



BRITISH
COLUMBIA



Wildlife and Agriculture Conflict Reduction Review

Stakeholder Feedback
and Recommended Next Steps
November 2016

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On behalf of: Wildlife and Agriculture Conflict Reduction
Review Committee (AGRI, FLNR, ENV)

Background



Issues

Over the past several years livestock and crop producers have expressed concern about:

- Damage to crops from ungulates and waterfowl
- Losses due to predation on livestock
- Agriculture impacts on wildlife protection
- Need for more effective policies, stronger compensation programs and better client services

Objectives



Review Team

An inter-ministry Wildlife and Agriculture Conflict Reduction Review Committee was struck in October 2015 to review the effectiveness of current provincial policies and programs.

Objectives

- Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of provincial policies and programs that address wildlife-agriculture conflicts
- Evaluate inter-ministry communication and coordination
- Review approaches to program delivery and client services

Review Process



1. Stakeholder groups who participated

Number of Responses	Organization Type
7	B.C. Crop Producers
9	B.C. Livestock Producers
4	Conservation Groups
4	Other Key Stakeholders
24	Total Responses

2. First Nations engagement

More than 200 First Nations were invited to participate. These discussions are still under way and are expected to continue.

Review Paper and Questionnaire



Questions Asked

For each wildlife group (ungulates, waterfowl and predators) and for wildlife protection, stakeholders were asked:

- What is the concern and why?
- What policies or program are working, not working?
- What actions should government take?

Regarding Communication and Coordination, stakeholders were asked:

- How do you currently provide input into identifying and managing wildlife/agriculture conflicts?
- What structure would improve effectiveness of communication?
- How can government improved coordination and client service?

Response Themes

Response Themes



Ministry of
Agriculture

WILDLIFE AND
AGRICULTURE CONFLICT
REDUCTION REVIEW

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK
REPORT

MARCH 2016

1. Damage and Compensation
2. Wildlife Management and Mitigation
3. Habitat Management
4. Forest and Range Management Practices
5. Communication and Coordination

What We Heard



Theme 1 – Damage and Compensation

Issues

- Stakeholders appreciate compensation through current AGRI programs, however
- Compensation for losses is insufficient or unavailable for some sectors
- Damage loss assessments need to be reviewed and adjusted in order to properly account for the regional disparities of wildlife damage

Recommended Actions

- Establish agriculture program compensation rates that are current and regionally adjusted
- Review production insurance to have rates that are adjustable when higher frequencies of wildlife losses occur
- Provide compensation to horticulture sector (e.g. fruit and vegetable)
- Improve verification of livestock mortalities

What We Heard



Theme 2 – Wildlife Management and Mitigation

Issues

- There are widely differing views regarding fencing for wildlife strategies
- A desire for more targeted mitigation actions
- General concerns about disease management between wildlife and livestock

Recommended Actions

- Establish clear provincial policy for wildlife population management objectives; develop policies and objectives that consider agriculture, habitat, hunting, and wildlife values
- Conduct more wildlife population inventories
- Expand funding for fencing to prevent ungulate damage
- Increase hunting access and culling opportunities in regions where damage is greatest

What We Heard



Theme 3 – Habitat Management

Issues

- Habitat availability to support current wildlife population levels, especially keystone species
- Improved wildlife habitat would address a number of agricultural objectives

Recommended Actions

- Clearly define and communicate wildlife population and habitat objectives
- Conduct habitat assessments
- Improve ungulate habitat to decrease agriculture interface issues
- Increase wildlife population inventories to contribute to knowledge-based policy decisions

What We Heard



Theme 4 – Forest and Range Management Practices

Issues

- Current forest and range management practices are seen as contributing to increased conflicts with wildlife
- MPB affected areas not as supportive of wildlife or agriculture: restricted access and reduced forage capacity
- Logging and other resource roads create corridors that allow increased predator interactions
- Logging activities damage range fences and impact range use patterns.

Recommended Actions

- Review forest and range management practices to enhance habitat and forage capacity for wildlife and livestock
- Improve and expand programs for Crown range enhancements such as prescribed burning, invasive plant control, grass seeding, etc.
- Review management of MPB areas to increase ungulate and livestock use
- Review forest practices to preserve existing range infrastructure

What We Heard

Theme 5 – Communication and Coordination

Issues

- Lack of communications about government policies and programs
- Communication is only through direct contact with frontline staff
- Would like single entry point to government for concerns
- Stakeholders have difficulty accessing information
- Response times from management to inquiries is slow

Recommended Actions

- Improve communication to all stakeholders on policies and programs
- Use multiple communication tools and improve online content
- Improve response times to inquiries
- Establish *local teams* to better manage identified issues, such as waterfowl damage in forage crops
- Establish *interdisciplinary committees at the regional level*, to identify issues and develop solutions within each region
- Establish a *Provincial Roundtable* to collectively identify and find effective solutions to broad policy and program issues, with representation from all stakeholder groups and decision-makers from AGRI, FLNR and ENV
- Facilitate better communication amongst ranchers, hunters and trappers



Current Provincial Activities

1. Livestock Protection Program – AGRI, FLNR, MOE
2. Agriculture Wildlife Program – AGRI with support
 - Compensation and Mitigation
3. Wild Sheep Study – AGRI, FLNR
4. Support for Existing Wildlife-Agriculture Conflict Committees – FLNR, AGRI, MOE
5. Wildlife Management Planning – FLNR
6. Wildlife Population Inventories – FLNR
7. Ongoing Wildlife Management Activities - FLNR



Recommended Outcomes

- 1. Remain open to further engagement of First Nations**
- 2. In depth data collection and financial information**
- 3. Establish a Ministers' Provincial Round Table with a summer/early autumn 2017 inaugural conference**
- 4. Establish or use existing Regional Tables to address local wildlife/agriculture concerns**
- 5. Improve communications – release a “What You Said” report, develop regional – provincial communication strategies**

Next Steps



- Establish mechanisms for dialogue with First Nations
- Continue to engage FLNR regional ADM staff in proposed provincial responses
- Brief Ministers of AGRI, FLNR and ENV
- Present to Environment and Land Use Committee
- Communicate results to stakeholders “What You Said”

BC Ministry of Agriculture

Wildlife and Agriculture Conflict Reduction Review

Final Report

Prepared by Sector Development Branch
October 2016

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Executive Summary

Between October 2015 and the end of March 2016 the Ministries of Agriculture (AGRI), Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNR) and Environment (ENV) conducted a Wildlife and Agriculture Conflict Reduction Review that involved discussion with 24 stakeholder groups and engagement opportunities for more than 200 First Nations in the province. The purpose of the review was to evaluate:

- the effectiveness and efficiency of provincial policies and programs that address wildlife-agriculture conflicts;
- inter-ministry communication and coordination;
- approaches to program delivery and client services; and to
- develop recommendations on further analysis and government actions.

Policies and programs related to ungulate, waterfowl, predators and wildlife protection were reviewed.

Feedback from stakeholders resulted in considerable comments and recommendations that included:

- Establish clear provincial policy for ungulate population management;
- Establish agriculture program compensation rates that are current and regionally adjusted that include ungulate and waterfowl damage as well as livestock mortalities;
- Establish a compensation program for sheep predation commensurate as that for cattle;
- Review production insurance to have rates that are adjustable when higher frequencies of wildlife losses occur;
- Expand funding for fencing and investigate alternative mitigation methods for ungulate, waterfowl and predator management;
- Improve the timeliness of the predator verification process by providing more trained verifiers;
- Implement the Grey Wolf Management Plan;
- Increase hunting access and culling opportunities in regions where ungulate, waterfowl and predator damage is greatest;
- Review forest and range management practices with regards to improving forage capacity, habitat and access for natural prey populations;
- Improve coordination of all agencies regarding wildlife-livestock disease management including developing up-to-date protocols for managing disease;
- Establish protocols for managing wild and domestic sheep populations;
- Engage locally with stakeholders on developing habitat and range management objectives;
- Revise regulations to all Game Farm producers to access Crown range; and
- Increase species specific inventories.

Stakeholders were also asked about communication and coordination with government. They expressed frustration at the lack of communication from government about wildlife-agriculture policies and programs. Many stakeholders commented that, with the loss of regional agriculture wildlife committees, it has been several years since they have had the opportunity for meaningful dialogue with all three Ministries and other stakeholders. Previous provincial level committees dealing with agriculture-wildlife issues are no longer active. As an example, the 2008 Provincial Agriculture Zone Wildlife Program (PAZWP) is essentially defunct.

Stakeholders had a number of recommendations for improving communication, however their main request is that government establish:

- more local teams to better manage identified issues, such as waterfowl damage in forage crops;
- interdisciplinary committees at the regional level, to identify issues and develop solutions within each region; and

- a mechanism to collectively identify and find effective solutions to broad policy and program issues, with representation from all stakeholder groups and decision-makers from AGRI, FLNR and ENV.

Members of the Wildlife and Agriculture Conflict Reduction Review Team, a cross-Ministry committee with representatives from AGRI, ENV, FLNR, recommend that the province establish a Ministers' Provincial Round Table to develop a more consistent and coordinated policy approach to address wildlife and agriculture conflicts. A cohesive provincial policy framework will better serve all stakeholders in achieving desired outcomes related to wildlife and agriculture conflicts. Membership would include those stakeholders who were consulted for the review, First Nations, industry representatives, and representatives with technical and academic expertise.

In addition, the team recommends establishing Regional Tables with representation from each of the three relevant ministries and local stakeholder and First Nations groups to work through geographically and culturally appropriate solutions to the recommendations the consultation process identified.

Background

The provincial government manages wildlife populations across the province to create a balance of environmental, economic and social outcomes. The government also supports the agriculture sector, in particular those farmers and ranchers producing cattle, sheep and other livestock that creates both stable economic activity and sustainable food source outcomes. Management of wildlife/agriculture conflicts falls mainly to the above mentioned three provincial ministries with separate mandates and programs, but with a mutual interest in client services and effective resource management. It is recognized that the three ministries must work collaboratively to develop and deliver programs that address the issues and concerns affecting both sectors.

Over the past several years, a number of livestock and forage producers have expressed their concern for agricultural losses from wild ungulate and waterfowl damage to crops, as well as losses due to predation on livestock. Associated with this, stakeholders have also expressed the need for more effective policies relating to wildlife and habitat management, stronger compensation programs to reduce the economic burden to the agriculture sector, and overall better client service from government.

The province has spent more than \$4.8M in 2015 on compensation/mitigation of this issue, but the responses from the producer groups is that it is still not doing enough.

As a result, the government initiated the Wildlife and Agriculture Conflict Reduction Review to assess current provincial policies and programs related to agriculture-wildlife interface issues. This initiative involved the Ministry of Agriculture (AGRI), the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNR), and the Ministry of Environment (ENV). The roles of each ministry are described in Appendix 1. The purpose of the Review was to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of provincial policies and programs that address wildlife-agriculture conflicts, evaluate current inter-ministry communication and coordination, and review approaches to program delivery and client service.

The review was supported by all three ministries, each of which contributed to its work. It is important to note that the committee charged with conducting this review was asked to identify ways that the three participating ministries could increase their coordination and improve efficiency in addressing wildlife conflicts while respecting their individual mandates.

The review was not intended to create new legislation or reorganize government departments. The focus was to build on the one land one manager concept and leverage better service and management outcomes by ensuring there are clear roles, more collaboration and introduction of best practices to provide better service to our clients and for mutually sustainable economic activities. It is recognized that a comprehensive balanced approach will be required to address the challenges raised through the consultative process.

Issues associated with wildlife and agriculture include predators attacking domestic animals, e.g. wolves, cougars, coyotes or bears attacking cattle and sheep, as well as other smaller mammals and birds preying on free-range domestic fowl. Much of the predation mortalities occur when livestock are grazing on Crown land.

Wild ungulates (elk, deer and moose) and grizzly and black bears can damage the value of field and forage crops, as well as stored feedstocks, through consuming, trampling and excreting. Waterfowl can also destroy forage and field crops by consuming and excreting.

Wild waterfowl infecting domestic commercial flocks of birds were responsible for the 2014 Avian influenza outbreak. Nuisance species such as starlings and robins can do damage to high value berry and tree fruit crops

and rodents can damage and contaminate stored crops. Wildlife can also impact equipment and infrastructure such as fences and barns.

Additional problems can be caused by domestic animals, e.g. domestic sheep infecting wild sheep and domestic cattle infecting wild ungulates. Domestic animals may also affect the natural habitat of valued species, impact species at risk and reduce forage opportunities for wildlife.

Agriculture

The portion of the livestock industry in BC using crown and private grazing (dairy, beef, sheep and other livestock) generates farm cash receipts of more than \$850M annually. The province realizes more than \$2.1M annually in grazing tenure revenues from about 2,000 Crown land grazing tenure holders. There are 34.9M ha of Crown grazing land in BC, in addition to grazing on private land and on the 140k ha of Indian Reserve Land within the Agricultural Land Reserve.

Domestic sheep are very valuable to the province, providing an average of \$7M per year in farm cash receipts in 2014.

The estimated number of animals on farms in BC as of January 1, 2015 was 411,000 beef cattle, 158,000 dairy cattle, 40,000 sheep and 7,500 bison. The recent BC Cattlemen's Association (BCCA) survey of its members, of whom 25 per cent responded, estimated that provincially the annual beef cattle losses due to predators over the past five years was 1,261 head a year. One can assume the number was actually higher.

Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Operations

FLNR wildlife staff participate on committees and working groups to develop wildlife management plans and hunting regulations under the Wildlife Act that recognize the rights and interests of First Nations, stakeholders and the public including those of ranchers and farmers. Range staff also participate on committees and working groups to develop range management plans and integrate them with wildlife management and grazing objectives.

The use of the Crown range resource is managed through tenures issued under both the Range Act and Land Act administered by FLNR in districts throughout the Province. FLNR also monitors range condition, coordinates big game inventories (that can be linked to impacts to the agricultural sector) and develops wildlife management plans and hunting regulations. Resident and guided hunting contributes approximately \$350 M to the province's economy with the guide outfitting industry's portion valued at \$116M. For example, wild sheep are a valuable resource to British Columbians, bringing in an estimated \$5M a year from hunting, tourism and other related activities.

Resident hunters harvest approximately 47,500 big game animals annually. A single hunting trip for resident hunters on average represents \$2,900 in revenue to the economy. Overall, \$8.3M in license fees are collected annually.

Big game inventory funding has doubled since 2005. In 2014 big game inventory funding through the Land Based Inventory Strategy (LBIS) totalled \$750,000. A further \$2.5M in surcharges was paid to the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund for restoration work.

Environment

As part of the mandate of the Conservation Office Service (COS) conservation officers respond to all human wildlife interactions regarding public safety.

Prior to the Livestock Protection Program the COS responded to all wildlife attacks on livestock in BC on crown and private land with verification and potential mitigation work. Over the last three years the COS has received on average 770 complaints per year to the COS Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line that related to loss or harassment of livestock by predators. Mitigation work by the COS involves shooting, trapping and non-lethal capture methods on verified attacks. Any mitigation by the COS is dependent on work priorities, available time and resources.

The Predator Wildlife Coordinator previously provided verification training to livestock producers across BC. As of March 2016 there are 638 producer verifiers in BC. This training is continuing to be delivered by the COS. These formal field investigation and reporting procedures are essential to positively determine the harassments or attacks on livestock. In the case of cattle (beef and dairy) verification is required before compensation can be paid through Ministry of Agriculture programs.

Current Resources and Supporting Activities

Compensation

The Ministry of Agriculture is responsible to deliver compensation payments under the Agriculture Wildlife Program (AWP). It provides compensation for up to 80 per cent of verified losses to grain and forage crops caused by wildlife including ungulates migratory waterfowl and other wildlife. It also compensates for up to 80 per cent of verified cattle losses caused by wild predators. This program is authorized as part of the Business Risk Management Annex of Growing Forward 2 (GF2) a federal-provincial-territorial initiative that has been in place since 2008.

Compensation payments have averaged around \$1.6 million annually with 60 per cent of these payments being recovered from Canada under the Growing Forward 2 (GF2) Agreement. 2015/16 costs were well above normal as a result of adjustments to compensation rates for higher hay prices (due to drought) and higher cattle prices.

Agricultural Wildlife Program -Fiscal 2015/16 costs

\$3,003,292	Forage Loss Compensation
\$152,079	Grain Loss Compensation
\$144,871	Predation Loss Compensation
\$306,000	Loss Mitigation Projects
\$1,219,706	Fiscal 2015 admin costs
\$4,825,948	TOTAL

Mitigation

Mitigation of agriculture-wildlife interface conflicts is a policy approach focussing on prevention and mitigation instead of relying only on compensation. Under the GF2 Agreement, Canada introduced stronger requirements that compensation would only be cost shared where mitigation measures were in place. This prompted AGRI to develop the Livestock Damage Mitigation Initiative to support prevention and mitigation measures to reduce agricultural losses due to wildlife. Established in 2013, the focus of the initiative is to mitigate persistently large losses of some producers in order to reduce ongoing requests for compensation. The initiative is budgeted at \$300,000 annually, and focusses primarily on fencing to prevent ungulate damage on forage crops.

Best Management Practices initiatives

AGRI provides programs and activities that identify and address critical agricultural environmental issues and enable adoption of beneficial management practices supporting environmentally responsible production. AGRI has supported several programs within the last 10 years that have been directed towards supporting producers to adopt beneficial management practices that are related to wildlife issues. These programs have supported regional mitigation strategies, demonstration trials for innovative fencing (3D fencing), dial a hunter, enfranchisement programs, evaluation of hunting pressure and wildlife population monitoring, best management guides for predator prevention and waterfowl mitigation techniques such as lure and cover cropping.

Provincial Agriculture Zone Wildlife Program

The Provincial Agricultural Zone Wildlife Program (PAZW/P) was a 2008 provincial policy approach to proactively manage wildlife populations, habitat and adverse interactions between wildlife and agriculture. This policy direction focussed on prevention and mitigation with compensation as a last resort. It was developed between AGRI and ENV with input from various stakeholders. However, there has not been an opportunity to implement program policies that would establish eligibility criteria that set out the responsibilities of farmers/ranchers to mitigate losses.

Livestock Protection Program

This three-year program was launched in January 2016. It is administered by the BC Cattlemen's Association Program Delivery Inc. and supported (annually) by \$250,000 from the BC government and \$50,000 from the BCCA. The program ensures that wolf and coyote attacks on dairy, beef and sheep are addressed in a timely manner and at no cost to individual ranchers. The program targets problem wolves and coyotes where attacks or harassment on dairy, beef and sheep on Crown and private land have been verified.

Agriculture Wildlife Program Advisory Task Force Recommendations

This 2014 Task Force was created to evaluate the delivery of the Agriculture Wildlife Program (AWP) province wide and identify areas of opportunity and concern in the design and delivery of the provincial AWP with respect to compensation, prevention, and mitigation of the loss of perennial forage due to damage from wildlife in British Columbia.

One of its recommendations stated that the AWP Task Team be continued in an advisory capacity as well as a forum to discuss major changes to the Agricultural Wildlife Program. The Task Team would meet 2-3 times a year to review the Program and make recommendations for improvement. The Ministry of Agriculture accepted that recommendation in principal and is currently examining the best structure of such a group within the context of other requests by the BCCA and other groups to have input in broader wildlife management issues that are the responsibility of not only AGRI, but other Natural Resource sector ministries as well.

Moose Management Strategy

In early March 2016 the province announced its intention to strengthen its current moose management strategy as the initial phase in examining how to modernize aspects of wildlife management, such as licensing, inventory, research and increased engagement in wildlife management decisions.

Grey Wolf Strategy

The grey wolf management plan recognizes the goal of wolf management in BC is the same as other species - that is to maintain self-sustaining populations throughout the species natural range. The plan addresses outstanding issues with respect to the recovery of threatened caribou populations, reducing livestock predation and making changes to hunting/trapping seasons. It follows a Two-Zone approach:

- Zone 1: reduce predation on livestock where conflict exists and/or assist recovery of wildlife threatened by wolf predation, using both regulated harvest and predator control.
- Zone 2: allow wolf populations to naturally fluctuate, while also allowing regulated wolf harvest.

WildSafeBC

The WildSafeBC program, formally known as Bear Aware, is owned by the BC Conservation Foundation and exists in partnerships with Ministry of Environment, municipalities and regional districts.

As a front line program the WildSafeBC Program:

- Provides human-wildlife conflict prevention educational materials through trained coordinators;
- Acts in an advisory capacity to local governments;
- Supports compliance monitoring;
- Participates in local government planning initiatives; and,
- Maintains a real time public-facing database that monitors and tracks wildlife sightings and conflicts throughout the province.

This comprehensive and proactive approach to wildlife conflict prevention helps communities and individuals take an active role in managing human safety and property damage.

Since 2012/13, the primary funder for this program is the provincial government through the Ministry of Environment's Conservation Officer Service.

Cumulative Effects Framework

FLNR has recently implemented a Cumulative Effects Framework for assessing and managing cumulative effects of natural resource management decisions. This framework improves the ability of government to manage for desired outcomes. Currently the landscape level assessment tool is limited to evaluating legislative implications. Working with input from the agricultural sector, FLNR could develop a decision support model to include the evaluation of the cumulative effects of natural resource management on agriculture.

Wild Sheep Study

Pneumonia resulting in large all-age die-offs is one of the most significant threats to populations of wild sheep across western North America. Domestic sheep may carry the primary pathogen, with no apparent clinical signs, and transmit it to wild sheep. An inter-ministry steering committee has been established to investigate this issue and develop potential responses. Their efforts include: mapping known domestic sheep locations and wild sheep habitats to identify areas of highest risk of wild/domestic sheep interactions, developing a diagnostic test for the primary pathogen, and providing over \$14,000 in funding for testing of bighorn sheep throughout BC to enhance understanding of the dynamics of this disease. The Ministry of Agriculture is also planning a series of workshops for domestic sheep producers in wild-sheep habitat.

Wildlife Population Management

FLNR is responsible for wildlife population management planning at provincial to sub-regional scales, population inventories, and the collection of harvest statistics and user group value-based information. This planning and information is used to inform the development of hunting regulations that define the hunting opportunities for resident and non-resident hunters. Hunting regulations are a tool that is used to manage wildlife harvest/mortality across the province and thereby help to manage the size of any given wildlife population.

Wildlife habitat is passively managed through various statutes and regulations that are designed to protect the environment, water and habitat. It is also actively managed through land-use plans, the Government Actions Regulation under FRPA, and through funding and agreements with non-government organizations such as the

Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation and Ducks Unlimited Canada. FLNR is responsible for the Range Program, the Ecosystem Restoration Program and for the Wildfire Management Strategy. All initiatives influence range management and consider the role of fire in the maintenance of ecosystems and the management of range values and wildlife populations.

Licensing

FLNR is responsible for issuing licenses, e.g. hunting and trapping licenses, and permits that can relate to the proactive and reactive management of wildlife populations that are in conflict with agricultural objectives. Permits can provide specific authority to individuals, or other entities, to control wildlife with methods, or during time periods, that are not covered under the general provisions of Wildlife Act and its regulations.

Relationship with First Nations

The BC Government has a duty to consult First Nations when managing any resource that may affect a proven or asserted aboriginal right. As such, actions taken to manage wildlife-agriculture conflict will usually trigger a need to consult with First Nations. This creates a challenge when a First Nation relies on a wildlife population that happens to be in conflict with agriculture. On the other hand, this also creates opportunities for productive and collaborative relationships. Wildlife harvest, when done under the auspices of an aboriginal right, is not constrained by the Wildlife Act. Accordingly, the methodology and timing of this harvest can be flexible and adjusted to meet First Nations needs while serving to directly address agricultural impacts.

Review To Date

A Review Committee representing all three ministries was convened in October 2015. In preparation for consultation it met with delegates from the BC Cattlemen's Association on November 2, 2015, prior to launching the Review. This meeting identified a range of issues likely to arise during the stakeholder consultations.

Twenty-seven (27) stakeholders groups and organizations representing a broad range of geographic, industry and conservation perspectives were invited to participate in the review. Twenty-four responded (see Appendix 2). Discussions were conducted through 18 conference calls between November 30, 2015 to January 19, 2016 and by electronic submissions received until January 31, 2016. Other groups that requested inclusion in the process were accommodated and given the opportunity to provide written input.

Letters were sent out to more than 200 First Nations inviting input into the Review. As of August 31, 2016, seven First Nations had responded. Government is committed to ongoing engagement with First Nations regarding wildlife and agricultural conflicts. Stakeholders and First Nations were asked questions about various aspects of agriculture-wildlife policies, regulatory frameworks and programs as well as how satisfied they were with the opportunities they currently have to provide input to government about wildlife-agriculture conflicts (see Appendix 3). Stakeholders and First Nations were asked for their suggestions on how government could improve client service and enhance communication and cooperation among the ministries responsible for addressing wildlife-agriculture conflicts.

The comments and recommendations identified through the consultative process were analyzed by AGRI. These were grouped into five thematic areas in order to identify and better describe the main response messages as follows:

1. Damage and Compensation;
2. Wildlife Management and Mitigation;
3. Habitat Management;
4. Forest and Range Management Practices; and
5. Communications and Coordination.

What We Heard

Comments on Ungulate Damage to Crops

Ungulate damage to crops and stored feeds occurs across the province and is a concern to both ranchers and farmers. Most ungulate damage is caused by deer and elk, and to a lesser degree by Bighorn sheep. Producers in certain regions can also have crop damage from predators, such as bear damaging corn.

Regarding damage and compensation:

Producer groups acknowledged and appreciated the crop loss compensation that is available to them from provincial programs, but noted that the current level of ungulate damage compensation is insufficient, or not available to their sectors, e.g. tree and small fruits, row crops, resulting in significant financial losses. Ongoing wildlife damage leads to reduced insurance coverage over time. Comments were also made that damage loss assessments need to be current and adjusted in order to properly account for the regional disparities of ungulate damage.

Regarding wildlife management and mitigation:

Both crop and livestock producers indicated that ungulate-agriculture conflicts are increasing across the province. Many stakeholders expressed concern that government's population estimates of deer and elk are not reflective of current conditions. They pointed to a greater concern that government does not have clear ungulate population management objectives. Crop producers emphasized that, in addition to compensation, more effort needed to be put toward mitigation and prevention programs, such as the stackyard fencing funded by FLNR in the Cariboo Region. Other stakeholders want to see more strategic, area-based fencing as opposed to fencing a single property to prevent ungulates from entering a specific area such as a valley or neighbourhood. Some stakeholders commented that fencing could not always prevent ungulate damage to forage crops and they wanted to see support for alternative mitigation programs or deterrent strategies that ultimately prevent habituation, for example noise and hazing. Some producers wanted to see more active regulation of ungulate populations using tools such as culling through special hunting permits and expanded hunting seasons. Several producer and environmental groups noted that the Landowner Enfranchisement pilot program and Outdoor Passport programs were examples of successful tools for linking hunters with landowners experiencing crop losses. The tree fruit industry specifically wanted to see additional funding support for orchard fencing.

Regarding habitat management:

A range of stakeholder groups expressed concern that the Province does not have clear landscape-level policies and objectives for ungulate populations and ungulate habitat management. Stakeholders recognized diminished forage capacity (ungulate habitat), coupled with growing ungulate populations, as causing much of the agriculture-wildlife interface issue. They commented that conflict reduction strategies must address the lack of forage for ungulates.

Regarding forest and range management practices:

Many stakeholders expressed concern that current forest and range management practices did not sufficiently consider wildlife and agriculture values. For example, cutblock management practices could restrict ungulate movement, grazing and browsing opportunities. Mountain Pine Beetle affected areas were often highlighted as areas that did not support, or were inaccessible to ungulates or agriculture due to excessive slash and woody

debris coupled with reduced forage production capacity. Livestock producers in some areas wanted to see greater attention to preserving fences during forestry operations. Livestock producers were especially concerned about the significant loss of forage potential on Crown land due to high tree stocking standards, timber encroachment on grasslands, elimination of grass seeding on cutblocks, reduction in invasive plant control activities, and restrictive wildlife harvest rates. A few conservation stakeholders commented that livestock overgrazing of Crown range is also contributing to habitat loss for ungulates, and that rangeland fencing can restrict the natural movement and migration of ungulates.

Comments on Waterfowl Damage to Crops

Waterfowl damage is of major concern to forage and horticulture producers in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, and to a lesser degree in the Peace River region. Most waterfowl damage is caused by migratory and resident waterfowl, such as ducks, trumpeter swans, Canada and snow geese, and sandhill cranes.

Regarding damage and compensation:

Stakeholders commented that crop production losses and cumulative costs from waterfowl damage to crops continue to rise. Some producers expressed their view that compensation is the only consistent mechanism that can offset crop losses due to migratory fowl. While they acknowledged the compensation available to them through the Agriculture Wildlife Program, they stressed that the program under-values the amount of damage caused by waterfowl. Stakeholders further commented that compensation rates need to be regionally adjusted to reflect the variable and cumulative losses experienced by producers. Stakeholders also commented that compensation should be available to support the use of lure crops.

Regarding wildlife management and mitigation:

Stakeholders commented on the escalating growth of waterfowl populations in various regions and expressed concern for increasing conflicts with agriculture. Stakeholders wanted better clarity on policy processes, management protocols, guidelines, and roles and responsibilities of all government agencies involved in waterfowl management and mitigation. In addition, they expressed the need for more engagement with government at the local level. Many stakeholders commented on the need for greater effort on mitigation, such as lure crops, drones, propane cannons, hazing, dogs, and targeted hunting, especially in persistent waterfowl conflict areas.

Regarding habitat management:

Stakeholders commented on the imbalance they see between waterfowl populations and available habitat, and highlighted the need for accurate population and habitat inventories. Crop producers expressed concern that the waterfowl problem is intensified from continual loss of natural feeding habitat (agricultural and non-agricultural zoned land) due to infrastructure, commercial and industrial development, especially in the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island. Conservation groups commented that providing or protecting more wetland areas for waterfowl habitat would reduce the pressure on agriculture.

Comments on Predator Impacts on Livestock

Predator impacts on livestock are a major concern to the livestock sector across the interior of the province. The major predators are wolves, coyotes, cougars and bears. Overall, the livestock industry is appreciative of the new Livestock Protection Program.

Regarding damage and compensation:

The livestock industry commented that in many areas of the province, ranchers are observing and recording increased predation of livestock. While the livestock producers often acknowledged the wildlife damage compensation program, they expressed concern that current compensation rates for livestock mortalities are inadequate, and that their industry is absorbing increasing costs to manage predator problems. Specific comments on compensation were that the program underestimates livestock losses due to verification difficulties and is unable to assess all damage impacts such as herd health, weight loss and fewer births. As well, the livestock industry wanted to see more timely verification of livestock mortalities. Sheep producers and stakeholders that fall under the BC Game Farm Act indicated that their compensation eligibility should be the same as for all other livestock producers.

Regarding wildlife management and mitigation:

A number of stakeholders expressed that the province does not have clear management and mitigation objectives for predators. Comments reflected a desire for an effective, ethical, science-based and targeted predator management program. Several stakeholders commented that mitigation measures are very important and should focus on strategic hunting and trapping. Many stakeholders also expressed concerns regarding maintaining the social license for any new predator management action. In addition the need for a landscape level approach with Conservation Officer over sight was expressed.

Regarding habitat management:

Many stakeholders asserted that natural prey for large predators is declining in non-agriculture areas as a result of habitat degradation and increasing predator populations. They often linked this to increasing livestock mortalities as predators begin to target domestic animals. Livestock producers claimed that range use by ranchers is declining due to predator-related losses.

Regarding forest and range management practices:

Some stakeholders commented that forest and range management practices are contributing to the loss and degradation of habitat for natural prey populations. These stakeholders stressed that improving prey habitat is the key to decreasing predator impacts on livestock. These stakeholders wanted to see forest practices that encourage the use of cutblocks by ungulates and Crown range management practices that preserve sufficient forage base for wildlife. Stakeholders also expressed concern that logging activities and road construction is creating new corridors for predator movement, especially wolves, thereby increasing the risk and opportunity for predator-agriculture interface conflicts. Livestock producers also indicated that, as deadfall became a bigger issue, many Mountain Pine Beetle affected areas were becoming much less useful for supporting and protecting wildlife or livestock.

Comments on Protection of Wildlife

Most stakeholders commented on the importance of protecting natural wildlife populations, habitat and values. Industry organizations emphasized that they promote best management practices amongst their membership to both improve environmental sustainability and maintain their social license.

Regarding damage and compensation:

Livestock producers who are regulated under the BC Game Farm legislation want to be able to utilize Crown range for grazing and have access to the same programs as domestic livestock producers. Trappers and guide outfitters want to ensure programs don't impede their economic opportunities.

Regarding wildlife management and mitigation:

Livestock producers and environmental groups expressed concerns about disease management between wildlife and livestock, such as between wild and domestic sheep. Livestock producers noted transferrable diseases (wild to domestic) can impact trade and have severe economic impact on the industry. Wild sheep stakeholders would like to see the emphasis on exclusion to reduce disease transmission risk, whereas domestic sheep producers would prefer support for increased fencing in interface areas. Stakeholders generally support the protection of Species at Risk (SAR), but are concerned about a lack of public knowledge about SAR and the responsibility of landowners to invest in mitigations activities. As well, stakeholders want to see an integrated, science-based approach to applying greater protection for keystone species, e.g. grizzly/black bears, wolves.

Regarding habitat management:

Both industry and conservation stakeholders commented that there are conflicting management objectives between agriculture, resource management and wildlife management. Livestock producers and environmental groups identified that wildlife populations and habitats need to be managed at landscape levels and in accordance with a coordinated suite of population, ecosystem, e.g. range, climate change and agricultural objectives.

Regarding forest and range management practices:

Livestock producers and environmental groups identified that forest and range management policies and practices need to support wildlife protection objectives, with consideration of wildlife impacts on agriculture.

Communication and Coordination

Stakeholders were asked how satisfied they were with the opportunities they currently have to provide input to government about wildlife-agriculture conflicts. Stakeholders were also asked for their suggestion on how government could improve client service and enhance communication and cooperation among the ministries responsible for addressing wildlife-agriculture conflicts.

Stakeholders expressed frustration at the lack of communication from government about wildlife-agriculture policies and programs. There was overall acknowledgement of government for establishing the cross-ministry ADM Wildlife and Agriculture Conflict Reduction committee responsible for this review. However, most stakeholders commented that, with the loss of regional agriculture wildlife committees, it has been several years since they have had the opportunity for meaningful dialogue with all three Ministries and other

stakeholders. Stakeholders expressed frustration at having to approach government through individual frontline staff (COs, Professional Agrologists, Biologists, Land Managers) rather than through a structure that included, or linked directly to, key decision makers. Some industry groups are concerned that producers are not fully aware of programs that are available to them. A few non-industry stakeholders commented that they were satisfied with the level of communication they had experienced with ministry staff. A few stakeholders commented they have no effective mechanism to provide input to government on wildlife-agriculture issues.

Stakeholder recommended actions associated with the above consultation comments are listed in Appendix 4.

What We Heard From First Nations

In February 2016, letters were sent to more than 200 First Nations inviting comment on three provincial initiatives: the Livestock Protection Program, the Livestock Legislation Review and the Wildlife and Agriculture Conflict Reduction Review. Responses were received from seven First Nations by August 31, 2016. The majority of comments received from First Nations related to the Livestock Protection Program but also apply to the Wildlife and Agriculture Conflict Reduction Review. Comments included concerns over the culling and management of wildlife as well as the need for ongoing communication and appropriate engagement of First Nations. Discussions with two First Nations are currently continuing and the review committee remains open to dialogue with First Nations on matters related to wildlife and agriculture conflict.

Next Steps

Results of the consultation process clearly indicate that wildlife-agriculture conflict is complex and any solutions being proposed require a collaborative, thoughtful and phased-in approach. Those consulted were very clear of their preference for a “one-stop” approach to managing wildlife-agriculture conflict with the three ministries (AGRI, FLNR and ENV) working together to tackle the issues and to have the conversations about meaningful solutions both at the provincial and regional level. During the past several months, the three ministries have worked closely to set the context for the consultations, engaged senior management within each ministry, and ensured that most consultative meetings had representation from each of the ministries. The ministries must now build on this momentum.

It is also important to realize that no progress will be made without co-operation and work with government by industry and individual stakeholders. These are complex issues and improvement and change is a shared responsibility that must be carried by all concerned.

There are a number of next steps to move this report to action.

1. While the ministries made efforts through regional FLNR, First Nations Relations processes to engage with First Nations (more than 200 requests were sent to First Nations bands and organizations) and capture the responses, further work may be required with the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR) and the First Nations Relations Branch of FLNR given the commitment to specific ongoing negotiations and treaty requirements. Consideration should be given to including a MARR representative both at the ADM senior management table as well as on the Executive Director, technical working group to ensure First Nations engagement going forward.
2. To express the importance of data would be an understatement. The review period did not allow for a detailed collection of data both on intended and unintended consequences of wildlife-agriculture conflict

and the financial contributions to mitigation and/or prevention by government. More work is needed by all three ministries to collect relevant data and financial information. This is important not only contextually but also to determine the true economic impact of wildlife-agriculture conflict to government and to farmers. This data very likely already exists within government and through key stakeholders such as the Guide Outfitters Association or the BC Cattlemen's Association who routinely survey their members for wildlife-agriculture impacts. Given the demands currently on staff in the three ministries, consideration should be given to hiring an external consultant/agency to complete an economic impact assessment for wildlife-agriculture conflict and assess opportunities, for example increased hunting and First Nations partnerships.

3. Initiate the creation of a Ministers' Provincial Round Table that meets on an annual basis. Membership should comprise those stakeholders who were consulted for the review, industry representatives, and representatives with technical and academic expertise. The purpose of the Provincial Round Table will be to recommend priorities and provide strategic advice on the issues and the responsible measures that can be used to manage wildlife-agriculture conflict. The Provincial Round Table will advise the Minister of Agriculture, Forest, Lands and Natural Resource Sector, and Environment on mitigation and/or adaptation opportunities, economic impacts, industry best practices, policy, programs and a sustainable approach to future management of wildlife-agriculture conflicts. The work of the three ministries in establishing a Ministers' Provincial Round Table should culminate with an inaugural conference in the summer/early fall 2017.

A provincial level, interagency body at the director/manager level that is oriented toward coordination and action will be required to support the Round Table and to develop program policy and communications solutions.

4. While the consultation outcomes reflect the importance of a Provincial Round Table, there is clear recognition that effective solutions can only be identified and implemented region-by-region. As a result, it will be imperative that work also begin to re-establish regional tables to address local problems by bringing together regional leaders to collaboratively identify existing and emerging opportunities and to propose solutions. The Regional Tables will add value to the conversations at the Provincial Round Table. There is so much variation among regions in terms of the form of wildlife-agriculture conflict and their impacts that a broad province wide solution will be unrealistic. Given the heightened expectations from those consulted during the review, the dialogue will need to be followed by actions. Regional approaches can sometimes bridge the gaps, making substantive action feasible. Wherever possible these tables will co-ordinate with existing committees and structures using a sector-based approach.

5. Communication of the outcome of the wildlife-agriculture conflict review will be important. Expectations are high that stakeholders were heard and that government is acting on the findings, especially those pertaining to the creation of Provincial and Regional Tables. Releasing the "what you said" component of this report along with some actions such as the creation of a Provincial Round Table will ensure progress. The ministries should consider release of this component of the report before the end of 2016.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Ministries Responsible

The responsibilities associated with wildlife management in British Columbia are vested with the province. The Ministries with the greatest roles in managing issues associated with the agriculture-wildlife interface are AGRI, FLNR, and ENV.

The Ministry of Agriculture:

- Establishes legislation, policies and procedures for managing farms and livestock, which can be affected by wildlife;
- Delivers wildlife compensation and mitigation initiatives on private land, such as farms and ranches; and
- Undertakes programs to promote best agriculture management practices.

The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

- Establishes legislation, regulations, policies, and procedures for managing forests, range, and wildlife;
- Manages wildlife habitat, coordinates big game inventory and wildlife stock assessments;
- Establishes hunting seasons, and issues hunting licenses;
- Manages human-wildlife conflict through regulations, permitting and licencing;
- Coordinates range inventory and range condition monitoring activities;
- Issues licences and permits for Crown land grazing and hay cutting;
- Is responsible for the Ecosystem Restoration Program and for implementing the Wildfire Management Strategy; and
- Undertakes First Nations consultation.

The Ministry of Environment

- Enforces hunting regulations;
- Provides prevention and response to human-wildlife conflicts; and
- Performs problem predator investigations, verifications, and mitigation.

Appendix 2. Stakeholders Consulted

Number of Responses	Organization Type
7	BC Crop Producers
9	BC Livestock Producers
4	Conservation Groups
4	Other Key Stakeholders
24	Total Responses

APPENDIX 3. Consultation Questions

Section 1: Agriculture-Wildlife Policies, Regulatory Framework & Programs

Please answer each of the following questions for each category:

- Ungulate damage to crops
- Waterfowl damage to crops
- Predator impacts on livestock
- Protection of wildlife
- Other (specify)

1. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) what is the level of concern in your organization?
2. What is the reason for the level of concern expressed?
3. What current policies or programs are working well? Which could be improved?
4. What actions would your organization suggest be taken to address these concerns?
5. Please indicate any further comments your organization wishes to make on wildlife-agriculture conflicts including regulatory framework, policies and programs.

Section 2: Communication and Coordination

1. How does your organization or your members currently provide input into identifying and managing wildlife/agriculture conflicts? On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) how satisfied are you with your opportunity to provide input?
2. What structure or mechanism would your organization recommend to enhance communication and cooperation with the ministries responsible for addressing wildlife/agriculture conflicts?
3. What could the ministries responsible for addressing wildlife/agriculture conflicts do to provide improved and more coordinated client services to your organization and to your members?

Appendix 4. Actions Recommended by Stakeholders

Ungulate Damage to Crops

- Establish clear provincial policy for ungulate population management objectives;
- Establish agriculture program compensation rates that are current and regionally adjusted;
- Review production insurance to have rates that are adjustable when higher frequencies of wildlife losses occur;
- Review potential compensation for the tree, small fruits and row crop sectors;
- Conduct more ungulate population inventories and habitat assessments, and develop policies and objectives that consider agriculture, habitat, hunting, and wildlife values;
- Review forest and range management practices to enhance habitat and forage capacity for wildlife and livestock;
- Expand funding for fencing, incorporating additional approaches such as 3D fencing, to prevent ungulate damage to stackyards and silage pits;
- Consider additional funding support for orchard fencing;
- Review alternative mitigation or deterrent strategies such as noise and hazing;
- Increase hunting access and culling opportunities in regions where ungulate damage is greatest; and
- Improve and expand programs for Crown range enhancements; such as prescribed burning, invasive plant control, grass seeding, etc.

Waterfowl Damage to Crops

- Increase species specific inventories (Canada geese, trumpeter swans, sandhill cranes, and migratory ducks) and assessments of available habitat;
- Review compensation linked to waterfowl-caused crop losses and address the long term negative impact of these losses on the insurance values;
- Work with the industry to investigate alternative mitigation strategies (lure crops, drones, dogs, hazing and targeted hunting);
- Expand hunting seasons, using local hunters and adopting species-specific and area-specific strategies to manage waterfowl populations;
- Consider the possibilities of providing or protecting more wetland areas for waterfowl habitat to reduce the pressure on agricultural land;
- Manage hunter access and develop alternative crop and lure crop systems that rely, in part, on hunting revenues; and
- Establish local/municipal teams with the responsibility for administering and managing problem waterfowl-agriculture conflicts.

Predator Impacts on Livestock

- Improve the timeliness of the predation verification process by providing more trained verifiers;
- Work with industry stakeholders to revise and improve compensation levels for livestock mortalities;
- Conduct predator and prey inventories to improve predator management objectives;

- Particularly in Mountain Pine Beetle affected areas, review forest and range management practices with regards to improving movement and habitat for natural prey populations;
- Develop an effective, ethical, science-based and targeted predator management program;
- Implement the Grey Wolf Management Plan to manage wolf population densities;
- Expand the opportunities for hunting and trapping on both private and Crown land to better manage predator-livestock interface conflicts; and
- Revise compensation program to allow game farmers to access compensation for livestock mortalities from predation.

Protection of Wildlife

- Improve coordination of all agencies regarding wildlife-livestock disease management;
- Review veterinary oversight of wild and domestic populations for improvements;
- Develop protocols that consider and manage disease risks;
- Establish protocols for monitoring and separating or zoning wild and domestic sheep populations;
- Increase public knowledge and awareness of SAR associated with agriculture;
- Adopt forest and range management practices that do not restrict wildlife movement and migration, e.g. grizzly bears;
- Establish wildlife population objectives, and conduct wildlife population inventories;
- Engage locally with stakeholders on developing habitat and range management objectives; and
- Revise regulations to allow Game Farm producers to access Crown range.

Communications and Coordination

- Industry stakeholders expressed the need for government to communicate program information to producers, for example on compensation, verification and mitigation;
- Most stakeholders wanted to be able to engage collectively with government to improve cross-Ministry communication and coordination. Specific actions included:
 - more local teams to better manage identified issues, such as waterfowl damage in forage crops;
 - interdisciplinary committees at the regional level, to identify issues and develop solutions within each region;
 - a Provincial Roundtable to collectively identify and find effective solutions to broad policy and program issues, with representation from all stakeholder groups and decision-makers from AGRI, FLNR and ENV;
- The livestock industry wants to see more communication amongst ranchers, hunters and trappers;
- Several stakeholders wanted faster response times to queries (correspondence, email); and
- Stakeholders suggested government adopt a variety of communication tools, including social media, web, videos, email, newsletters, email, newsletters, and subject matter reviews as a means of keeping ranchers and farmers updated on current programs, issues and solutions. Many stakeholders specifically noted the lack of relevant content on ministry websites.



Brand Marketing
& Management Inc.

Business Plan

Federally Inspected Beef Packing Plant in BC

Prepared For
British Columbia Cattlemen's Association
May 19, 2017
Confidential



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Opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the British Columbia Cattlemen’s Association or project committee. The following Project Committee participants are respectfully recognized for their valuable feedback and contribution to guide this study:

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3)	
4) Geneve Jasper	BC Ministry of Agriculture
5) Clint Ellison	BC Ministry of Agriculture
6) Sean Darling	BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, and Skills Training
7) Melissa Barcellos	City of Prince George (Economic Development)

We would also like to acknowledge and thank the industry representatives (listed at the end of this document) who contributed to this project for their support, expertise and insight.

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Ministry of Agriculture
BRIEFING NOTE FOR DEPUTY MINISTER FOR INFORMATION

Ref: 186338

Date: June 23, 2017

Issue: Update on the Business Plan project for a federally inspected beef packing plant in Prince George.

Background:

In 2015, the Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) provided the BC Cattlemen's Association (BCCA) with \$124,000 in funding for a Viability Report for a Federally Inspected Beef Packing Plant. The project concluded a small flexible plant with a differentiated market strategy was viable. The report recommended that the business plan be further developed and a commercialization strategy be implemented as next steps. In 2016, BCCA received \$144,000 in Growing Forward 2 (GF2) funding to complete the Business Plan (attached).

The Business Plan's intent was to develop a business model and commercialization strategy to ensure a sound decision regarding investment and operation of a 100,000 head per annum federally inspected beef packing plant with an estimated value of \$25 million. The cattle from the BC East region (Regional District of Bulkley Nechako, Regional District of Fraser Fort George, Cariboo Regional District, Peace River Regional District, and Northern Rockies Regional Municipality) was targeted to supply the plant.

Discussion:

s.13,s.17

- s.13,s.17

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Next Steps:
s.13,s.17

Attachment: *Final Draft Business Plan – Federally Inspected Packing Plant in BC*

Contact: Geneve Jasper, Livestock Team Lead, Sector Development Branch

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