



Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

"Wildlife and their habitats thrive, are resilient, and support and enrich the lives of all British Columbians"

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PREMIER'S EXPERT TASK FORCE ON EMERGENCIES

January 17, 2024

Wildfire, Wildlife and Habitat in BC

The new and increasingly catastrophic 'normal' for wildfires in B.C. threatens both wildlife habitat and human communities. The Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council (Council) has prepared these recommendations to support your work to address this growing challenge.

Wildlife in B.C. evolved under historic disturbance regimes including low, moderate, and high severity fires that created a mosaic of habitat conditions across the landscape. That mosaic sustained the diversity and abundance of wildlife that supported Indigenous communities and for which B.C. has become renowned.

As temperatures climb and precipitation declines, novel fires regimes are emerging in B.C. Climate changes, combined with accumulated fuels, are resulting in larger fires with higher proportions of severely burned areas. In addition to costly and tragic harm to our society, these uncharacteristically large and severe fires are causing unprecedented adverse effects on wildlife species and their habitats. Building greater landscape resilience around wildfire—the focus of our recommendations—creates a win-win that supports Indigenous food security and the wellbeing of all British Columbians, and will better enable wildlife to thrive. This means returning beneficial fire to forested and grassland ecosystems, together with proactive mitigation and restoration of the impacts of uncharacteristically severe fire.

Council has provided some larger-scale recommendations for your consideration that could be initiated in 2024, as well as nine "quick wins" that could be implemented immediately.

Overarching Recommendations

1. **Build a strategy for resilience** – In 2024, the Province must initiate the development of an integrated wildfire resilience strategy that takes an all-of-government approach which effectively engages and leverages capacity across society. This strategy must be adequately funded, prioritizing proactive activities that build wildfire resilience throughout the landscape, and include programs with metrics for success in the areas of prevention, mitigation, adaptation, response, and recovery. This strategy must link with and drive investments into initiatives, programs and projects that support broad landscape resilience, including watershed security initiatives, wetlands conservation and restoration and biodiversity conservation and ecosystem health.
2. **Build a sustainable bioeconomy to manage fuels** – In recognition of the urgent need to manage fuels at landscape level, in 2024 the Province must begin an ongoing program to enable and

incentivize scaled-up fuels management by the Forest Sector, BC Hydro, First Nation Communities, Municipalities, and Regional Districts, and incentivize the development of the bioeconomy to enable long-term fuels management.

Wildlife & Habitat Focused Recommendations

3. Identify wildlife and habitat values at high risk of catastrophic wildfire and develop and implement locally informed wildfire management plans for these values.

- a. Wildlife and habitat values include all or portions of protected areas and conservation lands, Ungulate Winter Ranges (UWR), Wildlife Habitat Areas, Wildlife Management Areas, Old Growth Management Areas (OGMAs), riparian reserves, and critical habitat for species at risk. These values/areas should be assessed for the risk (probability and consequence) of being burned severely by wildfire and of severe fire spreading outside them.
- b. For values/areas at high risk, the Province must, by 2025, develop wildfire management plans indicating the proactive treatments to be implemented to manage for more resilient conditions that sustain or restore their values (e.g., thinning, prescribed/cultural fire) and any specifics for response and recovery. These treatments must be carefully designed to both reduce fuels and sustain or restore the values for which the areas were designated. Consideration of invasive plants will be key in southern regions.
- c. This work presents an opportunity to create local buy-in for fuel reduction treatments. Indigenous communities and regional stakeholder groups, including Forest Landscape Planning (FLP) tables and Together for Wildlife Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees (RWACs), could provide local knowledge to support WLRs, FNESS, & BCWS in preparing these plans.

4. Integrate direction on wildlife values in wildfire management plans into existing wildfire planning processes and decisions around prevention, mitigation, response and recovery activities.

- a. Ensure direction on wildlife values is incorporated into prevention, mitigation, response, and restoration activities across all of government.
- b. Implement regulation and policy changes where required to support implementation of these plans (e.g., where regulations prohibit fuel treatments, such as some OGMAs, UWRs, RRZs).
- c. To effectively reduce risk to communities, the priority within Wildland Urban Interface areas (WUIs) must remain on human life and infrastructure. Wildlife and habitat areas within WUIs should be prioritized for fuel reduction treatments.

5. **In 2024, create a simplified spatial layer that integrates over-lapping wildlife and habitat values into firesheds, and identifies the values and the intensity of fire acceptable within these firesheds.**
 - a. Many wildlife and habitat values overlap spatially. At present, there is no (or conflicting) guidance to BCWS as to how to respond when wildfire occurs within them. Integrating overlapping values into one spatial layer that includes all values in an area (i.e., by fireshed) and which indicates the acceptable range of fire intensity within each will assist BCWS in determining appropriate response tactics when fire occurs under most conditions. This work should be done through collaboration with FNESS, WLRS, BCWS, and First Nations.
6. **Ensure that Forest Landscape Plans (FLPs) include specific objectives for landscape fire resilience, and effectively integrate information on risks of severe wildfire to wildlife, habitat and other values.**
 - a. FLP tables should be directed to incorporate wildfire risk as a foundational layer in their planning, including guidance from wildfire management plans for wildlife. Assuming that fixed reserves will maintain wildlife values in this new era of uncharacteristic large and severe wildfires will not be a successful strategy. FLP tables should conduct sensitivity modelling to test different strategies to maintain wildlife and habitat values under various wildfire scenarios.
7. **Fund, enable and encourage fuel treatments by Indigenous Nations, stakeholders, the forest sector, and others on wildlife and conservation lands at high risk.**
 - a. Existing funding is largely for mitigation efforts in WUI areas. Effective landscape and community resilience requires moving beyond WUIs into the broader landscape. Here, priority should be given to supporting treatments within priority wildlife and habitat areas at high risk.
 - b. In 2024, work with the forest sector to address current barriers (e.g., liability, smoke, cost) to enable and encourage implementation of fuel treatments in strategic areas to enhance landscape resilience and wildlife/habitat values.
 - c. In 2024, fund and develop 3-4 strategic pilots that prioritize high value/ high risk landscapes and demonstrate success (i.e., mule deer winter range in the Cariboo, elk winter range in the East Kootenay). Initial funding could be sourced from the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation.
 - d. Create longer-term program (i.e., not annual) funding for key wildlife habitats and conservation lands to build and sustain contractor capacity for ongoing fuel treatments and resilience work.

Recommended 'Quick Wins' for 2024/25

- i. Embed WLRS Biologists familiar with conservation lands into BCWS Planning and Incident Management teams to ensure communication around actions re priority wildlife habitats and conservation lands.
- ii. In conditions of high to severe drought, and in areas where severe wildfires are likely to result and are undesirable, suppress as many fires as possible as quickly as possible (full response rather than monitor). Engage the forest sector to assist with expertise, labour and heavy equipment (strike teams).
- iii. Have Natural Resource Districts require machine operators building or rehabilitating fire guard on wildlife habitat and conservation lands to wash or steam clean their machinery to remove invasive plant seeds before beginning work.
- iv. Develop a provincially approved strategy for dealing with invasive plants during prescribed/cultural burns that Districts can use, to increase acceptance of burning in southern regions.
- v. Develop an infrastructure recovery program to fund the replacement of burnt fenceposts/fencing that prevents livestock/people from accessing conservation lands that have been burnt by catastrophic wildfire.
- vi. Support innovative work to refine the Provincial Strategic Threat Analysis to better understand where fire is likely to start and flow across mountainous landscapes, to assist in prioritizing areas to treat for fuel reduction. The 'Reducing the Risk of Severe Wildfire' Project in the Kootenay region, a collaborative project involving First Nations, regional government, and the forest industry, and led by the First Nations Emergencies Services Society (FNESS) and RW Gray Consulting, is piloting such an approach.
- vii. Increase support to the Provincial Broadleaf Working Group to assist them develop a provincial broadleaf strategy, provide support to regional silviculture groups to develop broadleaf and mixed-wood stocking standards, and better understand the role of broadleaf trees in wildfire mitigation.
- viii. Establish 'burn recovery teams' for severe burns and give them a mandate to determine how and where to maintain the heterogeneity in habitats created by severe fire. Reforesting to high densities of conifers will simply recreate a significant risk of high fire severity.
- ix. Have BCWS prevention staff participate in FLP table discussions around all values - not just fire - to ensure that fire risk is integrated into all conversations and decisions.

Ministers Wildlife Advisory Council, Strategies Working Group

Kari Stuart-Smith, PhD. (co-lead, Strategies Working Group)

Andrea Barnett M.A (Public Policy)

Mike Demarchi MSc. (co-lead, Strategies Working Group)

Jasper Lament, PhD.

Recommendations from the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council to the Premier's Expert Task Force on Emergencies

January 17, 2024



Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

- Individuals with a broad range of experience in natural resource stewardship and a passion for wildlife and habitat.
- Provide independent advice and support to the Minister on strategic issues and priorities which strengthen stewardship of wildlife and habitat in B.C.
- Focus on oversight of government work to implement the Together for Wildlife strategy including advice on legislation and policy.



Historic Fire Regimes



Current Fire Regimes



Overarching Recommendations

1. Build a Strategy for Resilience

- Develop an integrated wildfire resilience strategy that takes an all-of-government approach and engages and leverages capacity across society.
- Adequate funding for proactive work
- Link to watershed security and biodiversity conservation (including wetlands)



California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force

Overarching Recommendations

2. Build a sustainable bioeconomy to manage fuels

- Ongoing program to enable and incentivize scaled-up fuels management by the Forest Sector, BC Hydro, First Nation Communities, Municipalities, and Regional Districts, and incentivize the development of the bioeconomy to enable long-term fuels management.



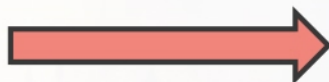
Wildlife & Habitat Focused Recommendations

3. Identify wildlife and habitat values at high risk of catastrophic wildfire and develop and implement locally informed wildfire management plans for these values/areas.

Wildlife & Habitat Values

- Protected areas and conservation lands
- Ungulate Winter Ranges (UWR)
- Wildlife Habitat Areas
- Wildlife Management Areas
- Old Growth Management Areas (OGMAs)
- Habitat for Regionally Important Species
- Critical Habitat for Species at Risk

Assess



Values/areas at high risk:

Develop wildfire management plans outlining proactive mitigative treatments, as well as response and recovery guidance

Fuel Treatments to sustain or enhance wildlife/habitat values



Recommendation 4 - Implementation

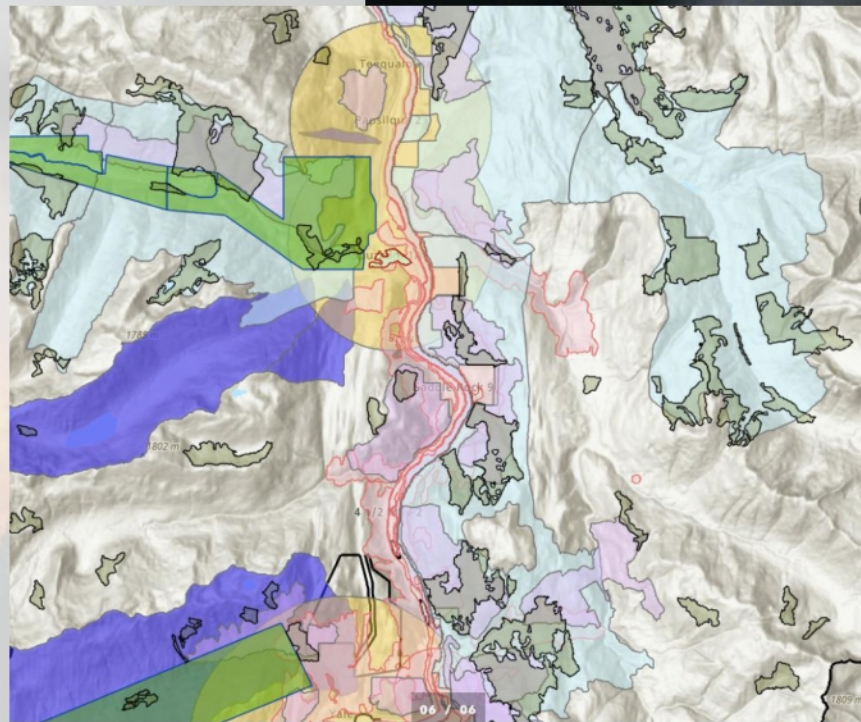
Integrate direction from wildfire management plans for wildlife/habitat into existing wildfire planning processes and decisions

- Regulation and policy changes may be required for fuel treatments within no-harvest areas (some OGMAs, UWRs, RRZs).
- Priority within Wildfire Urban Interface areas (WUIs) must remain on human life and infrastructure. Wildlife and habitat areas within WUIs should be prioritized for fuel reduction treatments.



Recommendation 5 - Response

- Create a simplified spatial layer that integrates over-lapping wildlife and habitat values/areas into firesheds, and determines the intensity of fire acceptable within these firesheds.



Recommendation 6 – Planning

Ensure that FLPs include specific objectives for landscape fire resilience, and effectively integrate information on risks of severe wildfire to wildlife, habitat and other values.

- Incorporate wildfire risk as a foundational layer in planning
- Include sensitivity modelling



Recommendation 7 – Fuel Treatments

Fund, enable and encourage fuel treatments by Indigenous Nations, stakeholders, the forest sector, and others on wildlife and conservation lands at high risk.

- Expand funding to areas beyond the WUIs – prioritize wildlife/habitat areas at high risk of severe wildfire
- Work with the forest sector to address barriers and enable and incentivize fuel treatments
- Develop pilots to investigate and prove out innovative approaches
- Critical to work towards Program funding, as opposed to project funding

Quick Wins for 2024/25

- i. Embed WLRs Biologists familiar with conservation lands into BCWS Planning and Incident Management teams
- ii. In conditions of high to severe drought, and in areas where severe wildfires are likely to result and are undesirable, suppress as many fires as possible as quickly as possible
- iii. Wash or steam clean machinery to remove invasive plant seeds before beginning work.**
- iv. Develop a provincially approved strategy for dealing with invasive plants during prescribed/cultural burns**
- v. Develop an infrastructure recovery program to fund the replacement of burnt fenceposts/fencing that prevents livestock/people from accessing conservation lands that have been burnt by catastrophic wildfire.

Quick Wins for 2024/25

- vi. Refine the Provincial Strategic Threat Analysis to better understand where fire is likely to start and flow across mountainous landscapes – Kootenay Pilot Project**
- vii.** Increase support to the Provincial Broadleaf Working Group to assist them in develop a provincial broadleaf strategy.
- viii.** Establish 'burn recovery teams' for severe burns and give them a mandate to determine how and where to maintain the heterogeneity in habitats created by severe fire.
- ix.** Have BCWS prevention staff participate in FLP table discussions around all values - not just fire - to ensure that fire risk is integrated into all conversations and decisions.



Thank you



Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

"Wildlife and their habitats thrive, are resilient, and support and enrich the lives of all British Columbians"

April 2, 2024

Minister Nathan Cullen, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Dear Minister Cullen,

Re: Funding Priorities

Your Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council (MWAC) is very pleased that new sources of funding have been established to support wildlife and habitat in B.C. Notably, the Tripartite Framework Agreement and Conservation Financing Mechanism are expected to make vital contributions towards fulfilling some of Together for Wildlife's (T4W) goals.

Yet, remarkable though these contributions may be, notable funding gaps persist. The need persists for tangible progress on outcomes under T4W Goal 3, Action 13 (*...review existing and potential new creative funding models and make recommendations to ensure sufficient, dedicated, long-term funding for wildlife and habitat stewardship...*). In keeping with previous recommendations made by Council, we advise that the following initiatives warrant focused attention and a level of funding necessary to fulfill key commitments of Goal 3 of T4W (*Stewardship actions achieve tangible benefits for wildlife and their habitats*).

- 1. Securing key parcels of private land with notable wildlife habitat value by purchasing them to become part of BC's collection of Conservation Lands. This undertaking should be consistent with the Conservation Lands Program Strategic Plan as supported by MWAC (MWAC recommendations #4, #7; T4W Goal 3 Action 11)**

We applaud the creation of the BC Conservation Fund and the opportunity to fund the creation of Indigenous-led area-based conservation on public lands. This initiative will support Goal 5 of T4W (*Collaboration advances reconciliation with Indigenous governments*).

At the same time, there is an urgent need to acquire private lands to support wildlife and habitat stewardship. At \$500,000 annually for Habitat Acquisition Grants, funding from the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation is not enough. Council advises that, in support of T4W Goal 3 Action 11, a minimum annual allocation of \$50 million is required to meet the goals of the Conservation Lands Program Strategic Plan per Goal 3, Action 11 of T4W (*...we will make investments to manage existing Conservation Lands and acquire new priority lands for wildlife stewardship*).

2. Rehabilitating resource roads, and lands subject to severe wildfire, in order to recover and protect productive wildlife habitat (recommendations #14, #17, #25, and advice given in January 2024; T4W Goal 3 Action 9)

Resource roads lead to greater access by the public and predators, resulting in wildlife displacement and mortality, and habitat loss. There is a need to fund the rehabilitation of these roads, together with legislation that requires companies to be responsible for this work on an ongoing basis and a new funding formula that incentivizes restoration of roads as opposed to building new roads.

The increasing severity of wildfires has and will continue to impact wildlife habitat, including that on conservation lands. Support for cultural and prescribed burning is required to reduce the incidence and severity of wildfires. Post-fire, funding is required to restore protective fencing, restore native species, and remove invasive species that will otherwise colonize burned areas. This funding should include science-based designs for monitoring and assessing impacts on wildlife values.

Rehabilitation of resource roads and wildlife habitats damaged by fire will advance T4W Goal 3, Action 9 (*...deactivating and reclaiming resource roads, and; managing key threats to wildlife and habitats, including invasive species...*).

3. Addressing road and rail impacts on wildlife and passenger safety (recommendation #19)

Wildlife mortality on roads and railways is a continuing concern. We encourage you to work with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to identify high risk road crossings, and fund safe wildlife crossings to avoid accidents with high cost to people and wildlife. At the same time, we encourage you to reach out to federal bodies and railroad companies to address the chronic problem of rail mortality. Progress here will address T4W Goal 3, Action 9 (*...reducing wildlife mortality on highways and railways...*).

In conclusion, Minister Cullen, we celebrate the establishment of new funding sources for wildlife and habitat conservation in British Columbia. However, it is imperative to recognize that there are persistent funding gaps that hinder the fulfillment of Together for Wildlife's crucial goals. The initiatives outlined by the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council underscore the urgency of addressing key priorities, such as securing critical parcels of private land, rehabilitating resource roads and fire-damaged habitats, and mitigating road and rail impacts on wildlife and passenger safety. Your Council advises that you make a steadfast commitment to allocating the necessary resources and collaborating with Indigenous communities and relevant stakeholders to ensure the realization of these vital conservation efforts. Together, we can safeguard the rich biodiversity of our province for generations to come. Thank you for your attention to these pressing matters.

Sincerely,

Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.) and Nancy Wilkin

Co-Chairs, Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

Cc: Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council
First Nations – B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum
Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team
David Muter, ADM, Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects, WLRS
Jennifer Psyllakis, A/ADM, Resource Stewardship Division, WLRS
Logan Wenham, Executive Director, Wildlife, WLRS
Michael Burwash, Associate Director Wildlife, Fish & Wildlife Branch
Jen Walker, Director, Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships, WLRS
Avril Nagel, Manager, Together for Wildlife Implementation



Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

"Wildlife and their habitats thrive, are resilient, and support and enrich the lives of all British Columbians"

April 2, 2024

Minister Nathan Cullen, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Dear Minister Cullen,

Re: Transmission of Disease to Wild Sheep

Your Wildlife Advisory Council Co-Chair Nancy Wilkin recently attended and spoke to the Wild Sheep Symposium organised by the Wild Sheep Society of B.C., the Syilx Okanagan Nation and Regional Provincial biologists. This included attendance from many Indigenous representatives from B.C. and the United States.

In Council's letter of August 2023, we identified the severity of risk to wild sheep from transmission of *mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (MOVI) from domestic sheep. We recommended strengthening the commitments and policy and regulation reforms that address disease risks and achieve effective physical separation of domestic and wild sheep (recommendation #26, attached)

At the Wild Sheep Symposium, we were pleased to learn that the Okanagan Nation Alliance has passed a Tribal Resolution regarding Syilx Domestic Sheep & Goat Health Protocol for the Protection of Wild Sheep. The Yukon Government has passed a Sheep Control Order (2020), requiring owners of domestic sheep and goats to comply with several conditions that are aimed at reducing contact with wild sheep and mountain goats. Copies of these are attached.

A key takeaway from this Symposium was that, despite efforts from B.C. staff working together, there is still a lack of policy, regulation or legislation in British Columbia to protect wild sheep. While we understand that your Ministry is looking at addressing this in part through the Wildlife Act Review, it will take several years to get this legislation in place.

A further challenge is that the *Wildlife Act* will not supersede the *Right to Farm Act*. This means it is not currently possible to remove the risk from wild sheep habitat.

This disease issue is transboundary. For example, herds in Osoyoos area are in contact with herds south of the border, where they also lack any policy or legislation.

Symposium participants were clear that immediate action is required. We would like to repeat the need for urgent action to protect wild sheep, and suggest the following priority actions:

1. Amend to the *Right to Farm Act* to remove the risk from wild sheep habitat.
2. Issue a control order similar to the Yukon Animal Health Order.

3. Amplify the resources for voluntary programs, MOVI testing, and communications with domestic sheep farmers.
4. Initiate communication with bordering governments, at the executive level, to open up cross-border dialogue about aligning regulations.
5. Adopt actions and best practices being undertaken in other jurisdictions to achieve sheep separation (including Alberta, Yukon, NWT, and the U.S.).

We appreciate your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.) and Nancy Wilkin

Co-Chairs, Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

Attachments:

Sylix Domestic Sheep & Goat Health Protocol for the Protection of Wild Sheep
Yukon Sheep Control Order (and resolution from Yukon Renewable Resources Council)
MWAC recommendation #26 (re wild sheep)

Cc: Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council
First Nations – B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum
Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team
David Muter, ADM, Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects, WLRS
Jennifer Psyllakis, A/ADM, Resource Stewardship Division, WLRS
Logan Wenham, Executive Director, Wildlife, WLRS
Michael Burwash, Associate Director Wildlife, Fish & Wildlife Branch
Jen Walker, Director, Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships, WLRS
Avril Nagel, Manager, Together for Wildlife Implementation
Kyle Stelter, Wild Sheep Society of BC
Okanagan Nation Alliance



OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

#101 – 3535 Old Okanagan Hwy, Westbank, BC V4T 3L7

Phone: (250) 707-0095 Fax (250) 707-0166 www.sylx.org

TRIBAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION

2023/24 No. 508
Natural Resources

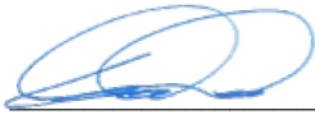
SYILX DOMESTIC SHEEP & GOAT HEALTH PROTOCOL FOR THE PROTECTION OF WILD SHEEP

June 11, 2023

- WHEREAS:** throughout the Syilx Nation, both domestic sheep and domestic goats exist adjacent to where populations of wild sheep (bighorn sheep) currently or can potentially reside.
- WHEREAS:** when domestic sheep and goats come into contact with wild populations of sheep and mountain goats, the wild populations can suffer illness and/or death associated with transferable diseases spread from domestic sheep and goats;
- WHEREAS:** wild sheep herds across British Columbia, Alberta, and the western United States have been documented to have suffered catastrophic all-age-class die-offs and long-term chronic effects from respiratory infections that domestic sheep and goats carry, including recent die-off within Syilx Territory;
- WHEREAS:** the introduction of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* bacterium, *Mannheimia* species bacteria, or any other bacteria, viruses, parasites, and/or microorganisms that may or potentially be transferred between domestic livestock/pets in Syilx Territory poses a significant threat to Syilx Rights and Responsibilities;
- WHEREAS:** research is ongoing, but it is widely recognized that there are no current effective treatments or preventative measures other than physical separation from domestic sheep and goats;
- WHEREAS:** overarching provincial legislation that limits or excludes domestic sheep and goat farms from specific high-risk areas while still supporting a viable domestic sheep/goat industry in British Columbia must be enacted and is consistent with actions taken by other jurisdictions.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The Okanagan Nation Alliance Chiefs Executive Council asks that the British Columbia government develop, in partnership with the ONA and Member communities, overarching legislation (e.g. Animal Health Act – Control Order) that will provide for effective means of separation between wild and domestic sheep and goats to ensure healthy wild sheep populations and the sustainability of sustenance, societal and ceremonial opportunities wild sheep provide, for generations to come.




SYILX DOMESTIC SHEEP & GOAT HEALTH PROTOCOL FOR THE PROTECTION OF WILD
SHEEP

Sil-teekin yilmix^{wm} Greg Gabriel
Penticton Indian Band



kal'Nupaqn yilmix^{wm} Keith Crow
Lower Similkameen Indian Band



ki law na yilmix^{wm} Clarence Louie
Osoyoos Indian Band

yilmix^{wm} Robert Louie
Westbank First Nation

yilmix^{wm} Byron Louis
Okanagan Indian Band

Quorum 3



RENEWABLE RESOURCES COUNCIL - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING KWANLIN DUN CULTRE CENTRE - 2015

Resolution #2015-03

Title: Wild/Domestic Sheep and Goats: Legislated Separation

WHEREAS;

- A. Wild sheep in North America and domestic sheep are closely related genetically but they have vastly different reactions to respiratory diseases.
- B. Wild sheep herds across BC, Alberta, and the western United States have suffered catastrophic die-offs and long-term chronic effects from respiratory infections that domestic sheep and goats carry.
- C. Research is ongoing but it is widely recognized that there are no current effective treatments or preventative measures other than physical separation from domestic sheep and goats.
- D. Farm-by-farm mitigation efforts (e.g., fencing projects on private land) without overarching legislation is expensive and prone to abuse by landowners.
- E. Options are available through the Yukon Animal Health Act to enable overarching Territorial legislation that limits or excludes domestic sheep and goat farms from specific high risk areas while still supporting a viable domestic sheep/goat industry in the Yukon.

Sheep Control Order

What is a control order?

Governments may use control orders to respond to issues of health and safety. The Government of Yukon is issuing this Control Order pursuant to the Animal Health Act to balance the responsible development of a domestic sheep and goat industry with protecting the health of wild thimhorn sheep and mountain goats.

Why is a Control Order necessary to protect wild sheep and goat health?

Wild thimhorn sheep and mountain goats are at risk of developing respiratory disease if they come into contact with domestic sheep and domestic goats. The disease can spread rapidly within wild sheep and goat populations, causing high numbers of deaths and significantly reducing the size and health of populations.

When is this happening?

The Control Order comes into effect January 1, 2020. Owners are encouraged to contact the Animal Health Unit and Agriculture Branch for more information and to access government support to comply with the order.

What does this mean for you, if you keep sheep or goats?

If you want to raise sheep and goats in Yukon, you must be in compliance with the Control Order by January 1, 2020.

How to comply with the order:

Before the Control Order comes into effect, sheep and goat owners must ensure their animals are being kept below 1,000 meters in elevation. In addition, all owners of sheep or goats, whether they own a single animal or operate a farm with many animals, must comply with the following conditions:

- all sheep and goats are maintained in an enclosure approved by an inspector before January 1, 2020 and annually thereafter;
- all sheep and goats have some form of permanent identification, e.g., ear tags;
- records are maintained for each individual sheep and goat;
- all sheep and goats are tested annually for pathogens of concern;
- any sheep or goats that escape from an enclosure, or while being transported, must be reported immediately to the chief veterinary officer; and



Contact

For general questions about the Control Order and testing for respiratory pathogens:

Animal Health Unit
Government of Yukon
867-667-5600 or
1-800-661-0408, ext. 5600

P.O. Box 2703 (V-7)
Whitehorse, YT
Y1A 2C6

animalhealth@gov.yk.ca

For questions about fencing specifications and support available:

Agriculture Branch
Government of Yukon
867-667-5838 or
1-800-661-0408, ext. 5838

agriculture@gov.yk.ca

MWAC Recommendation #26: Wild Sheep in B.C.

The spread of disease from domestic to wild sheep continues to be a crucial conservation issue facing wild sheep populations in B.C. Council strongly supports strengthening the commitments and policy and regulation reforms that address disease risks and achieve effective physical separation of domestic and wild sheep.

- 1. We recognize the use of existing regulatory protections under the Forest and Range Protection Act, and in particular the Government Actions Regulation. However, these protections have not resulted in enough action to ensure the sustainability of wild sheep in B.C., due to ongoing disease transmission. We understand a policy team has been re-energized but Council recommends that you to seek a stronger level of involvement and commitment from your colleague, Minister Pam Alexis, Minister of Agriculture and Food. This cross-ministry effort could improve outcomes for wild sheep and bring greater certainty to those who husband domestic animals.*



Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

"Wildlife and their habitats thrive, are resilient, and support and enrich the lives of all British Columbians"

April 12, 2024

Minister Nathan Cullen, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Dear Minister Cullen,

Re: Capacity for Chronic Wasting Disease Testing in BC

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is now a sad reality for people, deer, and other cervids (i.e., elk, moose, caribou) in B.C. A critical component of your Ministry's response strategy involves enhanced testing in affected areas, as well as supporting management, monitoring, and research to address this issue.

CWD is unlike many 'typical' wildlife diseases: it is currently untreatable and it persists in the environment. CWD may make harvested animals unsafe for human consumption and could be one more stressor for populations already in decline. For communities dependent on wild harvest for food sovereignty, food security, cultural practices, and recreation, CWD is devastating.

One of the most important tools we can offer the people of B.C. is rapid testing. With testing, managers can more accurately pinpoint outbreaks and can offer hunters the confidence that their efforts to provide food for their families will be respected. Currently, we are seeing test results measured in the months. In many cases, this will mean people will consume the meat even against Health Canada's recommendations to not consume CWD positive tissue. We understand that there is movement toward a 2–3 week turnaround time. We see that as a positive step but encourage you to push this even further and support this testing with adequate resources and even more rapid response times.

If test results are measured in weeks and months, not days, it is easy to image how and why people may take such risks to their health. If CWD is ever confirmed to cross the species barrier and infect humans, we do not want B.C. to be a test case for human transmission.

To limit the negative impacts and spread of this disease, frequent and timely testing of B.C. cervids is required to understand the dynamics of the outbreak and respond effectively. CWD testing has been ongoing in B.C. for over 10 years but has relied on out-of-province labs with long wait times for results. The BC Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Health Centre (Abbotsford) is now offering to support this work but has identified capacity challenges and will require additional resources to deliver this service effectively.

Timely testing is critical to provide your Ministry staff with information that will guide response efforts. Timely testing is also key to maintaining the support and partnership from the hunting community that provides over 80% of samples to the program.

More specifically, we request that B.C. create a testing program that:

- 1) Provides results to hunters within 7 days of submission;
- 2) Enables a compensatory mechanism of hunters with positive cases so they are not punished for assisting in management—every CWD-positive animal removed from the population should be rewarded! (Consider tag replacement programs that have been applied elsewhere).
- 3) Support operations (e.g., enhanced sampling from non-hunters), monitoring and research (e.g. deer movement studies), based on the actions outlined in Nelson et al., 2023 ([“A Surveillance and Response Plan for Chronic Wasting Disease in British Columbia”](#)) and the advice of regional and provincial CWD advisory groups.
- 4) Perhaps most importantly, we encourage you to empower and support front line staff to operationalize the 2023 CWD response plan. CWD and our response to it will remain a controversial issue for years to come—this include actions and inactions. Much like our lessons from COVID-19, we see how an evidence-based, transparent approach will deconflict different sectors of society. A lack of information and shifting baselines sow discontent and mistrust. We are urging similar ‘emergency measures’ leadership for this critical issue of CWD. Such an approach may mean sampling animals in inconvenient places or times, such as deer living in towns in the spring—which are currently off limits for testing. Indeed, it is in the urban spaces where deer densities are highest, and where contact with people are most likely. If we are not sampling in the towns of southeastern B.C., we are neglecting some of the riskiest areas for transmission of CWD.
- 5) For B.C.’s wildlife populations to be resilient in the face of CWD and multiple-other stressors, there is no greater time to pursue the goals of Together for Wildlife. We will need healthy landscapes and habitats so that cervid populations can recover. We request that the Province hastens its budgetary and time commitments to Together for Wildlife to support wildlife, habitat, and reconciliation.

To implement these recommendations, funding above and beyond BC’s current funding levels for wildlife is needed. Your Minister’s Wildlife Advisory Council discussed CWD at a recent meeting, and we urge you to work with your colleague the Honorable Pam Alexis to support adequate resourcing and capacity for CWD testing at the Animal Health Centre, in WLRS and other bodies supporting this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.) and Nancy Wilkin

Co-Chairs, Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

Cc: Honourable Pam Alexis, Minister of Agriculture and Food
Peter Pokorny, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food
Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council
First Nations – B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum
Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team
David Muter, ADM, Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects, WLRS
Jennifer Psyllakis, A/ADM, Resource Stewardship Division, WLRS
Logan Wenham, Executive Director, Wildlife, WLRS
Michael Burwash, Associate Director Wildlife, Fish & Wildlife Branch
Jen Walker, Director, Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships, WLRS
Avril Nagel, Manager, Together for Wildlife Implementation



Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

"Wildlife and their habitats thrive, are resilient, and support and enrich the lives of all British Columbians"

January 16, 2024

Minister Nathan Cullen, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Dear Minister Cullen,

Re: Dedicated Revenue for Wildlife and Habitat Stewardship

Happy New Year! Thank you for attending the 2023 Dialogues sessions, and for your letter updating Council on progress with our recommendations.

We are writing to encourage the Province to take rapid action to increase wildlife licence fees, surcharges, and fines, and to ensure that these revenues go to a dedicated fund supporting wildlife and habitat.

Council's Recommendation #8 (November 2021) speaks to a doubling of the surcharge on hunting and species licences:

"Enact regulatory changes to double the surcharge on hunting and species licenses for resident and non-resident hunters, effective immediately and with regular cost of living updates to the surcharge (the last increase was in 2004 and inflation has substantially eroded the purchasing power of these dollars). Council supports the BC Wildlife Federation 2021 resolution on this matter."

In your response to this recommendation (December 2023), you noted that Compliance and Enforcement and Funding are key themes in the review of the Wildlife Act. This is excellent, but we would suggest there are more immediate steps that could be taken to increase fees, surcharges and fines, with revenue from these sources placed in funds dedicated to wildlife and habitat.

We want to emphasize two important aspects of our support for a more encompassing increase to licences fees, surcharges, and fines.

First, we believe these monies should go into a dedicated fund for on-the-ground projects to maintain and restore wildlife and habitats. This is consistent with Action 13 of the Together for Wildlife Strategy to "ensure sufficient, **dedicated**, long-term funding for wildlife and habitat stewardship in British Columbia." In our most recent Dialogues session, stakeholders told Council they want to see immediate action to boost dedicated funding for wildlife and habitat.

Second, it is imperative that First Nations are supportive of these changes and that a portion of the increased revenue be allocated to First Nations capacity building and on-the-ground projects.

We believe there is backing for these measures. As part of our public outreach, Council Co-Chair Nancy Wilkin has met with the Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Coalition. The Coalition has expressed strong support to the Council for an increase to surcharges and dedicating this revenue. This has also been demonstrated through research conducted at UBC Okanagan (see attached summary).

While these measures will add a relatively small amount of funds compared to the overall need, these actions would be considered “wins” along the way to implementing the Together for Wildlife Strategy and putting dollars on the ground for wildlife.

The Together for Wildlife Strategy is more than three years into its critical mandate to making a difference for wildlife and habitat in B.C. Wildlife stakeholders are losing patience and want to see immediate progress on the Strategy, and in particular Action 13. Council believes that regulation changes could be implemented this year, with longer term changes left for the renewal of the Wildlife Act.

We look forward to your response on Council’s recommendation to increase and dedicate funding for wildlife.

Sincerely,

Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.) and Nancy Wilkin

Co-Chairs, Minister’s Wildlife Advisory Council

Cc: Minister George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Minister’s Wildlife Advisory Council
First Nations – B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum
Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team
David Muter, ADM, Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects, WLRS
Jennifer Psyllakis, A/ADM, Resource Stewardship Division, WLRS
Logan Wenham, Executive Director, Wildlife, WLRS
Michael Burwash, Associate Director Wildlife, Fish & Wildlife Branch
Jen Walker, Director, Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships, WLRS
Avril Nagel, Manager, Together for Wildlife Implementation

Attached: Zeman, J. 2022. Resident Hunters’ Preferences and Willingness to Pay for Moose and Wildlife Management in British Columbia. UBCO. Full report available from <https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0417444>

**RESIDENT HUNTERS' PREFERENCES AND WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR MOOSE AND
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

by

Jesse Zeman

B.B.A (Hons). Okanagan College and The University of British Columbia, 2006

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Interdisciplinary Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Okanagan)

August 2022

© Jesse Zeman, 2022

Abstract

British Columbia is suffering from a dramatic decline of funding for fish and wildlife management as a proportion of the provincial budget. In 1954, the proportion of the provincial budget dedicated to fish and wildlife management was 0.63%, and by 1994 it had declined to 0.08%. Since then, the budget for fish and wildlife has been unreported. Declines in funding limits the Province's ability to monitor and conserve fish and wildlife. At the same time, changing social expectations and legislation have made fish and wildlife managers' jobs more complicated. Fish and wildlife populations are also in decline. Hunters are disproportionately affected by declines in wildlife. For rural communities, hunting plays a significant role in terms of food security, economic vitality, and is an important source of recreation for those who hunt. The number of moose harvested by resident hunters in British Columbia was 10,894 in 1976, peaked at 13,045 in 1979, and declined to 4,017 in 2018. To sustainably manage wildlife, funding, science, and governance are needed. Resident hunters (those who reside in British Columbia and purchase hunting licenses) are one group that could play a role in increasing funding and ultimately improving wildlife management in British Columbia. To estimate resident hunters' preferences and willingness-to-pay for wildlife and moose management, this thesis employed a survey and choice experiment (n=2,104). The survey included a discrete choice experiment as well as qualitative pre- and post-choice experiment questions related to choice experiment attributes. The choice experiment attributes were: harvestable surplus; trade-off between opportunity and harvest, proportion of license fees dedicated to wildlife management, and governance; the payment vehicle was moose license price. Both the qualitative survey questions and quantitative choice experiment results found strong preferences for an increase in the harvestable surplus of moose, a focus on maximizing the opportunity to hunt versus the likelihood of harvesting a moose, changes to governance, and dedicating revenue from license fees towards moose and wildlife management. In contrast, results indicated respondents are

dissatisfied with the existing governance structure of elected officials managing wildlife, preferring first a Game Commission or second a Multi-stakeholder, Multi-Government Commission. The findings suggest that changes to moose management in British Columbia could result in substantially more funding while increasing resident hunters' utility.

Lay Summary

Funding, staffing levels, and science for fish and wildlife conservation in British Columbia are all in decline as a proportion of the provincial budget. Fish and wildlife populations are also in decline in British Columbia, and this decline is felt especially by people who hunt and fish. In North America, researchers have looked at hunters' willingness-to-pay for changes in the hunting experience and wildlife populations, but it is usually about a small area. My research looks at resident hunters' preferences and willingness-to-pay for changes in the moose populations, governance, where hunting license fees go, and how often hunters can go hunting for moose across the province of British Columbia. To figure out what hunters' preferences are and how much they're willing to pay to change moose management, we used an online survey. I hope this research helps hunters and policy makers, but most importantly the conservation of fish and wildlife in British Columbia.



Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

"Wildlife and their habitats thrive, are resilient, and support and enrich the lives of all British Columbians"

January 16, 2024

Minister Katrine Conroy, Finance

Minister Josie Osborne, Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation

Minister Nathan Cullen, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Dear Ministers Conroy, Osborne, and Cullen,

Re: Fish and Wildlife Compensation Programs

Happy New Year! The Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council looks forward to 2024 and continuing to assist with the implementation of the Together for Wildlife (T4W) Strategy.

Council's Recommendation #18 from July 2022 was "Increased Funding for the B.C. Hydro Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP)", and we would like to reiterate this proposal.

Action 13 of the Strategy is that: *"... in collaboration with the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council and the First Nations–B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum, we will review existing and potential new creative funding models and make recommendations to ensure sufficient, dedicated, long-term funding for wildlife and habitat stewardship in British Columbia."*

We heartily concur that *sufficient, dedicated, long-term funding* is essential in achieving the T4W goals, and congratulate your government on significant steps forward in 2023 (notably the funding associated with the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation and the Conservation Financing Mechanisms).

We appreciate that Funding is a key theme identified in the review of the Wildlife Act, but would suggest that there are more immediate steps that could be taken to increase the contributions to the FWCP and support the on-the-ground work that is so vital to wildlife and habitat across British Columbia.

FWCP provides valuable funding for First Nations, non-government partners, the Province, and others to help offset the impacts of BC Hydro reservoirs. In the Columbia Region, FWCP received ~\$5.4 million from BC Hydro to support projects ([2022-23 Annual Report](#)). In comparison, the Bonneville Power Administration provides funding for the U.S. Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Program, with [budgets](#) of ~\$280 million for 2023 and ~\$300 million for

2024. This means B.C. has ~12% of the Columbia Basin by area but receives less than 2% of the total funding of these two important fish and wildlife programs.

A foundational pillar of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework is “2. *Fostering and supporting a broader whole-of-society approach that facilitates actions and initiatives by individuals, organizations, private sector, governments, and communities to conserve and manage ecosystem health and biodiversity and to advance sustainable communities and economies.*” Ensuring that BC Hydro provides appropriate levels of compensation for the footprint impacts of its reservoirs is clearly consistent with this whole-of-society approach.

Council encourages the Province to direct BC Hydro to significantly increase their annual contributions to the three FWCP regions. It would be significant and timely if a percentage of the current and future BC Hydro rate increases be dedicated to the FWCP. This could be used, in part, to support multi-year capacity funding for First Nations fish and wildlife priorities.

We appreciate the continued opportunity to provide recommendations and advice to support wildlife in B.C.

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

Cc: Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Margo Sadler, FWCP Program Manager
Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council
First Nations – B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum
Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team
David Muter, ADM, Land Use Planning & Cumulative Effects, WLRS
Jennifer Psyllakis, A/ADM, Resource Stewardship Division, WLRS
Logan Wenham, Executive Director Wildlife, Wildlife Branch, WLRS
Michael Burwash, Associate Director Wildlife, Wildlife Branch, WLRS
Jen Walker, Director, Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships, WLRS
Avril Nagel, Manager, Together for Wildlife Implementation

Attachment 1: Background on Topics for Discussion

Topic	Background
Wildlife Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This year the topic of discussion for the MWACs dialogues was the <i>Wildlife Act</i> Review. These events were positioned as the advisory bodies seeking advice on what to consider as part of their advice to government. The events were distinctly not government engagement. Concerns were raised during the event about the scope of the current engagement and that certain interests, such as outdoor recreation are not sufficiently captured. A lot of support was raised for the review, including requests for greater investments into compliance and enforcement.
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under Together for Wildlife Action 13 there is a commitment to collaborate with MWAC to review existing and new funding models and make recommendations to ensure sufficient, dedicated, and long-term funding for wildlife and habitat stewardship in British Columbia. Since its establishment, MWAC has provided several recommendations and guiding principles for funding. Most recently they submitted letters to re-iterate two recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased funding for the B.C. Hydro Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (Attachment 2) Enact regulatory changes to double the surcharge on hunting and species licenses (Attachment 3) Revenue from both wildlife and freshwater fishing currently go to the Consolidated Revenue Fund. s. 13, s. 17 MWAC has also recently submitted a NEW summary funding letter to you (Attachment 5) which includes dedicated funding for Conservation Lands, the rehabilitation of Resource Roads and improved road and rail wildlife safety. Staff are currently working on a reply.
Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MWAC has been providing input on Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees (RWAC), Action 2 of T4W, over the course of the last two years and two members (John Bergenske and Kari Stuart-Smith) have been involved in the interim the East Kootenay Wildlife and Habitat Advisory Committee. MWAC has an interest in seeing faster and broader implementation across regional advisory bodies in the province. Some members feel that these bodies should have decision making authority over funding; this is contrary to the province's position that these committees are advisory in nature. Staff have policy and draft procedures in place to support the implementation of Action 2. Through the development of these documents, it has become clear that there are barriers to implementation. Some examples include varied interests or readiness of First Nations or stakeholders. Lack of staff capacity and readiness to work in an ethical space is an additional

	<p>barrier. In some cases, pre-existing regional tables call into question the need for an additional engagement body.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For this reason, a flexible and locally driven approach that is thoughtful and does not disrupt government-to-government relationships is critical to the implementation of Action 2.
Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MWAC has been actively engaged by Ministry staff on the development of the draft framework as well as the implementation planning. MWAC provided an advisory note related to the establishment of the Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Office that suggested key attributes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A legislated mandate to ensure that biodiversity and ecosystem health are prioritized in all natural resource management decisions. Expertise to bring both western science and indigenous traditional knowledge on biodiversity and ecosystem health to ministries and First Nation Governing Bodies. An independent body, supported by an external advisory body. Statutory authority to prevent decisions being made that may cause irreversible damage to biodiversity and ecosystem health — “stop work orders”. Sufficient budget to engage appropriate expertise. Transparency through regular reporting to government, First Nations Governing Bodies, Stakeholders, and the public. s. 12
Wildfires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous recommendations from MWAC called for a holistic planning approach to wildfire recovery management, post-wildfire decisions that balance wildlife and wildlife habitat with other economic drivers, and an expansion to the cultural and prescribed burning program. The unprecedented 2023 wildfire season has increased MWAC's concern about wildlife and ecosystems considering intensifying wildfires. MWAC recently presented to the Premier's Expert Taskforce on Emergencies as part of the Taskforce's engagement calendar and presented additional considerations (see Attachment 4): MWAC also presented a series of quick wins for action before the 2024 season such as embedding biologists into incident management teams and actively rehabilitating fire guards. The package to the Taskforce was in-depth and the secretariat indicated that although all the recommendations are valid, some were out of scope of the Taskforce's mandate. To note, some of the MWAC members were directly impacted by the 2023 fires, through experiences such as evacuations/evacuation alerts or loss of property on conservation lands. The Task Force has recently released its report: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/embc/reports/premiers_task_force_on_emergencies_report-april2024.pdf Several MWAC recommendations were included: a landscape resilience strategy, expanding local partnerships, scaling up, and being proactive; some were missing - burn recovery teams, proactive salvage

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Task Force has committed to ongoing meetings with MWAC post-election
Wildlife Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair Nancy Wilkin attended a Wild Sheep meeting in Kelowna in March; it was a collaboration with Okanagan Nation Alliance, Wild Sheep Society and others designed to address spread of disease to wild sheep. A request for action on addressing <i>Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae</i> (MOVI) forms part of their letter to you (Attachment 6); The Council is also paying close attention to Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD); it directly impacts some of the members who have expertise on CWD response. MWAC concerns – including a request for funding – have been capture in a pending letter to you (Attachment 7).
MWAC Public Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MWAC received advice from previous Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers to increase their public presence. Since that time, MWAC has been debating what an enhanced public voice could look like and there have been some differing views. Some members feel that public communications should not be a focus of the Council and that they should continue to focus energy on policy advice. s. 13 s. 13 We are actively working on the MWAC web presence. Concerns were also raised about the capacity required to do additional communication work, such as social media, or public engagements. MWAC members are already active on many policy topics and are volunteering their time. We have considered T4W communications needs in our 24/25 budget. MWAC also has a specific role in promoting public acceptance of the <i>Wildlife Act</i> review and the associated shift towards co-governance. Members can also play an influential role in promoting transformational change across organizations and in helping to build understanding of First Nations rights. To that end, a joint working group with members of MWAC, the First Nations-B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Forum (the Forum) and the Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team has been struck and one focus will be consistent communications across the organizations' networks about the importance of wildlife and the paradigm shifts required to meet obligations under the Declaration Act and in light of increased pressures on ecosystems. Most recently, the Council has been introduced to the DRAFT non-statutory Shared Decision-making policy, as recently endorsed by the Forum, and plans to advocate for this and related Ethical Space guidance and training. To help highlight the work of MWAC and to elevate the T4W Strategy, the Council requested a list of success. In response, staff have developed a list that the Council may discuss and then leave with you. Attachment 8 further summarises these projects for you.

Overview of Regional T4W Highlights

Region Projects Cost	Project Highlights	~ Funding Amount	T4W Action
West Coast 44 Projects s. 17	Implementing Bear Den Management on Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii	s. 17	9
	Collaborative Wildlife Stewardship for Elk on Vancouver Island	s. 17	9
South Coast 16 Projects s. 17	Deer Ungulate Winter Range (UWR) Sunshine Coast TSA	s. 17	10
	Improving Accuracy of Roosevelt Elk Inventory via Modelling of Sightability	s. 17	4
Cariboo 41 Projects s. 17	Chilko River Bear Monitoring and Collaborative Management of Recreational Bear Viewing	s. 17	9
	Species Management Planning and Wildlife Engagement	s. 17	8
Thompson-Okanagan 41 Projects s. 17	Bighorn Sheep Population Recovery and Stabilization	s. 17	9
	Post-Fire Vegetation Monitoring in Skeetchestn Territory	s. 17	9

*Total project numbers and amounts are approximate because final reporting for the 23/24 year occurs in May 2024. Figures for 23/24 captured in this document are based on the planned activities and budget but require confirmation by project leads.

Kootenay-Boundary 49 Projects s. 17	Highway 3 Mitigation in Southeastern BC	s. 17	9
	Managing Impacts to Wildlife and Habitat from Landscape-Level Linear Disturbances	s. 17	8
Northeast 16 Projects s. 17	Fisher Exclusion Box Building	s. 17	9
	Fisher Infographics	s. 17	3
Omineca 23 Projects s. 17	Mitigating Human-Bear Conflicts	s. 17	9
	Using large-scale functional habitat restoration tools to enhance moose populations in north- central BC	s. 17	9
Skeena 43 Projects s. 17	Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum (SSAF) Moose Health Assessment	s. 17	9
	Southern Skeena Mountain Goat Motorized Access Planning	s. 17	9

*Total project numbers and amounts are approximate because final reporting for the 23/24 year occurs in May 2024. Figures for 23/24 captured in this document are based on the planned activities and budget but require confirmation by project leads.

MEETING NOTE

DATE: April 17 2024

PREPARED FOR: Honourable Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

REGARDING: Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council 2024/25 Together for Wildlife priorities

INTRODUCTIONS: Chief Harry Nyce, Co-chair
Nancy Wilkin, Co-chair
Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council
Jennifer Psyllakis, A/Assistant Deputy Minister
Jennifer Walker, Director, Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships
Avril Nagel, Manager, Together for Wildlife Implementation

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION AND MESSAGES (see Attachment 1: Backgrounder on Topics for Discussion in support of all the points below):

Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council (MWAC) Effectiveness and Priorities:

- The Council's continued leadership and advisory support is very appreciated and is having an impressive impact. Chief Harry Nyce and Nancy, special thanks to you for your chair roles.
- The credibility and dedication of all members has led to recognition both within the provincial government and externally. This is a lot of effort that clearly shows.
- I can understand that things can feel as though action isn't swift enough, and recognizing there is so much that can be done, the priorities identified by the MWAC has focused work in key areas and I am confident impacts are improved.
- Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health, *Wildlife Act* Review, 30 x 30 and Conservation Lands, will continue as priorities and a critical review of the Together for Wildlife Strategy to improve implementation is welcomed.

Wildlife Act and Funding:

- The MWAC's reflection that some parties have felt that the early engagement on the *Wildlife Act* is not broad enough will help to inform the engagement process.
- Staff will continue to reach out to industry representatives and other interested parties to clarify the process and update the website accordingly.
- Staff have also met with Rights and Title holders; groups like the Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Coalition; and new and emerging advisory bodies.
- Broad engagement sessions with the public will happen in 2025.
- [s. 13](#)

Regional wildlife advisory committees:

- The regional wildlife advisory committees are emerging. We want to ensure information flow is effective and these groups feel valued and have impact.
- Expanding the committees will need to move at the pace of readiness for the local context and is going to be challenging given the broad diversity of expectations.
- We have some good lessons from the early meetings and will continue to listen to what is working well and where we need to do better.

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework (BEHF):

- Thank you for helping to converge the relationships among Together for Wildlife, Biodiversity Ecosystem Health and Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation.
- A lot of feedback was received on the Framework, as with other aspects of the Old Growth Strategic Review. We are working to assess this input, which is taking some additional time.

Wildfires:

- Planning for the 2024 fire season is top of mind, particularly given current drought conditions.
- I was pleased to see Council's efforts reflected in the recently released Task Force report. I will continue to champion wildlife and habitat values with my colleagues. (see Attachment 4).

Wildlife Health:

- Thank you for Council's attention and guidance on MOVI in wild sheep and Chronic Wasting Disease. We will advance on these recommendations in partnership with Ministry of Agriculture and Food with urgency (see Attachments 6 and 7).

MWAC Public Presence:

- Continue to grow a leadership profile by communicating and modeling anti-racism and ethical space relationships with the public.
- Elevating public understanding and "whole of society" partnerships is what is necessary to ensure thriving wildlife and healthy ecosystems for our communities and economies.

T4W Accomplishments (see Attachment 8).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

- s. 17

SUMMARY:

- The MWAC was established in 2020 to guide implementation of Together for Wildlife. Members are non-representative and come from diverse backgrounds. The outreach and public communication focus efforts on specific priorities.
- The term of current members of the MWAC will end September 1, 2024. Efforts are underway to determine which members wish to be re-appointed for an additional two-year term. Four members have confirmed they will not return. Nancy Wilkin will remain for six months to facilitate transition to an incoming chair. Re-appointments will be completed by July 2024.
- Priorities for next year will include advancing the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework, *Wildlife Act* Review, 30 x 30 and Conservation Lands, as well as a critical review of the Together for Wildlife Strategy to improve positive impact.

Attachment(s): Attachment 1. Background on Topics for Discussion
Attachment 2. Fish and Wildlife Compensation Programs
Attachment 3. Dedicated Revenue for Wildlife and Habitat Stewardship
Attachment 4. MWAC Package for the Premier's Expert Taskforce on Emergencies
Attachment 5. NEW – Letter re funding priorities April 2024
Attachment 6. NEW – Letter re wild sheep March 2024
Attachment 7. NEW – Letter re BC Animal Health Centre Testing Capacity
Attachment 8. Overview of T4W Regional Highlights



PREPARED BY:

Avril Nagel
Manager, Together for Wildlife
Strategic Initiatives and Partnership
(250) 413-7911

REVIEWED BY:

	Initials	Date
DM	LH	April 15, 2024
EFO		
ADM	JP	April 14, 2024
Program Dir/Mgr.	JW	April 11 2024 Feb 5, 2024