



Summary of Wildlife Dialogues 2026

Ministers Wildlife Advisory Council



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Thank you to all participants for your support of the Wildlife Dialogues, and for generously sharing your perspectives, insight and ideas to improve wildlife in B.C. Your contributions are truly appreciated.

1. Introduction

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 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.

This report summarizes themes and perspectives shared during the dialogues, reflecting the range of views expressed by participants. It is a summary of what was heard and should not be interpreted as representing Council’s views or position.

1.1 Purpose and Format

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

- Session 1: February 3, 2026, 9am-11am (Indigenous Dialogues)
- Session 2: February 4, 2026, 1pm-3pm (Stakeholder Dialogues)

Invitations were sent to all First Nations in British Columbia (Indigenous Dialogues) and to all of the Stakeholder Groups who participated in earlier Together for Wildlife engagement (Stakeholder Dialogues). This is the fourth year for Wildlife Dialogues, with a total of 89 participants in the Indigenous Dialogues, and with 87 in the Stakeholder Dialogues. These are the highest participation numbers for Wildlife Dialogues to date, reflecting broad interest and engagement across the Province with various Nations and stakeholders regarding restoration and protection of ecosystems and wildlife habitat in B.C.

The sessions were facilitated by Fraser Basin Council (FBC) (Theresa Fresco – Indigenous Dialogues, and Mahdis Araujo – Stakeholder Dialogues), with support from FBC and the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship staff for breakout group facilitation and notetaking. Participants were encouraged to participate fully for the sessions to capture a diversity of ideas from everyone. The intent was to hear a broad range of viewpoints and understanding and not to seek consensus.

For a full list of participants, please refer to the Participant List in Attachment 1.



1.2 Welcome Remarks & Opening Statements

Welcome from Minister Randene Neill

The Honourable Randene Neill, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Minister Neill expressed deep appreciation for the work participants do to preserve biodiversity and protect ecosystems in B.C. The importance of collaborative sessions like the Wildlife Dialogues was noted as a way to learn from each other, build trust, and move toward a collaborative approach for wildlife and habitat conservation. The importance of a whole of ecosystem approach was expressed. The following updates were provided:

- WLRS created a new Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Branch to prioritize ecosystem health and restoration efforts that are informed by multiple knowledge systems
- Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation between Canada, British Columbia, and the First Nations Leadership Council is being rolled out with parties committing to invest \$1 billion
- A number of Land Use Plans are underway (objectives, goals and values are set through land use plans to help protect large areas with high biodiversity values)
- Provincial Forestry Advisory Council (PFAC) has released their final report, acknowledging the need for a new way to do forestry and looking at the whole of the ecosystem vs fibre first

Minister Neill emphasized the need for greater public education on the value of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity for both the economy and the environment, along with the importance of collaboration across government. She also underscored the strong link between a thriving economy and healthy ecosystems. Minister Neill acknowledged the current provincial deficit and that efforts continue to increase dedicated funding for wildlife and habitat stewardship. Regarding the Wildlife Act review the following updates were provided:

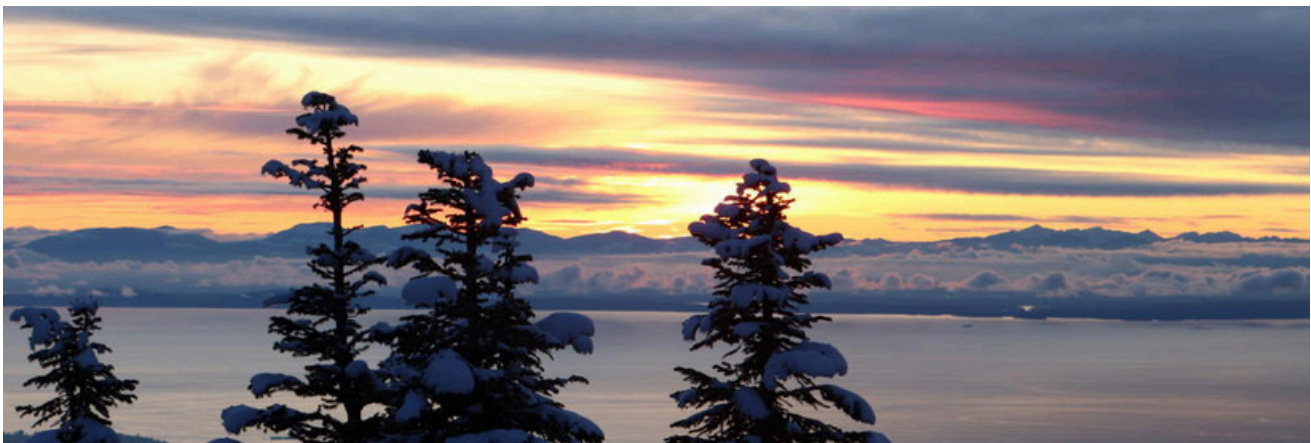
- Currently in process of refining *Wildlife Act* policy intentions and confirming next steps
- Engaged on proposed doubling of wildlife surcharges, which is dedicated to the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, and working on next steps to confirm implementation

Welcome from the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

Nancy Wilkin, MWAC Co-Chair

Nancy provided opening remarks, commenting on the need for all participants to support land care, independent oversight, and a new way of managing forests and co-governance. She noted the Provincial Forestry Advisory Council's final report – which calls out that the forestry system is broken and highlights the importance of moving from volume based to area-based systems alongside considerations of the whole of the ecosystem.

Nancy highlighted the 2 priority topics for the Breakout Sessions, which were gathered through survey results provided by Indigenous and Stakeholder participants and are: 1. Ecosystem Health Oversight, and 2. Habitat Restoration.



Presentations

Presentation by Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

Nancy Wilkin, MWAC Co-Chair

Nancy provided an update on the role of the MWAC, which was appointed as part of the Together for Wildlife Strategy, and whose job is to provide strategic advice to the Minister. She noted there will be some transition in 2026, with new council members to be appointed to MWAC. Nancy provided an overview of key areas of focus for MWAC for the next 2 years as:

- *Wildlife Act*: New Tools for Management and Habitat Protection
- Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees: Ensure Ministry Support
- Old Growth Strategic Review: Ensure Government Implements All Recommendations
- Wildlife Habitat Restoration: Identify Priorities and Accountabilities
- Funding: Ensure Government Delivery of the Doubling Surcharge and New Funding Mechanisms
- Support Progress on Co-Governance and Braiding Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science
- Scholarships: Maintain and Raise Public Profile
- Wild Sheep and Goats: Make Progress with the Ministry of Agriculture

Presentation by First Nations – BC Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum

Hunter Lampreau, Purnima Govindarajulu, Forum Co-Chairs

Hunter provided an overview of the role of the Forum in providing technical advice to the Province to improve its laws, policies and regulations with respect to wildlife and habitat stewardship and conservation. The Forum has emphasised legislative change and noted the need for better communication around a shared vision for reconciliation in B.C., to curb some of the existing misinformation. The Forum is looking to Nations and partners to hold B.C. accountable to implementing the work of the Forum and Together for Wildlife.

Presentation by Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team (PHTAT)

Stephen MacIver, PHTAT Chair

Stephen provided an overview of PHTAT members, who all have province-wide representation. While the focus of PHTAT is on hunting and trapping, the work is around much broader topics of wildlife stewardship in B.C. Stephen noted the functions of PHTAT as a provincial level stakeholder advisory team to provide advice to government related to the management of wildlife in B.C., with consideration of conservation and Indigenous priorities, as well as social and economic interests.

For more detail on the Presentations, please refer to the Presentation Slides in Attachment 2.



“Lands need time to heal and restore – if land is healthy, animals will come back.”

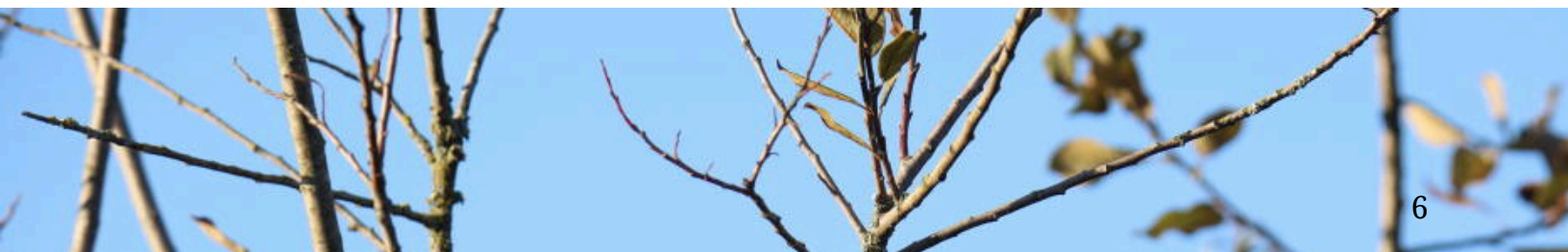
2. Key Points and Reflections

2.1 Key Points

There were overarching themes and viewpoints that were identified in the sessions:

- Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share their thoughts, and to connect on ideas to address shared challenges – with particular appreciation to Minister Neill for her participation.
- There is clear direction that change needs to come from a unified and collaborative approach - all groups, governments and Ministries - rather than a fragmented, siloed approach.
- Participants underscored a need for a paradigm shift - from reactive and costly restoration to holistic ecosystem stewardship and pro-active long-term planning.
- Both groups spoke to the need for long-term investments on the land base, and the need for B.C. to support innovative and creative solutions to fund habitat restoration.
- Both groups emphasized a need for strong accountability and compliance measures for industry and resource proponents and projects, and legislation to strengthen enforcement if restoration targets are not met.
- Ecosystem and habitat conservation must prioritize water stewardship as a foundational element of ecosystem function.
- There is a need for increased transparency around decision-making, alongside increased communications, public reporting and accessible data from B.C. around ecosystem health and restoration.
- A variety of community-led stewardship models were shared as effective solutions with broad support, including Guardian and community-based monitoring programs, which are seen as central to meaningful, on-the-ground oversight.
- There is ongoing confusion about some of the regulatory guidance from the Province that impacts sectors.

- Participants noted shared concerns that forestry and industry decisions override wildlife and habitat needs.
- There was significant interest in legally enforceable habitat requirements and objectives, independent oversight, and clearer mechanisms to track and report whether objectives are met.
- More transparency is needed from B.C. regarding review and approval processes and evaluation of environmental considerations for industrial projects. There is shared concern that many industry proponents do not have ecosystem health as a core concern or a necessary consideration for approval, as such, legally enforceable restoration obligations and a compensation model for habitat loss are required.
- There is a need for increased and clear communication from the Province around a shared vision for reconciliation and co-governance in B.C. Participants expressed experiencing a rise in anti-Indigenous sentiment coming from members of hunting, fishing and trapping organizations.
- Participants noted significant interest in learning more and shared concern about the potential spread of Chronic Wasting Disease.
- There was a call for the Province to communicate and clarify Indigenous rights and title, *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, and the difference between rightsholders and interested parties to the general public, to curb misinformation and promote inclusion.
- Viewpoints were shared on whether the anti-Indigenous sentiment is due to an education or knowledge gap – some feel hunting, fishing and trapping groups have been repeatedly educated through court decisions, policy reforms, and direct engagement, while others feel there is an ongoing need for public education around the legalities and realities of Indigenous rights and title.
- It was emphasized that enforcement on the land base must be through Indigenous-led conservation - more Guardians on the land and more authority is needed for them to manage lands and waters.



2.2 Reflections from MWAC

Our thanks to everyone who participated in our 4th year of the Wildlife Dialogues. Your passion for wildlife and wildlife habitat is demonstrated in the comments recorded in this report, as well as your concern that ecosystem health is not given priority in British Columbia.

The high level of participation and engagement shown by participants at the 2026 Wildlife Dialogues sends a strong message to the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship and the Ministers Wildlife Advisory Council on the vital importance of long-term sustainable and functioning ecosystem and habitat stewardship governance systems.

You have provided a path forward for new recommendations to be developed by the Minister's Wildlife Council, for action by our current and very supportive minister - Minister Randene Neill. Our thanks to the Minister for attending both of the Wildlife Dialogues this year!

Here are some of the areas that Council should consider over the coming year:

- Legally enforceable wildlife and habitat objectives
- Oversight of forestry decisions under a co-governance framework
- Transparency to reveal how to get ecosystem health as a core concern and a necessary consideration for approval of industrial projects recognizing the potential impact of climate change
- A clearly communicated shared vision for reconciliation and co-governance
- Landscape level planning to prevent habitat loss as a more effective approach than habitat restoration
- Move from siloed decision making to holistic approaches for ecosystem stewardship, with all parties involved
- Traditional knowledge and Western science brought together with on the ground local knowledge

Throughout the Wildlife Dialogues sessions we heard from both the Indigenous participants and the Stakeholder participants about the need for greater collaboration. A challenge you have given to Council is to develop a recommendation to the Minister to make this a reality. More action in 2026/27 is needed for Together for Wildlife to ensure a future for wildlife and wildlife habitat in B.C.

Regards,

Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.) & Nancy Wilkin, Co-Chairs, Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

3. Wildlife Dialogues Breakout Groups – Overview of Feedback from Participants



Participants on both days were divided into 6 breakout groups each to discuss the following topics and questions:

Discussion Topic #1: Ecosystem Health Oversight

- **What do we mean by Ecosystem Health Oversight, particularly as it applies to wildlife and wildlife habitat?**
- **How can we make practical improvements to ensure and strengthen accountability?**

For example, through amendments to the Wildlife Act, the way Forest Landscape Plans are being used, or other mechanisms?

Discussion Topic #2: Habitat Restoration

- **What are key priorities for Habitat Restoration in B.C.?**
For example, are there geographic areas which are more important for wildlife; are there habitat types which need priority, or is there a different way to determine priorities for restoration?
- **How do we ensure there is accountability for Habitat Restoration?**

Are there ways the renewal of the Wildlife Act could help? What about Forest Landscape Plans?

3.1 Session 1 Overview

Ecosystem Health Oversight

3.1.1 Feedback from Indigenous Participants

What do we mean by Ecosystem Health Oversight, particularly as it applies to wildlife and wildlife habitat?

Participants described a strong desire for Indigenous-led ecosystem health oversight grounded in traditional knowledge and recognition of Indigenous authority. Holistic stewardship must consider cultural values and interconnections across landscapes. Participants expressed broad frustration with ineffective provincial mechanisms and conflicting government priorities. Process fatigue was noted due to repeated provincial meetings without meaningful outcomes, and frustration with being treated as stakeholders rather than rightsholders. Inclusion remains inconsistent, particularly regarding overlapping territories.

Current provincial processes are seen as obstructive, with a lack of regulatory enforcement, leading some Nations to act independently to develop their own initiatives to uphold stewardship responsibilities. Examples of successful Indigenous land management initiatives were emphasized, along with the importance of moving to landscape-level planning across sectors. There is a strong call for investment in whole-ecosystem stewardship, and a coordinated approach to assessing cumulative effects in order to protect ecosystem functions. Participants emphasized a need for strong accountability metrics for industry and resource projects. Forest landscape planning was noted as a tool and opportunity for shared ecosystem management, within meaningful implementation of co-governance and joint decision-making.

Key Themes

- Implement Holistic, Long-Term Stewardship of Ecosystems
- Prioritize Co-governance over Consultation
- Incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- Recognize Existing Processes not leading to Meaningful Outcomes
- Invest in Stronger Regulatory Enforcement
- Consider Cumulative Effects
- Address Accountability for Industry, Forestry and Resource Projects
- Recognize Opportunities in Forest Landscape Planning

How can we make practical improvements to ensure and strengthen accountability?

For example, through amendments to the Wildlife Act, the way Forest Landscape Plans are being used, or other mechanisms?

Participants emphasized that landscape-level planning should be prioritized, and should shift away from project-by-project approvals. Participants highlighted the importance of Guardian and land-based stewardship programs as having real impact on the land, and needing long-term funding support. A common thread among examples that were shared of positive ecosystem restoration is that they are seen as most effective when they are Nation-driven and grounded in traditional knowledge. Participants emphasized the importance of Nation-led data governance and tracking systems, to track habitat conditions and to enforce commitments. Compliance and inspection processes should be strengthened, and regulatory processes should require best practices, beyond relying on minimal standards.

Key Themes

- Implement Landscape-level Planning across Sectors
- Address Need for Long-Term Funding
- Support Nation-led Data Governance
- Strengthen Compliance and Planning Processes



Ecosystem Health Oversight

3.1.2 Feedback from Stakeholder Participants

What do we mean by Ecosystem Health Oversight, particularly as it applies to wildlife and wildlife habitat?

Participants emphasized that ecosystem health oversight must move beyond a species-by-species approach toward landscape-level functional processes, considering long-term adaptability and a unified approach across all groups and governments. It must integrate multiple knowledge systems, and include shared definitions and a shared vision for the desired future state of ecosystems and habitat in B.C. Ecosystem Health Oversight should define and measure ecosystem functions, and ensure proactive action, beyond crisis response. Ecosystem Health Oversight must integrate holistic water stewardship perspectives – it was highlighted that all systems relate back to water as central to ecosystem function. Participants emphasized that there is a need for legal objectives with enforcement mechanisms that are strong and actionable. This pertains to forestry and mining, and also recreational land uses including hunting and trapping. Furthermore, there must be thresholds and triggers and then enforceable repercussions if stewardship and restoration targets are not met.

Key Themes

- Improve Processes for Functional Ecosystem Health Oversight
- Prioritize Watersheds and Wetlands
- Consider Connectivity
- Strengthen Accountability and Communication
- Provide More Enforcement
- Provide Clear Objectives and Binding Direction

“We can’t continue in a destroy/restore cycle.”

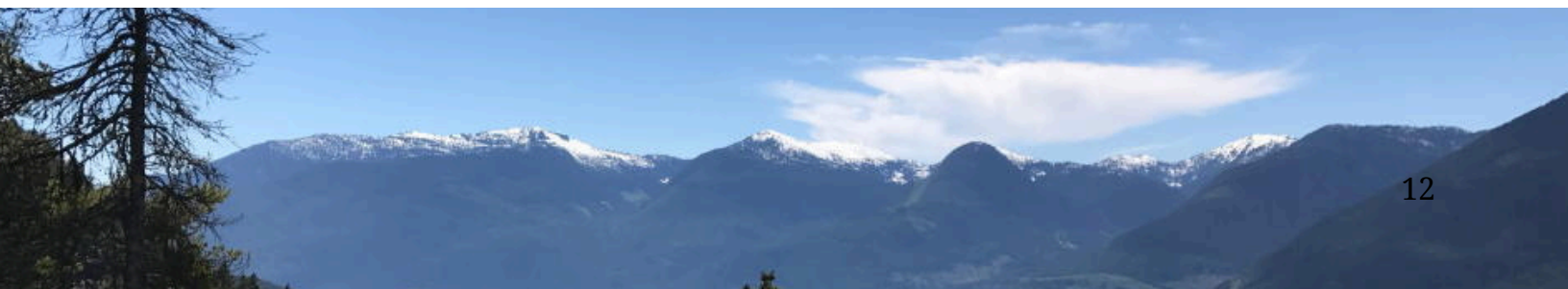
How can we make practical improvements to ensure and strengthen accountability?

For example, through amendments to the Wildlife Act, the way Forest Landscape Plans are being used, or other mechanisms?

Participants expressed uncertainty about whether *Wildlife Act* amendments can deliver accountability. It was noted that systems are dysfunctional because the Acts are not as effective as they could be and more protections are needed. There is concern that forestry decisions override wildlife needs. While the *Wildlife Act* can provide legal oversight and act as a lever, it was emphasized that accountability must extend beyond *Wildlife Act* reforms. Beyond being supported by measurable habitat requirements, participants emphasized that accountability must also be embedded in planning frameworks and resourced adequately. Accountability should be built into land-based planning tools with resources to support them. There was significant interest in legally enforceable habitat requirements, independent oversight, and clearer mechanisms to track and report whether objectives are being met. Participants noted that biodiversity legislation that is enforced and applies across all Ministries is needed. Participants also highlighted the need for more transparency from B.C. on how decisions are made, alongside the need for more accessible data.

Key Themes

- Consider Limitations of the *Wildlife Act* for Adaptive Management
- Provide More Monitoring, Reporting, and Resourcing
- Address Gaps in Data
- Provide More Enforcement and Fees
- Improve Biodiversity Legislation and Transparency



Session 2 Overview

Habitat Restoration

3.2.1 Feedback from Indigenous Participants

What are key priorities for Habitat Restoration in B.C.?

For example, are there geographic areas which are more important for wildlife; are there habitat types which need priority, or is there a different way to determine priorities for restoration?

Participants emphasized a holistic and collective approach: prioritization should not imply that any ecosystem element is less important, as all components are interconnected. Concerns were raised about human pressures and industrial impacts on the land, due to short-sighted thinking. Current forestry practices are unsustainable and major industrial impacts to habitat need to be addressed. Restoration priorities should recognize that watershed health is central to ecological recovery. Legislation should be updated and include guiding principles and best practices, to create accountability and avoid costly litigation through the courts. A momentum shift is needed, to get to a place where people with different priorities and worldviews can come together in an ethical space and engage in co-governance implementation. Participants highlighted regional variation in priorities across Nations, noting variations in cultural values, food security needs, and local conditions. Indigenous knowledge and site-specific context should guide decisions to maintain balance across the land and water systems.

Key Themes

- Address Major Impacts to Habitat
- Promote Wetland and Riparian Restoration
- Mitigate Industrial Impacts
- Focus on Culturally Sensitive and Important Species
- Commit to Long-term Thinking
- Update Legislation To Strengthen Legally Enforceable Obligations
- Consider Value of Co-Governance vs Litigation

How do we ensure there is accountability for Habitat Restoration?

Are there ways the renewal of the Wildlife Act could help? What about Forest Landscape Plans?

Participants emphasized the need for stronger accountability in habitat restoration, noting that industry commitments often feel voluntary and should be backed by legally enforceable obligations and measurable actions. They highlighted the importance of a shift to shared agreements with real consequences for both government and industry, supported by long-term funding and respect for Indigenous law and knowledge. Participants emphasized the need for Nation-led restoration and planning approaches that reflect real, on-the-ground conditions, supported through the necessary auditing tools to ensure co-decision agreements are implemented as intended. Understanding carrying capacity, ground-truthing data, and ensuring landscape-level planning that accounts for full ecosystem linkages—rather than isolated sites—were identified as key priorities. Participants noted hunting and access concerns need to be addressed, with hunting requiring stronger regulation. The participants also highlighted that accountability improves when people are physically present on the land, referencing the importance of place-based stewardship. Restoration projects need clear timelines and transparent public reporting to monitor systemic evaluation of outcomes.

Key Themes

- Incorporate Co-Governance and Indigenous Authority
- Improve Monitoring and Measuring of Restoration Implementation
- Implement Enforceable Restoration Obligations for Industry
- Restore Nation-Led Monitoring and Stewardship
- Address Hunting Concerns

Session 2 Overview

Habitat Restoration

3.2.2 Feedback from Stakeholder Participants

What are key priorities for Habitat Restoration in B.C.?

For example, are there geographic areas which are more important for wildlife; are there habitat types which need priority, or is there a different way to determine priorities for restoration?

Participants emphasized that preventing habitat loss is more effective than restoration, which is costly and often limited in effectiveness. Priorities should include rare and highly threatened ecosystems, endangered and keystone species, and should move from single-species models to ecosystem health models. Participants noted that restoration should not be used to justify further degradation of habitat. Connectivity matters, and restoring relationships between Nations, stakeholders and communities can help the practical restoration of habitat as well. Participants underscored the urgency of a paradigm shift—from siloed decision-making and reactive restoration to holistic ecosystem stewardship and pro-active long-term planning. There is opportunity for the Province to support more innovation for restoration.

Watershed health should be prioritized as a foundational element of ecosystem health, with investments going where they have measurable impact. It was emphasized that long-term funding mechanisms for restoration need to be explored and implemented. Participants noted a lack of alignment between regulators, and layers of different rules affecting practitioners. To address the significant information and education gap, knowledge sharing needs to happen earlier and data needs to be more transparent and accessible. Communities need practical, on-the-ground resources. The need to evaluate the true ecological state of each region was emphasized, informed by Indigenous knowledge and local conditions. Access management was noted as a priority for both hunting access and restoration areas – letting the land rest to restore habitat and wildlife. The *Wildlife Act* Review and Forest Landscape Planning were highlighted as important opportunities for shared planning and implementation, depending on political will, meaningful implementation, and coordinated effort.

Key Themes

- Prioritize Protection over Restoration
- Promote Restoration Priorities Driven by Connectivity Needs
- Integrate Data Tools and Mapping
- Promote Reactive over Proactive Planning
- Prioritize Healthy Watersheds
- Implement Long-term Funding Mechanisms
- Improve Alignment between Regulators
- Prioritize Ecosystem Health Over Single-Species
- Strengthen Information Sharing
- Address Access Management
- Prioritize Meaningful Implementation of *Wildlife Act* Review and Forest Landscape Planning



“A shift is needed; we would not have to restore habitats if we did not degrade them...”

How do we ensure there is accountability for Habitat Restoration?

Are there ways the renewal of the Wildlife Act could help? What about Forest Landscape Plans?

Participants stressed that accountability requires measurable and enforceable objectives, and legal mandates to protect and restore habitat. Rather than just voluntary guidelines, legally enforceable measures must be required from industry, and accountability mechanisms should force industry and corporations to include ecosystem restoration as part of the cost of doing business. Restoration should not be siloed, and rather be embedded in coordinated landscape-level frameworks with time-bound commitments. Participants emphasized the importance of long-term stewardship and multigenerational timelines, with a need for long-term funding commitments. Connectivity is essential and restoration planning and implementation must link ecosystems rather than fragment them. A holistic approach and partnerships are needed to support community driven projects and promote trust across boundaries. Participants noted that more emphasis needs to be put on cumulative effects and alignments, alongside considerations of the economics of habitat degradation.

Key Themes

- Create Restoration Targets with Time-Bound Commitments
- Improve Accountability and Enforcement Mechanisms
- Consider Alignments and Economics
- Promote Long-term Timelines for Funding and Monitoring
- Promote Connectivity and Trust Across Boundaries

Additional Information

For additional information related to the 2026 Wildlife Dialogues Summary Report, please refer to the following separate Attachments:

Attachment 1: Participant List and Agenda

Attachment 2: Presentation Slides

Attachment 3: Wildlife Dialogues Breakout Groups – Detailed Feedback from Participants

Session 1 Detailed Feedback: Ecosystem Health Oversight

1.1 Feedback from Indigenous Participants

1.2 Feedback from Stakeholder Participants

Session 2 Detailed Feedback: Habitat Restoration

2.1 Feedback from Indigenous Participants

2.2 Feedback from Stakeholder Participants



“Responsibility for ecosystem health does not rest solely with user groups—everyone is responsible, from industry to governments to communities.”