

INFORMATION NOTE

DATE: July 25, 2023

PREPARED FOR: Honourable Bruce Ralston, Minister of Forests

ISSUE: Update on the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship's mandate to protect 30% of B.C.'s land base by 2030.

KEY POINTS:

- B.C. currently has a total of 19.6% of the land base conserved (15.5% in protected areas and 4.1% in Other Effective Conservation Measures)
- Reaching the target of 30% protection of B.C.'s land base by 2030 is achievable and will mean B.C. meets international goals aimed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.
- Government-to-government land use planning (LUP) will be the main process to identify and designate new areas. However, other planning processes including forest landscape planning, watershed security planning, and planning for species at risk will also contribute to targets.
- Planning with First Nations to identify critical areas for protection is done simultaneously with planning for economic and reconciliation objectives to ensure best opportunities are identified for all land base activities and values.

BACKGROUND:

- The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) is accountable to achieve the commitment for "30% protection of B.C.'s land base by 2030, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA)".
- International advice recognizes that effective conservation includes two types of land designations: 1) protected areas, and 2) "other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)".
- Protected areas are defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as: "A geographically defined area which is designated or regulated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives". More simply, protected areas are where land is designated to protect conservation values.
- OECMs are defined by the CBD as: "A geographically defined area other than a protected area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values". In summary, an area designated for another purpose but still results in effective conservation.
- B.C. estimates that our current protection levels are almost 19.6%. Achieving the 30% target requires approximately 10 million hectares more in protected areas and OECMs.

DISCUSSION:

s.16

- Some environmental groups have challenged B.C. current OECM reporting, citing policies for some areas (e.g., old growth management areas) as not having strict or long enough assurance of protection and applying protection to only one sector.
- WLRS is evaluating the policies, assessment tools, and reporting mechanisms necessary to achieve the 30% target, including those for OECM, with the goal to develop a Made-in-B.C. approach that aligns with international criteria and is developed with Indigenous peoples.
- Along with policy work, WLRS will work with ENV to ensure clarity on what lands contribute to conservation. Past State of Environment reporting has created various interpretations of B.C.'s status with some information being interpreted as over 50% is protected. However, areas under this large number would not meet international definitions of protected area or OECM.
- Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) also must be considered. IPCAs are areas that may see a mix of conserved and economic lands, with a portion of the IPCA meeting international definitions towards protection.

s.12

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

s.13; s.16; s.17

SUMMARY:

- WLRS is leading work on 30% by 2030 and co-developing policy and guidance for recognition of IPCA and OECM identification in B.C.
- This work, on behalf of B.C. and in collaboration with related initiatives such as land use planning, the old growth review, and Together for Wildlife, will reflect B.C.'s changing reconciliation context and highlight the success that B.C., First Nations, and local governments achieve as we progress our commitment to conservation and 30% by 2030.

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	Initials	Date
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