

MEETING NOTE

DATE: March 15, 2022

PREPARED FOR: Honourable Nathan Cullen, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment,
Honourable Bruce Ralston, Minister of Forests

REGARDING: Meeting with

- Nikolai Coutinho, Executive Director Unlikely Allies
- Kathy MacRae, Executive Director Commercial Bear Viewing Association of BC
- Chris Genovali, Executive Director Raincoast Conservation
- Shannon McPhail, Executive Director Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition
- Scott Ellis, Executive Director Guide Outfitters Association of BC

Regarding wildlife, habitat and conservation

INTRODUCTIONS: Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Jennifer Psyllakis, Executive Director

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION AND MESSAGES:

- Significant staff and financial resources have been allocated to wildlife and habitat management through the Together for Wildlife Strategy, as well as through proposed changes to the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) and implementation of Forest Landscape Planning.
- The Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council, established in 2020, is bringing external expertise to inform implementation and oversight of Together for Wildlife.
- In 2018, the ministry committed to improve the FRPA framework to better meet public expectations and trust, forest management objectives, address climate change, and to remove barriers for genuine collaboration with Indigenous Nations in forestry and range. More recently, several recommendations were accepted from the Old Growth Strategic Review which are expected to significantly shift government's approach to forest management.
- The Forest Planning and Practices Regulation was recently amended to remove the clause "without unduly reducing the timber supply."
- Forest Landscape Planning pilots have been initiated in the Sunshine Coast, Quesnel, Lakes Timber Supply Areas and in Tree Farm License 37. There was recent approval to begin these pilots in eight other locations.
- Engagement on the development of an Old Growth Action Plan and a policy framework for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health is also underway.
- As part of the establishment of biodiversity/ecosystem health legislation, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship is considering recommending a Chief Ecologist to be accountable for the policy/directives necessary to implement the legislation.
- Other strategic initiatives are also underway that are expected to influence forest practices. Modernized Land Use Planning (LUP) – in collaboration with First Nations and supported through engagement with industry, local governments, and

stakeholders – will lead to new objectives that capture the public's interest for the desired outcomes for multiple values.

- Collectively these initiatives are advancing transformative changes in natural resource stewardship in BC.
- Looking ahead, there will be several opportunities to provide input and engage policy and regulations. Members of Unlikely Allies, or Unlikely Allies as an organization, are welcome to continue to engage with these opportunities.

SUMMARY:

- Unlikely Allies' is a group of disparate, but allied stakeholders concerned with management of wildlife habitat in the province. The group assert that forestry in BC has negatively impacted ecosystem health more than all other resource sectors combined.
- The group is comprised of the BC Guide Outfitters Association, Stop Animal Brutality, the Commercial Bear Viewing Association of BC and RainCoast Conservation Foundation.
- The group provides specific recommendations for changes to forest management policy, including creation of wildlife objectives for the forest companies, changes to forestry legislation and practices and banning herbicide use.
- Unlikely Allies have met with senior staff from the Office of the Chief Forester and Resource Stewardship Division to discuss recommendations and were provided formal responses via letter (see attachment #1).
- Unlikely Allies has received this dialogue positively, as well as recent changes to forest legislation, regulation and policy, and progress with implementation of the Together for Wildlife strategy.
- Unlikely Allies has expressed frustration with the perceived lack of results on the land.

Attachment: #1 Summary of responses (collaboratively developed between the Ministry of Forests and the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship)

PREPARED BY:

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REVIEWED BY:

	Initials	Date
DM	LH	March 20, 2023
ADM	DM	March 16, 2023
Program Dir/Mgr.	JP	March 15, 2023

Attachment 1: Summary of responses (collaboratively developed between FOR and WLRS) to platform recommendations raised by Unlikely Allies in fall of 2021. Updates are noted in italics.

Platform Recommendation #1: Eliminate the volume-based tenure system and replace it with a specific licensee in a specific area.

We interpret that the intent of your platform recommendation is to replace the current forest tenure framework, composed largely of volume-based tenures, with area-based tenures.

In 2000 and again in 2014 government completed a comprehensive engagement process with First Nations, the public, and other stakeholders. The summary reports highlighted concerns for social, economic, and environmental values and a strong interest in diversifying the tenures across the province. This has resulted in the issuance of an increasing number of area-based tenures in the form of Woodlots, Community Forest Agreements and First Nations Woodland Licences. These have been established by acquiring volume (AAC) and appropriate land from other tenures. This approach has not only increased the proportion of provincial timber in supply area-based tenures but has also diversified the types of area-based tenures. The commitment to continuing to diversify tenure opportunities across the province is highlighted in government's intention to increase forest sector participation, in government's newly released "Modernizing Forest Policy in BC" which can be found here:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/competitive-forest-industry>.

Recommendation Two: Amend the Free Growing legislation to reward increasing biodiversity and non-volume-based metrics i.e., moose density. There should be silviculture incentives to deactivate roads, plant deciduous trees and plant alternate forage. Review stems per hectare and allows some natural regeneration.

We interpret that the intent of your platform recommendation is to improve and implement stewardship related objectives into silviculture regimes and practices, including harvesting, reforestation and stand management.

The ministry's goal is to manage for diverse and healthy forested ecosystems that are resilient in the face of climate change. A number of initiatives are underway to support this goal – these can be found in the Modernizing Forest Policy paper

(<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/competitive-forest-industry>) which includes a commitment to continuing to improve the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) and in government's commitment to implementing all 14 recommendations in the Strategic Old Growth Review (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/forestry/stewardship/old-growth-forests/strategic-review-20200430.pdf>).

Work is underway on silvicultural regimes to support the goal of diverse and healthy future forests, including silvicultural treatments to benefit wildlife and wildlife habitat, as well as other important stewardship values, particularly in the central interior of the province.

Climate modelling suggest that the ecological suitability of some tree species may be impacted by ongoing and projected changes in climate. Silviculture and reforestation regimes and site

plans need to be made in the context of a changing climate. To support this, we are seeking to apply ecological data collected in past silvicultural prescriptions to project and plan for our future forests and prioritize habitat enhancement and restoration efforts. Further, the provincial biogeoclimatic ecosystem classification (BEC) system links tree species' environmental suitability on a site, to climate. This allows us to integrate projected changes in climate into guidance for tree species' ecological suitability on a site in the face of climate change.

Harvesting and silviculture strategies and practices can be applied at the stand and landscape level. Depending upon stand and landscape-specific management objectives, reforestation may be accomplished through planting or natural regeneration. If planting is the chosen regeneration method, there is a requirement to use orchard grown improved seed. In order to better manage for climate change, the ministry is currently in a voluntary transition period to selecting seed that is genetically adapted to a changing climate (Climate Based Seed Transfer).

Free growing (FG) and legal stocking standards guide reforestation and stand management practices to ensure a stand progresses towards achievement of long-term management objectives. They are designed to ensure ecologically appropriate species are managed at the right densities to achieve specific long term management objectives in a reasonable timeframe. Although management objectives have historically been timber focused, silviculture regimes now address important objectives including biodiversity, wildlife (e.g., grizzly bear habitat), and wildfire risk reduction objectives.

In addition to silviculture practices, another important way to manage for biodiversity is at the planning stage before harvest, both at the stand and landscape level. Examples of stand level, high value biodiversity features include wetlands, raptor nesting trees, patches of shrubs for berry production or the deciduous trees. These can be and usually are retained (reserved from harvest), and/or have special management strategies applied. Retaining these features does not interfere with FG stocking standards in the rest of the harvest area.

Recommendation Three: Create wildlife objectives for the forest companies.

We interpret that the intent of your platform recommendation is to ensure wildlife habitat is given greater priority in harvest and silviculture planning and practices.

The *Forest and Range Practices Act* establishes default objectives for biodiversity and wildlife. In 2004, specific wildlife habitat objectives were established in almost every District and Timber Supply Area through the *Forest Planning and Practices Regulation* and the *Woodlot Licence Planning and Practices Regulation* for Identified Wildlife Species (<https://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/frpa/notices/>). In some cases, these objectives are replaced with general wildlife measures (i.e., practice requirements) where Wildlife Habitat Areas and Ungulate Winter Ranges are established.

In 2018, the ministry committed to improve the FRPA framework to better meet public expectations and trust, forest management objectives, address climate change, and to remove barriers for genuine collaboration with Indigenous nations in forestry and range. More recently,

several recommendations were accepted from the Old Growth Strategic Review which are expected to significantly shift government's approach to forest management.

Further, significant staff and financial resources have been allocated to wildlife and habitat management through the Together for Wildlife Strategy. Improving objectives for wildlife and wildlife habitat is a top priority.

Collectively, through these initiatives we are seeking to improve the direction provided to licensees and the outcomes for wildlife and biodiversity.

Engagement has begun on a policy framework to prioritize biodiversity and ecosystem health in addition to amendments to the Wildlife Act.

Recommendation Four: Outlaw the use of glyphosate and other similar related pesticides.

Herbicide use on provincial crown forest has declined by more than 50% over the past years; however, it remains an important tool for the management of invasive species and to enable achievement of free-growing status where competing vegetation is inhibiting growth of conifer seedlings.

All herbicides and pesticides are used according to the requirements of the manufacturer's product safety label and only after they have been approved for use in Canada by the Environment Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Authority. The requirements for herbicide and pesticide use are stringent, and buffers around wetlands and streams are required by provincial regulation to reduce impacts on vegetation in riparian habitat.

The province is reviewing the extent and role of deciduous species in the interior of BC both at the stand and landscape level with a view to ensuring there is adequate value placed on retaining a broadleaf (deciduous) component across the landscape.

The ministry has also partnered with researchers to complete specific trials and analyses to better understand the effects of glyphosate in northern ecosystems and wildlife species. This work includes nutritional analyses of plants treated with glyphosate and results will contribute information to better inform the potential future use of glyphosate in BC.

Recommendation Five: Strike the "without unduly reducing timber supply" in all FRPA regulations.

The FRPA Improvement Initiative is currently underway with the aim of enhancing the management regime of B.C.'s forest and range resources. Both FRPA and associated regulations are being assessed for ways to support the health and sustainability of B.C.'s public forests and rangelands, while strengthening public and First Nations' confidence in how these resources are managed. The ministry is looking at a variety of ways to improve the current management framework including the recommendation to repeal "without unduly reducing timber supply" from FRPA regulations.

Without unduly reducing timber supply was recently removed from the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation.

Recommendation Six: Empower the other values within FRPA.

The ministry's goal is to manage for diverse and healthy forested ecosystems that are resilient in the face of climate change and that provide a suite of ecosystem goods and services to the people of BC. Managing for all the values under FRPA is a key part of this.

There are several strategic initiatives underway that will support this goal and that are expected to influence forest practices. Modernized Land Use Planning, in collaboration with First Nations and supported through engagement with industry, local governments, and stakeholders will lead to new land use objectives that capture the interest in improving outcomes for multiple values.

Operationally, to achieve government's commitment to update and improve forest management policies, the ministry is introducing Forest Landscape Planning (FLP), a new tactical level forest planning regime. This new regime will ensure better transparency, engagement and coordination of forest management activities and lead to better outcomes for all values under FRPA. To support this development of the FLPL regime, Forest Landscape Planning pilots have been initiated in the Sunshine Coast, Quesnel, Lakes Timber Supply Areas and in Tree Farm License 37.

In addition to the above, the province is currently undertaking an assessment of current habitat designations across the province, funded through TFW. The results of this work will inform our efforts to continue to improve our understanding of the status of existing habitat designations, identify gaps and refine management policies. Policy development is also underway with respect to improved management of adventure tourism, particularly in support of caribou recovery.

Engagement has begun on a policy framework to prioritize biodiversity and ecosystem health in addition to amendments to the Wildlife Act.

Recommendation Seven: Establish an independent review body for natural resource practices and decisions (Recommendation #31 Professional Reliance Review)

The Forest Practices Board ('the Board') has been an independent oversight body for sustainable forest and range practices in B.C. since 1995. The Board provides an important source of feedback for the implementation of the FRPA. The Board publishes reports on various topics including wildlife, biodiversity and species at risk. As previously mentioned, the ministry is advancing amendments to FRPA that are designed to address many of the recommendations that have been made by the Board and by Unlikely Allies over time.

Other important independent bodies that provide oversight and advice for natural resource practices include the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council, which was established in 2020 to bring external expertise to inform implementation of the Together for Wildlife (TFW) strategy. Additionally, the First Nations – BC Wildlife Forum was formed in 2018 to obtain indigenous perspectives on wildlife and habitat conservation and management. There are also opportunities

for enhanced involvement in habitat and wildlife-related discussions through the Together for Wildlife Strategy and existing forums such as the Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team.

At the moment, no other independent board has been proposed.