardship ethic in their local area which is essential for the long-term persistence of species
- ◆ Perhaps an ad campaign that introduces wildlife across B.C. and shares concern about biodiversity would be beneficial - straightforward messaging that highlights the uniqueness of B.C. wildlife, or information put out by the B.C. government to inform the public about how valuable these resources are and how threatened they are
- ◆ Signage – tourism – accessible to all

“Hands-on” learning

- ◆ Getting kids outside; field trips outdoors; getting connection to the land
- ◆ Field trips

Creating personal connections to wildlife

- ◆ Urban populations often lack direct experience with natural landscapes
- ◆ Increase accessibility to wildlife experiences that foster a personal connection and deeper appreciation for conservation

Citizen Science

- ◆ Expand the use of citizen science
 - First Nations were very supportive of citizen science programs
 - People are committed to the cause and are less costly than contractors

Social media, websites

- ◆ Use the tools we have: social media/ phones
- ◆ Utilizing Gen-Z digital media strategies can increase engagement and public awareness
- ◆ Challenging:
 - Social media / gets pushed to the side
 - Limited government access to social media – hard to get approved
 - Need for dedicated staff to manage
- ◆ Social media is effective for those who already are involved
 - But hard to reach out to those who are not already part of the conversation
- ◆ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service effectively combines engaging and educational content on social media

Education

- ◆ Need to educate the general public about the importance of wildlife and its connection to human health and well-being
 - Involves making the case for why wildlife conservation is essential and how it benefits society as a whole
- ◆ Introduce biodiversity education in B.C.’s high school curriculum

- ♦ Establish university courses focused on B.C.'s wildlife management and biodiversity
- ♦ Promote regional wildlife communication programs where biologists share knowledge with the public

Partnering for communication

- ♦ Utilize existing platforms and groups: Leveraging existing education and communication platforms, as well as groups already focused on specific wildlife or habitat issues to amplify messages and reach broader audiences
- ♦ Partner with organizations (e.g., BC Wildlife Federation, Nature BC, Ducks Unlimited, Wetland Keepers) to amplify conservation messaging
- ♦ One voice: If you want something done, make a tidal wave. There needs to be unified voice from organizations and form one or two coalitions and agree on message. And if there is enough push it can make impact. Right now all the groups are trying to get the ear of the Minister

Potential Role of RWACs

- ♦ Use RWACs to deliver the key messages about wildlife in their regions
- ♦ RWACs could be an avenue for communications for capturing regional differences
 - Importance to have trusted members of the community “in the know”
 - This can counter the misinformation on social media

Promote work of scholarships

- ♦ For the 26 student who have scholarships through Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, make it compulsory that they present their research to the public

Funding support

- ♦ There are many ways to communicate but we need to tie it all back to funding
- ♦ Need resources to counter misinformation when it comes up. This can hold back good projects/initiatives

Assessing effectiveness of outreach programs

- ♦ Conduct impact assessments of public education initiatives to determine effectiveness

5. Next Steps

As Co-chairs of the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council (MWAC) we were so pleased with the enthusiasm by all participants in the Dialogues this year. Inspiring! So many people came prepared to discuss the questions and make recommendations to go forward. A few messages resonated:

1. Take action - work directly with the Minister's office, starting with a request to meet the Minister in person as soon as possible. There is deep frustration with the slow pace of tangible

decisions like doubling of the surcharge and the release of the Conservation Lands Strategic Plan.

2. Get dedicated funding done - start with the doubling of the surcharge and thereby doubling the revenue to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation and then continue with fines and fees into a special account.
3. Participants continued to express the need for more ecosystem health oversight on resource development affecting wildlife - particularly in light of the desire to maintain high environmental standards with the 18 fast tracked developments recently announced. One example previously shared was Council’s proposal for “The Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health” as an independent agent of the legislature.
4. Join forces with First Nations and wildlife organizations to communicate the value of wildlife to British Columbians, and use the Regional Wildlife and Habitat Advisory Committees to communicate regionally.
5. Promote the use of incentives to encourage more forest stewardship, road rehabilitation, and wildfire recovery that supports wildlife and work more closely with both the Ministry of Forests and the Industry.
6. Acknowledge that recreational impacts are becoming an increasing concern for wildlife and wildlife habitat and more collaboration is needed for solutions on the ground.
7. Work with the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation and the Ministry to showcase the outcomes of the student scholarships research projects.
8. Support the new Minister, as the leader for Together for Wildlife and a communicator.

The survey sent out before the Dialogues this year was an excellent practice, and we will do it again—to know that our priorities are aligned. We will keep implementing the Together for Wildlife Strategy, with our partners the Forum and PHTAT, and we will continue our collaborative work on the *Wildlife Act*, Co-governance and Shared Decision Making. The Dialogues help us to hear from even broader perspectives and the Council remains vigilant on our two overarching paradigm shifts—Reconciliation and Ecosystem Health as wildlife priorities.

Thank you for taking the time and energy to participate in this year’s Dialogues. Your continued support is critical to making a positive difference for wildlife in British Columbia.

Simoogit Hleek Chief Harry Nyce, Co-Chair and Nancy L. Wilkin, Co-Chair

6. Appendices



A: Participants

Indigenous Dialogues		Stakeholder Dialogues	
Kate Hewitt	CIER	Jonathan Buchanan	Association for Mineral Exploration (AME)
Catch Catomeris	Council of the Haida Nation	William Parker	Association of Professional Biologists
Rosie Robbins	Esket Land and Resource	Aimee Mitchell	Athene Ecological/Coastal Partners in Conservation Society
Gabriel Hilbach	Gitxsan	Brad Harrison	Backcountry Lodges of BC Association
Max Stevens	Gitxsan Laxyip	Rod Davis	BC Chapter of the Wildlife Society
Noel	Gitxsan Laxyip	Carly Dow	BC Community Forest Association
Rob Matthews	Gitxsan Laxyip	Jennifer Gunter	BC Community Forest Association
Christine Gruman	Huu-ay-aht First Nations	David Hendrickson	BC Conservation Foundation
Linda Morven	Kitselas First Nation	Harry van Oort	BC Hydro
Cynthia Barwell	Kitselas FN Fisheries	Ben van Drimmelen	BC Nature
Tara Morrow	Kwiakah First Nation	Peter Ballin	BC Nature
Brian Wadhams	Namgis Council	Stewart Guy	BC Nature
Scott Emmons	Neyun Huwuts'inli Department T'azt'en Nation	Nadia Xenakis	BC SPCA
Sue Senger	St'at'imc Government Services	Sara Dubois	BC SPCA
Michelle Edwards	St'atimc Chief Council, St'at'imc Government Services	Olav Langelaar	BC Trapper's Association
Jessica Wood	Sumas First Nation	Holly Wise	BC Trapper's Association
Kristina Wasylesky	Sumas First Nation	Gerry Paille	BC Wildlife Federation
Gordon Planes	T'Sou-ke Nation	Grant Hiebert	BC Wildlife Federation
Gary Phillips	Tobacco Plains Indian Band	Barbara Murray	Bears Matter
Jonquil Crosby	Ucluelet First Nation	Elias Torheiden	BHA/RWHAC
Jim Webb	West Moberley FN Lands	Douglas Ransome	British Columbia Institute of Technology
Chief Harry Nyce	MWAC, co-chair	Pamela Zevit	City of Surrey
Nancy Wilkin	MWAC, co-chair	Angela French	Creston Community Forest and BCCFA
Jason Northcott	MWAC	Jim Cuthbert	Cuthbert Ecological Services
John Bergenske	MWAC	Greg Sawchuck	Ducks Unlimited
Megan Hanacek	MWAC	Richard Hoar	East Kootenay Wildlife & Habitat Advisory Committee
Naomi Owens-Beek	MWAC	Kevin Podrasky	East Kootenay Wildlife Association
Hunter Lampreau	First Nations Forum, co-chair	Jim Turner	EK WHAC - Co-chair & United Bowhunter Rep & Member PHTAT
Mariana Nagy-Reis	First Nations Forum, co-chair	Lynne Betts	EK WHAC facilitator
Purnima Govindarajulu	First Nations Forum, alternate co-chair	Shannon Otruba	Environmental Law Centre
Michael Burwash	PHTAT Chair	Roxanne Tripp	FortisBC
Alan Duffy	East Kootenay Wildlife and Habitat Regional Committee	Scott Ellis	GOABC

Indigenous Dialogues		Stakeholder Dialogues	
Anna McIndoe	WLRS	Dan Buffett	Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation
Annie Pumphrey	WLRS	Brian Gustafson	Independent
Avril Nagel	WLRS	Lara Phillips	ISCBC
Catherine Denny	WLRS	Juliet Craig	Kootenay Conservation Program
Danica Crystal	WLRS	David Vey	Mosaic Forest Management
Diana McNeill	WLRS	Rachel Shanner	Mosaic Forest Management
Eva Schindler	WLRS	Meg Bjordal	Okanagan Boundary RWAC (& CPAWS-BC)
Pam Doerksen	WLRS	Jeff Nishima-Miller	Okanagan-Boundary RWAC / UBC
Roderigo Solis Sosa	WLRS	Emma Dolhai	Organizing for Change
Stephen MacIver	WLRS	Louise Pedersen	Outdoor Recreation Council of BC
Derek Thompson	T4W Advisor	Karen McAllister	Pacific Wild
		Natasha Wehn	Pacific Wild
		Chelsea Greer	Raincoast Conservation Foundation
		Kristen Walters	Raincoast Conservation Foundation
		Kari Lesick	RWAC - Okanagan
		Rick McKelvey	Sylix-Okanagan-Boundary RWAC
		Myles Lamont	TerraFauna Wildlife Consulting
		Carleton MacNaughton	The Nature Trust of British Columbia
		Jason Emergy	The Nature Trust of British Columbia
		Danielle Toperczer	Thompson-Nicola Conservation Collaborative
		Amber Peters	Valhalla Wilderness Society
		Wayne McCrory	Valhalla Wilderness Society
		Cori Lausen	WCS Wildlife Conservation Society Canada
		Chris Barker	Wild Sheep Society of BC
		Kyle Stelter	Wild Sheep Society of BC
		Peter Gutsche	Wild Sheep Society of BC
		Lucero Gonzalez	Wilderness Committee
		Jenny Balke	Wildlife Biologist
		Hazel Wheeler	Wildlife Preservation Canada
		Chief Harry Nyce	MWAC, co-chair
		Nancy Wilkin	MWAC, co-chair
		John Bergenske	MWAC
		Kari Stuart Smith	MWAC
		Shaun Hollingsworth	MWAC
		Hunter Lampreau	First Nations Forum Co-Chair
		Mariana Nagy-Reis	First Nations Forum Co-Chair
		Michael Burwash	PHTAT
		Derek Thompson	T4W Advisor

Indigenous Dialogues		Stakeholder Dialogues	
		Alexa Kerr-Warner	WLRS
		Annie Pumphrey	WLRS
		Avril Nagel	WLRS
		Catherine Denny	WLRS
		Danica Crystal	WLRS
		Diana McNeill	WLRS
		Excedera St. Louis	WLRS
		Jennifer Psyllakis	WLRS
		Marla Bojarski	WLRS
		Pam Doerksen	WLRS
		Roderigo Solis Sosa	WLRS
		Stephen MacIver	WLRS
		Cherry Tam	Fraser Basin Council (facilitator)
		Scott Brown	Fraser Basin Council (facilitator)

B: Wildlife Dialogues PPT Presentation

Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

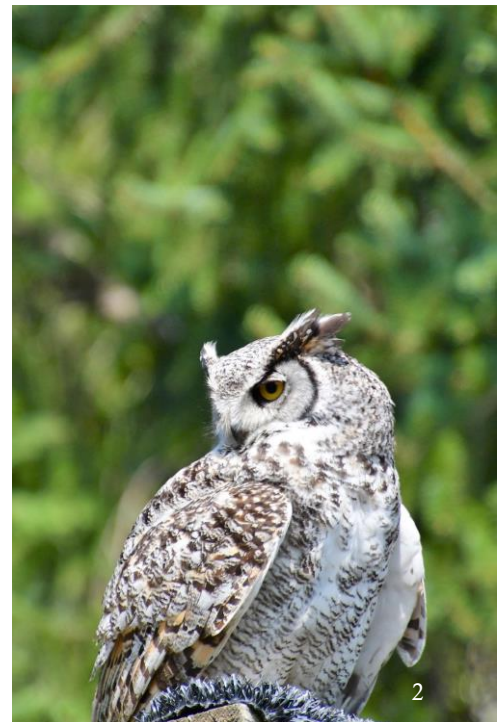
WILDLIFE DIALOGUES JANUARY 2025



1

AGENDA

- Welcome and opening prayer
- Minister Randene Neill
- Updates:
 - Shared Initiatives
 - Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council
 - First Nations-B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum
 - Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team
 - Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees
 - Outcomes from 2023 Dialogues
- Breakout discussions
- Summary



2

2



MINISTER RANDENE NEILL

3

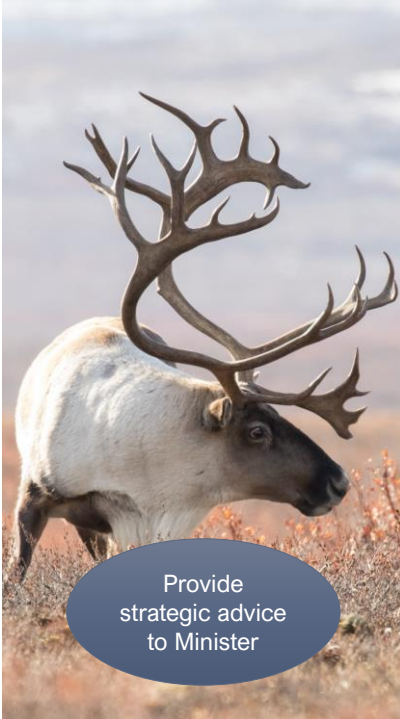


TOGETHER FOR WILDLIFE – SHARED INITIATIVES (MWAC, FORUM, PHTAT)

- Shared values and collaboration, e.g.,
 - Wildlife Act Review Joint Committee
 - Guidance to RWACs (three established)
 - Reconciliation, co-governance and shared decision making
 - Ecosystems first (priority)
 - Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework
 - Communications – annual Wildlife Dialogues
-

4

4



MINISTER'S WILDLIFE ADVISORY COUNCIL

2024 Activities/recommendations :

- Premier's Emergency Task Force (wildfires)
- Funding: Conservation Financing mechanism and ↑ fees/surcharges
- Collaborative Wildlife and Habitat Stewardship Planning (wildlife objectives)
- Old Growth Strategic Review and Forest Landscape Plans
- Wildlife health
- 26 wildlife scholarships

Going forward:

- Working more directly with Minister and her office
- Support for Wildlife Act Renewal, including wildlife objectives
- Dedicated funding (double surcharge)
- Conservation Lands Strategic Plan
- Tripartite Nature Agreement
- Increasing our communications; continued push for government transparency
- Support Forum/PHTAT work towards co-governance, new research model

5

5

First Nations - BC Wildlife & Habitat Conservation Forum.

The Forum is comprised of provincial government staff and participants from 39 First Nations from across British Columbia who provide advice to the Province to improve its laws, policies, and regulations with respect to wildlife and habitat stewardship and conservation in the true spirit of reconciliation.

All photos used in this presentation are my own. This image was taken on the unceded territories of the Simpcw First Nation

6

Recent Work & Priorities

- Bill 14, amendments to the Wildlife Act & co-developed policies and procedures.
- Wildlife Act Review.
- Shared Decision Making, Non-Statutory Decisions Policy.
- Draft Principles of Co-governance.
- Finalizing the Forum Strategic Plan.
- Ongoing collaboration and joint work with the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council (MWAC) and the Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team (PHTAT)

All photos used in this presentation are my own. This image was taken on the unceded territories of the Simpcw First Nation

7



PROVINCIAL HUNTING AND TRAPPING ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PHTAT)

The Team is composed of members from a range of hunting and trapping stakeholder organizations in B.C.

Purpose: Facilitate information exchange and dialogue pertaining to sustainable game species use and management

- Use science-based wildlife management and indigenous knowledge to inform decision making (e.g., CWD management actions)
- Help expand engagement on hunting and trapping management including reconciliation in wildlife management

Going forward:

- Supporting shared priority efforts with the Forum and MWAC
 - Continue to provide creative ideas and defensible solutions for wildlife policies, regulations and strategies at a provincial scale
 - Supporting opportunities to advance shared stewardship actions through other Natural Resource agencies
-

8

8

REGIONAL WILDLIFE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

East Kootenay Wildlife & Habitat
Advisory Committee (Jim Turner/
Alan Duffy)

- Recommendation Letters to Government:
 - Protect High Quality Habitats
 - Linear Features
 - Objective Setting for Wildlife
 - Elk stewardship plan
 - Post burn assessment
 - Sheep, road kill
-

☐ Thompson-Lillooet
Wildlife and Habitat
Advisory Committee(Elias
Torheiden)

☐ Okanagan-Boundary
Wildlife and Habitat
Advisory Committee
(Jermiah Kruger, Nick
Kozub, MacKenzie Clark)



9

INPUT FROM 2023 DIALOGUES

December 2023 Dialogues focused on Wildlife Act Review.
We asked for your input on:

- Desired changes in the renewed Act
 - Ensuring a successful introduction of the renewed Act
 - Other priorities
-



10

10

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MINISTER

Funding: Permanently dedicate all wildlife license fees to a special account and double the surcharge which flows to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation. This has been widely supported by hunting and trapping organizations. Create clear pathways for First Nations organizations to access funds independently.

Wildlife/Forestry: Accelerate the implementation of the Old Growth Strategic Review Action Plan, which has important implications for wildlife habitat. Enable agreements with First Nations and partners to undertake renewed planning initiatives, which may include Forest Landscape Plans. Invest in access management and road rehabilitation to reduce the number and density of resource roads. Work with Ministry of Forest to establish and implement a 'no net gain' policy on forestry and resource road development.

 11

11



BREAKOUT DISCUSSIONS

- ♦ Session 1: Choice between:
 - ♦ **Funding** for wildlife: How can nations/stakeholders contribute to the momentum to create dedicated funds for wildlife? What support would you need to make this happen?
 - ♦ **Wildlife/forestry:** What are examples of practical solutions that would improve stewardship of forests for the benefit of wildlife AND the forest sector?
- ♦ Session 2: How can we (collectively) improve communications and education to raise the profile of wildlife and habitat in British Columbia?

 12

12

C: Indigenous Dialogues Notes

Question 1: How can nations/stakeholders contribute to the momentum to create dedicated funds for wildlife? What support would you need to make this happen?

Dedicated funding

- ♦ Haven't had traction on Dedicated Funding. This requires a legislation change.
- ♦ Funds from surcharges, fees and fines should go into dedicated fund.
- ♦ Dedicated fund could also receive philanthropic donations.
- ♦ HCTF funding could be enhanced with increase to surcharges and court-ordered fines (especially if there was more oversight on land activities). Could also increase fines.

Challenges accessing funding

- ♦ There is need for long-term funding and access for First Nations to funding is central.
- ♦ Clear that many government employees and others have never worked with FN and meetings are just a check box.
- ♦ Need to streamline processes since still a lot of time and effort to access funds.
- ♦ The fiscal year-end creates problems and is a barrier for partners in on-the-ground work.
- ♦ Two frustrations for funding for wildlife – hasn't come through in time to do the work, and has to be spent by the end of March. Find ways to bridge fiscal years.
- ♦ Should be support for projects jointly with First Nations; funding allocated by region.
- ♦ Should be a route for First Nations to apply for T4W funding.
- ♦ Funding for First Nations from Environment and Climate Change Canada is multi-year and more sustainable than T4W funding.
- ♦ Has been progress with Indigenous engagement/participation on Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation board.

Guardian program

- ♦ Guardian – building capacity. Watershed, cumulative effects are priorities for some communities.
- ♦ Provincial wide funding program for guardians – from training groups to delivery.
- ♦ Some funding for Guardian program through T4W, but needs long term funding.

Taxes and levies

- ♦ Taxes – hasn't been support for increasing taxes.
- ♦ Taxation.
- ♦ Garner local conservation funds more broadly from landowners.
- ♦ Need to expand on funding from mitigation and compensation.

- ♦ Tax to support a conservation fund?

Other funding sources

- ♦ Some First Nations have funding that could be leveraged for other sources.
- ♦ First Nations have access to funds that can be used to leverage matching funds (e.g., Reconciliation Fund).
- ♦ User pay, not just other users, but broadly across the public. Something like local conservation funds—example of Kootenays where all the landowners have agreed to put in like \$20 a year towards conservation.
- ♦ Increase the user pay – e.g., from recreational users.
 - Challenge of how to receive the funding—is there a role for partnerships with others, e.g., universities.
- ♦ Create an impact benefits agreement
- ♦ Discuss the potential for revenue sharing from activities like tourism and hunting, where Indigenous communities could benefit financially and use those funds for restoration and management efforts.
- ♦ A regular levy on industries whose activities impact land and water
- ♦ Tap industry that are having the impact, have a regular levy. Perhaps something like the BC Fish and Wildlife Habitat Compensation program that BC Hydro has.

Question 2: What are examples of practical solutions that would improve stewardship of forests for the benefit of wildlife AND the forest sector?

Indigenous Management and Control

- ♦ Emphasize the importance of Indigenous communities having more control and management over their forests. This includes integrating traditional knowledge and practices into forest management plans, recognizing that Indigenous peoples have long observed and documented wildlife needs.
- ♦ Foster collaborative governance models that involve Indigenous communities in decision-making processes.
- ♦ Working with various government agencies to ensure that Indigenous perspectives and knowledge are integrated into forest management policies.

Long-term and Landscape-level Planning, Forest Stewardship Plans

- ♦ Encourage long-term planning that considers entire landscapes and watersheds. This approach should include wildlife tree retention and riparian management to protect critical habitats and ensure sustainable forest use.
- ♦ Need to find ways to sustain both forest industry and wildlife populations, particularly for species at risk (e.g., southern mountain caribou).
 - Holistic landscape unit planning is needed.

- ◆ Current plans are reactive, focusing only on legally protected species, rather than proactive measures for large wildlife (deer, elk, moose).
 - Incorporate wildlife needs into forest landscape planning from the beginning rather than as an afterthought.
 - FN treaty harvesting rights must be considered in plans. Access to resources shouldn't be restricted by forestry practices.
- ◆ FLP processes currently take 6-10 years to implement, which is too long given ongoing forestry activities and their impacts.
 - Apparently efforts are being made to streamline planning timelines to a two-year range.
- ◆ B.C.'s approach remains reactionary rather than forward-thinking.
- ◆ Strengthen direct engagement between FN and forestry companies so that local knowledge, (hydrology, wildlife movement) is incorporated into forestry planning.
 - Cases exist where forestry companies were unaware of key conservation efforts, such as salmon spawning areas and elk translocation projects.

Economic Feasibility and Value Recognition

- ◆ Reassess the economic feasibility of logging in certain areas, recognizing that standing forests may hold more value for ecosystem services and cultural significance than for timber extraction. Encourage economic models that prioritize ecological health and sustainability.

Wildlife management

- ◆ Invasive plants should be included in appraisal manual.
- ◆ Need for more thought around legislative requirements around species at risk.
- ◆ Need for more thought about longer term management decisions that have impacts (e.g., communications re translocating elk).
- ◆ Decision-making around wildlife is reactive.

Monitoring

- ◆ Understanding Indigenous knowledge includes taking action to enforce practices; there is need to enforce actual Indigenous practice on the landscape with respect to forestry development.
- ◆ Propose that the province take a more active role in monitoring and regulating activities, such as hunting, to ensure they align with Indigenous laws and values. This includes involving Indigenous communities in the approval and permitting processes.
- ◆ Implement monitoring systems to track the health of forests and wildlife populations. Use adaptive management strategies to respond to changes and challenges, ensuring that management practices remain effective and relevant.

Restoration as a Priority

- ◆ Advocate for restoration to become a significant industry, suggesting that it should be a billion-dollar initiative. Restoration efforts should focus on repairing ecosystems damaged by past logging practices and fires, ensuring that vegetation regrowth supports wildlife needs.

Wildfire management, cultural and prescribed burns

- ♦ Move away from hard boundaries around conservation areas and adopt a more nuanced approach to wildfire management.
- ♦ Implement cultural and prescribed burns as a traditional method of land management. These practices help maintain healthy ecosystems by preventing overgrowth and promoting biodiversity, which benefits both wildlife and forest health.
- ♦ Important to maintain old growth forests and using prescribed burning to treat areas to prevent high-intensity wildfire that destroys critical habitat (participants agreed there is red tape preventing this from happening).
 - Further discussion is needed to determine the scale and scope of prescribed burns in old-growth areas.

Linear features and road deactivation

- ♦ Deactivation and reclamation of roads to limit access and habitat disturbance.
 - Road closures in the East Kootenays are being ignored, need for stricter access management and enforcement.
 - Illegal camping and garbage are issues in the Ucluelet area.
- ♦ Appraisal manual should include deactivation and invasive plant treatment to incentivize compliance from industry.

Education and Outreach:

- ♦ Increase education and outreach efforts to inform the public and policymakers about the historical and cultural significance of forests to Indigenous communities. This includes teaching about traditional land management practices and the ecological roles of different species.

Question 3: How can we (collectively) improve communications and education to raise the profile of wildlife and habitat in British Columbia?

Role of Minister

- ♦ We should ask our Minister, who is very experienced in communications, how we can be more effective.
- ♦ Talk to Minister! She is very experienced in communications.
- ♦ We need to educate our Minister and government in general, and provide landscape-level knowledge about what is happening from one region to another.

Communications challenges

- ♦ Most of B.C.'s voting base is in urban centers, leading to a lack of understanding of wildlife and habitat management challenges in rural and resource-dependent areas.
- ♦ More targeted outreach is needed to communicate the importance of wildlife conservation and sustainable land management to urban populations.

- ♦ Urban – rural divide was demonstrated with Chronic Wasting Disease, and the Minister thinking everything was under control and fine with the testing program, however it is unacceptable for hunters to wait 2 months to know if their meat is safe to eat.
- ♦ Conduct surveys and research to identify barriers that prevent effective communication and education. Understanding these barriers can help develop strategies to overcome them and improve overall communication.

Education and Awareness of Indigenous practices

- ♦ Emphasize the need for education and awareness about Indigenous cultures, laws, and traditional practices. This includes educating government officials, decision-makers, and the public to foster a deeper understanding and respect for Indigenous perspectives.
- ♦ Suggest reversing roles in meetings with government officials, where Indigenous representatives present their knowledge and practices to an audience of ministers and officials. This approach aims to shift the dynamic and ensure that Indigenous voices are heard and understood.
- ♦ Many stakeholders and the general public lack awareness of treaty obligations and wildlife conservation.
 - Public meetings (caribou example was given) can be ‘charged’ and sometimes racist due to misinformation.
- ♦ Government needs to take a stronger role in communicating its responsibilities rather than leaving FN representatives to educate the public.

Audiences

- ♦ The profile of wildlife and habitat needs to be raised to a broadened audience – particularly the urban audience.
- ♦ Need to communicate across siloes in government (fishing vs hunting)
- ♦ How to connect to urban populations in B.C. – nature centers (like Minnesota).
- ♦ Need to draw in networks from adventure tourism, NGOs, which connect to a broader audience in B.C. Currently not a venue to link into government. Recognizing that tourism/outdoor recreation groups do carry a lot of weight and they do not operate without impacts.
- ♦ Need to be aware of communicating to the echo chamber, and only talking to people who are already supportive of wildlife and habitat.
 - More publicly available information? Need to be creative here.
- ♦ Address the need for better education of tourists, particularly in areas where tourism impacts wildlife and ecosystems. This includes developing educational materials and programs to inform tourists about respectful and sustainable practices.
- ♦ Engage with younger generations through modern communication channels, such as social media, to provide them with accurate and truthful information about Indigenous histories and practices. This approach aims to build a foundation of understanding and respect among future leaders.
- ♦ Work with young people.

Honest and Transparent Messaging

- ◆ Ensure that communication from all parties is honest and transparent. Indigenous representatives emphasized the importance of truthful storytelling and sharing of Indigenous histories to counteract misinformation and build trust.
- ◆ First Nations priorities are different than government or stakeholders.

Ways to communicate

- ◆ Some First Nations are telling their stories through different avenues.
- ◆ Set criteria for what we're communicating about, e.g., one regional highlight.
- ◆ Consider podcasts, other organizations that have venues that we can lean on to get started.
- ◆ Make use of social media, consider how to do that effectively.
- ◆ Social media is key.
- ◆ Develop strategies, e.g., articles in Narwhal, TV stories—hopeful stories that will influence people.

Sharing research and reports effectively

- ◆ Survey results and conservation recommendations often remain buried in government reports rather than being publicly communicated.
- ◆ Provincial government must take a more active role in sharing FN-led research and incorporating it into policy discussions.

Capacity for First Nations communications

- ◆ First Nations need capacity to participate meaningfully.
- ◆ Capacity gaps among First Nations need to be addressed to achieve meaningful engagement.
- ◆ Need to consider the capacity for FN communities and gov staff to take the time to communicate, since there are other pressures and capacity challenges.

Collaboration Across Ministries

- ◆ Encourage collaboration across different government ministries to break down silos and ensure cohesive communication strategies. This would involve ministries working together to understand the impacts of their actions on Indigenous territories and wildlife.

Collaborations for communications

- ◆ Develop integrated communication platforms that bring together various ministries and stakeholders. This would facilitate the sharing of information and ensure that all parties are informed about ongoing initiatives and issues.
- ◆ Use the environmental nongovernmental organizations, make better use of them and support communications there. But ensure the communications coordinated with First Nations.
- ◆ Collaborate with NGOs to get messages out.
- ◆ There are discussions among different regulatory agencies at the federal and provincial levels and legal obligations around who is responsible for what; agencies could communicate materials and fiduciary responsibilities before discussions to help participants find common ground on complicated decisions at the landscape level.

Regional approach

- ♦ Regional focus is good – work with Regional Wildlife and Habitat Advisory Committees. Media releases should be shared with First Nations first.
- ♦ Be regionally focused. Need to do these communications on a regional basis and to make use of the RWACs and make use of working with local First Nations in terms of the kinds of recommendations come forward. But that communication, they're going to be much more effective if they're regionally focused rather than just being abroad provincial initiatives all the time.
- ♦ Communications must be done on a regional level by making use of Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees and local First Nations

Governance and decision-making authority

- ♦ FN are often treated as stakeholders rather than decision-makers, despite holding rights and title.
 - FN leadership should be signatories on key decisions, particularly for GAR orders.
- ♦ Government should not use FN representatives as a proxy for stakeholder engagement.

Hunting and wildlife allocation concerns

- ♦ FN communities report declining moose populations, impacting traditional harvesting.
- ♦ Calls for localized hunting management rather than province-wide licensing, to ensure sustainability in FN territories.
 - Government has been reluctant to modify hunting regulations to support wildlife recovery efforts.

Wildlife inventory and monitoring

- ♦ Conducting wildlife population surveys has been effective in improving local management.
- ♦ FN-led surveys have successfully gathered data on caribou, moose, and mountain goat populations.
- ♦ Need for more government support in funding and utilizing these studies in decision-making.

D: Stakeholder Dialogues Notes

Question 1: How can nations/stakeholders contribute to the momentum to create dedicated funds for wildlife? What support would you need to make this happen?

Frustration and challenges

- ♦ Frustration that under Minister Cullen, dedicated funding was not approved, and Treasury Board has rejected for now. Will require legislation.
- ♦ There is not enough funding for wildlife in the province and fiscal year funding is not working.
- ♦ Been hearing about funding issues for so many years and nothing changes.
- ♦ T4W needs to manifest itself.
- ♦ We do not back up what we push out and wildlife is in deep trouble in this Province.
- ♦ Tacking on how much money we can contribute is a stretch. We can advocate, run campaigns but this has been done to death.

Challenge accessing funds

- ♦ Spend a lot of time looking for funding..... building relationships
- ♦ As organisations grow -...more funding needed
- ♦ Rehabilitations are on unstable ground no one is taking on the volunteer work.

Dedicated funds

- ♦ The critical issue is that funds are not dedicated to wildlife.
- ♦ More voluntary – willing to pay if it goes into fish and wildlife....(harvesting a small amount, mostly for viewing, e.g., elk to the mainland).
- ♦ Investigate historical government ‘earmarking of funds,’ though it is rare in B.C. outside of Parks Canada.
- ♦ More trust when money goes to someone outside Govt.
- ♦ Why do my hunting fees and tags etc...is not going to a dedicated fund for Wildlife Management/ stewardship (is it not? – goes to general revenue) – a no-brainer.

Surcharge

- ♦ Surcharge doubling would be good
- ♦ Doubling the surcharge for F, H, T (needs to be transparency. People can know and trust – where their money is going)
- ♦ RWAC (only a couple are active) - can they provide a letter to ENV(Parks?) – to provide support to the surcharge work.
 - Hammer away – pressure from each angle, give advice.

- ◆ Gov'ts do not like 'surcharges' – no matter the party.

Increased provincial funding

- ◆ Need to determine the overall cost of managing wildlife in B.C. and assess feasibility of government funds.
- ◆ The Province spends so little on conservation, around one percent.
- ◆ The Province needs to pay for the rest of the shortfall.
- ◆ Current non-governmental funding sources exist but are highly competitive and limited.
- ◆ Government must maintain a minimum level of fiduciary responsibility for FLPs and stewardship documentation.
 - Once these plans are established, efforts can be directed toward activities aligned with stewardship objectives (example of wild sheep was given).
- ◆ Tie into SAR/ ungulates – overlap with TFANC/ 30x30/ corridors.

Strategic approach

- ◆ Vision should be aligned. How do you build a statement that gets people on board. Wildlife is always a draw – commercial, Nations. Corporate sponsorships? Dedicated funds.....
- ◆ Conservation Lands program's draft strategic plan should be finalized. Can set benchmarks for funding needs for that program which can help us understand overall funding needs.

Diversify funding recipients

- ◆ Nations should be able to access funding streams.
- ◆ Funding should go to a variety of projects, including those to educate on the intrinsic importance of wildlife.
 - Consider whether you can build on or prop up/expand existing organizations that are working on this.
 - Rather than relying on one solution, and then waiting to see if it's successful

Diversity funding sources

- ◆ Overall, should diversify the sources to maximize funds, but centralize the body that makes the decisions on how the resources are used and distributed – and should also diversify the recipients of funds.
 - Need to have strategic coordination
 - Must be complementary, not competing – should leverage

Examples from elsewhere

- ◆ Conduct research into funding mechanisms across North America to identify best practices.
 - Apply successful funding models to B.C. and present findings to decision-makers with a risk-benefit analysis.
- ◆ Tax outdoor equipment like they do in certain parts of the United States. If people knew that the tax was going straight to wildlife, they would be more willing to pay.

- ♦ Some U.S. states that are small in comparison to spend a staggering amount of money on wildlife.
- ♦ The U.S. – has some successful examples of surcharges – taxing recreators (3:1 match).

“Beyond hunters”

- ♦ Hunters are willing to pay more but they are not the only group that use the land. What about out of province people or motorized users for example? All users need to pay into the system. What about license fees, classified waster fees and so forth? This could help with our deficit.
- ♦ Many people use the back county not just hunters, all users should pay.
- ♦ Seems problematic that hunters, trappers, and fishers should have to pay more for wildlife. This should be a government lead funding effort!
- ♦ All users need to pay, and we need a commitment from government they will increase funding.
- ♦ Example - re: Mt Washington + skiers - add 50 cents for marmots (= opportunity to see marmots).
 - Could be applied to every ski-hill. (wildlife at each hill)
- ♦ E.g., ATV licensing....impacts to caribou

Enforcement fees

- ♦ Enforcement fees should be included in wildlife funding although this is complicated as those fees belong to the Ministry of Environment.
- ♦ Enforcement funds need to come to WLRS.
- ♦ User fees make sense and as well as enforcement fees; there is a pot of money there to access.
- ♦ Current fines under the *Wildlife Act* are not strong enough deterrents.
 - Greater enforcement and steeper fines necessary to ensure compliance and generate conservation revenue.
- ♦ Regarding enforcement: people want to be policed, and enforcement needs to be strengthened.
- ♦ Administrative monetary penalties could be another source.
 - Form of creative sentencing
 - Courts want to move to these penalties rather than going through court system
 - Might now go to general revenue, but should go to a dedicated fund
- ♦ Mitigation and offset policy implementation could be a source of funding.
 - Such as with HCTF, there are court awards from contravention of statutes.
 - The judge sets parameters for species, region

Industry

- ♦ Environmental offsets: developers could be required to compensate for habitat loss (example: YVR runway offsetting for wildlife habitat).
- ♦ Establishing a wildlife compensation fee for resource extraction activities, including forestry and mining permits.
- ♦ Compensation for habitat destruction must reflect real costs.
- ♦ Wildlife habitat bond for industries impacting wildlife ecosystems.
- ♦ Developers in corridor areas as well as railway users should be contributing.

- ◆ Industry – to pay more? If you are displacing wildlife, there should be a fee.
- ◆ On industry side, may be required to take some form of action or contribute one-time lump sum of money.
 - Such as if data limited in a certain area, may fund data collection for a species
 - Industry has limited information on how to sufficiently protect local wildlife
 - This leads to a piecemeal approach with proponents doing various things
 - Need a strategic approach across the land base, to help use funds appropriately
 - Major projects could provide a lump sum of money to a larger pool to be used strategically, similar to FWCP
- ◆ Introduce surcharges on industries that affect the landscape, including recreational users, resource industries, and urban developers.

Corporations

- ◆ Business and corporations use the Province, so let us have some of those dollars flow back into us. Make it a mandatory charge for businesses.
- ◆ We should look at linking into ICBC and BC Hydro funding. ICBC for wildlife collision and the dollars they save by fencing and protecting the public.

Local government

- ◆ Funding conversations often exclude urban municipalities.
 - Some SAR of focus, or charismatic megafauna, may not be within the municipal boundary.
 - Hard to get funding prioritized for urban areas, but they are important opportunities for communication around wildlife/habitat.
- ◆ Other users on the land base have impacts too – how to source funds from them?
- ◆ Through development, not many funds for wildlife/habitat being contributed.
 - Push for biodiversity piece through the permitting process for development
- ◆ Consideration of property tax surcharges to support conservation, recognizing that all citizens benefit from biodiversity.
- ◆ Conservation Funds could be expanded.
 - Some examples such as Kootenays
 - Discussion on this in Metro Vancouver
 - Also data may not be submitted to the Province

Other funding sources

- ◆ There are 56K drivers in British Columbia; and similar to the BC Parks license plate program; how about a surcharge for drivers?
- ◆ BC Parks Licence plates.
- ◆ Wildlife conservation should be financed by a broad tax base, not just industry royalties.
- ◆ More creative ways: private donors etc...

- ◆ Proposed solutions include surcharges or percentage-based funding mechanisms linked to GDP growth.

Need for greater pressure

- ◆ B.C. lags in funding compared to Alberta and the United States in funding for wildlife. Money should not be going to general revenue, there needs to be a better model than this.
- ◆ When will government make this a priority? We need to put pressure on the government. A shame campaign.
- ◆ We need a statement from the Premier that he is committed to wildlife and how he will break down barriers. Ideas are great but we need direction from the top.
- ◆ Establish a joint statement from relevant organizations (RWACs, PHTAT, MWAC) to present a collective voice on the need for dedicated wildlife funding.
 - Unified messaging increases impact and likelihood of government action.
- ◆ Funding is essential for regional initiatives—projects cannot be effectively implemented without financial resources.
- ◆ We are stronger together. Working with the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF).
- ◆ How can we put pressure on to NGOs to support this?
 - General revenue gathers everything then re-directs.
 - Start small (do not ask for much, or you will not get it) – go back to his board and collect idea forextra streams
 - How to put it in front of Gov't in a digestible way

Build resilience

- ◆ Systems perspective could create resilience.
 - Could explore multi-pronged approach with a model that includes a few funding sources, an entity in the middle, and a few outgoing sources.
 - Consider what options have the bigger magnitude of impact and lower barriers? Work on those first.
 - Things move at different paces.
 - This diversity could help buffer fluctuations in different sources being more/less successful over time.
- ◆ Need mechanism for long term, stable, consistent funding.
 - Need to think about barriers and whether work is actually likely to happen in one year vs multi year.
 - Funding through ECCC Priority Places is an example of long term
- ◆ Across parties/ bipartisan – all agree to save wildlife / recreators (non-consumptive degrade habitat).
 - Even (folks who are 'anti-govt') are also into this idea.

- ◆ Concern re changing governments.

Question 2: What are examples of practical solutions that would improve stewardship of forests for the benefit of wildlife AND the forest sector?

Chief Ecologist

- ◆ The Chief ecologist continued to be emphasized through the discussion.
- ◆ (New position) create Chief officer for biodiversity in the province.
- ◆ Main point I heard was having a new chief officer and making it so the chief Forester goes to cabinet and not directly to the minister.
- ◆ Larger oversight via a chief ecologist for B.C. (i.e., prioritize ecosystem-based approach).

Inter-ministry cooperation

- ◆ There has always been a strong dichotomy between the Ministry of Forests and the Ministry of Fish and Wildlife; more cooperation is needed between the two ministries
- ◆ There should be a way to force cooperation between Forestry and WLRS (forestry and wildlife) there is a strong dichotomy between the two and WLRS is struggling along and seems like it will continue in that way based on the new mandate letters.
- ◆ Better cooperation between Ministry of Forests and WLRS.
- ◆ Cross communication and alignment between ministries.
- ◆ Also a need for more integration between foresters and ecologists.

Regulatory and policy frameworks

- ◆ Need for clear and consistent guidelines from the government to manage forests effectively. Existing frameworks, like wildlife habitat areas (WHAs), could be better utilized or reformed to protect multiple species and habitats.
- ◆ Support for 30 by 30, wildlife corridors, and wildlife health and biodiversity framework.
- ◆ A lot of what prevents us from doing good work on the ground are policy and legislation.
- ◆ Enacting a provincial species at risk act would better highlight needs of species.
- ◆ No provincial mechanism for stumpage/ timber licensing.
- ◆ Bureaucrats need to understand forestry, agriculture, WLRS, ENV – we have created a bureaucratic roadblock within government that is hard for ENGOs to get past. Silos exist.

Landscape level planning

- ◆ Concept of landscape level planning to address wildfire resilience and ecosystem restoration needs to be nested in larger context (e.g., OGSR recommendations and Ecosystem and Biodiversity Health Framework).

- Need to understand how cut affects watershed hydrology; a lot of material can be mobilized into watercourses that can adversely affect species like wild salmon; this is primarily due to a lack of coordination even broadly between terrestrial and aquatic environments.
- Better consideration for watershed scale processes in the cut level and wildlife populations.

Biodiversity and habitat conservation, ecosystem-based approach

- Look at new approach to forestry with emphasis on ecosystems (not just logging).
- Focus on ecosystem-based approach and ecosystem values.
- Emphasizing the importance of maintaining biodiversity, particularly focusing on species like bats that play a crucial role in forest ecosystems. It was suggested that preserving patches of intact forests, rather than just individual trees, could support biodiversity and natural pest control.
- Look at how timber harvesting occurs and revise to accommodate multiple values.
- Take an ecosystem-based approach that recognizes that community forests support innovation (e.g., wildfire mitigation, drought resistance, habitat management, harvesting techniques, etc.) and ecosystem-based approaches that emphasize local tenures, in alignment with federal legislation (e.g., SARA) and within the context of the OGSR and the Ecosystem and Biodiversity Health Framework).
- Forestry model – a new approach is required especially now as we hit a tipping point in forest sustainability / new approach should emphasize ecosystem values not just logging.
- Opportunities are there for compromise to meet wildlife and forestry objectives.
- Need to consider habitat connectivity.
- When we're setting allowable annual cuts, are we adequately assessing wildlife species and populations - particularly ones that are at risk?; need to account for species within the cut areas.
- Biodiversity and ecosystem framework, we should push hard for the government to finish what they are doing. The minister has indicated that is her priority, but that work should be finished.

Incentives

- Is there an opportunity to provide incentive to resource extractors to incentivize them to go beyond for wildlife? (e.g., a break in stumpage if they beyond basic regulations); part of incentive could be putting money into studying red and blue species; incentive for leaving more broadleaf trees/vegetation on the landscape to support species diversity and also increased wildfire resiliency.
- Incentives for licensees to do stewardship and more of the cut going to community forests.
- The incentive could be phrased as a habitat management incentive rather than a wildlife incentive; once the government has wildlife objectives, they can come up with ways to incentivize habitat management for forest licensees.
- There are a lot of guidelines (especially riparian area management), so there are a lot of regulations on what should not be done by resource extraction, is there an opportunity to provide incentives for resource extraction? ie through stumpage, what if connectivity was left that would cost less in tree removal but would give incentive and interest in going bigger and better rather than “meet these guidelines” or you'll be fined? Less stumpage collected, but beneficial to wildlife?

- ◆ Reward the good players.
- ◆ MWAC is focusing on measurable wildlife objectives, that could be an incentive created for. Habitat management rather than wildlife incentive. Incentive habitat management through forest licences.
- ◆ Incentive for leaving more broadleaf trees/vegetation on the landscape to support species diversity and also increased wildfire resiliency → if we could add this to the list I think it's important as well.
- ◆ There are other programs in B.C. that incentivise landowners to enhance ecological values on their land, e.g., in Kamloops area.
 - More about bringing them on as a positive incentive and go beyond the minimum and resource extractors will get a benefit.
 - It needs to be well defined and say “we created vole habitat”.
- ◆ In North America a lot of our habitat goals can be met through forestry practices because they manipulate the landscape. They are essentially the wildlife managers.
 - Need a framework or structure to go beyond the minimum regulations. Is it ecosystem based or species based? There has to be some way to prioritize the incentives but sufficient enough for companies to do it and get bonus points at market when they do it.
 - It would be through research money for red and blue species that have minimum info on what is needed for their life history. So many species have a unique niche.
 - How do you improve what they are doing to result in long term change. Regulation vs incentivizing.
- ◆ There are 3 kinds of certification in companies and it is often seen as incentive but it doesn't not apply to solid wood products. But there is no incentive to do so. It hasn't translated into changes in the market, but companies continue to do it for social license and FN involvement.

Relationships, partnerships

- ◆ ENGOs need better relationships with foresters, not just government
- ◆ Create linkages between BCCFA ideas that can be implemented. Lots of work done on mapping and forestry ... but still gaps: how much road do tenure holders / wildlife etc. need? Focus on innovative approaches that are inclusive.
- ◆ Collaborate and bring together industry, FNs, and stakeholders.

Stakeholder engagement, transparency

- ◆ Better stakeholder engagement.
- ◆ The importance of involving various stakeholders, including local communities and indigenous groups, in forest management decisions was emphasized. Collaborative planning and communication were seen as essential for effective stewardship.
- ◆ More transparency with what is going on and decision making. There are G2G discussions, but we don't hear much at the next level of stakeholder engagement. Things are delivered in a “this was done” messaging.
- ◆ More transparency is needed about decisions that are made regarding the forest.

- ♦ Stakeholder or others can get on the Ministry of Forests stakeholder notice distribution lists to improve communications. Reach out to Ministry of Forests to get on the list.

Forest management practices

- ♦ The need for strategic planning in logging activities was discussed, suggesting that logging should be balanced with the preservation of forest patches to maintain ecological health. This includes planning for natural pest control services provided by wildlife.
- ♦ B.C. Nations can provide BMP advice to licensees to follow at the licensees discretion, that may be able to work in some places. This can produce change without creating instability.
- ♦ in hydrology the cuts are main way that affect aquatic species, as we factor in climate change and make conditions in a block more prone to debris flow, etc. a lot of material can flow into watercourses which can affect at risk aquatic species (i.e., wild salmon) which seems to come from the separation from terrestrial and aquatic species.
- ♦ Free-to-grow is outdated. “we are planting pine and killing everything else.”
- ♦ Silviculture – a new approach / look at case studies (e.g., Bulkley Valley). Get rid of pesticides as silviculture tool, prioritize wildlife and habitat
- ♦ Increase awareness of forestry cos re: migratory birds, other conventions, protocols

Community forests

- ♦ Look to community forests for potential solutions
- ♦ Forest tenure – needs close consideration, community forest tenure is good tool for new approach to forest stewardship.
- ♦ Communities and First Nations need control of their resource management; they want to look after the species in their backyards; with community-based forestry we see communities and First Nations co-managing together for different values like old growth, caribou, different species and the money stays within the communities.
- ♦ Community forests were included in the Ministry of Forestry mandate letter; we are in the baby steps of expanding the program; annual allowable cut is already distributed so there is talk of pushbacks.
- ♦ Community forest model. They manage above and beyond stewardship requirements, and this model could offer a lot of solutions. What needs to happen is communities and FN need control of the resource management. They want to look after the watershed and not just collect money and this allows for diverse management. This allows for managing for different values, e.g., old growth and caribou. There is more attention being given and it was highlighted in the mandate letter for Ministry of Forests to expand the community forest program.
- ♦ Hopefully the community forest program is an easy push.
- ♦ With potential expansion of community forests, it could be better to message that wildlife needs to be a higher value in the community tenure system, for example.

Old growth

- ♦ Support for Old Growth Strategic Review and implementation of it

- ◆ We could push for old growth recommendations to be implemented, to see some actual action on the ground.
- ◆ The most practical, immediate and urgent step we advocate and want to see moving forward for logging in B.C. is moving exclusively to second growth forests. Old growth logging is inherently unsustainable and continued logging of the remaining stands will never benefit ecosystems no matter any actions taken to "minimize" effects.
 - Set up regional T4W staff to succeed.
- ◆ OG deferral: there has been action on the ground, temporary deferrals have been implemented it depends on whether they were supported by FN. It was implemented in the East Kootenays and licences have been staying out of the areas, licensing on old growth is changing and was based on old data and it is not based on lidar which is better technology to understand the old growth and then can set up a collaborative group then find the best places for work on the ground. There is lots of work happening, but you probably don't hear about it. A lot of other recommendations the government still needs to follow through on them. The MWAC is pushing for those.
- ◆ It is taken out of the cut, but not every stand that is old growth is not selected out as not allowed to be harvested. In each TSA there is a certain amount of old growth to be protected, there is a lot of private land on the coast and there is no requirement to protect old growth. Depends on if it is Crown or Private land.
 - It also applies to community forests, needs to be approved by First Nations.

Wildfire

- ◆ Addressing the impact of forest fires and subsequent logging activities, it was proposed that better communication and strategies are needed to protect remaining old-growth forests and wildlife habitats after such events.
- ◆ Wildfire response strategy: consider pros and cons of fire (e.g., how does a fire benefit ecosystems and wildlife).
- ◆ Wildfire as a tool.

Road density and access

- ◆ The challenge of balancing road construction for logging access with the need to reduce road density was discussed. It was noted that roads can serve as wildlife corridors but also pose risks by increasing vulnerability. A more integrated approach to planning road networks was suggested.
- ◆ ID / manage / restore road with emphasis on ecosystem values and tie to stumpage fees.
- ◆ Deactivate roads so that trucks can't get through, but quads and snowmobiles can. This reduces pressures on the land base but still provides access to trappers.
- ◆ Through appraisal system, companies do get some recognition of partial cost and road rehabilitation. There is not incentive for road rehab. It is a cost the licensee bears. If it could be pushed to treasury, there would be more changes to road rehab etc.
- ◆ Road impacts.

Funding habitat restoration

- ♦ Industry should pay for habitat restoration through stumpage and fines.
- ♦ Need to look for opportunities to bring in more folks with good paying jobs to contribute to rehabilitating different landscapes; how can we employ people, supply secure jobs and support our landscape at the same time?
- ♦ If we know these are the population targets and the habitat we need, then we know what we need to maintain, restore, rehab that habitat. And work in collaborative transparent groups. Maybe the RWACs are a good place for those discussions.
- ♦ In watershed world we discuss restoration economy or workforce, so restoration of sites we look at where is there opportunity to bring in other good paying jobs and people. How can we work better together, it's at a business level, but stumpage fees could go to provincial coffer for other jobs.

Communication and education

- ♦ Improving communication within government agencies and with the public was identified as crucial. This includes better transparency and engagement with non-consumptive users of forest resources to build trust and support for conservation efforts.
- ♦ More transparency in conversations.
- ♦ It is important to involve everyone at the table; perhaps RWACs would be a good place for that.

Citizen science

- ♦ Apply citizen science; e.g., Gain Creek Valley; through universities (UVic) the objective was to inventory Species at Risk in old growth blocks designated for cutting with the idea to give the Ministry of Forest a better idea of what is inside the cut blocks; there is never enough people to do pre-harvest inventory; need for time and people to traverse the block (e.g., to notice the pileated woodpecker nests etc. that are there).
- ♦ How to approach management is through citizen science. For example, Port Renfrew and through UVic inventories of SAR and old growth are done and work closely with FN and keep Ministry of Forests involved. Monitoring of SAR (ex marbled murrelet). There is a lot of interest and provide Ministry of Forests with better insight with what is in their cut block.

Build on existing programs

- ♦ Leveraging existing conservation programs and groups that focus on specific species or habitats was suggested as a practical approach to enhance stewardship efforts.
- ♦ Don't create new things; this group should push hard for the government to continue to be doing what they are doing; Minister Neill already says it is her intention; a lot of work needs to be implemented

Question 3: How can we (collectively) improve communications and education to raise the profile of wildlife and habitat in British Columbia?

Challenges

- ♦ Challenges - attention spans, lack of time, lack of trust, who do people believe in if it's not on social media?; we know what the solution needs to include - that contact to the land, the enduring engagement with the land and the real world
- ♦ One challenge is that wildlife stewards feel they have to 'start over' when there is turnover in government staff or elections. Legislation is a way to provide resiliency to wildlife values, can surpass change over time.
- ♦ Roadblocks are not derived from the Minister but from higher up.
- ♦ Even when there is a focus on comms, such as with CWD where messaging going out to the Kootenays in particular, still lots of community members unaware – how to reach them?

Role of Minister

- ♦ We have a benefit that the Minister is a communication expert, and we need to take advantage of this.
- ♦ Have the Minister attend regions for group conversations with staff, PHTAT and RWAC.
- ♦ Minister should attend PHTAT or RWAC and allow people to have the freedom to express themselves and ask her questions. This is achievable and will just take some organizing.
- ♦ The Minister is an expert in communications; when you get people out on the land, then you have a chance to open minds to find solutions; the struggle is how to get enough of them out on the land in the right way with enough time.
- ♦ MOVI documentary would be for the Minister to see.

Cross-ministry communications

- ♦ More collaboration between ministries on communications is needed
- ♦ Ensure that WLRS is not the only Ministry, but it is the lead Ministry. Look at how WLRS communicates its values / objectives to forestry companies. Comms between Ministries needs to be strong. Agriculture, Environment, Forestry etc. need to know the wildlife priorities of WLRS so they can align their decisions etc. with WLRS values.
- ♦ Addressing Contradictory Policies: It was noted that contradictory policies and mandates within the government can undermine communication efforts. Ensuring that policies are aligned and do not send mixed messages to the public is important for effective communication.
- ♦ Internal Government Communication: The need for improved communication within government agencies was highlighted, ensuring that different departments and levels of government are aligned and informed about ongoing projects and policies.
- ♦ ENV – AG – Forestry should connect w Tourism – tourists come for the wildlife and scenery.
- ♦ Recognize the role of tourism (economic benefits) and the importance of OG forests and biodiversity to tourism in B.C. Awareness could motivate.

Address government bureaucracy in communications

- ◆ In previous efforts, government approval processes have watered down messaging, reducing impact.
- ◆ Stakeholder groups need greater autonomy in distributing factual, non-partisan information.

Transparency and trust

- ◆ More openness and transparency, and builds trust
- ◆ Improving transparency in government actions and decisions related to wildlife and habitat management was seen as crucial for building public trust. This includes clear communication about plans, policies, and the rationale behind them.
- ◆ We need greater transparency from government. Look what happened with the Land Act. Engagement opportunities need to happen at the beginning of the process. Engage and not inform.
- ◆ Providing more opportunities for public feedback and participation in decision-making processes was discussed. This includes extending timelines for public consultations and ensuring that feedback mechanisms are accessible and well-publicized.
- ◆ Can be a mistrust in gov – how to counter that with communications?
- ◆ T4W website is confusing to navigate.
 - Hard to see how different committees are connected, work together, how often they meet
 - Would be useful to have options for independent observers for meetings

Targeting the right audience

- ◆ Identify key stakeholders and decision-makers who need to be engaged.
- ◆ Develop strategies to reach government officials and the general public with clear messaging on the importance of wildlife conservation.
- ◆ Our struggle is to bring reality into everyone's face.

Audiences

- ◆ Public facing stuff doesn't raise wildlife issues, we 'preach to the choir' when communicating wildlife issues, but fail to reach the broader public.
- ◆ Communications is two buckets:
 - 1. Those who are already supportive, who may just need more scientific info
 - 2. Other folks who are more disconnected from nature for different reasons
- ◆ Broaden engagement efforts to include non-consumptive users of forest resources, as they represent a significant portion of the population. This involves reaching out to communities and individuals who may not directly use forest resources but have an interest in conservation.
- ◆ Informing newcomers to the Province.
- ◆ "Radicalizing the normies" – encouraging those to take action who may not have been involved yet.
- ◆ Wildlife/habitat not always on the radar for many local governments, unless lots of wildlife conflicts.
 - Although lots of decisions made at local level regarding habitat – need to get the right info to them to support decision making

- Union of BC Municipalities could get the word out
- Need to find the fence-sitters and help them get on board and be champions within their organization

Youth

- ◆ We need to get our point across to younger people. Our current methods are not working.
- ◆ Target audiences of youth and local groups, need to be funded. This burden shouldn't be on hunters. Conservation organizations are volunteers, the ability for them to do this is limited, although there is willingness. Member organizations are far reaching across the province, outreach can be done.
- ◆ Never too early to build connection to wildlife.
- ◆ Connect with schools, get it into the classroom.
- ◆ Nature education in the schools.
- ◆ Increase wildlife education.
- ◆ iNaturalist into schools?
- ◆ High school, university, need to educate them about policy and public policy involvement. We need to educate the public on the connections between science, policy and stewardship.
- ◆ Outreach from stakeholder groups (i.e. BCTA) to local schools to spread the word. There's a lack of resources to do this.
- ◆ Environmental science curriculum in high school could address what we've been discussing.
- ◆ Highschool level – showcase their work/ area.

Clear messaging

- ◆ Communication efforts should focus on delivering clear, concise, and consistent messages. This includes ensuring that regional biologists and other key figures have a unified understanding and are disseminating the same information across different regions.
- ◆ Quantifying wildlife values and costs of habitat loss – leveraging BMPs. Economic arguments, values of wildlife and wildlife habitat is high, maybe the best way to the public is through the pocketbooks/economy. We undervalue wildlife and wildlife habitat, speaking to the economic benefits of habitat may catch people's attention. Values of ecological services, sediment control carbon sequestration, etc. can be leveraged to a higher degree than what is currently happening.
- ◆ Communicate what makes B.C. so special via storytelling and let wildlife be the narrative.
- ◆ With comms, should be more clear about what actions we want from the audience, and the purpose – general raising of awareness can be a bit unclear.
- ◆ All the groups could come up with consistent messaging and push it up to government and further push it to community. Using programs like iNaturalist

Strategic communications

- ◆ Develop a strategic approach to communication that includes coordinated efforts across different organizations and sectors. This could involve creating joint communication campaigns or initiatives to raise awareness about wildlife and habitat issues.

- ♦ Communication requires thought, planning and commitment.
- ♦ Need comms strategy that leverages shortcomings in previous initiatives to enact change. Where is SAR legislation, hear that bios don't have the tools they need, etc.
- ♦ Fail to plan, plan to fail.
- ♦ Our voice needs to be amplified next to other speaking groups that have opposite ideas from us.
- ♦ We are a small part of what people listen to, and we need to be a larger piece or a small piece more often.
- ♦ Local and small actions can be helpful, may be the first step, build smaller actions into larger actions that government eventually listens to.
- ♦ We recognize the secret is tying people and communications to the reality of the land and how it is today and what are the challenges for the future; the problem is we don't have a solution.

Highlighting economic & cultural value

- ♦ Emphasize B.C.'s biodiversity as a unique and valuable asset.
- ♦ Position wildlife conservation as a benefit across multiple government sectors, including tourism and economic development.
- ♦ Kids could be raised with more B.C. values.
- ♦ Is there an ad that can be done about the decline of biodiversity everywhere and highlight the uniqueness of B.C. wildlife. Inform the public is on how important the resource is and how threatened it is around the world. Public education service like the Hinterlands Who's Who. Ex. Beavers and their impact to BDA's.
 - Especially if we can make the link between nature, wildlife and human health. Doctors giving prescriptions to people to walk in the woods to improve mental health. Directly see the relationship to themselves.
- ♦ Educate the public and visitors about the science of biodiversity and take away the politicization of environment- consumptive versus non consumptive users
- ♦ Protecting biodiversity has been a long term message, lots of organizations have been trying to get B.C. to protect SAR and biodiversity more than they have.

Communication methods

- ♦ Citizen science can engage the public in wildlife and habitat stewardship and raise profiles. This also provides people with a stewardship ethic in their local area which is essential for the long-term persistence of species.
- ♦ Perhaps an ad campaign that introduces wildlife across B.C. and shares concern about biodiversity would be beneficial - straightforward messaging that highlights the uniqueness of B.C. wildlife, or information put out by the B.C. government to inform the public about how valuable these resources are and how threatened they are.
- ♦ Signage – tourism – accessible to all.

"Hands-on" learning

- ♦ Getting kids outside; field trips outdoors; getting connection to the land.

- ◆ Field trips.
- ◆ Ex DFO: salmon in the classroom; visiting rearing facilities.
- ◆ Wildlife viewing areas (have not been taken care of).
 - Could be areas for breaks and education
 - Add short (IG?) videos – QR codes

Creating personal connections to wildlife

- ◆ Urban populations often lack direct experience with natural landscapes.
- ◆ Increase accessibility to wildlife experiences that foster a personal connection and deeper appreciation for conservation.

Citizen Science

- ◆ Expand the use of citizen science. FN were very supportive of citizen science programs. People are committed to the cause and are less costly than contractors.
- ◆ What about the Mo Education to citizen science program where there is a concerted effort in the curriculum that everyone should be cognizant of.

Social media, websites

- ◆ Dedicated staff for comms out – better use of Social Media.
- ◆ Challenging – social media / gets pushed to the side.
- ◆ Use the tools we have, Soc Media/ Phones.
- ◆ Limited government access to social media – hard to get approved.
- ◆ Social media is effective for those who already are involved.
 - But hard to reach out to those who are not already part of the conversation
- ◆ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service effectively combines engaging and educational content on social media.
- ◆ Utilizing Gen-Z digital media strategies can increase engagement and public awareness.

Education

- ◆ Public education on the importance of wildlife: There was a recognition of the need to educate the general public about the importance of wildlife and its connection to human health and well-being. This involves making the case for why wildlife conservation is essential and how it benefits society as a whole.
- ◆ Introduce biodiversity education in B.C.'s high school curriculum.
- ◆ Establish university courses focused on B.C.'s wildlife management and biodiversity.
- ◆ Promote regional wildlife communication programs where biologists share knowledge with the public.

Partnering for communication

- ♦ Utilize existing platforms and groups: Leveraging existing education and communication platforms, as well as groups already focused on specific wildlife or habitat issues to amplify messages and reach broader audiences.
- ♦ Partner with organizations like BCWF and Nature BC to amplify conservation messaging.
- ♦ Support initiatives like the Wetland Keepers program that engage communities in habitat stewardship.
- ♦ How can we be part of ongoing communication with local groups for greater information sharing? Perhaps a wildlife calendar for the Province to disseminate education and communication. Social media?
- ♦ Collaborate in a non-divisive manner / build relationships / work together/ don't be this or that/ message the cost of fire, the cost and implications of managing forests.
- ♦ Silos exist now and as stakeholders we could connect more with some of the existing groups to share info, share notes and explore collaborations. Instead of meeting in silos, bring all together to share info.
- ♦ There is no money and too many requests, so larger coalitions would be welcome and take the burden off the public.
- ♦ Example: in Saanich, there is a program to develop a management plan for a wetland that was previously considered for farmland. HAT has offered funding money to coordinate all the groups into one group for Panama Flats.
- ♦ One voice: If you want something done, make a tidal wave. There needs to be unified voice from organizations and form one or two coalitions and agree on message. And if there is enough push it can make impact. Right now all the groups are trying to get the ear of the Minister.

Role of RWACs

- ♦ Use RWACs to deliver the key messages about wildlife in their regions.
- ♦ RWACs could be an avenue for comms for capturing the regional differences.
 - Importance to have trusted members of the community “in the know”
 - This can counter the misinformation on social media
- ♦ Want to amplify messages at the regional scale by like-minded organizations.
 - May take a few years of working with local gov'ts to get the message across
 - Individually we may not have the resources, but may be easier to piece things together by working with others
 - Regional scale can be more targeted with messaging

Promote work of scholarships

- ♦ For the twenty-six student who have scholarships through HCTF, make it compulsory that they present their research to the public.
- ♦ Twenty-six scholarship recipients to report their results and raise the profile.

Funding support

- ♦ There are many ways to communicate but we need to tie it all back to funding.
- ♦ Robust funding!
- ♦ Need resources to counter misinformation when it comes up
 - This can hold back good projects/initiatives
- ♦ A messaging program does cost money. Public education is necessary. Foundations and how .001% have most of the wealth in the world
- ♦ Build off of things that already exist – but need more funding. E.g., HCTF – has Project Wild – they train teachers at Manning Park etc...
- ♦ Message from the government that there is no money for new programs. There is no money for health care and housing, so there is no money for publicity programs. We need meaningful recommendations and need to be able to be done by someone other than the provincial government.

Assessing effectiveness of outreach programs

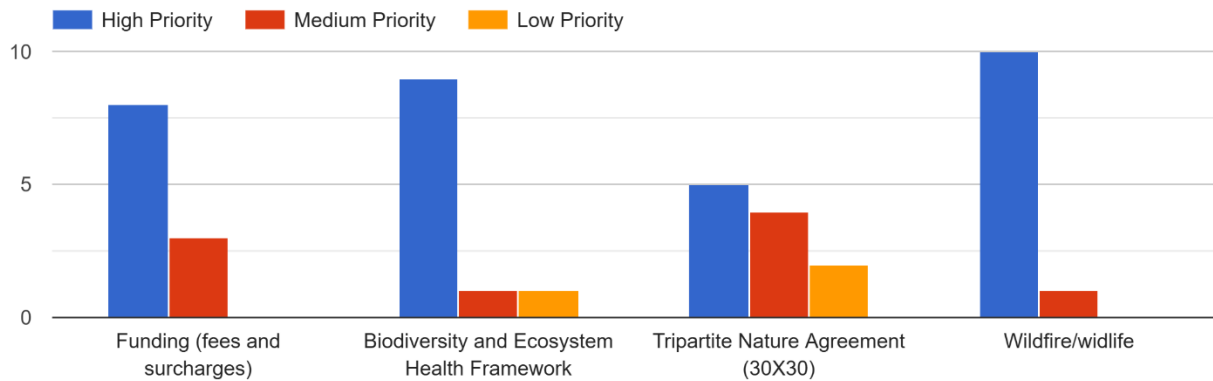
- ♦ Conduct impact assessments of public education initiatives to determine effectiveness.
- ♦ Use surveys to gauge public understanding of wildlife issues and adjust outreach strategies accordingly.

E: Survey Responses

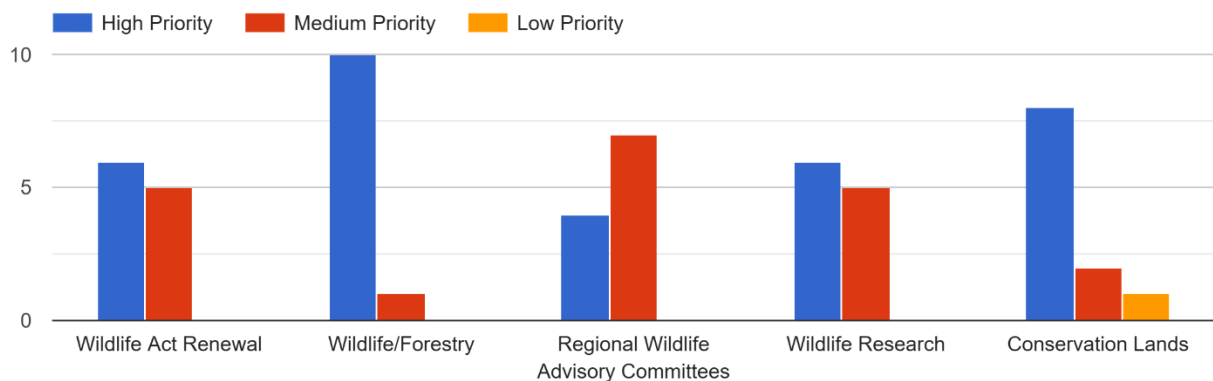
Indigenous Responses to Priorities Survey

11 responses

Short term priorities



Priorities over next two years



Short term priorities: Comments

Wildlife management is seriously underfunded in B.C. First Nations require steady, consistent revenue stream for funding our management of the wildlife resource for success, particularly habitat recovery which will require long-term commitment to achieve.

Each of these initiatives is of high priority for HBFN and HBFN is deeply involved in these initiatives.

Back burns are not cultural burns

If you want to double the surcharge that flows to HCTF, then you need to make certain that projects start when the nations and biologists need them to start. It makes no sense to start projects if we can't collect valuable data when we need it.

Our ongoing challenge with funding coming from government projects on wildlife is that the money NEVER arrives as planned. Projects that should begin April 1 do not even get approved money notices until late August, Sept or even later - well passed the operational field season for wildlife work. And then expectation is the money will be spent by March 31.

- ♦ The situation is as worse as it has ever been. It sets our projects up for failure.
- ♦ Likewise we are still encountering government contract and agreement language which does not uphold the principles of UNDRIP or the protection of indigenous knowledge. This continues to delay projects unnecessarily.
- ♦ The biodiversity values for areas with St'at'imc territory were all set without any involvement of the Nation or communities. The basis for biodiversity decision making needs to be revisited with input from First Nations.

Two-year priorities: Comments

Committees tend to slow things down, get the people from the area

Indigenous people are not stakeholders but yet we are still treated that way. Government to government has to happen not for us to be invited to a regional committee

The Regional Advisory Committees are nice but they are still treating First Nations as stakeholders. Proper strategic planning and co-management requires a government-to-government relationship on key resources, especially when hunting by non-native peoples has the potential to impact cultural practices around traditional foods. Food security is a significant concern within the St'at'imc Nation as the combined impacts of low salmon returns and significant loss Mule deer winter range habitat from wildfires is having a cumulative effect on traditional food availability. Road access closures and hunting area restrictions will be needed to help ensure traditional foods remain viable into the future."

Other priorities and comments

Dedicated wildlife funding from revenues generated from hunting tags and licenses

No Net Loss for roads and forestry

Fish and fish habitat conservation, restoration, and enhancement

Funding and networking with other First Nations, B.C. and Federal Government

Want the Ministry to take a hard look at closing certain harvesting in areas that animals need closers and First Nations Input are in acted

Both the Rocky Mountain Goat and California Sheep need to be closed for minimum of 5yrs in our territory now followed by a study and surveys and counts to record numbers.

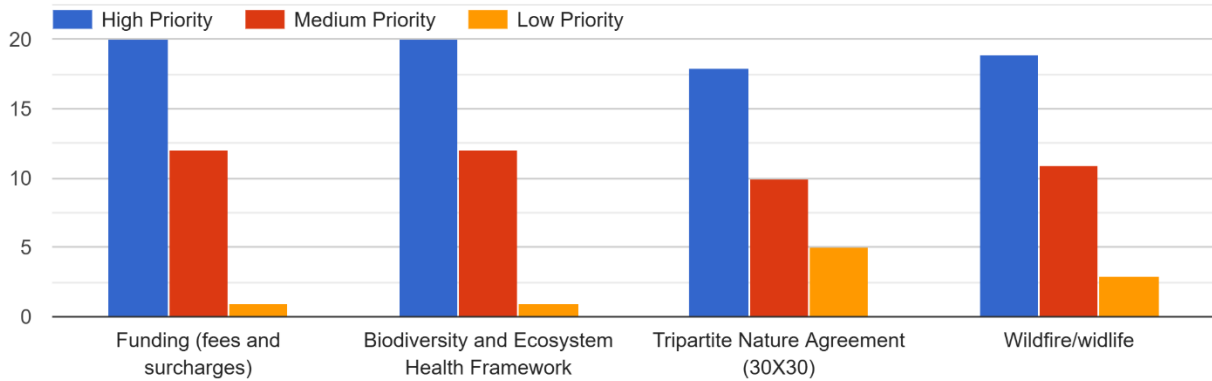
To educate the decision makers who make economic decisions not the right thing to do decisions

The combined impacts of low salmon returns and extensive habitat loss from catastrophic wildfires on traditional food availability and sustainability. Providing wildlife project funding by April 1 so that projects can proceed according to their work plans and objectives.

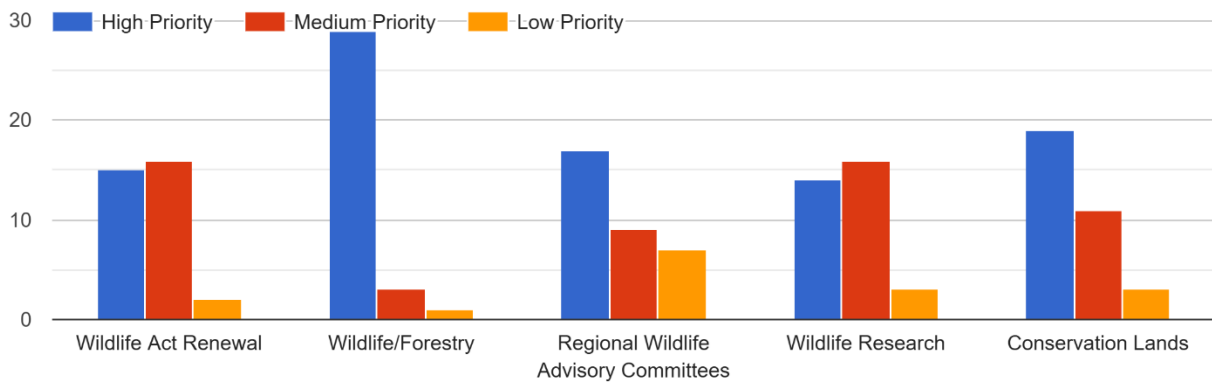
Stakeholder Responses to Priorities Survey

34 responses

Short term priorities



Priorities over next two years



Short term priorities: Comments

General

All of these are obvious high priorities and clearly the MWAC is on the right track. In reading the various documents however, it is somewhat difficult to see how the various strategies will be implemented, and whether or not the scale of implementation will actually make a measurable difference. We need reassurance, because in B.C.'s long history wildlife and biodiversity have been pretty low priorities compared to resource extraction and our never-ending quest for "growth". Time will tell, presumably.

All are important. There may be sequencing efficiencies found in all four.

Funding

Source of funding

Funding increase must go beyond just license fees. There needs to be a much larger increase in funding overall. HCTF funds need to be aligned and granted in line with priorities of the Ministers Wildlife Strategy

I would say these are on point, however, I would go a bit further on the funding request and suggest increasing dedicated year over year funding (not just from increasing fees).

Funding is always an issue pertaining to management of any natural resource. Securing government funding is critical to demonstrate political support. It should come from a broad stakeholder base though, not simply from trappers/hunters/fishers. General tax revenue should also be a source, as these resources are managed for ALL B.C.'ers.

With respect to First Nations organizations accessing the funds, there should also be a mechanism for them to support by inputting funds as well, such as industry operating in traditional territories, etc.

Not just dedicating hunting and trapping fees, but increasing the fish and wildlife budget to \$200 million or more.

Expanding a dedicated funding model beyond one which focused on the contributions of consumptive users only (i.e., hunting and fishing tags, etc.) to include industry contributions, and other groups (the ski industry, mountain biking, ATV, etc.) who impact wildlife and their habitats.

Permanently dedicating wildlife license fees and increasing funding for the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation would allow for proactive, long-term conservation, while ensuring Indigenous communities can independently access these resources.

From the perspective of the Ministry, what is the main benefit of having all wildlife license fees dedicated to a special account? Do you anticipate that this would enhance funding for wildlife? Would there be fees associated with non-consumptive users that would also go into this account?

Provincial government now has no funding available and has set non-environmental priorities with the Greens. Priority recommendations must be toned down to accommodate this unfortunate reality.

Need for funding

Funding is essential for all four of these short term priorities.

Funding is the top priority, nothing can move forward without funding. B.C. has some of the lowest habitat/wildlife funding in North America. All of this becomes much easier if funding is in place.

Funding is the number 1 priority above all- as successful, prolonged, and widespread implementation of management strategies will rely on significant increases to funding.

Funding has to be increased well beyond current levels and if it's not then the government's commitment to wildlife, habitat and biodiversity can't be taken too seriously. The fact that regional wildlife management programs seem to be managed without a base funding, and are conducted based on annually submitted projects does seem like a commitment to long term stewardship of the resource. Nor will only a user-pay model work. The natural world is what we live in. It's up to all of us to share the costs of its upkeep.

More dedicated funding is needed for wildlife, and in particular, species that are currently not receiving dedicated annual funds. For example, bats reflect approximately 10% of all terrestrial mammal diversity in B.C. (with only a few species that are not at risk provincially/federally). They are needed for healthy ecosystems, for economic reasons (forestry, agriculture, organic farming industry) and human health (as demonstrated through the recent Science publication by Frank 2024 as summarized here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/05/climate/bats-pesticides-infant-mortality.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20research%2C%20published,by%20an%20estimated%208%20percent>). While this should be a wake up call for B.C. where white nose syndrome (WNS, deadly disease of bats) is knocking on our doorstep just over the border in

Washington and the Alberta Rockies -- instead, the main B.C. government bat biologist struggled again to find enough funds to test a subset of samples to see if the disease is in the province yet. And when we asked if the B.C. Government could contribute financially to the testing of a promising treatment to reduce mortality of bats infected with WNS (underway in Vancouver), the reply was that there is not enough funds and they don't know about funds until June annually which is often too late for field work to move ahead. The annual funding uncertainty and the low dollar value of funds available for such an important and declining component of B.C.'s biodiversity is a red flag that non-game wildlife in B.C. is chronically underfunded. I believe greater emphasis needs to be placed on funding for wildlife.

Increase funding for provincial programs responsible for managing the destructive transmission of deadly diseases from domestic sheep to wild sheep.

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework

The BEHF is a key priority, particularly with the focus on implementation and the development of specific on-the-ground examples. Too many of these types of Frameworks, Strategies, or Plans (various names and examples out there amongst the western provinces) stay simply as a broad Framework without any actual guidelines or sideboards on what implementation actually looks like. Everyone can say they support it, but without clear examples of what that looks like, there is no meaningful gains as a result of the Framework. The Implementation Plan should also contain clear and measurable objectives so that effectiveness of the BEHF can be demonstrated.

In addition to releasing the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework, the Ministry needs to identify within the Implementation Plan how the Framework will guide industry and hold resource users accountable to ensure that the biodiversity objectives within the Framework are met. Will the Biodiversity Office deploy officers to ensure compliance and increased monitoring of wildlife populations and industrial activities occurring in their habitats? More detail needs to be provided on what an Implementation Plan will encompass. understand the urgency of action.

A [Biodiversity] law like this – co-developed with Indigenous peoples and respecting their authority and rights – could help B.C. communities achieve both healthy forests and sustainable livelihoods. Combined with the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework, this new law should: implement ecosystem-based planning and management; address the cumulative effects of multiple forms of development on ecosystems; implement new governance arrangements with First Nations and ensure better consultation and community involvement in decisions about forests and watersheds; and implement the recommendations

of the Old Growth Strategic Review, which will help to better protect nature across the province.

The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework, with a dedicated office and clear thresholds, could shift the province toward preventing ecosystem decline before it becomes a crisis.

Actually implement the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health initiative.

Tripartite Nature Agreement

Tripartite agreement - must include, while conserving natural spaces, the ability to continue to have a light footprint of commercial tourism and public recreation.

Building collaborative and transparent partnerships with natural resource business sectors (in particular adventure tourism) so they can, by being directly involved, help to achieve many of the priorities. They have many common goals and interests.

Discussion on the Tripartite, around implementation and what is in IPCA's, how will they be developed?

The 30 by 30 agreement is key and it must be implemented strategically for the benefit of safeguarding biodiversity, such as protecting critical habitat for endangered caribou and protecting wildlife corridors for umbrella species such as grizzly bears.

Releasing the implementation plan for the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework is key and this plan should include new legislation for B.C. that would reinforce the commitment to make biodiversity and ecosystem health the top priority in how natural resources and wildlife are managed.

The 30x30 initiative needs to make adjustments to include additions to management areas, current protected lands and bring a better understanding of what are Indigenous Protected and Conservation Area as they relate to wildlife and habitat.

Committing to "30 by 30" and expanding conservation areas, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, would safeguard B.C.'s natural landscapes from further degradation.

Wildfire

While proactive approaches to preventing wildfires is becoming increasingly critical, this must be handled carefully. Logging forests to prevent fires is not equivalent to cultural burning and should not be taken as such. Protecting old growth forest ecosystems is one of most important steps that should be prioritized for wildfire prevention.

Wildfire use and planning must account for natural wildfire currently taking place due to extent and size of these wildfires.

Additionally, leaving old-growth forests intact serves as a natural wildfire suppressant, helping prevent the increasingly destructive fires that threaten ecosystems. Increasing support for proactive wildfire management, including cultural burning, would further restore balance to the land. Supernatural B.C. deserves to be preserved in its full integrity, and these actions are crucial for protecting our environment before irreversible harm is done.

Other

Prioritizing these initiatives would help B.C. move away from the reactionary conservation efforts that too often follow human-caused damage to habitats and ecosystems.

It would be great to see the government put more into road closure and returning the land to a natural state. Our focus on the land is so important we can not keep extracting from the land as we have.

It is getting too late to be determining thresholds and there are a number of examples where thresholds become watered down or not comprehensive enough or are unable to keep up with changes on the landscape proving them to be ineffective. Would like to see clarity on definition of IPCA in B.C. and how these can be designated. Increasing support for wildfire management is vague - would this be through funding, or policy changes or some other means? Is this strong enough. Would like to see action words or greater commitment in the language used in these priorities, understanding that all the committee can do is advise, still believe priorities could be strengthened. The wording around funding is good example of this, it is clear and direct and sets out an action.

Given that wildlife conservation is inherently tied to timeframes, it would be helpful to hear if and how the Ministry is considering timeframes beyond the political (4-5 years) to social (e.g. generation change) and ecological (100+ years) contexts in which conservation efforts need to take place.

To gain public support for these priorities we need broad based education so that people (?.)

Two-year priorities: Comments

General

Priority should be to simply continue the most important actions and defer the others. No new initiatives.

As far as they go, these are also obvious priorities. However, I have some reservations.

All of these initiatives should be considered high priority as they address critical aspects of wildlife conservation and ecosystem health in B.C.

Wildlife Act Renewal

The renewal of the Wildlife Act is particularly important, as it is imperative that it includes legislation that accommodates the growing desire to coexist with wildlife and holds people more accountable for attractants that put wildlife in complex situations often costing them their lives. This legislation should enhance protections for species at risk or of special concern, along with their critical habitats. Denning areas, which are essential for many species' survival, should also be explicitly protected.

Legislated objectives for fish and wildlife

Wildlife Act Renewal - I am fairly new to B.C., but based on my experience and involvement with the Wildlife Act and Regulation Review (WARR) in Alberta (still ongoing), unless there are some specific issues requiring immediate 'fixing', I don't see this as #1 priority.

re: WILDLIFE ACT RENEWAL. "ensure wildlife and habitat objectives are in the renewed Wildlife Act legislation" While I agree with this, I believe it is too general and too conservatively. I would reword: "ensure there is protection for wildlife including sufficient habitat protection".

The following are my comments specifically about this Wildlife Act Renewal:

- ♦ We are concerned about the reliance on wildlife habitat features (WHFs; GAR Order 213 under FRPA in Kootenay Region) as a province-wide instrument of habitat protection. We have had first-hand experience with the use of WHFs, and our observations, together with others, have pointed to the ineffectiveness of this tool. By its very nature, WHFs are a piecemeal and reductionist approach. The notion that protection of a single feature can protect the animal(s) using it does not align with what we know about wildlife ecology. These features, when identified, result in a patchwork of a few trees, or typically snags, remaining in an area that becomes logged. This is no longer a functional ecosystem that can support the long term needs of reproductive bats (a species group in which we have expertise). While it may seem prudent to save single wildlife habitat features, without some level of intact ecosystem to support these WHFs, such an act of identifying and retaining these features is misplaced conservation efforts and resources, and misleading to the public, foresters, industry, and even some biologists who work in good faith to meet standards that are assumed to be evidence-based.

- ♦ To be effective, WHFs would need to be seen not as an endpoint but as a starting point of identifying habitat needs for species at risk in an area. For example, WHFs could be identified as a points around which a polygon of habitat retention would be drawn. This is more in line with the Wildlife Habitat Areas (WHAs). However, WHAs reflect yet another problematic tool: linked to single species, applying only to certain species (Identified Wildlife), and labour intensive to implement such that significant backlogs exist currently despite few species qualifying.

In the spirit of the BEHF, any measure of habitat protection provided under the Wildlife Act needs to take into consideration retention of ecological integrity, ecosystem health, and biodiversity. In line with a new more inclusive biodiversity conservation framework needs to be inclusion of all species at risk as identified by B.C. Conservation Data Center, not a subset (i.e., Identified Wildlife). This in fact represents a much needed simplification, and provides recognition that all species assessed as at-risk through science-based assessments need to be afforded protection. And a habitat-based unit of protection should group species at risk, protecting intact and in many cases, connected, habitats for effective and long term protection (ie. ecosystem-based with recognition of multiple SAR for protection). For all of the reasons we have stated above, that the evidence suggests strongly that the piecemeal approach currently proposed which relies heavily on the existing tools of WHAs and WHFs should not underpin a revised Wildlife Act, and instead needs to be completely redesigned to reflect a Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework approach, focussing on biodiversity, all Species at Risk (as identified by the B.C. CDC), ecological integrity, and connectivity of protected landscapes. However, should the WHA concept persist for inclusion in the Wildlife Act, the following is important:

1. WHAs need to apply to all SAR, not a special Identified Wildlife List. Should this Identified Wildlife (IW) list be required based on currently limits of legislation, there needs to be automatic population of this IW list with SAR, which constantly reflects the status assigned by B.C. CDC, and the CDC must continuously be provided resources to assess and reassess B.C. species, both vertebrate and invertebrate, and reflect SARA.
2. A new more efficient process of establishing WHAs is essential. Multi-species approaches are needed, and a well-funded office that ensures timely creation of these areas with effective protection measures in place for each WHA.
3. WHFs be replaced with a revised process of WHA creation whereby single habitat features are identified for inclusion in a sufficiently large area of protected intact habitat. Other changes that will be needed with the current WHF identification process:

- a. Change the requirement from Foresters identifying WHFs, to requiring biologists for some species for which identification of habitat is more difficult;
 - b. Require appropriate technology/tools for identifying habitats of some species where applicable. For example, binoculars should be a required tool for identifying bird nests, bat detectors and in some cases radiotelemetry for locating bat nursery and hibernation habitats, etc.
4. Remove the requirement for a habitat feature to be a natural feature. For example, flooding in some areas of the province has reduced the prevalence of natural low elevation caves and rock crevices for bat hibernation; however, many low elevation mines have filled this gap. Bats do not differentiate among mine versus cave versus other underground habitats. E.g., bats will often hibernate in rock crevices in and around mines. As written now the WHFs will protect the crevice outside the mine, but not the one in the mine. This seemingly arbitrary human construct of what we define as natural versus anthropogenic habitat features threatens biodiversity and SAR.

The only ineffective 'misplaced' unit of protection in B.C. (in Kootenays so far) is WHFs which do not truly protect bat habitat. A few trees rather than an intact forest is not going to meet the needs of maternity roosts of multiple species of bats, let alone, the winter hibernation needs (now that we recognize there is widespread use of trees as hibernacula in many southern and coastal forests of B.C.). Bats are an important set of umbrella species. When old/mature forests are protected/managed for bats, the forest ecosystem (and ultimately the forest industry

Because of the above, I would suggest that in addition to the Priority for Wildlife/Forestry as worded in the existing letter, there needs to be language that also points to the need to change forestry practices as it pertains to keeping/restoring a much needed interconnected patchwork of intact forest habitat for bats and other species that contribute to the long term sustainable health of our forests and forestry industry.

The Wildlife Act Renewal/Review should not only include habitat objectives, but also meaningful protections for species at risk. This is a key opportunity area with this review (and/or the Biodiversity Law). Missing from this list is development of a Biodiversity Law (the end goal of the biodiversity and ecosystem health framework). I agree on the immediate steps related to this as noted in the short term priorities section, but either there or here should also be development & introduction of a Biodiversity Law.

Wildlife Act: Legislation to protect species at risk or of special concern is crucial to preventing further loss of biodiversity in B.C. The fate of biodiversity should not be at the whim of

changing political parties, but be protected by legal mechanisms. History has shown the dangers of assuming species are abundant. Species like woodland caribou or spotted owl are now trapped in the "extinction vortex," where declining populations make recovery increasingly difficult. However, when we take proactive steps, such as was seen with the halting the hunting of humpback whales and sea otters—species that were once extirpated from our coast—we see remarkable recovery. These successes show the power of thoughtful, targeted conservation. The same urgency must be applied to protect vulnerable species like grizzly bears, marbled murrelets, spotted owls, and Vancouver Island marmots. These species face unique threats, from slow reproductive rates to habitat loss and other human pressures. Strengthening legal protections will help ensure these species—and the ecosystems they depend on—have a fighting chance to recover and thrive for future generations.

Legislation for WLRS to have a budget that looks after wildlife and habitat, that will ensure that there is adequate funding to employ and fill staff positions in regional wildlife offices, also provide funding for CO's to enforce regulations on the landscape, this all needs to be with in the Provincial budget , We have seen the budget continually cut for the last 40 years.

For example: the fact the PHTAT is the only non-First Nations group being consulted makes it look like the review of the Wildlife Act will be mainly about harvest. No habitat means no animals to harvest, so let's not fiddle while the landscape diminishes.

We have been advocates for decades to establish habitat supply legal objectives set by government, much in the same way an Allowable Annual Cut (AAC) is set for timber extraction, but in this case it is for wildlife habitat maintenance that drives AAC target setting. Without the establishment of habitat supply objectives ("x" amount of hectares for each habitat class of 1 to 5 for a given indicator species), we will continue to see the erosion and degradation of wildlife habitat and wildlife abundance, especially in light of human population and resource extraction expansion in B.C. Has the Council ever discussed the concept of habitat supply objectives/targets? Despite some hesitations, setting such objectives/targets for multiple species is not placing the importance of one species over another, but serves a collaborative approach to resolving the issue. Here is a quick off the top list of wildlife species for NW B.C. that should have **effective** habitat supply objectives set:

- ♦ caribou (impacted by landscape modification and road/trail density that facilitates predator movement)
- ♦ grizzly bear (impacted by road density, loss of old-growth and early seral forest stand abundance that drives terrestrial food availability)
- ♦ goshawk (impacted by landscape modification and loss of old-growth structure complexity)

- ♦ marten (impacted by clear-cut logging resulting in loss of large organic material such as downed logs and snags)
- ♦ mtn. goat (impacted by human access inclusive of commercial and noncommercial recreation, and mineral exploration & development)
- ♦ mgt. sheep (impacted by human access inclusive of commercial and noncommercial recreation, and mineral exploration & development)

Setting habitat supply objectives of carefully chosen indicator species will encompass the habitat requirements for the bulk of wildlife species.

Wildlife/Forestry

While the Old Growth Strategic Review needs to be accelerated reaching conclusion within a 16 month period. What is sadly be missed used by industry and Forest Service are OGMA (Old Growth Management Areas). These are supposed to represent habitat types throughout the forest and yet are constantly being moved around so companies can log stands yet show there is a replacement OGMA that often are not of the same elevation component yet have similar characteristics i.e. a pine OGMA at 5000 ft. elevation is not similar in several habitat features to a pine OGMA at 3000 ft. elevation.

While the Old Growth Strategic Review is important, it is imperative to continue pushing for the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health framework for forest practices review. These are intertwined with the Old Growth mentioned above.

A 'no net gain' policy on forestry and resource road development would be huge.

Accelerating the implementation of the Old Growth Strategic Review Action Plan is urgent for safeguarding wildlife habitats threatened by logging, and working with First Nations to develop collaborative planning initiatives ensures culturally relevant and effective solutions. Prioritizing access management and road rehabilitation will restore habitat connectivity, while a 'no net gain' policy on forestry and resource roads is essential for halting further habitat destruction which has proven over time to be detrimental to the survival of many species within the province.

re: FORESTRY. I would reiterate the importance of this. Bats, for which I hold a great deal of expertise, are important for ecosystem health, including forests; for the economy including agricultural, and ironically, forestry. I say ironically, because forestry has drastically reduced the habitat for the ~11 species of bats that use trees to raise young in B.C. Forest Stewardship Plans need to change to nurture bats and keep these long-lived mammals on the landscape to be able to carry out their natural pest-control services. This has been made very clear in a

recent Science publication (Frank 2024) that as bats decline, pesticide use goes up, and infant mortality rates of humans goes up. The link is clear and in B.C., keeping bats on the landscape is important for the health of the forests, humans and the long term sustainability of the forestry industry.

Wildlife and forestry: There is an urgent need to protect and restore wildlife habitats while also exploring non-lethal methods for conservation initiatives. The provincial wolf cull has long been a contentious issue, raising both ethical and ecological concerns. While the complexities of wildlife management are recognized, evidence-based approaches that prioritize non-lethal methods for caribou recovery should be researched. A recent government-funded study indicated that wolf culls do increase caribou numbers, but that in the absence of meaningful habitat restoration, the cull will need to continue indefinitely. This can no longer be called a short-term solution. This study overlooked other options such as functional habitat restoration, which has been shown to reduce wolf-caribou encounters by up to 85%. Mass resources need to be flowing into habitat restoration, and researching further non-lethal predator management immediately. Protecting intact, critical habitat as well as wildlife corridors for species at risk need to be prioritized over all else.

We have to rethink our management practices on our forests extraction also how we start cultural burns and planting of none equitable tree types.

Come to grips with apparently over-committed forests, for both fiber production and other uses like grazing, and at the same time to everything possible to reduce fuel loads in the forest.

As I have stated previously in this survey, forests are critical for many species of wildlife, who in turn are important for reducing our carbon footprint: e.g., it is estimated that 2 kg Carbon Equivalent is spent annually on each hectare of farm land in areas where bat populations have plummeted, to develop and apply requisite pesticides. A similar figure has not yet been calculated for spraying of forests, but undoubtedly the consequential reduction in bats following habitat loss from timber harvest has trickle down effects for the health of the ecosystem, and economics of the industry. The 11 bat species that use forests in B.C. don't all need old growth per se, but they need mature trees in a healthy forest (ie not young forests regenerated from clear-cuts) and intact forests not small remnant patches or single trees. Bats need intact forest habitat enough to support birthing and raising of young (just one maternity colony of bats can use upwards of 60 trees offering specific thermal properties in just one summer for rearing young), and in some cases (that we are just learning about), they need a different suite of trees in the same forest for hibernation through winter. Bats are just one important component of forest ecosystems: their impressive diversity and multiple niches makes them an ideal umbrella species for forest management and timber harvest planning. To date however, forestry is one of the biggest threats that most of our bat species face. If we can

keep bat biodiversity in our forests, then *many* other species benefit. For this and many other reasons that I can't possibly capture here, I would like to see as a priority to REVISE FORESTRY POLICY AND PRACTICE. There needs to be a complete revision and paradigm shift for how forests are managed for wildlife (aligning within the BEHF) and this stems well beyond the discussion of Old Growth policy and protection.

Wildlife/forestry problems go well beyond just old growth and roads, although one has to start somewhere, and those are priorities, at least in the short term. The fact of the matter seems to be that the whole forest economy is not sustainable. Fiber is being removed faster than it can be regenerated, and other resources do not seem to be factored into current land uses. The old growth strategy seems also to apply only to a few BECs, when there are other forest landscapes with old growth that are being logged to oblivion, like the IDF and the ESSF to name just two in my area.

RWACs

Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees could potentially build localized governance structures, empowering communities to participate in wildlife management, though it is important to ensure the equal participation of non-consumptive interests and groups, as previously these committees seemed to be dominated by individuals or groups with hunting interests.

While the Regional Wildlife Advisory Councils are a great idea in theory, their advisory nature makes them lack any meaningful influence. As it stands (for the Okanagan-Boundary Council), there is a limited scope of work that the B.C. staff member is willing to engage on. In addition, any recommendations made by the RWAC's lacks significance in the absence of a dedicated funding model that can be leveraged to bring the habitat and land-based recommendations generated by the RWAC's into reality.

Wildlife should be held in trust for all British Columbians at a provincial level and informed by Indigenous knowledge, as well as western science. Stewardship should be part of rigorous consultation. Breaking up wildlife stewardship into regional committees could erode these principals and subjugate wide-ranging transboundary species to potentially dangerously uneven policies.

RWACs, if they are to be effective, need to meet with local wildlife and habitat managers. If they are going to advise, they need to first of all have some idea of what's going on.

Wildlife research

Developing a new wildlife research model that integrates Indigenous knowledge with western science will provide a more comprehensive understanding of conservation needs.

Similarly, research is always important, but I think we know enough science to make sound resource management decisions, we just need the processes identified and put in place to capture insight on management objectives of the broader B.C. public.

Re: WILDLIFE RESEARCH: I suggest additional words here in CAPS -- "bringing together Indigenous science and western science THROUGH KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND CAPACITY-BUILDING and involving academics, EXPERTS, industry and government (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) representatives."

Not sure what a research "model" is, but if wildlife research is not aimed at the needs identified by the managers it will end up being interest based.

Not in favour of Scholarship Research Scholarships and should replace with research grants in line with Minister's Wildlife Strategy and spread through Regional Wildlife Advisory areas of the Province.

Conservation lands

Finally, the implementation of the Conservation Lands Strategic Plan and the creation of a wetland policy are key to ensuring that B.C.'s diverse ecosystems are protected. It is imperative that we treat British Columbia and all its inhabitants with the same respect that's conveyed with provincial tourism campaigns - if the intact wilderness and ecotourism is what drives so much of our economy, the importance of protecting the biodiversity and ecosystems we rely on should be of the utmost importance.

Conservation Lands, Nature Agreement/30X30 is going to take a longer timeframe to sort out. Stakeholders have so far pretty much been left out - a priority would be involving stakeholders early on.

Actually implement the Conservation Lands strategic plan.

Conservation lands selected need to be seen to be doing with they were designed for, in particular if biodiversity and wildlife were factors in their choice. Monitoring is essential, and followed up with adaptive management. It is unbelievable that there is still no policy on wetlands. I await this with great anticipation, especially in a dry area like the Okanagan, where we have already lost more than 85% of our pre-settlement wetlands.

Side note, that I am not familiar with (nor could I find) the Strategic Plan for B.C.'s Conservation Lands. While I in principle agree with what is noted in regard to improving conservation lands, I think there is opportunity and need for some broader conservation around how we protect wildlife habitat in B.C. This is related to both action 10 and 11 of the T4W strategy, and I think they should be addressed in tandem.

There is a real need for a wetlands strategy which should be lifted to number one endeavor of the Conservation Lands Strategy. The Auditor General held hearings on this and came out with the importance for the Province to make wetlands a priority.

More tangible support of 30 by 30 initiative by quickly facilitating more protected areas.

Other

We need to put some closer [?] on harvesting of certain species re Sheep and goat in our territory

Would also like to see grasslands represented in these priorities. Similar to wetlands they too need a policy and additional protections.

Strongly support the broad base of input to policy, regulations and actions

These priorities need to be articulated in the letters from Premier Eby.

Other priorities and comments

Species at Risk

Legislation to protect species at risk or of special concern is crucial to preventing further loss of biodiversity in B.C. History has shown the dangers of assuming species are abundant—just look at the current crisis facing caribou and southern resident killer whales, both of which are heading toward extinction due to habitat loss, exploitation through hunting and live capture, and other human-caused pressures. These species are now trapped in the "extinction vortex," where declining populations make recovery increasingly difficult. However, when we take proactive steps, such as halting the hunting of humpback whales and sea otters—species that were once extirpated from our coast—we see remarkable recovery. These successes show the power of thoughtful, targeted conservation. The same urgency must be applied to protect vulnerable species like grizzly bears, marbled murrelets, spotted owls, and Vancouver Island marmots. These species face unique threats, from slow reproductive rates to habitat loss and other human pressures. Strengthening legal protections will help ensure these species—and the ecosystems they depend on—have a fighting chance to recover and thrive for future generations.

Coordinated regional/provincial monitoring plan(s) for assessing wildlife status and management effectiveness

Legislated protection for species at risk in B.C. (either stand alone law or wrapped into wildlife act update or biodiversity law)

Conservation of at-risk species

Conservation of habitats that support at-risk species

Legislation is needed to address B.C.'s ~2,000 endangered species, rapid urbanization, extreme road densities, changing climate, and archaic environmental protection laws. This includes meaningful habitat and wildlife considerations in the Forest & Range Practices Act and advancing the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework by enacting a Biodiversity Law and implementing a 'whole of government' approach to land use and planning.

Partnerships, communications and education

The Regional Wildlife and Habitat Advisory Committees to have more/better communication with the public for review of items being discussed and receiving feedback. The same holds true for the Provincial Council. Having consultants on these committee who can benefit from inside information to bid on future projects has it's worrying points and brings credibility into play. This needs to be reviewed.

Ensure that all British Columbians are included in the development of additional protected areas and historical access such as hunting, fishing, and low-impact recreation is maintained.

Building collaborative and transparent partnerships with natural resource business sectors (in particular adventure tourism) so they can, by being directly involved, help to achieve many of the priorities. They have many common goals and interests.

Historically, wildlife conservation and ecotourism communities have not had an official advisory mechanism for which to communicate their concerns and discuss opportunities with the Minister. The formation of an additional provincial advisory team to represent the "non-consumptive" community would create an avenue for well rounded discussions between First Nations, hunters, trappers, wildlife conservationists, scientists, and ecotourism companies.

Educate the public, including in schools, to an understanding of basic ecology.

Environmental Education to public, schools and politicians

Public education/awareness campaigns of values of wildlife

Establish decision making processes. Which have been presented to Gov.

The feedback on what PHTAT is providing or putting forward has not been made clear. There needs to be more updating and feedback.

Other

Chronic Wasting Disease!! Having been on the front lines with CWD management in Alberta for over 20+ years, this is something B.C. needs to address immediately and effectively while the province still can. Alberta now has CWD from East to West across the province south of Edmonton. Prevalence rates over 50% in some Wildlife Management Units.

Increased grassland protections in legislation and acts, including considerations during development stages of things like mines.

Increased funding and support for management of invasive species in B.C.

Addressing urban wildlife conflict

Recognizing that hunting is not the number one cause of wildlife populations, up or down trending. And focusing on the real issues/priorities of highway mortality, agriculture/wildlife conflict,

We have wildlife in our province that need to be put into a no hunting for 5 year break to see what that can do with their numbers.

There is an urgent need to protect and restore wildlife habitats while also exploring non-lethal methods for conservation initiatives. The provincial wolf cull has long been a contentious issue, raising both ethical and ecological concerns. While the complexities of wildlife management are recognized, evidence-based approaches that prioritize non-lethal methods for caribou recovery should be researched. A recent government-funded study indicated that wolf culls do increase caribou numbers, but that in the absence of meaningful habitat restoration, the cull will need to continue indefinitely. This study overlooked other options such as functional habitat restoration, which has been shown to reduce wolf-caribou encounters by up to 85%. It also failed to consider the long-term impact of continued old-growth habitat degradation on the survival of caribou, even with reduced wolf populations. Limited entry hunting of caribou is still allowed in certain regions of the province, including herd areas where population trends and sizes remain largely unknown. For example, caribou hunting was permitted in Region 7B until 2021, when 28 animals were harvested, according to big game hunting statistics. This region now supports six caribou herds that are subject to predator reduction efforts. We need a proactive, holistic strategy that addresses habitat protection and restoration and ensures that no species, whether predator or prey, is unfairly targeted or driven to the brink of extinction.

B.C. must move away from reactionary measures and instead embrace conservation strategies that respect the rights of all species to thrive on the landscape.

Increased funding, real actions 'on the ground'. Enough planning. Gov is responsible for stewardship plans. Let's get them in play.

Connectivity as part of other initiatives, such as 30x30 and improving habitat for wildlife (such as actions 10 and 11 of the T4W strategy)

Use the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Framework to propel the realization of these priorities.

Fish and Wildlife decisions based on evidence (western science, traditional and community knowledge etc.

The 2025 Mandate Letter from Government has to be shared and followed by all ministries and staff and promoted with the people of B.C.

Place much more managerial priority on the protection/management of wildlife habitat and by doing so, foster a more enlightened approach to wildlife management.