



Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Estimates Binder

April 2024

**ESTIMATES BINDER
FOR MINISTER NATHAN CULLEN
APRIL 2024**

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Budget 2024 Summary

Recommended Response:

The 2024/25 Estimates budget is \$214.267M, representing an increase of \$90.258M compared to the original 2023/24 Estimates of \$124.009M.

The 2023/24 restated Estimates of \$206.102M represents an increase of \$82.093M for Inter-Ministry Transfers:

- \$79.776M - Budget transfers from the Ministry of Forest (FOR) for natural resource sector rebalancing.
- \$2.984M - Budget transfers from the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) for natural resource sector rebalancing.
- (\$0.580M) – Budget transfer to Government Communications and Public Engagement (GCPE) for six positions.
- (\$0.087M) – Budget transfer to the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation (EMLI) for one position.

The 2024/25 Estimates budget is an increase of \$8.165M, or 3.96 percent, compared to the restated 2023/24 Estimates of \$206.102M.

Base Budget Lifts of \$8.165M include:

- \$1.738M –Base Budget lifts associated with Permitting, Authorizations and Housing Priority.
- \$6.427M – Shared Recovery Mandate lifts including the Shared Recovery Mandate from rebalancing.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Key Facts:

Budget 2024 Summary Per Divisions

The 2023/24 Estimates (Restated) column reflect changes in WLRS' core businesses and associated budgets, due to natural resource sector rebalancing.

	2023/24 Estimates (Original) (\$M)	2023/24 Estimates (Restated) (\$M)	2024/25 Estimates (\$M)	Variance (\$M)
Ministry Operations by Core Business				
Land Use Policy and Planning and Ecosystems	57.465	-	-	-
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects	-	57.386	58.428	1.042
Resource Stewardship	-	41.147	41.365	0.218
Water, Fisheries and Coastal Policy and Planning	10.355	-	-	-
Water, Fisheries and Coast	-	13.822	14.244	0.422
Natural Resource Information and Digital Services	26.225	26.225	28.803	2.578
Reconciliation and Natural Resource Sector Policy	3.254	-	-	-
Reconciliation, Lands and Natural Resource Policy	-	11.402	11.610	0.208
Natural Resource Sector Secretariat	6.953	-	-	-
Permitting Transformation	-	29.083	29.516	0.433
Executive and Support Services	19.757	26.537	29.801	3.264
Crown Land Special Account	-	0.500	0.500	-
Total Ministry Operations	124.009	206.102	214.267	8.165
April 2023 Plan	124.009	124.009	127.634	3.625
Total Inter-Ministry Transfers - Rebalancing		82.760	84.586	1.826
Total Inter-Ministry Transfers - Others		(0.667)	(0.792)	(0.125)
Total Base Budget Lifts		-	2.839	2.839
February 2024 Plan	124.009	206.102	214.267	8.165
Percentage Change				3.96%

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Budget 2024 Summary by Decisions

	2023/24 Estimates (Original) (\$M)	NRS Rebalancing (\$M)	EMLI (\$M)	GCPE (\$M)	2023/24 Estimates (Restated) (\$M)	Permitting Authorization Housing Priority (\$M)	Shared Recovery Wage Mandate (\$M)	2024/25 Estimates (\$M)
Land Use Policy and Planning and Ecosystems	57.465	(57.465)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects	-	57.465	(0.079)	-	57.386	0.134	0.908	58.428
Resource Stewardship	-	41.147	-	-	41.147	-	0.218	41.365
Water, Fisheries and Coastal Policy and Planning	10.355	(10.355)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Water, Fisheries and Coast	-	13.822	-	-	13.822	0.046	0.376	14.244
Natural Resource Information and Digital Services	26.225	-	-	-	26.225	1.003	1.575	28.803
Reconciliation and Natural Resource Sector Policy	3.254	(3.254)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reconciliation, Lands and Natural Resource Policy	-	11.402	-	-	11.402	0.180	0.028	11.610
Natural Resource Sector Secretariat	6.953	(6.953)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Permitting Transformation	-	29.083	-	-	29.083	0.240	0.193	29.516
Executive and Support Services	19.757	7.368	(0.008)	(0.580)	26.537	0.135	3.129	29.801
Crown Land Special Account	-	0.500	-	-	0.500	-	-	0.500
Total Base Budget	124.009	82.760	(0.087)	(0.580)	206.102	1.738	6.427	214.267

Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Phone: (250) 882-4429

**MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE
STEWARDSHIP**

Vote 46: Ministry Operations

DRAFT
February 12, 2024

**MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP
2024/25 Budget Highlights**

OPERATING BUDGET: \$214.267M (Increase of \$8.165M, or 3.96%, from 2023/24 Restated)

Budget Lifts: \$8.165M

Permitting, Authorizations and Housing Priority	\$1.738M
Shared Recovery Wage Mandate	\$6.427M

Inter-Ministry Program Transfers: \$83.794M

1. Budget Realignments due to Natural Resource Sector Rebalancing	
From Ministry of Forest	\$81.507M
From Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation	\$3.079M
2. Other Budget Realignments	
To Government Communications & Public Engagement	(\$0.705 M)
To Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation	(\$0.087 M)

See Inter-Ministry Program Transfer worksheet for specific details on individual transfers.

CAPITAL BUDGET: \$0.003M (No Change from 2023/24 Restated)

1. Budget 2024 provides \$0.003M as recurring CRF capital funding for Office Furniture and Equipment.

FTEs/ STAFFING:

FTEs - 2,250 Approved

1. Budget 2023 included funding for 1,282 FTEs.
2. Budget 2024 adds 955 FTEs as part of the NRM Budget Rebalancing.
3. Budget 2024 adds 13 new FTEs, for the Permitting, Authorizations and Housing Priority.

Staffing

1. As of December 1, 2023, 822 staff were transferred to WLRS as part of the NRS Rebalancing.
2. As of March 1, 2024, the WLRS Headcount is 2,271, with 2,186 Active and 85 On Leave

MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP
2024/25 Budget Briefing
THREE YEAR BUDGET CHANGES FROM FEBRUARY 2024 PLAN
OPERATING (\$Ms)

	2023/24 Estimates	2024/25 Estimates	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan
A April 2023 Plan				
Vote 46 - Ministry Operations	124.009	127.634		
Total April 2023 Plan	124.009	127.634		
Year-to-year change in 2023/24 Service Plan (See Key Facts - Budget Summary)	-	3.625		
<hr/>				
B Inter-Ministry Transfers				
Budget Realignment - from Ministry of Forest	79.776	81.507		
Budget Realignment - from Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation	2.984	3.079		
Budget Realignment - to Government Communications & Public Engagement	(0.580)	(0.705)		
Budget Realignment - to Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation	(0.087)	(0.087)		
Total Inter-Ministry Transfers	82.093	83.794		
C Base Budget Lifts (Reductions)				
Permitting, Authorizations and Housing Priority	-	-		
Shared Recovery Wage Mandate	-	2.839		
Total Base Budget Lifts (Reductions)	-	2.839		
Total Transfers and Adjustments	82.093	86.633		
Year-to-year change in 2023/24 Service Plan	82.093 66.20%	86.633 67.88%		
<hr/>				
	2023/24 Restated Estimates	2024/25 Estimates	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan
D February 2024 Plan				
Vote 46 - Ministry Operations	206.102	214.267		
Total February 2024 Plan	206.102	214.267		
Year-to-year change in 2024/25 Service Plan		8.165 3.96%	-	-
Year-to-year change from April 2023 Plan to February 2024 Plan		90.258 72.78%	-	-

Advice/Recommendations; Government
Financial Information

Advice/Recommendations;
Government Financial Information

MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP
2024/25 Budget Briefing
THREE YEAR BUDGET CHANGES FROM FEBRUARY 2024 PLAN
Inter-Ministry Transfers (\$Ms)

Inter-Ministry Transfers	2023/24 Restated Estimates	2024/25 Estimate	E-Form#	Note
	13.329	13.673	T004070	<i>Aquatic/Fish Program Management</i>
	0.001	0.001	T004071	<i>Water Rental Remissions</i>
	5.340	5.340	T004072	<i>Contaminated Sites</i>
	21.281	21.281	T004073	<i>Regional Operations - FrontCounter BC, Lands Authorizations, and related permitting support functions</i>
	26.570	26.226	T004074	<i>Regional Operations - Fish and wildlife policy, allocations and authorizations</i>
	4.152	4.152	T004075	<i>Corporate Overhead - related to WATER</i>
	3.040	3.040	T004076	<i>Corporate Overhead - related to LAND</i>
	3.466	3.466	T004077	<i>Land Based Investment Strategy (LBIS) related to WATER</i>
	1.248	1.248	T004078	<i>Land Based Investment Strategy (LBIS) related to LANDS</i>
	0.486	0.486	T004079	<i>Permitting (Water)</i>
	0.363	0.363	T004080	<i>Permitting (Land)</i>
	-	0.727	T004081	<i>Transfer Shared Recovery Mandate for LAND</i>
	-	1.004	T004082	<i>Transfer Shared Recovery Mandate for WATER</i>
	0.500	0.500	T004083	<i>Crown Land Special Account</i>
Budget Realignment - from FOR	<u>79.776</u>	<u>81.507</u>		
	0.278	0.235	T004103	<i>Lands Transfer team from IRR to WLRS</i>
	0.176	0.387	T004104	<i>OH maintenance costs for systems transferred from IRR to WLRS</i>
	2.530	2.411	T004105	<i>Lands Transfer team from IRR to WLRS</i>
	-	0.046	NA	<i>SRM allocation for Lands Transfer team</i>
Budget Realignment - from IRR	<u>2.984</u>	<u>3.079</u>		
Total Net Budget Realignments	<u>82.760</u>	<u>84.586</u>		Budget Realignments due to MoF, MIRR, and WLRS Restructuring
Budget Realignment - to GCPE	(0.580)	(0.705)	T004094	<i>Transfer of Budget for 6 staff hired on WLRS's behalf</i>
	(0.079)	(0.079)	T004091	<i>Transfer of Budget for 1 position to EMLI</i>
	(0.008)	(0.008)	T004092	<i>Transfer of Budget for 1 position to EMLI (OH)</i>
Budget Realignment - to EMLI	<u>(0.087)</u>	<u>(0.087)</u>		
Total Inter-Ministry Transfers	<u>82.093</u>	<u>83.794</u>		

MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP
2024/25 Budget Briefing
THREE YEAR BUDGET CHANGES FROM FEBRUARY 2024 PLAN
CAPITAL (\$Ms)

	2023/24 Estimates	2024/25 Estimates	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan
A April 2023 Plan				
Vote 46 - Ministry Operations	0.003	0.003	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
Total April 2023 Plan	0.003	0.003		
Year-to-year change in 2023/24 Service Plan	-	-	-	-
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	2023/24 Restated Estimates	2024/25 Estimates	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan
D February 2024 Plan				
Vote 46 - Ministry Operations	0.003	0.003	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
Total February 2024 Plan	0.003	0.003		
Year-to-year change in 2024/25 Service Plan		-	-	-

MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP
2024/25 Budget Briefing
Budget 2024 Summary (\$M)

	2023/24 Estimates (Original) (\$M)	2023/24 Estimates (Restated) (\$M)	2024/25 Estimates (\$M)	Variance (\$M)
Ministry Operations by Core Business				
Land Use Policy and Planning and Ecosystems	57.465	-	-	-
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects	-	57.386	58.428	1.042
Resource Stewardship	-	41.147	41.365	0.218
Water, Fisheries and Coastal Policy and Planning	10.355	-	-	-
Water, Fisheries and Coast	-	13.822	14.244	0.422
Natural Resource Information and Digital Services	26.225	26.225	28.803	2.578
Reconciliation and Natural Resource Sector Policy	3.254	-	-	-
Reconciliation, Lands and Natural Resource Policy	-	11.402	11.610	0.208
Natural Resource Sector Secretariat	6.953	-	-	-
Permitting Transformation	-	29.083	29.516	0.433
Executive and Support Services	19.757	26.537	29.801	3.264
Crown Land Special Account	-	0.500	0.500	-
Total Ministry Operations	124.009	206.102	214.267	8.165
April 2023 Plan	124.009	124.009	127.634	3.625
Total Inter-Ministry Transfers - Rebalancing	-	82.760	84.586	1.826
Total Inter-Ministry Transfers - Others	-	(0.667)	(0.792)	(0.125)
Total Base Budget Lifts	-	-	2.839	2.839
February 2024 Plan	124.009	206.102	214.267	8.165
Percentage Change				3.96%

	2023/24 Estimates (Original) (\$M)	NRS Rebalancing (\$M)	EMLI (\$M)	GCPE (\$M)	2023/24 Estimates (Restated) (\$M)	Permitting Authorization Housing Priority (\$M)	Shared Recovery Wage Mandate (\$M)	2024/25 Estimates (\$M)
Land Use Policy and Planning and Ecosystems	57.465	(57.465)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects	-	57.465	(0.079)	-	57.386	0.134	0.908	58.428
Resource Stewardship	-	41.147	-	-	41.147	-	0.218	41.365
Water, Fisheries and Coastal Policy and Planning	10.355	(10.355)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Water, Fisheries and Coast	-	13.822	-	-	13.822	0.046	0.376	14.244
Natural Resource Information and Digital Services	26.225	-	-	-	26.225	1.003	1.575	28.803
Reconciliation and Natural Resource Sector Policy	3.254	(3.254)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reconciliation, Lands and Natural Resource Policy	-	11.402	-	-	11.402	0.180	0.028	11.610
Natural Resource Sector Secretariat	6.953	(6.953)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Permitting Transformation	-	29.083	-	-	29.083	0.240	0.193	29.516
Executive and Support Services	19.757	7.368	(0.008)	(0.580)	26.537	0.135	3.129	29.801
Crown Land Special Account	-	0.500	-	-	0.500	-	-	0.500
Total Base Budget	124.009	82.760	(0.087)	(0.580)	206.102	1.738	6.427	214.267

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Minister's Office Budget

Recommended Response:

- For FY 2024/25, the Minister's Office budget is \$876,000.
- The increase of \$13,000 over FY 2023/24 includes:
 - Shared wage mandate for Salaries and Benefits.
- The Salary and Benefits budget of \$745,000 supports nine FTEs. There is one FTE that is risk managed, for a total of 10 FTEs.

Positions	2024/25 Estimates	Name
Minister	1	Honourable Nathan Cullen
Parliamentary Secretary	2	Fin Donnelly + Kelly Greene
Chief of Staff	1	Scott Harris
Ministerial Advisor	2	Lisa Dekleer + Jordan Van Schaik
Ministerial Advisor	1	Matthew Damario
Executive Assistant	1	Marshall Scott-Bigsby
Administrative Coordinator	1	Hailey Walters
Administrative Assistant	1	Nicole Moreira
Ministers Office Total	10	

Key Facts:

- No change to Operating Budget.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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STOB	STOB Description	2023/24 Estimates	2024/25 Estimates	2025/26 Estimates	2026/27 Estimates	Variance
50EA	Base Salaries	479,000	490,000	Advice/Recommendations		11,000
5298	Employee Benefits	122,000	124,000	Government Financial		2,000
52EA	Legislative Salaries - Indemnities	38,000	38,000	Information		-
54EA	Legislative Salaries	93,000	93,000			-
	Salary and Benefits Sub-total	732,000	745,000			13,000
57EA	Public Service Travel Expenses	71,000	71,000			-
63EA	Information Systems - Operating	12,000	12,000			-
65EA	Office and Business Expenses	17,000	17,000			-
82EA	Legislative Assembly	15,000	15,000			-
85EA	Other Expenses	16,000	16,000			-
Total		863,000	876,000			13,000

Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2024

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Budget Transfer Summary: Natural Resource Sector Rebalancing

Recommended Response:

- The natural resource sector was reorganized in 2022 with the creation of the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) to support government's goals of reconciliation with First Nations, environmental sustainability and economic prosperity.
- Since that time, the province has faced unprecedented challenges with wildfire, floods and drought. The importance of cross-Ministry coordination and collaboration is clear, and while positive changes have been demonstrated, a decision has been made to further refine the work between the Ministries of FOR, Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) and WLRS to ensure they are streamlined and efficient in delivering the services British Columbians count on.
- On October 19, 2023, an Order-in-Council was issued for the rebalancing.
- FOR transferred 799 staff (927 positions):
 - Water Management Branch and staff,
 - Fish and Wildlife Branch and staff,
 - Land Branch and Crown Lands Opportunities and Restoration staff, and
 - Front Counter BC and Regional Operations staff responsible for lands authorizations.
- MIRR transferred 23 staff (28 positions):
 - Strategic Partnerships & Initiatives staff, and

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- Negotiations & Regional Operations staff.
- The alignment of key statutory authorities for water, lands, fish and wildlife under a single Minister's portfolio ensures clear accountability and brings together the strategic and operational teams to address priority actions in these critical areas.
- In early Fiscal Year 2024/25, ministries will review the budgets transferred and identify any further budget refinements between ministries and across divisions.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Key Facts:

Budget Impacts (\$M)	
FOR divisions transferred budget to WLRS (Note 1)	81.507
IRR divisions transferred budget to WLRS (Note 2)	3.079
Total	84.586
FOR transferred contingency access to WLRS (Note 3)	12.263

Note 1: Details for \$81.507M budget transfer from FOR to WLRS:

- \$13.673M: Aquatic/Fish Program Management
- \$ 0.001M: Water Rental Remissions
- \$ 5.340M: Contaminated Sites
- \$21.281M: Land activities identified in the Regions
- \$26.226M: Water activities identified in the Regions
- \$ 7.192M: Overhead for Executive and Support Services
- \$ 4.714M: Land Based Investment
- \$ 0.849M: Permitting
- \$ 1.731M: Shared Recovery Mandate
- \$ 0.500M: Crown Land Special Account

Note 2: Details for \$3.079M budget transfer from IRR to WLRS:

- \$2.411M: Land Strategies
- \$0.235M: Land Transfers and Implementation
- \$0.387M: Land Return
- \$0.046M: Shared Recovery Mandate

Note 3: Details for \$12.263M contingency access transfer from FOR to WLRS:

- \$4.554M: Access to contingency for Flood Management and Drought Resilience (CPAS)
- \$4.209M: Access to contingency for Permitting
- \$3.500M: Access to contingency for Blueberry River First Nations

Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Sonja Martins, ADM/EFO

Phone: (250) 889-1774

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Tamra McQuitty, CFO

Phone: (250) 882-4429

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Budget 2024 Revenue

Recommend Response

On October 19, 2023, an Order in Council was issued for a rebalancing between FOR and WLRS. The entirety of the following revenues (\$602M Budget 2024) has been transferred from FOR to WLRS: water resources, *Wildlife Act* fees and licenses; real estate earnings of the Crown Land Special Account; interest on overdue accounts; and miscellaneous fees and licenses.

Other Natural Resources Revenue

- Water Resources FY2024/25 shows reduced revenue expectations due to extended 2023 drought.
- Water Resources FY2025/26 and FY2026/27 revenue increasing due to Site C generation estimates beginning in 2025.
- Water Resources revenue is 97 percent from about 250 power producers, and 3 percent from 30,000 other licensed water users in the province, from domestic usage to the Greater Vancouver Water District supplying all of Vancouver with water.
- Water rental rates are indexed based on the annual percent change in the CPI rate. Forecasted increase in BC CPI calendar 2025 is 2.20 percent.
- 100 percent of net angling revenue is allocated to Freshwater Fisheries Society BC annually.

Crown Land Revenue

- Land tenure increases for all fiscal years are mainly attributed to new authorizations expected to be issued and increases in BC Assessment land values. There is no material change in forecast compared to Budget 2023.
- Crown Land sales revenue shifts due to sales being finalized later than expected. Since Budget 2023, \$12M in planned land sales are expected to be completed in FY2024/25 (shifted from FY2023/24 in Budget 2023)

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- Crown land revenue includes crown land sales to external parties, sales of crown land assets in accordance with the provincial Surplus Property Program (SPP), and land royalties collected when crown land resources are extracted or used. Land tenure instruments include investigative permits, licences of occupation and leases.
- Crown land revenue is generated from all regions within the province.

Total Revenue (\$, Millions)				
Ministry Revenue Category	2023/24 Revised Forecast	2024/25 Budget Forecast	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan
Other Natural Resources Revenue	531	501	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
Crown Land	80	101		
Other CRF Revenue	1	1		
Total Ministry Revenue	612	602		

Other Natural Resources Revenue (\$, Millions)				
Ministry Revenue Category	2023/24 Revised Forecast	2024/25 Budget Forecast	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan
Water Resources	459	428	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
Water Recoveries	50	50		
Wildlife Act Fees & Licenses	10	10		
Fish and Wildlife Recoveries	13	13		
Other Natural Resources Revenue	531	501		

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Crown Land Revenue (\$, Millions)				
Ministry Revenue Category	2023/24 Revised Forecast	2024/25 Budget Forecast	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan
Land Tenure	55	59	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
Net Land Sales	4	6		
Net SPP Sales	1	19		
Land Royalties	19	15		
Interest and Other Income	1	1		
Total	80	101		

Key Facts:

- **Total Ministry Revenue** as from the 2024/2025 Budget Forecast by major category is \$602M in 2024/25, ^{Advice/Recommendation} in 2025/26; and ^{Advice/Recommendation} in 2026/27.
- The “Other Natural Resources” category aligns with the corresponding row in Table A9 (expected value) of the 2024/25 Budget and Fiscal Plan. Note: the 2024/25 Budget and Fiscal Plan has not yet been published and table reconciling will need to occur.
- Crown land and other revenue do not have their own separate line items and are rolled up with other revenue sources in the Budget and Fiscal plan.

Date Prepared: February 12, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Trevor Miller, Director, Revenue

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Modernized Land Use Planning Program and Approach

Recommend Response:

- The Ministry’s mandate letter states “continue to transform the management and stewardship of our waters, lands and resources, together with First Nations, and work toward modern land use plans and permitting processes rooted in science and Indigenous knowledge that consider new and cumulative impacts to the land base.”
- Modernized land use planning (LUP) sets strategic direction to guide sustainable resource stewardship and management of provincial public land and waters that meets economic, environmental, social, and cultural objectives.
- LUP applies a partnership model centered on building lasting relationships and trust between First Nations and the Government of British Columbia.
- Engagement occurs iteratively throughout an LUP process to ensure the values, interests, and perspectives of all affected parties are understood and considered.
- Projects are being initiated in high priority areas, at the appropriate scale, varying between comprehensive to issue specific plans that seek to address defined community needs and assist implementation of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.
- The LUP program receives \$7.78M annually to support program development and the advancement of 12 projects throughout the province.
- Advancing LUP is core to natural resource sector strategies and mandates including advancing reconciliation, improved timing and transparency of permitting, transforming the management of lands and waters, and delivering a commitment to protect 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- The LUP program is collaborating with Forest Landscape Planning and Water Sustainability Planning program to ensure the provincial approach to strategic and operational planning is aligned/coordinated.
- The LUP program is expected to play a role in implementing the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework by setting management direction that supports ecosystems, communities, and economic resiliency.
- In some cases, First Nations have declared Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) in their territories. IPCAs can include a wide variety of management objectives
 - In some cases they describe a First Nations interest to be more involved in on the ground monitoring and stewardship initiatives,
 - In some cases they are an interest to be more involved in natural resource stewardship decisions,
 - And in some cases they describe a First Nation's interest to create a new land use plan or update specific elements of an existing land use plan.
- LUP is an appropriate approach in addressing some IPCAs because it is conducted in partnership with First Nations rights and title holders and includes engaging with industry, stakeholders, and local communities; and considers environmental, economic and reconciliation outcomes.

Key Facts:

- LUP provides an opportunity to resolve land use conflicts at the local level. Strategic planning helps to define 'what' can occur and 'where', in a planning area and supports improved land base predictability and certainty.
- The annual LUP budget supports technical planning staff in regions; policy and project coordination in branch; and planning-focused positions within the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation.
- Capacity funding is sought annually from the Indigenous Funding Program to support First Nations participation in LUP (\$1.3M annually).

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- Other funding mechanisms including those flowing from the Nature Agreement and Conservation Finance Mechanism may assist in advancing conservation commitments through LUP.
- Early in 2023, five LUP projects advanced to the stage of Plan Development:
 - **Previously Initiated:** Tahltan-B.C. Land Use Plan; Gitanyow-Nisga'a-B.C.: Meziadin Salmon Habitat Plan; 'Namgis-B.C.: Gwa'ni Project.
 - **New:** Kaska-B.C. Land Use Plan; Taku River Tlingit-B.C.: Taku River Watershed Plan.
- Plan Development will involve the following key steps for each project:
 - Explore new combinations of land use zones, objectives, and associated impacts including the identification of candidate conservation areas.
 - Work with First Nations partners to develop and deliver a strategy for engagement with stakeholders, local government, and the public.
- Other planning projects include:
 - Northeast Land Use Planning (3 projects)
 - shíshálh-B.C. Land Use Planning Project
 - Nicola Watershed Land Use Planning Project
 - Wetzin'kwa Water Sustainability Project

Appendix 1: Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Intergovernmental Communications
Appendix 2: Summary of Modernized Land Use Planning: A Guide to Effective Stakeholder Engagement 2021

Date Prepared/Revised: February 9, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Tricia Morris, Director

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Withheld pursuant to/removed as

Advice/Recommendations ; Intergovernmental Communications

Page 028 of 513 to/à Page 037 of 513

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Advice/Recommendations ; Cabinet Confidences ; Intergovernmental Communications

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Advice/Recommendations ; Intergovernmental Communications

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Advice/Recommendations ; Cabinet Confidences ; Intergovernmental Communications

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Withheld pursuant to/removed as

Advice/Recommendations ; Intergovernmental Communications

Appendix 2: Summary - Modernized Land Use Planning: A Guide to Effective Stakeholder Engagement

Overview:

[Modernized Land Use Planning: A Guide to Effective Stakeholder Engagement \(2021\)](#), is a resource available on the public [Land Use Planning and Policy and Guidance](#) webpage. ‘A Guide to Effective Stakeholder Engagement’ (the guide) is a reference for both Provincial government and Indigenous government planners working together to create a land use plan and provides clarity to stakeholders on the principles and processes considered in a land use plan (LUP) engagement process.

Engagement occurs iteratively throughout a project to ensure the values, interests, and perspectives of all affected parties are understood and considered in planning-related decisions. Engagement is intended to hear and understand perspectives and ideas related to land use values, and to consider this input in land use decisions and direction.

Engagement on existing and future projects will be guided by project-specific engagement strategies developed by project planning teams, informed by this guidance. The following provides a summary of the guiding principles for engagement activities in LUP.

Guiding Principles for Effective Stakeholder Engagement

Principle #1 – Credibility: Stakeholder engagement is transparent, representative of the range of interests, and communicated fairly across all parties in a timely manner throughout the planning process.

Criteria	
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement strategies developed for each land use planning process are publicly available and clearly define how and when stakeholders will be engaged;• Project principles and scope are clear to inform parameters around what is being considered;• Purpose and objectives of engagement are mutually understood by all parties;• Supplementary documents and information to support engagements are easily accessible and are proactively shared, so that stakeholders are well-informed of the issues prior to the engagement; and• Engagement summaries (e.g. What We Heard reports) are posted online following public comment periods.
Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All parties, whether in person or by proxy, have an opportunity to be involved in planning-related engagement processes;• Representatives of a stakeholder organization or group must be authorized by, and are accountable to, their constituencies; and

Appendix 2: Summary - Modernized Land Use Planning: A Guide to Effective Stakeholder Engagement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation of the spectrum of interests is fair and balanced¹
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication is open, sincere, and demonstrates mutual respect and trust; • Prompt and thorough responses are provided to concerns and comments; • It is clear how engagement feedback will, or will not, influence plan development; • The constraints on the planning process are clearly communicated; and • The level of commitment that is being asked from participants (particularly in terms of time) is clearly communicated.
Access to Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders may be engaged throughout the process or at various stages, from drafting the terms of reference, to review of plan products as they are developed, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation; • Engagement methods are inclusive; and, • Financial barriers to participation are addressed and resolved through resources allocated to the process.
Verification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder input is reflected in planning direction or options considered by planning partners, and planning partners report out on how that input influenced the decision making process.
Understandable information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is clear and comprehensive and distributed in accessible formats; • Participation provides opportunities to promote learning and understanding; and • There are transparent and agreed upon procedures for information gathering and analysis.
Timelines and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timelines are realistic for the level of engagement, appropriate to the situation, and respectful of the communities being engaged; and • Be clear and upfront with stakeholders about any available financial, human, and technical resources to support engagement.

Principle #2 – Impartiality: Stakeholder engagement should be impartial to outcomes and perspectives.

Criteria:	
Neutral Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unbiased, neutral facilitation available for use at appropriate stages of the land use planning process; and,

¹ Where existing legislation applies, some stakeholder groups (ex. tenure holders) may have different rights to engagement than others.

Appendix 2: Summary - Modernized Land Use Planning: A Guide to Effective Stakeholder Engagement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and fair procedures are determined at the outset of the engagement process.
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stakeholders will receive the same information as to provide equal opportunity for review and engagement; and, • A communication plan will be developed that will have detailed documentation of steps taken to involve stakeholders, and accounting of how each participation impacted planning products.
Respect for Different Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values of all stakeholders participating in the planning process are recognized and respected; and, • Potential value conflicts are expected and respected.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background information, as well as scientific and technical data, is equally available to all participating stakeholders.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

**CONFIDENTIAL
ISSUES NOTE**

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship
Date: March 18, 2024
Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen

**No-mining orders (OICs)
issued under the
*Environment and Land Use Act***

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- Reconciliation with First Nations and enhanced co-stewardship of B.C.'s lands and waters are key elements of our government's approach to managing natural resources for the benefit of everyone who lives here.
- The *Declaration Act*, which was passed unanimously in 2019, requires the Province to take all measures necessary to ensure the laws of British Columbia are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Our government implemented the interim measures in the Gitxaala Nation and Ehattesaht First Nation territories as part of an ongoing effort to address these Nations' concerns and support reconciliation, while broader work continues to reform the *Mineral Tenure Act* in response to the 2023 B.C. Supreme Court ruling.
- Let me be very clear... These measures do not constitute a First Nation veto over mining in these areas.
- Instead, they support reconciliation by preventing the registration of new mineral claims, temporarily pausing current mining activities (which are limited) and pausing the issuance of new permits in Gitxaala and Ehattesaht territories — subject to further consultation and agreement from these Nations.
- These measures align with the broader work proposed as part of the reform of the *Mineral Tenure Act*.
- In June 2023, the *Mineral Tenure Act* Modernization Office was established by our government to support the modernization of that statute.

- Our government is firmly committed to implementing MTA modernization in consultation and in cooperation with title and rights holders, as indicated in the Declaration Act Action Plan.
- We will also work with industry, stakeholders, the public and other partners as this process unfolds.
- This will be challenging work, but we are confident that by working together, we can modernize the act while maintaining a vibrant mineral exploration and mining sector that continues to contribute to reconciliation and economic prosperity for everyone.

If needed:

- A recent news article suggested that the *Environment and Land Use Act* has never been used to pause resource-related activity in this way, but that's not true.
- The *Environment and Land Use Act* was enacted in 1971 and, over the course of 53 years, orders were made by ELUC for a variety of reasons to support protecting and conserving the environment and guiding land use decisions.
- These uses include pauses to commercial or industrial activity within specified areas to provide time and space to undertake land use planning, which is critical to long-term economic and environmental sustainability.
- For instance, starting in 2014, the Province issued orders under the ELUA to restrict mineral and coal activities in the Klappan in the Northwest, while a land use plan was being developed for that area.
- The Province also implemented interim restrictions with respect to existing permits for oil and gas activities in the Blueberry River First Nation's Claim Area, following the *Blueberry River First Nations (Yahey) v. Province of British Columbia* Supreme Court decision in 2021.
- In 2012, the Province enacted an order to establish the Sliammon Forest Area. The order restricted the Minister of Forest's ability to enter into a forest agreement for the purposes of harvesting timber within the Forest Area unless the forest agreement was entered into with the Sliammon First Nation (now Tla'amin) or its representative. The order was enacted for a period of five years.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

- **The authority provided by the *Environment and Land Use Act* is broad and allows the Province to make orders that it considers necessary or advisable respecting the environment or land use.**

KEY FACTS:

On March 11, 2024, business law firm McMillan LLP posted an article on its website entitled “The Latest Risk to the BC Natural Resource Sector: Government Uses Little Known Law to Freeze Mining Rights Unless First Nations Consent”

<https://mcmillan.ca/insights/publications/the-latest-risk-to-the-bc-natural-resource-sector-government-uses-little-known-law-to-freeze-mining-rights-unless-first-nations-consent/>

The article was co-authored by Robin Junger, who was critical of the government’s proposed amendments to the *Land Act* earlier in 2024. The article focuses on interim measures taken by the B.C. government in early March 2024 under the *Environment and Land Use Act* to “place restrictions on mineral claim registrations and mining activities in Gitxaala Nation and Ehattesaht First Nation territories.” <https://news.gov.bc.ca/30420>

The Orders in Council (OICs) pause current mining activities (which are limited) and the issuance of new permits in Gitxaala and Ehattesaht territories, and they prevent the registration of new mineral claims without agreement by the respective nations.

Please note: The two First Nations and the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation agreed to support amendments to the OICs if the Ehattesaht First Nation or Gitxaala Nation were to reach an agreement with companies seeking to explore or mine in their territories, but the ELUA orders themselves do not specify that certain activities may be permitted if an agreement is reached with either of the First Nations. If any changes to the orders are to be made, they would be done in consultation with the two First Nations.

BACKGROUND

In September 2023, the B.C. Supreme Court declared that the provincial Crown’s conduct in establishing an online system that allows the registration of mineral claims (without creating a system for consultation) breaches the obligations that the Crown has toward First Nations. Justice Ross gave the Province 18 months to reform the *Mineral Tenure Act* (MTA) to incorporate the duty to consult. The Province’s duty to consult with First Nations (with respect to decisions that would impact their rights) is well established by Section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

In the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan, the Province committed to modernizing the MTA in consultation and in co-operation with First Nations. In June 2023, the Mineral Tenure Act Modernization Office was established by the Province — alongside the First Nations Leadership Council and the B.C. technical working group — to support the modernization of this legislation.

What the *Environment and Land Use Act* is and how it's been used previously:

The *Environment and Land Use Act* (ELUA) provides the Lieutenant Governor in Council (LGiC) — following a recommendation of the Environment and Land Use Committee (ELUC) — with the authority to make any orders they consider necessary or advisable respecting the environment or land use. This is a broad authority that supports ELUC by providing it with the flexibility to respond to new and emerging issues quickly.

In the current context, the September 2023 *Gitxaala v. British Columbia* ruling of the B.C. Supreme Court declared that the provincial Crown's conduct in establishing an online system allowing automatic registration of mineral claims without creating a system for consultation breaches the obligations of the Crown to First Nations. The Supreme Court provided the Province with 18 months to reform the *Mineral Tenure Act* to incorporate the duty to consult.

Legislative reform is a time-consuming and resource-intensive process. While this work continues, mining activity (including staking) was allowed to continue on Gitxaala and Ehattesaht territory, which would continue to impact their rights until broader legislative changes could take place.

The ELUA orders (OICs) that were enacted to defer mining activities on Gitxaala and Ehattesaht territory will support the Province time and space to advance its commitments to reconciliation with the Gitxaala and Ehattesaht Nations while broader changes to the *Mineral Tenure Act* continue.

The Province took a similar approach to creating interim restrictions with respect to oil and gas activities in the Blueberry River First Nation's Claim Area, following the *Blueberry River First Nations (Yahey) v. Province of British Columbia* Supreme Court decision in 2021. In that decision, the Supreme Court determined that the Treaty 8 rights of the Blueberry River First Nations had been breached by development authorized by the provincial government over many years. In response to that decision, the Province entered into an initial agreement with Blueberry River First Nations to suspend previously authorized oil and gas permits in the Claim Area pending further negotiation and agreement from Blueberry River First Nations.

Another example is when ELUA orders are made to protect areas from further industrial development in advance of creating a provincial park, providing the broader benefit of protecting the area in the interim while longer-term conservation plans are established.

The ELUA was enacted in 1971 and, over the course of 53 years, orders were made by ELUC for a variety of reasons to support protecting and conserving the environment and guiding land use decisions. These uses include establishing protected areas, prohibiting specific activities within specific areas and deferring activities within specific areas.

The authority provided by the *Environment and Land Use Act* does not restrict the Province from suspending previously issued permits.

Media Interest: Following the McMillan LLP article, *Business in Vancouver* also published an article about these OICs on March 12, 2024 (<https://www.biv.com/news/resources-agriculture/concerns-raised-over-bcs-temporary-targeted-mining-ban-8433809>).

ADVICE TO MINISTER

Program contact	Patrick Glanc, A/Manager, Reconciliation, Lands and Natural Resource Policy Division, WLRS	Government
File created	March 18, 2024	
File updated	Date	

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Kaska – Modernized Land Use Plan (MLUP)

Recommend Response:

- British Columbia (BC) is engaging with Kaska in support of their interest in stewardship and conservation of the Dene K'eh Kusan (DKK), Intergovernmental Communications Intergovernmental Communications

Advice/Recommendations: Intergovernmental Communications

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

Key Facts:

- Land use planning in Kaska Ancestral territory within BC will provide strategic guidance and certainty on the what, where, and how of land and resource conservation, stewardship and responsible development within 9.9 million ha of northern BC.
- Key business pursuits and opportunities in the project area include guide outfitting and ecotourism, resident hunting and trapping.
- Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

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- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Intergovernmental Communications

- Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

Date Prepared/Revised: February 9, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: David Muter, Assistant Deputy Minister

Phone: 250-217-5385

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Rudi Maysner, Director

Phone: 250-739-8364

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Gwa'ni Modernized Land Use Plan (Namgis First Nation)

Recommend Response:

- WLRS has a mandate to lead modernized land use planning in partnership with First Nations to guide sustainable resource stewardship and management of public lands and resources.
- The Gwa'ni project will be the first modernized land use planning process delivered in the province through a government-to-government partnership with 'Namgis First Nation.
- Gwa'ni represents a significant step towards reconciliation with the 'Namgis as it promotes collaborative stewardship of ecosystem health.
- The 166,000-ha project area is in core 'Namgis territory within the Upper and Lower Nimpkish Landscape Units on the north end of Vancouver Island.
- This project will amend the Vancouver Island Land Use Plan and shape the strategic direction for management of lands and resources in this area.
- Fostering a sustainable forest economy is a key driver and consideration of overall ecosystem health, including recruitment and rehabilitation of rare and at-risk forest ecosystems will support a predictable forest economy.
- With Port McNeill as the largest community in the project area, local stakeholder engagement is an important component of the process.
- Three stakeholder engagement sessions to inform the plan have been held since 2021 and this spring, following completion of a socio-economic and environmental assessment, Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Key Facts:

- On February 25, 2021, 'Namgis First Nation and British Columbia (B.C.) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to undertake a planning process to modernize the existing Vancouver Island Land Use Plan (VILUP) in the portion of the 'Namgis First Nation territory within the Upper and Lower Nimpkish Landscape Units.
- Key values considered in the plan include timber, water, fish wildlife, biodiversity, visuals, recreation, tourism, cultural heritage resources, access, and mineral resources.
- A Terms of Reference for the Gwa'ni Project was signed April 12, 2021, and a steering committee of senior officials from B.C. and 'Namgis was established to oversee a technical working group of 'Namgis, WLRS and FOR to develop the plan.
- Objectives of the project are to advance reconciliation with 'Namgis, support healthy ecosystems, and provide predictability for the forest sector.
- The Gwa'ni Project is closely linked to the Western Forest Products/'Namgis Tree Farm License 37 (TFL 37) Forest Landscape Planning pilot that is concurrently underway with 'Namgis and the Office of the Chief Forester.
- Having the major forest licensee involved in the project as an advisor has enabled their interests to be considered alongside 'Namgis values.
- The Gwa'ni Project area includes approximately 80 percent of TFL 37 and additional B.C. Timber Sales operating area.
- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information
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Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Matt LeRoy, Executive Director, Coast Area Phone: Government

Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Stewardship Operations, West Coast Region

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Omineca Land Use Plan (LUP) Carrier Sekani First Nations¹ (CSFN)

Recommend Response:

- Since 2015, British Columbia (BC) and CSFN have partnered to develop a shared understanding of cumulative effects in the CSFN traditional territories. Long-term planning is needed to address stewardship risks and the inability for Nations to exercise their Aboriginal rights.
- A plan initiation mandate was received in 2019 and the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) is now requesting a Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences
- LUP is part of a comprehensive reconciliation strategy with the CSFN and is focused on balancing environmental stewardship with economic interests.
- An integrated approach across ministries (WLRS, the Ministry of Forests, the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation) is proposed, using multiple legislative tools for comprehensive objective setting; water sustainability planning; and operational forestry planning.
- The Omineca LUP addresses BC priorities, including resource development certainty (forestry, mining, and the North Coast transmission line); wildlife habitat (including Together for Wildlife) and species-at-risk; old growth protection; “30x30” conservation goal; co-management and shared decision-making; water quality and quantity objectives; and conservation and carbon economies.

¹ Nadleh Whut’en, Nak’azdli Whut’en, Saik’us First Nation, Stellat’en First Nation, Takla Nation, Tl’azt’en Nation, Ts’il Kaz Koh represent 6,950 members - one of the largest collectives in the province.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Key Facts:

- The Ministry's Mandate letter states: "continue to transform the management and stewardship of our waters, lands and resources, together with First Nations, and work toward modern land use plans and permitting processes rooted in science and Indigenous knowledge that consider new and cumulative impacts to the land base."
 - Advice/Recommendations: Government Financial Information
- CSFN territory has been impacted by wildfire, drought, insect infestations and resource development. BC has been able to provide economic and social stability to most communities in the Omineca region; now declining timber supply is changing the economy and unemployment is increasing.
- LUP sets the strategic direction and social choice for sustainable resource stewardship and management of provincial public land and waters that meets economic, environmental, social, and cultural objectives.
- Drivers for land use planning include reconciliation, a strong sustainable economy, addressing cumulative effects, landscape level disturbance, water sustainability, climate impacts, and species at risk.
 - Advice/Recommendations: Intergovernmental Communications
- BC's Critical Minerals priority includes a proposed nickel mine, FPX Nickel, which is in a highly impacted area from forestry with caribou and salmon interests.
- Proposed twinning of the BC Hydro North Coast Transmission Line transects CSFN territory (~40 percent of the line).
 - Advice/Recommendations: Government Financial Information
- Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA) reflect a First Nation's land use vision; this LUP area has a declared IPCA in the Tsay Keh Dene territory.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Jennifer Pollard, Director Resource Stewardship Operations

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Modernized Land Use Planning Program and Approach

Recommend Response:

- The Ministry’s mandate letter states “continue to transform the management and stewardship of our waters, lands and resources, together with First Nations, and work toward modern land use plans and permitting processes rooted in science and Indigenous knowledge that consider new and cumulative impacts to the land base.”
- Modernized land use planning (LUP) sets strategic direction to guide sustainable resource stewardship and management of provincial public land and waters that meets economic, environmental, social, and cultural objectives.
- LUP applies a partnership model centered on building lasting relationships and trust between First Nations and the Government of British Columbia.
- Engagement occurs iteratively throughout an LUP process to ensure the values, interests, and perspectives of all affected parties are understood and considered.
- Projects are being initiated in high priority areas, at the appropriate scale, varying between comprehensive to issue specific plans that seek to address defined community needs and assist implementation of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.
- The LUP program receives \$7.78M annually to support program development and the advancement of 12 projects throughout the province.
- Advancing LUP is core to natural resource sector strategies and mandates including advancing reconciliation, improved timing and transparency of permitting, transforming the management of lands and waters, and delivering a commitment to protect 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030.

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- The LUP program is collaborating with Forest Landscape Planning and Water Sustainability Planning program to ensure the provincial approach to strategic and operational planning is aligned/coordinated.
- The LUP program is expected to play a role in implementing the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework by setting management direction that supports ecosystems, communities, and economic resiliency.
- In some cases, First Nations have declared Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) in their territories. IPCAs can include a wide variety of management objectives
 - In some cases they describe a First Nations interest to be more involved in on the ground monitoring and stewardship initiatives,
 - In some cases they are an interest to be more involved in natural resource stewardship decisions,
 - And in some cases they describe a First Nation's interest to create a new land use plan or update specific elements of an existing land use plan.
- LUP is an appropriate approach in addressing some IPCAs because it is conducted in partnership with First Nations rights and title holders and includes engaging with industry, stakeholders, and local communities; and considers environmental, economic and reconciliation outcomes.

Key Facts:

- LUP provides an opportunity to resolve land use conflicts at the local level. Strategic planning helps to define 'what' can occur and 'where', in a planning area and supports improved land base predictability and certainty.
- The annual LUP budget supports technical planning staff in regions; policy and project coordination in branch; and planning-focused positions within the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation.
- Capacity funding is sought annually from the Indigenous Funding Program to support First Nations participation in LUP (\$1.3M annually).

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- Other funding mechanisms including those flowing from the Nature Agreement and Conservation Finance Mechanism may assist in advancing conservation commitments through LUP.
- Early in 2023, five LUP projects advanced to the stage of Plan Development:
 - **Previously Initiated:** Tahltan-B.C. Land Use Plan; Gitanyow-Nisga'a-B.C.: Meziadin Salmon Habitat Plan; 'Namgis-B.C.: Gwa'ni Project.
 - **New:** Kaska-B.C. Land Use Plan; Taku River Tlingit-B.C.: Taku River Watershed Plan.
- Plan Development will involve the following key steps for each project:
 - Explore new combinations of land use zones, objectives, and associated impacts including the identification of candidate conservation areas.
 - Work with First Nations partners to develop and deliver a strategy for engagement with stakeholders, local government, and the public.
- Other planning projects include:
 - Northeast Land Use Planning (3 projects)
 - shíshálh-B.C. Land Use Planning Project
 - Nicola Watershed Land Use Planning Project
 - Wetzin'kwa Water Sustainability Project

Appendix 1: Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Intergovernmental

Appendix 2: Summary of Modernized Land Use Planning: A Guide to Effective Stakeholder Engagement 2021

Date Prepared/Revised: February 9, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Brian Bawtinheimer, Executive Director

Phone: 250 888 0620

Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Issue: Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs).

Recommend Response:

- OECMs recognize that a wide array of lands and waters that, while not designated as traditional protected areas, play a critical role in conserving biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Aligned with the Ministry's Mandate, WLRS aims to significantly increase effective area-based conservation of lands, inland water, and marine areas, contributing to B.C.'s target of conserving 30 percent of these areas by 2030.
- British Columbia (B.C.) is on track to meet our 2030 conservation targets through a collaborative model.
- Partnering with First Nations and leveraging a range of conservation approaches, including protected areas and OECMs, will create a more inclusive and effective conservation network.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Inclusion of OECMs contributes to sustainable environmental management across land, freshwater, and marine environments, offering inclusive conservation approaches that engage a variety of governance models, from private entities to Indigenous stewardship.
- Successful implementation and management of OECMs in B.C. will require collaboration with First Nations, local stakeholders, and private landowners, ensuring that conservation efforts are both community-informed and culturally sensitive, enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives.

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Key Facts:

- The concept of OECMs was initiated by the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010, aiming to recognize diverse conservation efforts beyond traditional protected areas.
- The Pathway to Canada Target 1 developed an OECM Decision Support Tool (DST) to assist provinces and territories in identifying and managing OECMs, a process that did not involve the B.C. government or First Nations.
- As of 2024, B.C. has conserved 19.6 percent of its land base. This includes 15.5 percent in protected areas and 4.1 percent in OECMs, encompassing legal Old Growth Management Areas, no harvest Wildlife Habitat Areas, and Wildland Areas.
- The 4.1 percent analysis has received criticism from Ecojustice and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) for including old growth management areas they feel do not meet the criteria for OECMs. WLRS has committed to build a made-in-BC approach to new analysis for OECMs and include these groups among others.
- B.C. faces complex land use designations, and the province's framework for developing policies requires full involvement of First Nations, as outlined in the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. These factors highlight the need for a clear and robust policy framework for OECM decision making in B.C.
- The province is developing an OECM policy and reporting protocol with First Nations and key organizations. The policy will take a principle-based approach to decision-making and management, reflecting a strategic commitment to more inclusive and effective environmental stewardship.
- The initiative involves collaboration with Natural Resource Sector ministries, including Forests, Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Energy, Mines, and Low Carbon Innovation, and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.
- It aligns with other ministry priorities including the Old Growth Strategic Review Recommendations, the Together for Wildlife Action Plan, the Conservation Financing Mechanism, and the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework, which supports a coordinated approach to OECM implementation in B.C.
- Engagement with key industry representatives, environmental NGOs, and the public is scheduled for 2024 to 2025, aiming to gather diverse input and foster a shared commitment to conservation.
- The financial commitment towards OECM engagement and policy development aligns with WLRS' strategic goals of biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use. This investment is crucial for preserving B.C.'s natural heritage and promoting a sustainable future.

Date Prepared/Revised: January 29, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Issue: Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas

Recommend Response:

- Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) are largely conservation-focused areas, but may include some industrial use, and identified by First Nations.
- IPCAs generally (1) are Indigenous led; (2) represent a long-term commitment to conservation, and (3) provide opportunities to reconnect with the land and heal both the land and Indigenous Peoples.
- British Columbia (BC) views IPCA proposals as a positive indicator that a Nation has developed their land use vision for their territory.
- IPCAs are a valuable point for government-to-government land use planning and management initiatives, including supporting reconciliation agreements.
- As IPCAs can reflect a First Nation's land use vision, they can help identify land use conflicts and help set priorities where government-to-government land use planning can occur towards shared goals.
- Addressing IPCA proposals is best managed through publicly involved land use planning projects, and those projects should occur where there are land use conflicts or where new land use objectives are needed.
- Through the new funding made available through the Tripartite Framework Agreement and Conservation Financing Mechanisms we hope to provide resource to increase land use planning initiatives in BC.

If asked about socio-economic impacts

- Land use planning is the preferred approach to addressing land management objectives expressed in IPCAs because it is conducted in partnership with First Nations rights and title

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holders and includes engaging with industry, stakeholders, and local communities; and considers environmental, economic and reconciliation outcomes.

- Land use planning is intended to be used in areas where new, shared land use objectives are needed, or where the current land use plan is out of alignment with current government and First Nations goals.
- In these areas the modernized land use planning process will reduce conflicts and will create the conditions for improved economic certainty and investment.
- Modernized land use planning can mean a shift in our economies in these areas, and understanding those shifts will be done through detailed socio-economic analysis.
- Throughout the phases of planning, we work to understand how plan scenarios might impact the current economic activities – both positively and negatively – in the area.
- This information helps us understand the scope and scale of what is included in new land use scenarios.
- All planning scenarios considered will have full socio-economic impact analysis completed to help with final decision-making. Public engagement here is key to the work.

Key Facts:

- Engagement on IPCAs will be led by WLRS due to the relationship with modernized land use planning and to confirming social choice on the land base, as well as a co-managed land and resource regime. The ministries of Environment; Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation; Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation; and Forests will support this work.
- In 2017, Canada brought together Indigenous experts along with federal, provincial, and territorial government experts to explore a new approach to protected areas reflecting the international Indigenous Community Conserved Areas model. The committee (Indigenous Circle of Experts, or ICE) wrote the report *We Rise Together* of 26 recommendations and advice to all governments on considering IPCAs.
- IPCAs continue to be an emerging issue in BC due to various factors including:

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- Direct federal funding to BC First Nations to pursue IPCAs in their territories;
- Interest in the new 30 percent protection targets by 2030;
- Nations who are seeking renewed land use plans with the province; and
- Nations who wish to exert and express more formally rights and title.
- In 2019 34 First Nations applied for ECCC IPCA funding. Only 20 applications qualified at that time and 5 Nations received \$37,076,680 through the IPCA funding in 2019 with little or no consultation with B.C. staff.
- In late 2022, ECCC announced a call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for up to a total of \$40 million in Indigenous-led area-based conservation (ILABC) funding Nationally.
 - These funds were explicitly directed for the purpose of advancing towards 30% protection.
 - EOI submissions were required to identify jurisdictional support and provide evidence for future conservation to be established.
- 28 B.C. First Nations submitted EOIs. ECCC deemed 7 ineligible for funding and requested B.C. staff review 21 B.C EOI submissions for alignment with B.C.'s priorities and to provided feedback to ECCC for consideration.
- November 2023 ECCC announced ILABC funding for 14 B.C.-based Indigenous-led (IPCA) projects, the total funding is \$22,005,800.00.
 - Funding is disbursed over 3 years starting in fiscal 2023/24 and through fiscal 2025/26.
 - Funding is directed to the Nation for activities necessary to secure conservation outcomes, including (but not limited to): capacity for the First Nation community, contracting, field activities, land securement, and compensation.
- B.C.s role in the decision process was limited to collaboration with Pacific Region colleagues prior to final decision. Provincial staff were notified after First Nations had been contacted by ECCC.
- In 2023/24 ECCC provided an additional \$49,780,675 to 5 IPCA projects through the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund. These funds will be disbursed to applicants between 2023/24 and 2024/25 fiscal years.
 - WLRS staff were provided no opportunity to review the NSCSF funding applications.
- The concept of an IPCA is desirable to many First Nations. This, together with federal resources, has resulted in multiple IPCA proposals from Nations across the province. Although IPCAs may vary in approach, most will result in two critical land management results:
 - change the current land designation configurations resulting in a different social land use outcome; and
 - change economic activities on the land base affecting jobs, revenues, and the economy.
- Land use planning is the preferred approach to considering new conserved areas because it is conducted in partnership with First Nations rights and title holders and includes engaging with industry, stakeholders, and local communities. It also

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considers environmental, economic and reconciliation outcomes, as opposed to single, one-off conservation proposals.

Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications

Date Prepared/Revised: February 9, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Rhonda Cage, Director

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Withheld pursuant to/removed as
Intergovernmental Communications

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Issue: Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (CISF)

Recommend Response:

- The Ministry's Mandate letter is to: "develop a path forward with First Nations to build a co-managed land and resource management regime that will ensure natural resources are managed effectively now and, in the future".
- The Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (CISF) represents B.C.'s fundamental, strategic approach to shared stewardship and collaborative land and resource management between B.C. and partner First Nations.

● Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

- The CISF model is comprised of 16 regional Forums with 124 Nations involved: four in the Marine Plan Partnership for the North Pacific Coast, one in the Great Bear Rainforest (GBR) and 11 CSF province wide.
- The Ministry has committed to base program funding on an annual basis, such that Nations can begin building capacity as land managers and building trust in our partnership approach. The provincial budget commitments can be leveraged to attract federal investment. Most recently Environment Canada and B.C. have been negotiating a long-term funding agreement for CISF.
- The CISF model supports and informs modernized land use planning, forest landscape planning, old growth forest management, field-based monitoring and Guardians/Rangers, cumulative effects assessments and reporting, and collaborative approaches to shared decision making.

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- The CISF demonstrates B.C.'s response to the BC Supreme Court *Yahey* decision and provides a venue for strategic response province-wide, as First Nations look to the Northeast and demand similar action in their territories.
- The Forum model is a unique structure of consent-based decision-making between Indigenous governments and the Province and supports the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act)*.
- Stakeholder and community engagement, local and regional government involvement, along with federal support and engagement, are key priorities for the Forums. Forums are committed to demonstrating results, and to sharing early products with partners and stakeholders.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The CISF is guided by a Governance Working Group Executive (GWGE), comprised of senior Nation leadership, elected and hereditary Chiefs. The GWGE advises B.C. on the design, implementation and direction of the CISF, reflecting a true collaborative approach to governance.
- Forums cover close to 80 percent of the provincial land-base and are poised to be more permanently and consistently established. Discussions are underway with the remaining Nations not currently participating in a regional Forum.
- B.C. continues to hear directly from Nation partners about the profound impact that CISF is having in their communities. Positive outcomes are arising with respect to the management of resource values, as well as with Indigenous youth engagement, the transfer of Indigenous knowledge into land and resource use and decision-making, community healing, and social well-being.

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- Participating Nations state that CISF is the best example they have seen in delivering true shared stewardship and trusted land and resource management.
- Industry and stakeholder representatives are engaged provincially and at the regional Forums. Industry sees Forums as venues for constructive work with First Nations, leading to trusted, informed and durable decisions in the future.

Key Facts:

Key recent outcomes of CISF:

- Completion of 12 Cumulative Effects Assessment Reports and protocols through forums.
- Agreements in place to deliver Forum-generated information to Land Use Planning, Forest Landscape Planning and Water Sustainability Planning (WSP) tables (e.g. LUP - Fort St. John, Nicola Watershed; FLP - MacKenzie, Qelminite Secwepmc, Lakes and TFL 37; WSP - Upper Bulkley Morice (Wet'zinkwa)).
- Cross-Forum Data management/Data Sharing Framework is supported by the expansion of the GWGE- Data Management Working Group. Data sharing agreement review and writing guidelines are underway with support by forums and the Knowledge Management Branch.
- Over 73 Indigenous positions funded, and 350 individuals trained, working as Fish and Wildlife Technicians, Land Management Guardians, Cumulative Effects Specialists, and Project Managers. Capacity funding provided through CISF is resulting in an increase in professional land and resource managers at the Nation community level, further supporting the path towards co-management.
- Regions containing a stewardship forum: Cariboo (Southern Dakelh Nations, Northern Shuswap Nations, Esketemc, High Bar and Whispering Pines); Kootenay Boundary (Ktunaxa Nation), Thompson Okanagan (Nicola Bands, Secwepmc and Sylix), Skeena (3Nations - Kaska Dena Council, Taku River Tlingit, Tahltan Nation; Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum – Gitanyow, Gitxsan, Wet'suwet'en, Witsset and Lake Babine), South Coast (S'olh Temexw Stewardship Alliance, Sto:lo), North Coast (Metlakatla, Haisla, Gitga'at, Gitxaala, Kitsumkalum and Kitselas), Omineca (Carrier Sekani and Tsay Kay Dene).

Date Prepared/Revised: Feb. 9, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Phone: 250-896-8224

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Blueberry River First Nations (BRFN) Implementation Agreement

Recommend Response:

- In January 2023, government signed the Blueberry River First Nations Implementation Agreement (BRFN IA).
- The BRFN IA aims to substantively address infringements declared upon Blueberry's treaty rights in the 2021 *Yahey* decision due to the cumulative impacts of industrial development.
- It is our obligation to better protect BRFN's Treaty 8 rights, and honour the treaty signed over 100 years ago, on behalf of Canadians.
- WLRS is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the implementation of the BRFN IA in partnership with the natural resource sector.
- Government is working with BRFN Chief and Council to conclude the first operational land use plan, which is expected to be completed by March 31, 2024.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The Blueberry Implementation Agreement and the T8 Consensus Document are complex and include initiatives that have never been done before.
- January 2024 was the first anniversary of these historic agreements, and we know that implementation has had its challenges.
- We are working very closely with all Treaty 8 Nations to implement these agreements.
- This work will transform how the Province and First Nations steward land, water and resources together to better manage for cumulative effects and ensure Treaty rights are upheld.
- Industry engagement and input to the implementation of the specific initiatives has been very valuable. This is most noticeable in new development planning initiatives.
- These historic agreements will guide a partnership approach to land, water and resource stewardship that ensures First Nations can meaningfully exercise their Treaty 8 rights and provide stability and predictability for industry and communities in the region.
- The overall objective of our work in the Northeast is to address the declarations from Justice Burke and to provide a stable basis to support Treaty rights, and economic development.

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Wildlife:

- BC and BRFN have convened their Wildlife Working Group. Priorities include assessing moose populations, predator management and prescribed fire.
- A review of the 2022 regulations is ongoing to determine if refinements are needed. We recognize this review has taken longer than expected; however, we are still collecting data to help inform those decisions.
- The current regulatory package includes some potential changes, including removing antler restrictions for licensed moose hunting, and identifying areas of cultural significance for First Nations' harvest opportunity.

Water:

- BRFN Environmental Flow Needs (EFN) Framework is in its implementation or 'pilot' phase. The successful implementation of this framework will support expansion to further watersheds across Northeast BC.
- Authorities to use Administrative Monetary Penalties for compliance issues under the *Water Sustainability Act* are now in effect.

Restoration:

- Blueberry River Restoration Society established in March 2023, and partial payment to the Society of the provincial commitment is complete.

Revenue Sharing:

- Currently based on payments that are set out in the BRFN IA, for three years.
- BRFN has an option to receive revenue sharing payments instead of fixed payments on the same basis as the revenue sharing agreements with other Treaty 8 Nations.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 9, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Phone: 250-217-5385

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: James Cuell, Executive Director

Phone: 250-877-1615

ADVICE TO MINISTER

**CONFIDENTIAL
ISSUES NOTE**

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship
Date: March 28, 2024
Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen

Blueberry River First Nations (BRFN)

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **Our government continues to take steps to right past wrongs, and uphold the constitutionally protected treaty rights of Blueberry River First Nations and all Treaty 8 First Nations in B.C.**
- **That is why in January of 2023, we signed a historic agreement with Blueberry River First Nations, to create a new path forward for responsible resource development in northeast B.C., that protects treaty rights.**
- **We also signed agreements with all other Treaty 8 First Nations: Saulneau, Doig River, Halfway River, Fort Nelson, McLeod Lake, West Moberly and Prophet River – addressing the same objectives to protect treaty rights and support responsible resource development.**
- **These agreements will accelerate our joint work to assess and manage for cumulative impacts, to heal the land and the people through restoration activities and advance a new path for land and natural resource management for everyone living in northeastern B.C. and in Treaty 8 territory.**
- **We chose a path of negotiation, of agreement making, and are now focusing on implementing those agreements with our First Nation partners.**
- **Doig River First Nations and Halfway River First Nation filed petitions in October 2023 challenging processes related to the BRFN Implementation Agreement. As with the broader agreements, our preferred path is to negotiate and not litigate. We continue to have productive discussions with both Doig River and Halfway River First Nations.**
- **Since signing the agreement, we have:**

- **Established our shared restoration society and provided a substantive financial contribution to it.**
 - **Made significant progress to finalize restoration agreements with BRFN and other Treaty 8 First Nations.**
 - **Implemented the Environmental Flow Needs Framework and the use of the Pilot Water Allocation Tool to generate and apply the diversion threshold values in allocation decisions within the Blueberry, Upper Beatton, and Lower Sikanni Chief water management basins.**
 - **Implemented authorities to use Administrative Monetary Penalties for compliance issues under the *Water Sustainability Act*.**
 - **Engaged BRFN on planning in “high value” or “HV1” areas to address and manage cumulative effects and minimize new disturbance, while supporting economic development and local jobs.**
 - **Engaged a number of other Treaty 8 First Nations on the development and implementation of their land use plans.**
 - **Convened the wildlife working group to address priority issues such as assessing moose populations, predator management and prescribed fire.**
-
- **Together in partnership, we are making decisions on the land that ensure BRFN members can meaningfully exercise their constitutionally protected rights to hunt, trap, fish, and carry out their way of life.**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

BACKGROUND:

In June 2021, the BC Supreme Court determined the Province had infringed Blueberry River First Nations' (BRFN) treaty rights, and that no further unjustified authorizations could proceed in BRFN's Claim Area. The seven other BC-based Treaty 8 Nations all believe natural resource development activities have negatively impacted their treaty rights, and that similar infringement has occurred. In January and April 2023, the Province and eight Treaty 8 Nations signed agreements to set out to develop a cumulative effects management regime together, inclusive of mitigation and accommodation measures to support the strengthening of their culture and identity.

Media Interest: Significant provincial and national media interest in the first year following the Yahey decision. Very few recent stories or media inquiries in recent months.

Communications contact	Sean Leslie	250 893-4403
Program contact	David Muter	250 217-5385
File created	September 14, 2023	
File updated	March 28, 2024	

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Treaty 8, Cumulative Effects and the Yahey Decision – Consensus Document

Recommend Response:

- In 2023, government signed multiple, historic reconciliation agreements with eight Treaty 8 First Nations.
- Agreements with seven of the eight Treaty 8 Nations were based on a co-developed approach to address cumulative impacts on treaty rights.
 - This co-developed approach was named the “Consensus Document,” for six Treaty 8 Nations and BC and the “workplan” between McLeod Lake Indian Band and the BC.
 - A separate Implementation Agreement was signed with Blueberry River First Nations.
- Five provincial ministries have responsibility for implementing these agreements. WLRS is responsible for overseeing the overall implementation of the agreements in partnership with the other natural resource ministries.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The agreements demonstrate government’s ongoing commitment to a partnership approach with Treaty 8 Nations on land, water, and resource stewardship, providing more stability for people and industry in the region.
- Effects from these agreements on the Provincial and Regional economies are unknown. Provincial resources are being realigned to support agreements implementation from permitting and land use planning programs.
- Implementation of these agreements are not without their challenges. A transformative shift in natural resource management, in collaboration with Treaty 8 takes time.

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Key Facts:

The Treaty 8 Nations who signed Letters of Agreement and Revenue Sharing Agreements in B.C. are: Doig River, Fort Nelson, Halfway River, McLeod Lake, Prophet River, Saulneau, and West Moberly First Nations.

An update on the implementation of the key elements of the Consensus Document follows:

Honouring the Treaty:

- The province and several Treaty 8 Nations have formed an Honouring the Treaty working group to develop and implement initiatives to improve awareness and understanding of the Treaty with an anti-racism approach.
- Ongoing work to develop a Communications strategy and plan, as well as signage projects to increase awareness and visibility of Treaty 8, and to develop training curriculum.

Restoration:

- Blueberry River: The Province is providing funding to the Blueberry River Restoration Society for restoration, on behalf of the Nation, consistent with the BRFN Implementation Agreement.
- Seven other Treaty 8 Nations (Consensus Document signatory, and MLIB-BC workplan): The Nations and Province are working to complete restoration agreements by end of fiscal (March 2024), to meet agreement commitments for funding up to ten years for Nation-led, Nation-determined projects to heal the land and heal the people.
 - In March 2022, \$127.2M was granted to support these Nations in initial project development and implementation.

Revenue Sharing

- BC entered into revenue sharing agreements with the six Treaty 8 Nations that were engaged on the Consensus Document and with McLeod Lake Indian Band.
- The revenue sharing agreement was for two years and expires March 31, 2024.
- The revenue sharing agreement is to share 10% natural gas royalties received by the Province, and where oil and gas revenues exceeded \$1.0 billion there was an additional payment. In 2022/23, this delivered approximately \$248 million in revenue sharing because of the 10% plus additional payment.
- The Consensus Document committed Treaty 8 Nations and BC to develop a new fiscal relationship, and that work is ongoing.
- Payments to Blueberry River flowed pursuant to our Implementation Agreement that settled the Yahey court decision.

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Wildlife:

- The Treaty 8 Wildlife Working Group and its Technical Committee meet regularly to advance wildlife and wildlife habitat stewardship initiatives, co-develop workplans, collaborate on wildlife inventories and stewardship investments.
- A review of the Hunting and Trapping Regulations is ongoing and focused on identifying sustainable opportunities for all users in future amendments..
- We recognize this review has taken longer than expected; however, we are still collecting data to help inform wildlife management recommendations and decisions.

Land Use Planning:

- A number of Treaty 8 Nations are actively working with the Province on the development and implementation of their land use plans. The plans are seen as a key component to addressing the impact of cumulative effects through the setting of new standards and the establishment of new conservation efforts.
- There is a high expectation that completed land use plans that are supported by the Nations, will provide certainty for the resource sector.
- There will likely remain some areas of high conflict and high overlap where government will need to consider accommodation and or longer-term negotiation strategies.

Cumulative Effects

- One of the initiatives in the consensus documents addressed a shift in how cumulative impacts to values supporting T8 way of life were being considered in decision making. The commitment in the consensus document is:
 - *The Province will issue legally effective direction to statutory decision makers requiring:*
 - *Consideration of the extent and duration of cumulative impacts and*
 - *Measures to avoid or minimize cumulative impacts and the potential infringement of treaty rights.*
- A BC/Treaty 8 Legislative Working Group was struck to address the legislative approach to implementing this direction. Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences
Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Intergovernmental Communications

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Intergovernmental Communications

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Treaty 8/BC Collaborative Stewardship Forum

- BC and all Treaty 8 Nations are involved in a facilitated process to convene a new collaborative stewardship forum that can support the management and assessment of cumulative effects.
- They are committed to convening a forum that is inclusive of all Treaty 8 Nations at the community and land manager level. This work is taking significant time and is working at a pace that will allow trust to be re-established amongst all parties, especially amongst the nations.
- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Intergovernmental Communications

Other Issues

- Pace of implementation is not meeting the expectations of the nations. The lack of a coordinated delivery of the commitments has stretched capacity for all parties.
- Both Halfway River First Nation and Doig River First Nation are concerned about the overlap of the Blueberry Implementation Agreement and their core territories. They have applied to the courts for a Judicial Review of the Province's decision to enter into the agreement with Blueberry. Both nations are in active discussions with the Province on opportunities to resolve their claims.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 9, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Cumulative Effects Framework

Recommend Response:

- My Ministry's Mandate includes direction to: "increase the Province's capacity to manage for cumulative effects through integration of science-based land, aquatic, resource, geographic and Indigenous knowledge to evidence-informed policy and decisions can be made by statutory decision makers".
- Cumulative Effects (CE) assessments under the B.C. Cumulative Effects Framework (CEF) are a foundational component of natural resource stewardship. They assess the cumulative effects of natural and human-caused disturbances on key provincial values to inform planning and decision-making throughout B.C. and across natural resource agencies. CEF outputs provide a common understanding of value condition and trend.
- CEF products are used to inform: (1) modernized land use planning and forest landscape planning; (2) implementation of the provincial Old Growth Strategic Review recommendations; (3) environmental assessments for major projects; (4) natural resource authorizations, such as roads and forestry activities; (5) watershed security planning and fish habitat management; (6) consultation with Indigenous Nations and impact assessment to Aboriginal rights and title; and (7) other strategic, tactical and operational natural resource management decisions.
- To date, current condition reports and accompanying data generated under the CEF on various values have been published publicly for all the eight Natural Resource Regions and many more reports are in progress.

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- Ongoing development of guidance and training for decision-makers on the use of this data and information is being prioritized by the CEF team.
- B.C. continues to shift towards increased delivery of the CEF with First Nation partners through regional Forums and the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (CISF) model.
- Cumulative effects assessments are a key interest and priority for many Indigenous governments. Through CISF, trusted data is collected, and assessments are conducted collaboratively to inform operational and strategic decision-making, reflecting Indigenous perspectives and knowledge.

Additional Response points (if needed):

Next steps for CEF implementation include:

- Continue publishing CE assessment results for Grizzly Bear, Forest Biodiversity, Old Growth, Aquatic Ecosystems, and Moose, including building web-based reporting tools to communicate assessment results to users. Continue engagement with First Nations through CISF to share information and seek collaboration on CE approach.
- Advancing CE data into operational decision-making through the development of management considerations and guidance.

Key Facts:

- The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship is the lead agency for the Cumulative Effects Framework, including the development of policy, guidance, assessments, and reporting.
- The Cumulative Effects Framework Interim Policy is an NRS-wide policy; all natural resource ministries have a role to play in the application of the Framework to the decisions they make on the land base.
- **Audit:** In 2015, the Office of the Auditor General completed an audit on “Managing Cumulative Effects of Natural Resource Development in B.C.”, concluding that the Ministry of Forests was not adequately addressing CE in decision-making. The Public Accounts Committee has stated that the response to the audit is now complete (as of February 2023).

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- **Yahey vs. B.C.:** In the 2021 B.C. Supreme Court decision, Justice Burke found that “The Province has not implemented a fully functioning regime where cumulative effects in the Blueberry Claim Area and impacts on the exercise of treaty rights can be assessed and managed.”

Date Prepared/Revised: Feb. 9, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Phone: 250-637-1007

Cumulative Effects Framework

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Issue: Lower Fraser Cumulative Effects Forum

Recommend Response:

- The Lower Fraser šx^{wk}wecxənəm (skwitch-hah-num) Partnership is a Tsawwassen and Musqueam First Nations-led stewardship partnership for the Lower Fraser River which would involve Canada, Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, Metro Vancouver, and British Columbia.
- This multi-government stewardship partnership is intended to provide a comprehensive solution for cumulative effects discussions on current and future projects and decisions in the Lower Fraser River. This includes advancing cumulative effects solutions which can support environmental assessment work.

Key Facts:

- The Lower Fraser is among the most jurisdictionally complex and economically active regions in British Columbia. There are numerous provincial and federal regulators, a regional district and nine local governments with jurisdiction in the Lower Fraser.
- In 2022, the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) assessed the Tilbury Marine Jetty project as having moderate-to-serious and serious cumulative effects to Tsawwassen First Nation's treaty rights related to culture and fishing. This assessment, together with the implications of recent cumulative effects litigation (*Yahey v. British Columbia* decision) poses significant challenges and risks surrounding infrastructure development in the Lower Fraser River.
- Tsawwassen First Nation and the Musqueam First Nation have constitutionally protected, proven rights to harvest in the Lower Fraser with numerous other First Nations (20-35) asserting rights and title.
- A robust solution is required to address the cumulative effects of ongoing development in the Lower Fraser that is either led by, or has significant support from, First Nations.
- Chief Sparrow (Musqueam) and Chief Laura Cassidy (Tsawwassen) wrote a joint letter addressed to the province in late November 2023 seeking to confirm a mandate with the province to begin this work. The province will respond with broad cross agency support for this Indigenous led work.
- A key first step for Tsawwassen and Musqueam is to design and agree on a governance approach at the political and technical levels between the Nations and with regards to the involvement of the other government partners.

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- While the exact structure and function for the partnership has yet to be set, areas of focus could include coordination of restoration and enhancement activities, knowledge and data sharing, and inventory and monitoring.
- MIRR is lead for securing the necessary funding to advance this work. Advice/Recommendations: Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications

Date Prepared/Revised: March 4, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Phone: Government

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Cumulative Effects Forum for Bamberton

Recommend Response:

- WLRS is committed to co-developing a cumulative effects assessment of the Saanich Inlet alongside First Nations impacted by the Bamberton Quarry.
- This work is in early stages: WLRS has begun important conversations between BC and First Nations to build new relationships, to work together towards collaborative stewardship of the Saanich Inlet with W̱SÁNEĆ (Wh-Saa-niCH) peoples and neighbouring communities.
- By supporting this work through the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums program, WLRS is looking to develop shared and trusted information to support collaborative management and stewardship for key values within the Saanich Inlet into the future.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The cumulative effects work is independent of the *Mines Act* and *Land Act* permit review processes; however, the outcomes of this collaborative forum are expected to inform environmental management of the Bamberton Quarry through an Environmental Review Committee required by the Bamberton Quarry *Mines Act* permit.

Key Facts:

- The Bamberton Quarry is on private land owned by the Malahat First Nation and is in the Cowichan Valley Regional District, approximately six km south of Mill Bay, on the Saanich Inlet. The site has been used since the early 1900s as a cement plant and later as a quarry. The existing quarry was permitted in 1991. Products from the Bamberton Quarry serve local construction markets and are primarily shipped by barge via the Saanich Inlet.
- Malahat Investment Corporation (MICO) is the business arm of the Malahat First Nation and became the permit holder of the quarry in 2016. MICO received an amendment to the Bamberton Quarry permit in October 2023, increasing production area and production rate. MICO has also applied to

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WLRS to amend its foreshore lease to administratively expand its authorized marine area; no additional construction is required.

- During the application stage, BC was asked to review the application under the *Environmental Assessment Act* to better address cumulative effects of the proposed quarry expansion on the Saanich Inlet.
- On June 27, 2023, Minister George Heyman, Ministry of Environment declined the designation of the Bamberton Quarry Expansion Project near Mill Bay as reviewable under the *Environmental Assessment Act* (approved October 30, 2023, by the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation).
- Alongside that decision, Minister Heyman committed WLRS to design and implement a collaborative cumulative effects analysis in full partnership with First Nations.
- The scope of work will include an assessment of marine values in the Saanich Inlet area. The final geographic extent, scope and approach will be dependent on participating Nations and collaborative interests.
- WLRS has assigned a project lead to collaboratively develop scope and approach with Nations. They are reaching out to Nations and are in early negotiations to set out governance, scope, and approach.
- The Saanich Inlet is the traditional territory of WSÁNEĆ Nation, which includes five communities (Malahat, Tsartlip, Tseycum, Tsawout and Pauquachin), as well as many coastal and landward Coast Salish neighbours.
- Multiple federal government initiatives, to manage the cumulative effects of marine shipping, implement marine protected areas and manage marine values (among others) are already underway with Nations in this complex jurisdictional space.
- Fully implemented, the Forum is anticipated to cost \$1.5M annually to support analyses, guardian and restoration work that will co-develop trusted information that supports improved permitting and authorizations.
- Funding for this initiative will support a transition towards collaborative management of natural resources, emphasizing non-western ways of knowing and transmitting knowledge and valuing Indigenous knowledge and responsibilities. The work is intended to explicitly address the impacts of colonization on Indigenous connections to land and cultural revitalization.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 4, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Issue: T̓silhqot̓in National Government (TNG) Pathways Agreement renewal and the Nen Transformation Table

Recommend Response:

- Active negotiations between TNG, WLRS, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR) and FOR continue to strengthen the relationship and collaborative efforts this past year.
- The T̓silhqot̓in Nation is recognized for its leadership in advancing Indigenous rights, and the Xeni Gwet̓in [HUN-nee wah-TEEN] First Nations; as caretakers of the Declared Title Area (DTA).
- BC recognizes tenure holders in the DTA are in a challenging position as we continue to work through the transition of governance. Through discussion with TNG, we have received assurances that they will not interfere with road access to private land and tenure holders.
- We are working internally and with TNG to prepare for the celebration of the 10 year anniversary of the *T̓silhqot̓in 2014 Supreme Court of Canada* decision.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Recent emphasis at the Nen Transformation Table has been developing a “Nen Overarching Plan” identifying shared priorities and the development and implementation of the Wildlife and Habitat Stewardship Plan which includes Habitat/Ecosystem management , Access Management, Species Management, Data Management, AAH(LEH)Quota, Compliance and Enforcement and Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science
- Negotiations are ongoing on the Wildlife Management Area and Federal Vessel Regulations in the Upper Chilko located within and outside the Declared Title Area.

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- We support and actively participate with MIRR as the lead on the Pathways Agreement renewal anticipated in 2024.
- Progress between TNG, WLRS, FOR and MIRR regarding moose population concerns addressed at regular face to face Nen Transformation Table meetings.
- WLRS and Fisheries and Oceans Canada are working closely with TNG to support their desire to have and run a permanent salmon hatchery on BC Conservation Lands.
- WLRS continues to work closely with FOR to support TNG's desire for substantial protection and recognition of cultural sites on both crown and private land.

Key Facts:

- TNG is comprised of six communities that are primarily located west of Williams Lake throughout the Chilcotin Plateau: ?Esdilagh (*ess-de-la*), Tsideldel (*tsigh-dell-dell*), Tl'etinnox-t'in (clay-teen-co-teen), Toosey (*two-zee*), Yunesit'in (*you-neh-seh-teen*), and Xeni Gwet'in (HUN-nee wah-TEEN).
- The Supreme Court of Canada made a declaration of Aboriginal title to the T̓silhqot'in Nation on June 26, 2014. The T̓silhqot'in Nation is the only First Nation in Canada to have a declaration of Aboriginal title affirmed by the The Supreme Court of Canada.
- BC and the T̓silhqot'in Nation are signatories to the following agreements that recognize the T̓silhqot'in Nation 2014 The Supreme Court of Canada decision:
 - *Nenqay Deni Accord's* (2016) with Section 12 commitments related to land and resources; and
 - The tripartite *Gwets'en Nilt'i Pathway Agreement* (2019) which identified a BC/TNG Nen Transformation Table (NTT) as one of the pathways. Nen is the T̓silhqot'in word for "lands". This Pathways agreement contains short, mid- and long-term milestones to guide implementation of land and resource management, including moose.
- Assistant Deputy Ministers are the Provincial representatives at the Nen Transformation Table.

Appendix 1 – Six Components of the NTT

Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2024

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

APPENDIX 1

Wildlife and Habitat Stewardship Plan – 7 components: Habitat/Ecosystem, Access Management, Species Management, Data Management, AAH(LEH)Quota, Compliance and Enforcement and Indigenous Knowledge and Western Science

The following are the six components of the NTT:

#1 Recognizing T̓silhqot̓in Authorities, Transforming the Relationship

A *Shared Decision Making* discussion paper negotiated between the province and the TNG explores approaches for advancing ShDM, confirming agreement, and seeking direction on differences. Ideally, this work will support and track existing collaboration and commitments, and describe where we are at, on the spectrum of ShDM.

#2 Transfer of Category A Lands:

A jointly drafted discussion paper for this topic has been developed; this creates a thoughtful, informed approach to negotiations. The NTT will be asked to endorse the format and content. Internally, FOR, WLRS and MIRR will need to develop a project charter to guide the provincial approach, including roles and responsibilities across agencies.

#3 Declared Title Area:

Tenure transition and stakeholder engagement are key current tasks that we would like to continue focusing on. The question of 'compensation' for particularly guide outfitters, access, consent-based decision making and bridging agreement renewals are additional current topics. The Attorney General is in the process of finalizing a legal opinion on the continued issues of access through the DTA and on the status of the roads within the DTA.

#4 Protecting T̓silhqot̓in Cultural and Spiritual Heritage:

In the absence of a Section 4 (*Heritage Conservation Act*) Agreement with the T̓silhqot̓in, the following has been achieved between the Nation and the Province: 1) signed information sharing and confidentiality agreement (August, 2021) to support the initial discussions on 3 critical heritage sites on private lands, including options regarding joint management; and 2) ongoing positive discussions seeking the T̓silhqot̓in's collaboration on updating the regional Archaeological Overview Assessment model.

#5 Strategic Management Framework for Category B Lands:

This strategic management framework is intended to cover the entire T̓silhqot̓in territory, and their interest in Habitats, Ecosystems, access, species and data management. As well the development of a compliance and enforcement regime and undertake Indigenous Knowledge and western science research. TNG actively completing T̓silhqot̓in Nen plans (land use planning).

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#6 Transforming Fiscal Relationships:

TNG's focus on the Pathways renewal and uplift discussion and their interests on resource revenues and taxes.

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Issue: Northern Wildlife Roundtable

Recommend Response:

- Together for Wildlife (T4W) establishes goals and actions to advance the vision of thriving and resilient wildlife and habitat that enrich the lives of all British Columbians, while advancing reconciliation and co-management, and improving public trust and confidence.
- We need to consider the diverse values and perspectives of all British Columbians to improve outcomes for wildlife and habitat and provide opportunities to bring together these perspectives in collaborative dialogue.
- The Northern Wildlife Roundtable (NWR) is a north Skeena Region initiated wildlife advisory table re-convened to support the sharing of perspectives, collaboration, and relationship building among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It is anticipated that the table will work towards building consensus advisory recommendations on wildlife stewardship topics.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The NWR is being established in collaboration with the 3Nations (Tahltan, Kaska, Taku River Tlingit) and B.C. through the Collaborative Stewardship Forum (CSF; 3N-B.C.-CSF and is inclusive of non-CSF First Nations groups, community and stakeholder representatives who have an interest in north Skeena Region wildlife and habitats.
- The NWR is being established to provide an advisory role and is intended to complement the government-to-government relationships the Province of British Columbia and Indigenous governments.

Key Facts:

- The NWR is being stood up through the work with 3N-B.C.-CSF and the Tahltan Wildlife Accord team towards bringing together the Province of British Columbia, Indigenous, stakeholders and community representatives on wildlife stewardship.

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- Funding is supported through Goal 1, Action 2 of T4W; to strengthen and broaden relationships to make the engagement process more open, transparent, and effective through creating or expanding regional wildlife advisory committees. 3N-B.C.-CSF and the Tahltan Wildlife Accord contribute capacity funding.
- WLRS leads T4W implementation and has developed draft Regional Wildlife Advisory Committee procedures to support creating regional tables and strategies to enable linkage between tables.
- The NWR was last convened in 2018. A renewed Terms of Reference (TOR) was drafted with the 3N-B.C.-CSF team and was updated to include principles of T4W and UNDRIP and bring more voices to this northern table.
- All Indigenous governments that have overlap in the 3N-B.C.-CSF boundary are invited to participate or link via other tables to the NWR. B.C. representatives from CSF, T4W, Resource Stewardship Division, and Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects are participating.
- Stakeholders and community members include northern Skeena based Guide Outfitter Associations (GOA) (Tahltan GOA, Northwest GOA, Kaska Dene Outfitting), and B.C. Wildlife Federation and Atlin Rod and Gun Club (resident hunters).
- Additional members are being considered under the renewed TOR to include broader stewardship focus as needed and other perspectives from the community, for example, recreation and youth membership.
- Expenditures for the 2024 planning and re-convening meeting face-to-face included cost capacity, travel, venue, facilitation, development of communication materials, ethical space training, and significant pre-engagement to scope the meeting agenda.
- This group is planned to meet ~ three times/year, with one of these in person, will be governed by a TOR, and will require support from the Province of British Columbia to manage as it builds capacity and momentum.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 5, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Cowichan Weir

Recommend Response:

- The Cowichan River provides a vital source of fresh water that supports drinking water, critical fish habitat, cultural use, and a diverse regional economy. The Cowichan River and its watershed also have deep cultural significance to the Cowichan Tribes.
- Under current recurring drought conditions, the existing Cowichan Lake weir no longer supports adequate water flows in the Cowichan River. This significantly impacts Cowichan Tribes' food security and cultural practices and has devastating consequences for fish.
- This is why we committed \$14M to Cowichan Tribes to support their work to replace the existing Cowichan Lake Weir with one with greater water storage capacity to support ecological and community needs in the watershed.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- BC's contribution leverages a \$24M federal grant to Cowichan Tribes in 2021.
- WLRS is now working closely with Cowichan Tribes, and their partners in the weir replacement project, to support them in advancing this project toward construction including navigating the water licensing process.
- This support and collaboration is in keeping with our commitment to working collaboratively with First Nations to steward natural resources.

Key Facts:

- The Cowichan Watershed is ancestral home to Quw'utsun Nation, including Cowichan Tribes, Halalt, Lyackson, Penelakut and Stz'uminus First Nations.
- The Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB) is a partnership between Cowichan Tribes and the Cowichan Valley Regional District and provides leadership for

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sustainable water management in the Cowichan Watershed and adjacent Koksilah Watershed.

- Since 1957, a weir on Cowichan Lake has controlled spring and summer water flows into the Cowichan River to meet environmental and water users' needs. The weir is owned and operated by Paper Excellence, who also owns a mill downstream.
- Due to recurring drought, the Cowichan Lake weir no longer supports adequate water flows in the Cowichan River to meet watershed needs and fish health, with significant impacts on Cowichan Tribe's food security and cultural practice. In summer 2023, a mass die-off of salmon occurred due to low water levels.
- The CWB is pursuing construction of a new weir with greater storage capacity.
- A higher weir will store more water, enabling the maintenance of water levels and flows in the Cowichan River to support beneficial outcomes for environment and community, including:
 - Fish spawning, habitat, and passage;
 - Flora and fauna in the Cowichan Estuary;
 - Recreation on the Cowichan River, including Sport fishing; and
 - Water supply for surrounding community and for industrial use and wastewater dilution requirements.
- In 2019, the Ministry awarded the Cowichan Valley Regional District \$4.1M through the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund to study the engineering requirements of rebuilding the weir and impact of storing more water on lakeshore properties. The study estimated new weir construction costs at \$20M - \$24M, not including liability, compensation, or operational costs.
- In 2021, Cowichan Tribes received partial funding for construction of a new weir through a Federal grant, conditional upon receiving \$14M matching funds from BC.
- A BC contribution of \$14M was announced as part of the BC budget on February 22, 2024. Funds are from FY2023-24 and a grant agreement to flow the funds in advance of March 31, 2024, is now being developed by WLRS in collaboration with Ministry of Finance and Cowichan Tribes. The agreement will include appropriate conditions tied to project completion.
- Timelines for the decommissioning of existing infrastructure and commissioning of new capital works will be confirmed with the Cowichan Watershed Board, Cowichan Tribes, the Cowichan Valley Regional District, and Paper Excellence (as the license holder for the existing weir).
- Construction of the new Weir is anticipated to take approximately four years.
- On January 18, 2024, Paper Excellence announced that due to operating cost pressures, it will indefinitely halt paper-producing operations at the Catalyst Crofton facility on Vancouver Island (the mill downstream from Cowichan Weir). The company noted market dynamics, inflation on raw materials, energy cost opportunities, and a lack of local domestic fibre supply as contributing factors.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Date Prepared/Revised: March 4, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Issue: Dock Management Planning Quw'utsun Nation West Coast

Recommend Response:

- Quw'utsun Nation has longstanding concerns about the cumulative impacts of private moorage on cultural, ecological, and archeological values in their territory in the southern Gulf Islands and southern Vancouver Island.
- Private moorage applications represent a significant portion of the total *Land Act* Authorizations caseload in the West Coast Region. Without Quw'utsun Nation's support for these applications and in absence of data to quantify private moorage impacts, the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) is not able to approve in-stream private moorage applications or renewals within Quw'utsun Nation Territory at this time.
- In 2023, BC and Quw'utsun Nation signed a Memorandum of Understanding to co-develop a strategic management plan for private moorage in this area. This has become a WLRS responsibility after the recent Ministry of Forests and WLRS rebalancing.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- A *Land Act* section 10.1 prohibition on the submission of new private moorage applications in this area was established in 2021 and extended in 2023 to provide time for BC to work with Quw'utsun Nation to address concerns. The current prohibition expires in 2025.
- WLRS is working to secure funding to support Quw'utsun Nation capacity, cumulative effects studies, and public engagement required for this initiative.
- WLRS recognizes the need for this work to lead to greater certainty and procedural fairness for private moorage applicants.

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Key Facts:

- Quw'utsun Nation is an alliance of five Nations (Cowichan Tribes, Halalt, Lyackson, Penelakut, and Stz'uminus) whose core marine territory includes southern Vancouver Island and southern Gulf Islands.
- In 2021, Quw'utsun Nation (QN) and the Province entered into a government-to-government (G2G) agreement to create a process and forum to build mutual understanding, advance reconciliation, and support the further advancement of QN self-determination and self-government. Addressing private moorage concerns was identified as an initial high priority initiative under the G2G agreement.
- The foreshore in QN's core marine territory is highly developed, with over 470 authorized moorages and 600 in trespass.
- WLRS staff across Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects, Permitting Transformation, and the Reconciliation, Lands and Natural Resource Policy Branch are collaborating with Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation staff to initiate project planning with QN on this initiative.
- WLRS works closely with QN member First Nation Cowichan Tribes on numerous important stewardship initiatives in the West Coast Region, including the Koksilah Watershed Sustainability Plan, the Cowichan Weir, and the Cowichan River Estuary Restoration Project.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 9, 2024

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Dock Management Planning with shíshálh on Sunshine Coast

Recommend Response:

- British Columbia (BC) is working collaboratively with shishalh Nation to promote resilient ecosystems and conserve archeological sites and cultural practices. These values are important for the long-term health of coastal communities, viability of marine industries and local business, and people's ability to enjoy their docks.
- The public feedback we heard made it very clear that we need make further changes to the Dock Management Plan.
- We understand that docks are a part of coastal living. But we also know they can impact foreshore ecosystems, including critical habitat for salmon and other species.
- A vast majority of the feedback our governments received from residents expressed support to protect the environment. We also know docks can impact critical cultural and archeological features.
- Together, the Province of B.C. and shíshálh Nation have proposed significant changes to the dock management plan to address community interests and protect shíshálh's rights and title,

Saltwater

- Owners of existing saltwater docks and boathouses will be able to apply for renewals as currently built.
- Owners of existing untenured saltwater docks will be able to apply for tenure as currently built and under flexible guidelines.
- Over time, dock owners will need to demonstrate consistency with the goals of the dock management plan, and as they make improvements to their docks, these will need to be done in keeping with the best management practices.
- Consistent with provincial policy, no new boathouses will be allowed on private moorages.

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Freshwater

- For private dock owners in freshwater, the application of the dock management plan will be paused pending further studies and engagement to further understand the impact of docks in the freshwater environment.
 - Existing tenured and untenured dock owners will be given the same opportunities to apply for tenures that are available for saltwater docks,
 - Tenures for new, unbuilt docks will not be considered in freshwater until studies are complete.
-
- The Province and shísháhlh are also forming an advisory group with representation from the across the Sunshine Coast to review the new proposed changes. Decision making will be consistent with provincial legislation and existing agreements. The first meeting of the advisory group was held on Friday, March 22, 2024.

Key Facts:

- The DMP addresses dock impacts on environmental, archaeological, and cultural values by defining dock design best management practices and zones in kalpilin [cow pay lin] (Pender Harbour) and has been implemented since 2018.
- Best Management Practices for dock design were expanded beyond kalpilin and required across shishalh's swiya (territory) since 2021.
- The proposed amendments related to dock flexibility were informed by an independent engineering study completed in 2023.
- Public engagement on the proposed changes was extended from December 12 to February 16 to provide the public more time to engage on the proposed changes.
- The What We Heard Report was publicly released on March 8th. Over 1700 comments have been received from the public, a vast majority of the comments demonstrate support for the need to manage and protect environmental and archeological values; however, many were critical of the proposed changes and the 2018 plan itself.
- Private and Commercial Dock tenure review:

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- Since 2018, over 225 *new and replacement* tenures have been issued to private moorage applicants in kalpilin (Pender Harbour) with terms of up to 10 years and 10 tenures to have been issued to commercial moorage applicants with terms of up to 30 years.
- 13 applications for *new docks* in Pender Harbour and across the shishalh swiya have been reviewed and recommended for approval through the BC-shishalh Shared Decision-Making Process. Of these, 10 have been issued tenures to date.
- 57 tenure replacement applications that were due by November 2023 have been granted more time to submit their applications while the DMP is reviewed, and further time will be considered.
- Between December 2022 and August 2023, 19 structures built in-trespass were removed in kalpilin (Pender Harbour). Some landowners complied with the orders and voluntarily removed their structures; a total of 10 structures were removed by the Compliance and Enforcement Branch.
 - Property owners that voluntarily removed their docks were responsible for appropriately disposing of the materials.
 - Qualified professionals were hired to remove and properly dispose of the material in trespass; creosote materials went to a facility in Chilliwack, and metal materials went to facilities in Burnaby or Abbotsford. Mixed debris went to landfills outside of the Sunshine Coast (either to Vancouver Regional District's landfill or EcoWaste in Richmond).
 - The Contractor salvaged materials that could be used again (i.e. 3 gangway ramps)

Appendix A - shishalh swiya Dock Management Plan What We Heard Report

Appendix B – Summary of updates to shishalh swiya Dock Management Plan in response to feedback

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2024

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Phone: Government

WHAT WE'VE HEARD REPORT

ENGAGEMENT ON PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO shíshálh swiya DOCK MANAGEMENT PLAN

A NOTE OF THANKS

The Province and shishalh would like to thank those interested parties who took considerable time and effort to provide thoughtful and meaningful comments. The comments and questions on the proposed amendments received through the engagement process give our governments additional considerations for review and decision, the chance to review areas of misunderstanding, provide opportunities for increased education and clarifications, and identify areas where improvements can be made to the Dock Management Plan.

Any submissions with racist remarks were not reviewed or considered by the government or shíshálh in any subsequent steps regarding the Dock Management Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Province and shishalh Nation are working together in true and lasting reconciliation that respects the exercise of Indigenous title and rights and ensures that lands and resources are managed in ways that respect of the values of shishalh people as well as the values shared by all residents in the shishalh swiya. The shíshálh swiya Dock Management Plan is a joint plan implemented by the Province and shíshálh Nation outlining how dock authorizations are managed to protect existing habitat and cultural resources and begin to restore environmental and archaeological values.

From November 24, 2023 to February 16, 2024, the province and shishalh Nation requested feedback from the public on a set of proposed amendments to the shíshálh swiya Dock Management Plan. This "What We've Heard" report is our commitment to share with the public what has been heard throughout the engagement process. The report summarizes the key themes and feedback captured during the engagement.

In relation to the November 2023 proposed amendments, the following list of concerns have been identified:

- The need for flexibility in dock design at different locations.
- An interest in "grandfathering" existing moorage structures. (Grandfathering can be interpreted as an exemption for existing structures from new requirements and/or best management practices.)
- Ensuring access to private property from the water.
- Concerns about Dock Management Plan not being supportive of existing private boathouses.
- Importance of robust, healthy marine and freshwater ecosystems
- Questions about dock impacts in freshwater environments given the importance of endangered species.

- Concerns related to potential economic impacts: to private property and business value, to regional economy from a possible reduction in moorage opportunities, and costs from disposal of existing structural materials.

Aside from comments specific to the proposed amendments, other overarching themes have been identified throughout the public engagement as well, including:

- Support for strong, respectful and considerate relationships as we move forward in our reconciliation journey in British Columbia.
- Support for additional forms of protection and restoration of environmental resources. Importance and value of scientific studies, monitoring, information gathering and data sharing to inform dock management.
- An interest to understand more about impacts of existing moorage structures on the environment and cultural resources.
- Requests for increasing opportunities for public involvement in dock management and environmental restoration on the Sunshine Coast.

The contributions during the public engagement assist the province and shishalh Nation in determining next steps and continued implementation of dock management in the swiya. Public feedback and comments received during the engagement process will inform a decision on the proposed amendments and next steps on managing docks within the swiya.

HOW WE GOT HERE

Time immemorial: shishalh Nation since time immemorial have had and continues to have a unique relationship to and connection with the land and resources throughout shishalh swiya, which are important to shishalh Nation's community, culture, health, and future, and to the maintenance of shishalh Nation's governance, law, and economy.

1990s-2000s: The Province manages private and commercial docks through private moorage and commercial policies requiring tenure under certain conditions. The density of docks increased on the South Coast. Provincial monitoring of tenures and their ecological and archeological impacts was inconsistent.

shishalh Nation looks to best management practices from a wide range of jurisdictions to manage dock impacts to the environmental and archeological resources. The province and shishalh Nation begin work on a joint plan to address the environmental and archeological impacts from private and commercial moorage throughout the swiya.

2015: The first draft of the Pender Harbour Dock Management Plan is released in 2015. The province and shishalh nation undertake public engagement and an independent review and further studies occur before the plan is finalized.

2018: On October 4, 2018, shíshálh Nation and the province sign a Foundation Agreement that commits to true and lasting reconciliation between the two governments. The Province recognizes that shishalh

Nation's Title and Rights exist in the shishalh swiya, and it is our respective interests to continue to foster a deeper collaborative relationship in relation to the land, resources, and economic development opportunities within the shishalh swiya, and to ensure that shishalh Nation's right to self-determination, including the inherent right of self-government is realized.

The Pender Harbour Dock Management Plan is finalized and implemented for dock authorizations under the *Land Act*. The plan includes best management practices for dock construction and defines three zones kalpilin (Pender Harbour) Management Area where additional requirements or restrictions apply.

The province and shishalh Nation begin to implement the Plan through the Shared Decision-Making process, working closely with dock tenures holders to explain the Dock Management Plan requirements. By 2024, most tenured dock holders have interim tenures between three and 10 years giving them time to come into compliance with the requirements.

2021: Based on feedback from tenure holders and interested stakeholders, the province and shishalh Nation amended the Pender Harbour Dock Management Plan to provide greater clarity to terminology and applicant requirements, as well as allowing for encapsulated styrofoam for dock floats.

Also in 2021, the province and shishalh Nation agree to use the Best Management Practices (BMPs) throughout the shishalh swiya to continue to better manage for dock impacts on the environment and archeological resources. Since the expansion of the BMPs, the province and shishalh Nation work with individuals seeking to build new docks or needing to replace their existing dock tenure. Dozens of docks since implementation have been approved in line with the Dock Management Plan.

2023: At the time of the amendments in 2021, proposed changes to dock width were not made and the province and shishalh Nation identified the need for further studies. In response, the province and shishalh Nation jointly commissioned an engineering report focusing on dock size and width. After reviewing the engineering report and considerations around dock sizes, a proposed set of amendments and clarifications to the shishalh swiya Dock Management Plan focusing on dock size were collaboratively developed. The province and shishalh Nation jointly invited the public to provide feedback on the proposed amendments.

SUMMARY OF COMPLETED PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON PROPOSED CHANGES

From November 2023 to February 2024, the Province and shishalh Nation received over 1700 submissions of feedback from the public on proposed amendments to the shishalh swiya Dock Management Plan. The public provided input through written submission on online engagement platform, letters were also received by the Minister and shishalh Nation. In addition, a public meeting with the Sunshine Coast Regional District (including councilors from District of Sechelt) was held in November and three virtual sessions with Commercial Moorage tenure holders were held in January 2024.

Public comments have been broadly grouped into two categories: A) comments about specific proposed amendments, and B) comments more generally about the Dock Management Plan. Summaries of the comments are outlined in four tables in the sections below.

- Table 1: Comments about Proposed Amendments to Private Moorage BMPs
- Table 2: Comments about Proposed Amendments to Commercial Moorage BMPs
- Table 3: Comments about existing Best Management Practices not proposed to change
- Table 4: Comments for general key themes and overarching comments

WHAT WE'VE HEARD: SPECIFIC TO PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Summaries of public comments received related to the proposed amendments to the shishalh swiya Dock Management Plan received on the proposed amendments are outlined below in the two tables below.

TABLE 1. COMMENTS ABOUT PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO PRIVATE MOORAGE BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMPs)

Increase in maximum width of access ramp from 1.2m to 1.8m

- Many recommendations for existing infrastructure to be grandfathered in.
- Many respondents suggested flexibility in ramp width given accessibility considerations and use of ramp (examples include transporting large appliances to upland properties).

Maximum float area of 30m²

- Many respondents provided comments that 30m² float area is too small of a float in their views for vessels longer than 40 feet.
- Further to the concerns regarding private boat lengths, a few respondents indicated larger boats may be required to moor at some private moorages for safety purposes, such as Coast Guard or emergency response to forest fires and therefore would need larger floats in the case of emergency events.
- Multiple commenters highlighted the variability in float requirements where large exposure of wind and wave action may occur on locations subject to open ocean.
- A large number of respondents requested existing structures that have floats larger than 30m² be grandfathered for approval as is.
- Many respondents flagged concerns regarding the limit in maximum float area may not adhere to the ASCE recommendation for a 1:3 width to length ratio for stability for floats.
- Some respondents suggested there are alternate vessels that may require moorage at private docks including float planes which may require larger floats.
- Several comments flagged that this Best Management Practice may increase pile driving and anchoring.
- Multiple comments expressed their desire for larger floats for recreational and personal enjoyment purposes.

Maximum width of float to be removed

- Not many comments were received about the proposal to remove maximum float width, however, the comments that did address the topic indicated support for removing a maximum width of dock given increased flexibility in dock design.

Maximum total length of 50m

- A large number of respondents requested grandfathering of existing infrastructure greater than 50m total length.

- Some respondents flagged concerns with potentially increased impacts closer to shore if docks pushed closer to the shoreline than currently designed.
- Many respondents indicated a need for variability of total length of dock structure to fit site specific considerations, including depth of water.

Annual Self-Inspections

- A number of respondents provided comments that it is onerous to require personal review of existing structures annually.

Outdoor lighting to be minimized

- While there were minimal comments received regarding outdoor lighting specifically, some respondents supported the proposed amendment and minimizing unnecessary light pollution, while others indicated the best management practice was unnecessary.

Boathouses required to meet Best Management Practices

- The majority of comments received concerning boathouses indicated a request for grandfathering existing structures as is.
- Respondents expressed concerns that property values would decline resulting in personal financial impacts and regional economic impacts if boathouses are not authorized or removed.
- Many respondents indicated there would be a significant cost to facilitate the removal of boathouses.
- Many commenters expressed concerns with the potential increase in waste produced through removing existing boathouses to align with the Dock Management Plan and the capacity of the Sunshine Coast's waste disposal sites.
- Some commenters flagged their individual boathouses may have created a microcosm of ecosystem and raised concerns that species that have made the boathouses their homes will have their habitat removed if the boathouse is not authorized.
- A number of respondents noted concerns with protecting their private boats from the elements and the inconvenience of removing the boat from the water to protect it from the elements on the upland.

TABLE 2. COMMENTS ABOUT PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO COMMERCIAL MOORAGE BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMPS)

Note to reader: Many comments specific to proposed amendments to Private Moorage Best Management Practices are also relevant for consideration for Commercial Moorage Best Management Practices. To reduce redundancy of repeating similar themes, only comments unique to Commercial Moorage are included in the table below.

Increase in maximum width of access ramp from 1.2m to 1.8m

- Many recommendations for existing infrastructure to be grandfathered in.
- Many respondents suggested flexibility in ramp width given accessibility considerations and use of ramp (examples include transporting large appliances to upland properties).

Maximum float area of 40m² per vessel up to 40 feet length overall

- Many respondents provided comments that 40m² float area is too small of a float area in scenarios where their commercial moorage provides moorage for lengthy vessels.
- Respondents highlighted the various business models and vessels their commercial moorages support have vastly different requirements for their floats.
- Multiple commenters highlighted the variability in float requirements where large exposure of wind and wave action may occur on locations subject to open ocean.
- A large number of respondents requested existing structures that have float areas larger than the proposed amendment be grandfathered for approval as is.
- Multiple respondents have highlighted the unique services commercial moorages may provide that require larger sized floats, such as fuel docks, stores, restaurants etc.

Maximum width of float of 3.0m for main float, 1.5m for finger floats

- As has been seen in many other comments, there are many commenters who have recommended grandfathering in existing structures if they do not adhere to the maximum width Best Management Practices.
- Some respondents indicated their marinas may require wider floats as they support various loads that are required to be transported across the floats (Ex. large appliances, construction materials etc.)

Maximum total length of 60m

- A large number of respondents requested grandfathering of existing infrastructure greater than 60m total length as their current commercial moorage extends past 60m.
- A number of respondents expressed concerns that this maximum total length would minimize their ability to expand their commercial moorage business to meet the demand for moorage on the Sunshine Coast.
- There was a recommendation to follow only Transport Canada's requirements for length of structures for federal navigability concerns and to not limit the moorage lengths otherwise.
- Some respondents flagged concerns with potentially increased impacts closer to shore if docks pushed closer to the shoreline than currently designed.
- Many respondents indicated a need for variability of total length of dock structure to fit site specific considerations, including depth of water.

Outdoor lighting to be minimized

- While there were minimal comments received regarding outdoor lighting specifically, those that were received supported the proposed amendment and minimizing unnecessary light pollution while supporting lighting for safety considerations.

Boathouses required to meet Best Management Practices

- The majority of comments received concerning boathouses indicated a request for grandfathering existing structures as is.
- Request from many respondents to provide more clear guidelines to how Commercial Moorage boathouses could meet and align with the Best Management Practices

WHAT WE'VE HEARD: OVERARCHING COMMENTS

Summaries of public comments received related to best management practices that were not proposed to be amended are outlined in the table below.

TABLE 3. COMMENTS ABOUT EXISTING BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES NOT PROPOSED TO CHANGE

43% light penetration

- Many commenters expressed that meeting the 43% light penetration best management practice is very difficult or impossible with existing floatation not being light penetrating.
- Multiple questions within the comments were related to how to calculate this light penetration and request for examples.
- Some respondents provided alternative options for consideration, including modifying the Best Management Practice to require “light penetrating decking on floats” instead of a specific number, grandfathering in existing decking until end of decking life or not requiring light penetration through structures floating above very deep waters.
- Some comments questioned the stability of light penetrating materials in open water scenarios where docks are subject to significant wave and wind action.
- Freshwater commenters raised questions if light penetration is environmentally significant in freshwater lakes given different ecology than marine ecosystems.

1.5m clearance between bottom of float and seabed

- Respondents gave examples of personal scenarios where their docks ground and/or cannot meet the 1.5m clearance Best Management Practice between the bottom of the float and the seabed.
- Some commenters indicated concerns their docks would require railings if 1.5m from the bottom of the float and the sea bed at their particular location resulted in the dock being raised on pilings or footings 1.5m above the seabed at low tide.
- Comments specific to freshwaters scenarios highlighted that the water level in freshwater lakes typically does not fluctuate as much as the ocean and won't have the same problems with moorage structures resting on the bed of the lake.

Property line clearance (structures should be 5.0m from property lines)

- Some commenters requested flexibility and removal of existing Best Management Practices given their existing infrastructure is within 5.0m of their property lines
- A number of commenters correctly noted that this Best Management Practice aligns with Transport Canada regulations and requested that if Transport Canada approves a smaller distance between the property line and the individual moorage structure that it be permitted under the Dock Management Plan.

Structures should be 1.0m above highest high-water mark

- Some respondents have provided examples of their personal properties being below 1.0m above the highest high-water mark and have concerns meeting this Best Management Practice with their existing geography.

Summaries of public comments received that were more general and overarching related to entire Dock Management Plan and not to any specific individual Best Management Practice are outlined in the table below.

TABLE 4. GENERAL COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

Regarding a request for increased Public Engagement and Involvement

- Call for extension to public engagement timeline on the proposed amendments.
- Many respondents have requested more opportunities to provide input, collaborate and provide innovative ideas from local knowledge for dock management within the swiya.
- A common theme in comments was to increase transparency around decision-making on applications and provide further communications on how decisions on policies and plans are made under the *Land Act*.

Increasing scientific studies, monitoring, information gathering and data sharing, and using the resulting studies to inform dock management.

- Many respondents requested that additional scientific studies be completed to support dock management decisions, including broad scale studies on freshwater environments, studies pertaining to light penetration, economic impact studies, archaeological studies, and species-specific studies including for Sakinaw Sockeye.

Financial and Economic Concerns

- Respondents raised concerns that requiring existing moorage to come into alignment with the Dock Management Plan may require them to remove their infrastructure and devalue private property values.
- Concern shared by property owners with water-access only that they may be unable to access their water-access only property if their current structures have to be changed to align with the Dock Management Plan.
- Many respondents expressed concerns on the cost of removal and/or modification of existing infrastructure to align their structures with the Dock Management Plan.
- Numerous commenters requested increased long-term clarity on dock management across the Sunshine Coast to make long-term plans.
- Some commenters indicated that there is limited availability for commercial moorage on the Sunshine Coast to provide accommodation for the number of boats that frequent the area for private, commercial and tourism purposes. There are concerns that regulating moorage will result in further lack of moorage availability, especially during the summer months, and that will deter boaters from coming to the area and will have a regional economic impact.
- A number of commenters promoted the use of an Environmental Cost-Benefit analysis for dock management within the swiya to inform how dock management should be implemented

Freshwater Considerations

- Commenters have raised suggestions that dock structures in freshwater environments may require unique Best Management Practices from marine dock and request an additional study be completed on freshwater lakes to determine if the existing Best Management Practices are applicable in the freshwater environment.
- Many respondents have highlighted the unique ecosystem and considerations for Sakinaw Lake and the endangered species, such as Sakinaw Sockeye and Western Painted Turtles that make the lake their home.
- A number of respondents flagged the potential for impacts to endangered species, such as the Western Painted Turtle, should modifications to docks be completed inappropriately and cause adverse impacts (such as impacting overwintering or nesting sites).

Environmental Protection

- A large number of respondents have expressed their desire and support for environmental protection and support long-term measures to protect the ecosystems and species within them.
- Many commenters expressed support for alternative forms of environmental protection, outside of dock management, including removal of derelict vessels and addressing pollution sources.
- Many respondents provided support that moorage development needs to be thoughtful and ensure no net negative impacts to the environment from the moorages occur
- Some respondents expressed that they are encouraged by the efforts being made to manage the foreshore and moorages with environmental protection as a key objective

Professional Availability

- A number of respondents indicated a lack of professionals on the Sunshine Coast available to complete requirements for dock management, including environmental professionals, archaeological professionals and structural professionals such as engineers or contractors.
- The commenters have expressed support for longer timeframes on requiring changes to dock structures and/or applications given the scheduling conflicts of necessary and desired professionals.

Grandfathering existing structures

- An overarching theme on comments relating to Best Management Practices and management of docks moving forward has been a recommendation to grandfather all existing structures as is.
- Comments have explored different options for grandfathering existing structures, such as grandfathering structures until the end of the structure's life, in perpetuity as is, or until a specific time frame.
- Additionally, options to have upgrades on existing structure completed over time was suggested as a way of staggering and minimizing impacts of the modification to surrounding environments.
- Some respondents noted their existing structures are unauthorized and do not have a Land Act tenure and would like their existing structure approved as is.

Variability in moorage requirements across the swiya

- Many comments pertain to the vast variability of the geography across the swiya and the variability of moorage uses.
- Respondents have highlighted many scenarios where their moorage types may differ from the Best Management Practices, including moorages in open water scenarios subject to high wind and wave action, shallow waters and unique uses for the moorages.
- Many commenters flag that flexibility and reasonableness needs to be taken into consideration when reviewing moorage applications against the Dock Management Plan Best Management Practices.
- Questions were raised by strata and group moorage owners as to how the BMPs fit with their specific moorage type
- Further, several respondents indicated that it was not clear what was considered what type of moorage (ex. is a moorage commercial moorage, private moorage, strata moorage or group moorage?)

Summary of updates to shíshálh Swiya Dock Management Plan in response to feedback

The Province and shíshálh Nation are working together and engaging the public and local stakeholders to ensure that lands and resources are managed in ways that respect the values of shíshálh people as well as the values shared by all residents in the shíshálh swiya. The shíshálh swiya Dock Management Plan is a joint plan implemented by the Province and shíshálh Nation outlining how dock authorizations are managed. From November 24, 2023 to February 16, 2024, the province and shíshálh Nation requested feedback from the public on a set of proposed amendments to the shíshálh swiya Dock Management Plan.

The province and shíshálh are now proposing further amendments based on that feedback as summarized below.

- For **private dock owners in saltwater**, the following will be put in place:
 - Owners of existing tenured docks and boathouses will be able to apply for renewal as currently built.
 - Owners of existing untenured docks will be able to apply for tenure under flexible guidelines.
 - Owners of existing untenured boathouses will be able to apply for tenure as currently built.
 - For new private dock applicants, we propose to update the guidelines (known as ‘Best Management Practices’) to provide more flexibility.
 - In addition to added flexibility, we plan to make these specific enhancements:
 - A maximum dock length will be set at the provincial maximum – 60M – with a preference for a 50M length.
 - Docks can have a total area of 30M² or a maximum width of 1.5M.
 - New or replacement **decking** must use products that allow for a minimum 43% light penetration.

- For **private dock owners in freshwater**:
 - The application of the dock management plan will be paused. During that time, further studies will be done, and engagement will be undertaken, to understand the impact of docks in the freshwater environment and to consider revisions to the Plan. BC and shishalh will communicate closely and often with freshwater dock owners throughout the swiya.
 - Existing tenured and untenured dock owners in freshwater will be given the same opportunities to apply for tenures that are available for saltwater docks.
 - No new docks tenures will be considered in freshwater until studies are complete.
 - Owners of existing untenured boathouses will be able to apply for tenure as currently built.
 - As per provincial policy, new boathouses will not be allowed in freshwater.

- For **commercial dock owners**:
 - We propose to update the Best Management Practices to provide more flexibility, which will allow for a diversity of commercial operations.
 - We will not implement maximum length limitations for commercial docks.

- In addition to the above changes, it is important to note that:
 - As is always the case, provincial and federal policies about safety and navigation remain considerations in any dock decision.
 - Protection measures will be put in place for areas with cultural resources and critical habitats.
 - Over time, as dock owners make improvements to their docks, these will need to be in keeping with best management practices.
 - Consistent with provincial policy, new boathouses will not be allowed on private docks.
 - New boathouses are allowed on commercial moorages.
 - Applicants for group moorage, strata moorage and institutional or community docks will apply for tenure following guidelines for commercial moorage with flexibility based on use.
 - The Province and shishalh will work together to identify areas suitable for new additional mooring buoys to support continued boat travel through the swiya.
 - Dock owners will need to demonstrate consistency with the goals of the Dock Management Plan. To support this effort, flexible guidelines will be used.
 - Decision-making will be consistent with provincial legislation and existing agreements.

<p>ESTIMATES NOTE (2024) Confidential</p> <p>Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy Strategic Services Division</p> <p>March 2024</p>	<p>International Joint Commission for the Kootenay Watershed</p>
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KEY FACTS

Joint Reference:

- **Canada, the United States, and Ktunaxa government officials have developed a joint proposal for the role of the International Joint Commission (IJC) announced via joint ambassador statement on March 11, 2024.**
- **The purpose is to reduce and mitigate the impacts of water pollution in the Kootenay watershed, as committed to in the Joint Statement of President Biden and Prime Minister Trudeau on March 24, 2023.**
- **The Province is encouraged by the possibilities of the IJC as a neutral facilitator in strengthening crucial relationships and trust across this important international watershed.**
- **We see this as an opportunity to build upon existing work and enhance information sharing and transparency to the benefit of the region. A fulsome review of existing science through an IJC Study Board will be valuable to support actions B.C. is taking and ensure that all agencies are working with the same information.**
- **B.C. is committed to a competitive mining sector that grows the economy and creates good jobs, supports environmental stewardship, and advances reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.**
- **We want to ensure that B.C. remains a leader in mining regulation and oversight, while enhancing responsible resource development and strengthening First Nations involvement in the mining sector.**
- **Using our regulatory tools the Province has required Teck to address water quality impacts. Teck has already invested over \$1.4 billion dollars in enhanced water treatment for mine-influenced water in the Elk Valley since 2014, and will make further investments to add an additional six new and expanded treatment facilities between now and 2027.**
- **The IJC process will respect the respective legal responsibilities and jurisdictions of each Government, including the role that B.C. plays as the primary regulator of the mining sector, and B.C. has been assured the IJC Governance Body will not seek to replace or override existing regulatory processes.**

Background:

- **There have been numerous calls for an IJC reference in the Kootenay watershed from U.S. agencies, Tribes and Ktunaxa Nation Council Society. Primary**

concerns have been related to impacts from coal mining operations reducing water quality (specifically selenium).

- Historically, B.C. has not been supportive of an IJC referral due to concerns about duplication, delay, or diversion of resources away from the Province's regulatory actions and other initiatives currently underway.
- On March 24 2023, Prime Minister Trudeau and President Biden committed to reaching an agreement in principle to mitigate water pollution in the watershed, in partnership with Indigenous peoples.
- In the spring of 2023, B.C. Deputy Ministers met with IJC Commissioners to better understand the potential role and perceived benefits of the IJC reference.
 - During this meeting, the IJC provided assurances that a reference would recognize, and not seek to duplicate, existing efforts, and nor would it make a determination around the future of mining in the Elk Valley.
 - Following the meeting with the IJC, B.C. drafted a proposal and Ministers Heyman and Osborne submitted to Canada in July 2023.
- The final joint proposal is based on commonalities across the three proposals Global Affairs Canada received from B.C., the U.S., and Ktunaxa during summer 2023.
- The joint proposal, like B.C.'s proposal, includes a two-tiered approach with a governance table (Governance Body) and technical forum (Study Board).
- Canada and the United States, in partnership with Ktunaxa, are asking the IJC through a joint reference to assist governments in the establishment of a formal governance structure (Governance Body) by June 30, 2024.
 - The proposal defers most implementation decisions to the Terms of Reference (TOR) discussions, including decision-making models, membership, and areas of focus. Deferring these decisions may lead to potential uncertainty and differing expectations of what the IJC can accomplish.
- Canada and the United States are also asking the IJC to establish a two-year Study Board to convene experts and knowledge holders, with the aim to support a common understanding of pollution in the Kootenai/y watershed.
 - The purpose is to review existing science, identify gaps, assumptions and uncertainties, and present recommendations to the Governance Body.
 - Participants will be appointed as experts and not to represent organizational interests.
 - The Study Board will not undertake new studies in the watershed.
 - Any recommendations from the Study Board will be considered by the Governance Body and decided on by the governments and not the IJC.
- The IJC reference is specific to the unique circumstances in the Elk Valley and Kootenay watershed. At this time, B.C. is not supportive of IJC involvement in any other watershed and will continue to work collaboratively with neighboring states and transboundary First Nations and Tribes.

Next Steps/Intergovernmental Considerations

- **The next steps in the IJC process are:**
 - A joint Canada-U.S. Ambassador statement stating the agreement in principle has been reached was released on March 11th. Notifications in advance of the statement were sent to local governments and First Nations on March 8th.
 - The Province released a joint Ministerial statement in response (Attachment 1) and key messages and Q & As have been prepared to support staff (Attachment 2).
 - Canada and the U.S. separately submitted the final proposal to the IJC via transmittal letters.
 - The IJC will respond with a plan of work and proposed budget. GAC and U.S. Department of State are responsible for funding an approved budget on a 50/50 basis.
 - All engaged governments including B.C. are expected to participate in the process through 'in-kind' contributions, i.e. by making available provincial staff to support the process.
 - Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Governance Body are to be developed by June 30, 2024 and the Study Board will be established within six months of the proposal transmittal.

Cross Reference: SE Coal Initiatives note.

Attachment: 1. Joint Ministerial Statement
2. KMs and Q&As for the IJC announcement

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JOINT STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
2024ENV0012-000323
March 11, 2024

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation
Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Joint statement on the Elk-Kootenay/Kootenai watershed

VICTORIA – George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy; Josie Osborne, Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation; Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation; and Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship; have released the following joint statement in response to Canada and the United States writing to the International Joint Commission with a plan for the Elk-Kootenay/Kootenai watershed:

“Improving and protecting water quality has always been a key priority for British Columbia. To date, more than \$1.4 billion has been invested in implementing the Elk Valley Water Quality Plan, with continued significant investments planned that will roughly double the amount of water-treatment capacity in the Elk Valley by the end of 2027. Through our regulatory activities, we continue to undertake and oversee projects to improve and protect water quality in the Elk-Kootenay/Kootenai watershed.

“B.C. supports the commitment made by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Joe Biden in March 2023. We welcome the joint statement today by the Canadian and American ambassadors that acknowledges the particular complexity of pollution concerns in this watershed and asks the International Joint Commission to convene experts and knowledge holders to conduct transparent and co-ordinated transboundary data and knowledge sharing.

“We have reviewed the proposal for a reference to the International Joint Commission and British Columbia is committed to fully engage in this process. In its proposed role as a neutral facilitator, the International Joint Commission is uniquely positioned to assist in building crucial relationships and trust across this key international watershed. We look forward to collaborating with governments, First Nations and community partners, as we work together to accelerate our joint efforts to enhance and protect water quality in the Elk-Kootenay/Kootenai watershed.

“We welcome the creation of a process that brings together representatives to share progress, validate issues and facts, and gather information in a way that is respectful and inclusive of Indigenous knowledge.

“We have been working with our partners to take a holistic view of this ecosystem and what we need to do to keep it safe. This includes working with First Nations, industry and local governments.

“We see this as an opportunity to build upon existing work and enhance information sharing

and transparency to the benefit of the region's people and ecologically responsible resource development."

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Connect with the Province of B.C. at: news.gov.bc.ca/connect

Key Messages

- **Addressing water quality is a key priority for British Columbia. Through our regulatory activities, we continue to undertake and oversee projects to mitigate water quality impacts in the Elk and Kootenay/ai watersheds.**
- **Using our regulatory tools the Province has required Teck to address water quality impacts. Teck has already invested over \$1.4 billion dollars in enhanced water treatment for mine-influenced water in the Elk Valley since 2014, and will make further investments to add an additional six new and expanded treatment facilities between now and 2027.**
- **We are encouraged by the possibilities of the International Joint Commission (IJC) as a neutral facilitator in strengthening crucial relationships and trust across this important international watershed.**
- **We see this as an opportunity to build upon existing work and enhance information sharing and transparency to the benefit of the region. A fulsome review of existing science through an IJC Study Board will be valuable to support actions B.C. is taking and ensure that all agencies are working with the same information.**
- **We want to ensure that B.C. remains a leader in mining regulation and oversight, while supporting responsible resource development and strengthening First Nations involvement in the mining sector.**
- **B.C. is committed to a competitive mining sector that continues to contribute to the economy via taxes and royalties, capital expenditures and employment, supports environmental stewardship, and advances reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.**
- **B.C. will maintain ongoing engagement with industry as the regulatory authority, ensuring transparency in the permitting process and Environmental Assessments throughout the IJC process.**
- **We understand that the IJC Study Board is expected to seek opportunities for public engagement, provide regular update**

reports, and make its reports available in a transparent, publicly available format.

Q&As for the IJC announcement

1. What is the IJC, and what is an IJC reference?

Canada and the United States created the International Joint Commission (IJC) because they recognized that each country is affected by the other's actions in lake and river systems along the border. The two countries cooperate to manage these waters and to protect them for the benefit of today's citizens and future generations.

The IJC is guided by the Boundary Waters Treaty, signed by Canada and the United States in 1909. The IJC studies and recommends solutions to transboundary issues when asked to do so by the national governments. When the IJC receives a government request, called a reference, it appoints a board with equal numbers of experts from each country. Board members are chosen for their professional abilities, not as representatives of a particular organization or region.

References to the IJC have focused mostly on water and air quality and on the development and use of shared water resources. IJC reference recommendations are not binding and take into account the needs of a wide range of water uses, including drinking water, commercial shipping, hydroelectric power generation, agriculture, ecosystem health, industry, fishing, recreational boating and shoreline property.

2. What is the reference for the Elk-Kootenay watershed?

Canada and the United States, in partnership with Tribal Nations and Indigenous Peoples have asked the International Joint Commission (IJC), through a joint reference, to assist governments in the establishment of a formal governance structure (Governance Body) by June 30, 2024, to support information sharing and co-development of options for future action.

Canada and the United States have also asked the IJC to establish a two-year Study Board to convene experts and knowledge holders to conduct transparent and coordinated transboundary data and knowledge sharing.

The geographic scope of the reference is defined as the Kootenai/y watershed which includes the Kootenai/y River flowing through Canada and the United States to its confluence with the Columbia River downstream in Canada, the Elk Subbasin, Koocanusa Reservoir, and Kootenay Lake.

3. What is the timeline for the IJC process?

Canada and the United States have now submitted the proposal to the IJC. The IJC is expected to convene governments to develop the Terms of Reference for the Governance Table by June 30, 2024. The IJC is expected to establish the Study Board within six months for a duration of two years.

4. How will B.C. be participating in the reference?

Canada, the United States, and Ktunaxa government officials developed the joint proposal for the role of the IJC. B.C. was not at the negotiating table but has been engaged by the Government of

Canada as the agreement was finalized. B.C. intends to fully participate in the Governance Body and provide information and expertise to support the IJC Study Board.

We see this as an opportunity to build upon existing work and enhance information sharing and transparency for the benefit of the region.

5. Which organizations will be part of the Study Board?

Experts will be appointed to the Study Board by the IJC. These experts will be neutral and independent rather than representatives of organizations or governments.

6. Is B.C. committed to acting on the recommendations that may come out of the IJC process?

The IJC will act as a trusted third-party to review existing science and data on the Elk-Kootenay/ai watershed and may provide non-binding recommendations to the Governance Body. The governments will decide on the recommendations not the IJC.

B.C. has maintained that if, once all parties are fully aware of our efforts, and any significant and relevant gaps are identified then we are open to considering additions or changes to our monitoring and assessment programs or other regulatory efforts.

7. The reference does not appear to specifically mention selenium and mining pollution. Will the reference address these concerns?

The reference takes a holistic view of the watershed and all potential sources of water pollution to better understand overall ecosystem health and the level and extent of other interacting pressures on the watershed. We anticipate that mining contaminants including selenium will be considered by the IJC Study Board but ultimately it is up to the IJC to design and implement the study within the two-year timeframe.

8. How can others interested parties participate in the process?

The IJC reference has been drafted by Canada, the U.S. and Ktunaxa and questions are better directed to the federal government. It is B.C.'s understanding that when the IJC receives a government request, called a reference, it will prepare a plan of study to outline for governments how it intends to act on the request. This would include a plan for engagement with representatives from the relevant federal, provincial, state, First Nation, Tribal, industry and other basin stakeholders, as appropriate. The Study Board is expected to seek opportunities for public engagement, provide regular update reports, and make its reports available in a transparent, publicly available format.

9. Will there be impacts to B.C.'s regulatory process for mining? How will this affect proposed new projects or expansions?

The IJC process will respect the respective legal responsibilities and jurisdictions of each Government, including the role that B.C. plays as the primary regulator of the mining sector, and B.C. has been assured the IJC Governance Body will not seek to replace or override existing

regulatory processes. The Province will continue to ensure there is transparency as it relates to permitting and Environmental Assessments throughout the IJC process. Canada and the United States expect the Governance Body to respect the respective legal responsibilities and jurisdictions of each Government and allow regulatory agencies to continue to review authorizations for existing, proposed new projects and expansions.

10 Why is B.C. continuing to receive and review applications and make decisions for new and expanded mines while the IJC is doing its work, instead of waiting for the outcome?

Canada and the United States expect the Governance Body to respect the respective legal responsibilities and jurisdictions of each Government. As an administratively fair regulator, agencies in B.C. responsible for mining authorizations must continue to accept and review applications for new and expanded mines. Authorizations will continue to be prioritized based on the input received from companies, following the standard process pathways in accordance with each application. We will consider any new information coming forward through the IJC process, or any other process, to inform our ongoing decision making.

11 How does this interact with the Columbia River Treaty negotiations?

The proposal clearly states that any work will respect legal and jurisdictional authorities, which would include matters addressed through international treaties.

12 Will there be IJC references for other transboundary regions?

The IJC reference is specific to the unique circumstances in the Elk Valley and Kootenay watershed. At this time, B.C. is not supportive of IJC involvement in any other watershed and will continue to work collaboratively with neighboring states and transboundary First Nations and Tribes.

To date there have been no exceedances in Alaska water quality standards downstream of the BC-AK border.

13 When will the water quality improve?

Teck is working quickly to implement water treatment and other strategies to improve water quality and water treatment facilities are now removing record amounts of selenium from the watershed. The B.C. government is prioritizing the review of permit applications for these facilities to ensure they can be implemented as quickly as possible and operated safely.

As of the end of 2023, Teck has spent more than \$1.4 billion implementing the Elk Valley Water Quality Plan. This includes investments in water treatment and Research and Development to achieve 77.5 million liters per day of constructed water treatment capacity. In 2024, Teck plans to spend between \$150M and \$250M in water treatment capital primarily towards expanding treatment at both Fording River and Line Creek Operations. This expansion of, and investment in, treatment will continue through 2025, 2026 and 2027 as Teck progresses towards the next major milestone of roughly doubling constructed water treatment capacity to 150 million liters per day by the end of 2027; furthering protecting the watershed.

International Joint Commission for Kootenay Watershed
Key messages and QAs for launch to support BC staff in responding to inquiries.
February 2024.

The Province regulates a transparent, area-based management plan for the Elk River watershed. We are actively improving this plan and we provide near-real-time information on water quality and status of water treatment facility performance. See: <https://elkvalleywaterquality.gov.bc.ca/>

The B.C. Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy has a dedicated team of environmental professionals, made up of Engineers, Biologists, Hydrologists and Hydrogeologists, that are working exclusively to improve and protect water quality in the Elk Valley.

14 When will BC release the Water Quality Objective for selenium in Kooconusa Reservoir?

We recognize there has been a significant investment by BC, Ktunaxa Nation Council and other parties to compile and evaluate science around selenium in Kooconusa Reservoir. Although this science hasn't yet been formally published as a WQO, we are aware of its existence, and it will be considered by ENV staff in evaluating risks and effects to water quality.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework

Recommend Response:

- During public engagement on old growth, led by an independent panel, we heard clearly from British Columbians that forest management needs to change.
- We heard that ecosystem health is the foundation of community well-being and economic prosperity, today, and for generations to come.
- We accepted all the recommendations delivered in the Old Growth Strategic Review report, including “declaring the conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity of British Columbia’s forests as an overarching priority and enact legislation that legally establishes this priority for all sectors”.
- In response, we collaboratively developed the Draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework (“Framework”) with First Nations, industry, non-government organizations, local governments, and academics.
- The broad public engagement process is further helping to inform the actions needed to shift the way we think about biodiversity and address the root causes of biodiversity loss; to align existing initiatives with the overarching goal of ecosystem health and resilience; and to develop facilitating conditions needed to support implementation.
- The Draft Framework organizes these actions (see Appendix A for details) under three pillars:
 - Adopting a whole of government approach that demonstrates vision, leadership, and integration.
 - Fostering and supporting a whole of society approach that includes broad input from the public.
 - Adopting an open and transparent process through evaluation, reporting, and collective learning.

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- Once approved, the final Framework will inform management actions, policy, and legislation development.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Biodiversity and healthy ecosystems support us all and ensure that communities and their economies, continue to flourish, especially in the face of climate change.
- The Framework itself does not establish specific local-level goals or targets for protection or outcomes. It is intended to support local-level planning processes through improved information, consistent prioritization of ecosystems, and enabling partnerships.

Key Facts:

- The Framework is led by the Resource Stewardship Division in the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship with support from the Ministry of Forests.
- The draft Framework was released on November 15, 2023 for public engagement. The final Framework is expected to be released in Spring 2024 with a phased Implementation Plan.
- Engagement has included more than 60 virtual and in-person engagement sessions to collaborate on vision, goals, and actions for the Framework attended by over 90 First Nations and hundreds of multi-sectoral participants from local governments, business, academia, and non-governmental organizations.
- More than 7,000 email submissions were received on the draft Framework during the open comment period from November 15, 2023 - January 31, 2024.
- Initiatives already leading the way, and aligned with the draft Framework, include the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, Modernized Land Use Planning, Together for Wildlife Strategy, Watershed Security Strategy, Coastal Marine Strategy, Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework and Cumulative Effects Framework.
- Financial implications and potential socio-economic impacts will be assessed primarily through planning processes (e.g., land use planning).

Date Prepared/Revised: March 5, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Celine Davis

Phone: Government

Appendix 1- List of actions under Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework pillars

Pillar 1 – Taking a whole-of-government approach

B.C. will work in partnership with First Nations, and seek advice from others to:

1. Establish an Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health within the B.C. Public Service with the necessary powers and authorities to lead a coordinated and collaborative approach across government ministries and agencies to implement the Framework. Including:
 - a. Improving the collection, coordination and sharing of information on the status of ecosystem health.
 - b. Leading the development of ecosystem health and biodiversity objectives and standards for key ecosystems (e.g., forests, wetlands, grasslands) that can then be recognized in planning, policies and processes.
 - c. Championing policies and approaches; and ensuring accountability to meet ecosystem health and biodiversity objectives and standards across government.
2. Co-develop with First Nations new legislation and amendments to existing land and water related provincial legislation that enable and support implementation of the Framework.
3. Strengthen policy cohesion across provincial government agencies and integrate biodiversity and its multiple values in decision-making processes, policies, programs.
4. Incorporate ecosystem health and biodiversity objectives and standards (see 1b) in all planning activities (e.g., Land Use Planning, Forest Landscape Planning, Watershed Planning), in a manner that enables First Nations and the Province to work together in an inclusive and transparent way to adjust the objectives and standards to meet the goals for specific areas. Planning activities will be based on ecosystem-based management principles to ensure:
 - a. Ecosystems are managed in a way that minimizes biodiversity risk and ensures ecological integrity is maintained and increased.
 - b. Cumulative effects of natural and human-caused disturbances are managed for desired future conditions.
 - c. Protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures are established, effectively managed, and equitably governed.
 - d. Restoration is included as part of planning activities and is used strategically to improve landscape condition and ecological integrity.
 - e. Ecosystems are managed to promote and enable sustainable economies and resilient communities.

Pillar 2 – Fostering & supporting a broader whole-of-society approach

B.C. will work in partnership with First Nations, and seek advice from others to:

1. Build and expand governance structures and processes that improve collaboration across sectors and within communities to enable local or regional decision-making.
2. Undertake broad education outreach and facilitate knowledge networks.
3. Create or use financing and economic mechanisms (e.g., conservation finance, carbon offsets) to enhance stewardship capacity and decision-making.
4. Implement transition measures to support economic stability and diversity within resource-dependent communities.

Pillar 3: Adopting an open, transparent, and accountable process

B.C. will work in partnership with First Nations, and seek advice from others to:

1. Develop concrete actions to start implementing the Framework.
2. Enhance oversight through monitoring, compliance, and enforcement by First Nations Guardian programs, registered professionals, and/or external oversight bodies working together to improve delivery of compliance and enforcement.
3. Regularly and transparently report publicly on the state of biodiversity and evaluation of progress in implementing the Framework and adjust response where needed based on the results of monitoring and evaluation (i.e., adaptive management).

ADVICE TO MINISTER

**CONFIDENTIAL
ISSUES NOTE**

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship
Date: March 6, 2024 (update)
Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **Choosing between the economy and protecting the environment is a “false choice”. We can and we must do both.**
- **Nature is one of our greatest allies in mitigating and adapting to a changing climate, supporting healthy communities, and ensuring a prosperous economy.**
- **The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework will help achieve our shared vision of healthy environments, communities, and economies by prioritizing ecosystem health in our natural resource management decisions.**
- **The Framework upholds our commitments in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act and commits to working better together across governments and with industry, scientists, and non-governmental organizations.**
- **Through better alignment across various program areas and initiatives, the survival and recovery of species and ecosystems will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires, floods, and drought.**
- **The Framework is being developed in response to a recommendation of the Old Growth Strategic Review and engagement sessions where we heard from thousands of British Columbians about the importance of transforming the stewardship of water, land, and resources.**
- **These natural values are important for First Nations, communities, and our economy and central to our identity as British Columbians.**

If asked about consultation and engagement efforts and the finalization of the draft Framework...

- **The draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework was made available for review from Nov. 15, 2023, to Jan. 31, 2024.**

- **As part of this review process, the Province has been consulting with First Nations rights and title holders and engaging with multiple natural resource sectors and industry, as well as local governments and other partners.**
- **The Framework is expected to be finalized in 2024, following the consultation and engagement process.**
- **A phased implementation plan will outline next steps. We will continue this work alongside First Nations and in partnership with industry, organizations, and communities, and the public, as we look to co-develop legislative tools with First Nations.**

If asked about the Province's actions related to ecosystem health and biodiversity...

- **Our government is building a series of comprehensive and integrated initiatives to safeguard the environment, ensure that resource use is sustainable, support local jobs, and recognize and respect First Nations rights to ensure healthy communities and continued opportunity for B.C.**
- **All these efforts are fundamental to protect against the worst effects of climate change and to create a healthier future for everyone.**
- **Collectively, this work represents a shift in how we have managed natural resources in B.C.**
- **Modernized Land Use Plans not only identify areas for conservation and protection but also unlock access to natural resources, bringing greater certainty on the land base for industry.**
- **There are areas where this has already occurred or is occurring, like the Great Bear Rainforest and the exploration of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas in the Northwest.**
- **If we think of Land Use Plans as a means of determining “what” activity will take place where on the land base, the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework helps identify “how” we manage land and resources to ensure ecosystem, community, and economic resiliency.**
- **The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework informs decisions that prioritize key environmental values, ensuring a shared understanding of the natural environment, more transparency, and sharing of information to better co-ordinate work across government and with various partners outside of government.**

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- **The Framework complements the new Conservation Financing Mechanism and the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, which further contribute funding and governance structures — including clarification of shared goals.**
- **This work will help the B.C. government achieve its target of protecting 30 per cent of B.C.'s water and land base by 2030.**
- **Our government is already leading the way on various aspects of ecosystem health and biodiversity. Examples include:**
 - **investing \$100 million in healthy watersheds and co-developing a watershed security strategy — with the B.C.-First Nations Water Table and the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia — to help ensure that safe, clean water is available to communities throughout B.C. for generations;**
 - **continuing to implement the Together for Wildlife Strategy, including Goal 12 of the strategy to review and improve the *Wildlife Act*; and**
 - **establishing a new conservancy area in the Incomappleux Valley.**
- **Together with First Nations, we're also implementing B.C.'s Wild Salmon Strategy and developing B.C.'s first-ever Coastal Marine Strategy.**
- **The implementation of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework will include identifying potential changes to government programs, policies, and regulations, as well as the development of new legislation or legislation amendments to support the vision and intent of the Framework that will apply across all sectors.**

KEY FACTS:

The conservation of long-term ecosystem health and biodiversity is crucial for the health and well-being of communities, economic sustainability, maintaining clean air and water, and the responsible stewardship of wildlife and natural resources for future generations.

In September 2020, the B.C. government committed to implementing all 14 recommendations of the independent Old Growth Strategic Review report, including Recommendation #2 to “*declare the conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity of British Columbia's forests as an overarching priority and enact legislation that legally establishes this priority for all sectors.*”

In response to Recommendation 2, the B.C. government collaboratively developed a draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework to prioritize ecosystem health and biodiversity conservation. The Framework will improve land management practices in B.C. to: better protect species; conserve vital ecosystem resources; and ensure the long-term social and economic well-being of communities throughout the province.

Consultation with First Nations rights and title holders and engagement with industry, local governments and other partners took place between Nov. 15, 2023, and Jan. 31, 2024. The input that was received will be considered and incorporated into the final Framework, which is expected to be released in spring 2024.

The B.C. government is moving toward a co-management system of land and resource stewardship that fosters improved ecosystem health. A system of programs and initiatives already leading the way on various aspects of ecosystem health and biodiversity include:

- developing co-management and inclusive governance systems;
- improving laws, regulations, and policies;
- setting objectives and identifying areas for protection, restoration, and conservation, through modernized land use, watershed, and forest landscape planning;
- ensuring that the use of resources is sustainable and benefits people and communities;
- protecting and recovering species at risk and those species most important to First Nations rights and culture; and,
- ensuring the availability of funds to address partners' capacity and remove barriers to their participation.

Specific complementary programs and strategies include Together for Wildlife (wildlife and terrestrial focus), Wild Salmon Strategy (salmon-specific), Watershed Security Strategy (healthy watersheds and environmental flows), Cumulative Effects Framework (consistent, transparent assessment of the condition of values).

The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework will apply to all sectors and ecosystem types.

The process consists of two phases:

- **Phase 1** focuses on the collaborative development of the Framework to determine a process to prioritize ecosystem health and biodiversity, with First Nations.
- **Phase 2** will focus on developing new legislation and updating legislation and other enabling tools to achieve the vision and intent of the Framework.

After reviewing the input received through multiple First Nations and multi-party forums and engagement sessions, the establishment of an Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health (or Chief Ecologist) is being considered. Such an office could include responsibilities and necessary powers to advise on, oversee, and support the implementation of the Framework, including functions such as:

- monitoring and sharing information about biodiversity and ecosystem health
- supporting decision-making across all sectors
- establishing biodiversity guidance
- championing policies and approaches to implement the Framework.

Long-term economic stability and jobs for many British Columbians rely on a healthy environment. The Framework will prioritize ecosystem, community, and economic resiliency and

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will help First Nations and local communities address the many challenges related to wildfires and droughts.

In March 2023, the Province and the B.C.-First Nations Water Table announced an unprecedented \$100-million investment in the Watershed Security Fund — to be co-managed by the Real Estate Foundation of BC and the B.C.-First Nations Water Table — to help ensure that safe, clean water is available to communities throughout B.C. for generations and to support watershed restoration projects.

In November 2023, the B.C. government, the First Nations Leadership Council, and the Canadian government announced the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, which aligns over \$1 billion of nature-related investments for four key areas: protection and conservation, restoration and enhancement, recovery of species at risk, and improved gathering and sharing of information.

Communications contact	Thomas Winterhoff, Sr. Public Affairs Officer, GCPE WLRS	778 679-5541
Program contact	Celine Davis, A/Exec. Director, Ecosystems Branch, WLRS	778 698-4060
File created	Feb. 28, 2023	
File updated	March 6, 2024	

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Conservation Lands Program and Strategic Plan

Recommend Response:

- The Conservation Lands Program (“Program”) has supported the delivery of the province’s ecosystem health and biodiversity goals for over 50 years through the conservation of areas with high-value biodiversity, and priority fish and wildlife habitat.
- Areas designated as Conservation Lands are some of the most biologically important ecosystems in the province and several are recognized internationally as key biodiversity areas or significant wetlands.
- The Program aligns with commitments already made to improve wildlife stewardship under the Together for Wildlife Strategy (T4W), will support the implementation of the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, and progress towards the Province’s 30 x 30 goal.
- A Program Strategic Plan (Plan) was recently developed in partial response to the Office of the Auditor General’s recommendation. The Plan will help strengthen and build new partnerships with First Nations, building on a strong track record with other conservation partners, including the Nature Trust of B.C., Ducks Unlimited Canada, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, and Nature Conservancy of Canada.
- The Program is also a cornerstone for private land conservation and protection and will be an important option for delivery of funding through the Conservation Financing Mechanism.

Key Facts:

- The Program administers land under the *Wildlife Act* (primarily Sections 3-5,7,8, including Wildlife Management Areas [WMAs]).
- The Program also include lands over which a recorded ‘interest’ has been secured for fish and wildlife under the *Land Act*, but not administration and management authority.
- There are approximately 900,000 hectares of conservation lands currently established, of which ~253,000 hectares are WMAs.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- Conservation Lands are currently reported as protected areas in the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database, thereby directly contributing to the 30 percent target.
- Annual operational funding to support the management of existing conservation lands (~\$700,000) is administered by the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, primarily through endowments provided by the Province.
- The Program is also supported through internal funding from the Together for Wildlife Strategy. Program staff have also secured grants through the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund (Environment and Climate Change Canada).
- Conservation partners within the Program have been instrumental in leveraging external conservation funding to support designation and acquisition of public and private lands.
- Other recent funding announcements including the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation and the Conservation Financing Mechanism may directly or indirectly support conservation lands in the future.
- The Office of the Auditor General's Audit on the Management of the Conservation Lands Program was released in May 2021. All 11 recommendations of the Audit were accepted by government. The Program is on track to complete three of the 11 recommendations by 2025, 7 additional recommendations by 2027, and the final recommendation by 2030.
- The Plan had input from First Nation advisors, the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council, the First Nations-B.C. Wildlife Forum, and the Conservation Lands Program Partnership (ENGOS). The Plan is in the process of final executive approval. It proposes four goals that will also help the Program achieve the audit recommendations. These goals are:
 - Expand and grow the Program as a key solution for protecting B.C.'s rich biodiversity with a focus on fish and wildlife habitat.
 - Increase collaboration with First Nations to identify and steward conservation lands for fish and wildlife habitat and biodiversity.
 - Restore, enhance and maintain fish and wildlife habitat and biodiversity within administered conservation lands.
 - Increase public accountability and confidence in the role of conservation lands in contributing to collaboration, stewardship and biodiversity.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 4, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Government Actions Regulation and Habitat

Recommend Response:

- The Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) is designated as the Minister responsible for the *Wildlife Act* within *Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA)*.
- The Government Actions Regulation (GAR) under the *FRPA*, provides additional regulatory mechanisms for the protection of non-timber values, including habitat for species at risk and ungulates.
- Objectives or practice requirements are established through Orders. These specified requirements add new expectations for forest or range activities in designated areas and ensure the conservation of important habitat values.
- Some industrial activity may be compatible with the objectives or practice requirements within designated areas called Wildlife Habitat Areas (WHAs) or Ungulate Winter Ranges (UWRs).
- We are currently reviewing policy and assessing the condition within WHAs and UWRs to determine their current condition.
- Results of these assessments will contribute to the development of emerging policy and procedures that will support our progress toward 30 x 30.
- Currently, only designations that prohibit harvesting are included in reporting areas protected or conserved.

Additional Response:

- The clause that required orders not “unduly impact timber supply” was removed in December 2023. This provides the Province with considerable flexibility to ensure that habitat for species at risk is effectively protected.
- The Minister, or delegate, will continue to consider economic and timber supply impacts and several other regulatory tests and limits on action when enacting an order under the GAR.

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- If social and economic impacts are potentially significant, a cabinet mandate is typically required. This was and will continue to be the case for broad ranging species like Caribou.

Key Facts:

- The protection of fish, wildlife and habitat values are significant components of WLRS' mandate. To effectively meet the requirements in the mandate, the Minister requires legal authorities and regulatory tools.
- The vision of *FRPA* was predicated on a balance between a forest or range tenure holder's economic interests, the sustainability of renewable resources and the protection of associated values such as soil, water, and wildlife.
- Numerous independent reviews and audits deemed that the balance point was not effectively meeting the public interests for the environment or First Nations' affirmed treaty or constitutional rights.
- GAR enables localized land designations for areas and features that require special management for the stewardship of wildlife, fish, water, biodiversity, visual quality, cultural heritage resources, recreation resources and resource features. The role of GAR is crucial with respect to the effectiveness of *FRPA* as legislation that protects the environment and "non-timber values".
- GAR designations help to provide operational certainty through the identification of values across the land base and establishment of various measures or objectives that clearly outline government's expectations for outcomes.
- The process of delegating authorities for *FRPA* (mirrored under *Energy Resource Activities Act*) to staff positions within WLRS was completed through the transfer of authority signed on December 14, 2023.
- On December 11, 2023, an amendment to GAR repealed the section that previously limited the Minister from establishing an order that would unduly reduce the supply of timber in B.C.'s forests ("without unduly" clause). The removal of this clause mirrored the amendments to the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation within *FRPA* that were removed on February 13, 2023, through Order in Council 76-2023.
- The Ministry of Forests and WLRS need to collaborate to ensure that government objectives and transparent reporting and decision-making process to ensure public trust and confidence in *FRPA*.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2024

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation

Recommend Response:

- The Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation (TFANC) is an unprecedented commitment that aligns global, federal and provincial conservation goals.
- TFANC pledges to work towards true and lasting reconciliation with First Nations and sets priority goals and objects towards protecting 30 percent of lands within the province by 2030, restoration and enhancement of degraded habitats, recovery of species at risk, and building foundational knowledge and information sharing.
- With Canada's support, over \$1B is being invested toward achieving these goals over the life of the agreement.
- The Framework Agreement will help to align and integrate existing initiatives and associated funding to ensure positive benefits are maximized and negative consequences mitigated.
- Implementation was already underway through provincial and federal funding programs. The parties are working together to establish governance systems to administer, track progress and report out on accomplishments.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- B.C. continues to work with Canada to leverage existing and strike new bilateral agreements to support TFANC goals; for example, through the Old Growth Nature Fund, 2 Billion Trees and Ecological Corridors.
- Modernized Land Use Planning and Forest Landscape Planning are expected to be the main processes that will identify areas for conservation, protection, restoration and enhancement. These initiatives will be complemented through the delivery of existing regulatory programs and co-management agreements for wildlife and species at risk

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(e.g., Caribou Recovery Program, Government Action Regulations, Conservation Lands Program, etc.).

Key Facts:

- The TFANC was signed in November 2023 by Canada, BC, First Nations Leadership Council, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, BC Assembly of First Nations, and First Nations Summit.
- Of the “up to” \$500M committed by Canada over the life of TFANC, \$50M has been allocated toward identification and securement of between 4,000 and 13,000 square kilometres of old growth forest areas through the Old Growth Nature Fund, and \$104M has been allocated from the 2 Billion Trees Program for the restoration of species at risk habitat, wildfire mitigation and recovery, road restoration and watershed health.
- Other federal funding programs include the Enhanced Nature Legacy and Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund.
- B.C. is already contributing to matching funding, having committed \$563M through existing programs and initiatives over the next three years:
 - \$150M - Conservation Financing Mechanism
 - \$23M - Modernized Land Use Planning (3 years) *
 - \$30M - First Nations Partnership Programs
 - \$21M - Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (three years) *
 - \$9M - Guardian Training Program
 - \$30M - Together For Wildlife (three years) *
 - \$100M - Watershed Security Strategy
 - \$30M - Caribou Recovery Program (three years) *
 - \$200M - restoration in the Northeast
- The Conservation Financing Mechanism is a public-private partnership between the Province and the British Columbia Parks Foundation, who have pledged a combined total of \$300M to combat biodiversity loss.

*(*Represents the amount identified within the three-year budget, after which the ministry will seek continued investment in these programs over the term of the agreement.)*

Date Prepared/Revised: Feb 2, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Old Growth Nature Fund

Recommend Response:

- The Old Growth Nature Fund (OGNF) is one of several federal funds that contribute to commitments under the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation (Framework Agreement).
- The OGNF supports conservation and protection in bio geoclimatic zones with high carbon potential.
- Activities that are eligible for OGNF must progress towards, or be associated with the costs of, securing conservation or protection designations that meet the standard for reporting toward the shared goal of 30x30.
- Canada has committed \$50M to B.C. over three years (22/23 – 24/25) toward the securement of between 4,000 and 13,000 square kilometres of old growth forest areas.
- Funding has gone towards First Nations planning capacity to support consultation on old growth deferrals and at Forest Landscape Planning tables, data collection to support the identification of Wildlife Habitat Areas for species at risk, and the purchase of private land.
- Funding has also been used to remove encumbrances that may be incompatible with the protection standards.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Protecting old growth forests is one of our best defenses against climate change. Old growth forests also provide key habitats for species at risk and are rich in species diversity.
- Over the last year, B.C. has finalised the protection of 3,200 hectares of old forests in the Incomappleux Valley.
- Funding provided through OGNF in 2023/24 is expected to secure over 170,000 hectares of protection.
- In 2024/25, \$25M is available for distribution.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Key Facts:

- The \$50M OGNF was negotiated and signed between Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and the (now) B.C. Ministry of Forests (FOR) in Spring 2023.
- The funding schedule is spread across three fiscal years (22/23, 23/24 and 24/25) as \$5M, \$20M and \$25M. Unspent funding cannot be carried between fiscal years.
- The OGNF supports conservation and protection of old growth forests in biogeoclimatic zones with high carbon potential (e.g., Interior Cedar Hemlock, Coastal Western Hemlock, Coastal Douglas fir) that count toward 30x30 goals (i.e., meets standards for Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database reporting).
- In fiscal year 22/23, the OGNF provided \$5M for First Nation capacity funding in support of the development of the Old Growth Strategic Review (OGSR) action plan and for tenure buy-back for the Incomappleux area.
- Accountability for the OGNF is transitioning to WLRS.
- WLRS and FOR staff have been working together to identify projects that are consistent with the purpose and eligibility criteria of the OGNF. To date, for fiscal year 23/24, B.C. and ECCC have reached agreement for \$19.9M of recoverable federal funding, leaving \$100,000 unspent.
- B.C.'s matching requirement (cash and in-kind) can span the three-year period, and ECCC already recognized \$15.6M of FOR spending in 22/23 towards B.C.'s overall matching requirement. With this year's proposed provincial expenditure, B.C. will have achieved over \$28M of match towards the total goal of \$50M.
- Intergovernmental Communications
Intergovernmental Communications
Intergovernmental Communications
- Intergovernmental Communications in the short term, ECCC agreed to capacity and engagement funding associated with planning processes, despite uncertainty that a conservation designation will result in this fiscal year.
- Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

Date Prepared/Revised: March 4, 2024

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ADVICE TO MINISTER

<p style="text-align: center;">CONFIDENTIAL GCPE-FOR ISSUE NOTE</p> <p>Ministry of Forests Date: February 14, 2024 Minister Responsible: Hon. Bruce Ralston</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Old Growth</p>
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ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- People who live here share a deep connection to our forests.
- In the face of devastating wildfires, climate change and timber supply challenges, we are taking urgent action to better care for our forests.
- Short-sighted approaches in decades past, like decisions to boost raw log exports and limit investments in wildfire preparedness, led us to the challenges we are facing today.
- That's why we are acting on the 14 recommendations from the old growth strategic review.
- We are working together and in close partnership with First Nations to conserve more old forests for our children and grandchildren and supporting sustainable local jobs.
- And we are taking action alongside First Nations as well as the forest sector, workers and communities to:

- Conserve more old forests, including through the \$1-billion Nature Agreement and a new Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework;
- Make sure forestry communities, get more local jobs for every tree harvested, including by boosting made-in-B.C. wood manufacturing; and
- Improve the work on the ground through better mapping, data, and knowledge sharing.
- Conserving nature and creating sustainable jobs is one of the most important things we can do to secure a stronger future for everyone.

If asked about old growth harvesting:

- Our approach to forestry and landscape management is focused on the full value of ecosystems – including the protection of watersheds, wildlife habitat, and areas of cultural significance.
- Ending all old growth logging is not a recommendation of the Old Growth Strategic Review – in fact the review specifically stated that some harvesting in some areas was possible and necessary.
- Some people want to continue with the old, unsustainable ways of logging, even at the expense of reconciliation and our action on climate change.

- Other people want to see logging stopped, regardless of support from First Nations or the cost to jobs, opportunities, and community wellbeing.
- We can't continue the old way of doing things – we know that the future is in partnerships with First Nations and sustainable forestry.
- Forestry is a cornerstone industry for B.C., and the workers who make up the sector are key to building a stronger, cleaner economy that works better for people.
- By prioritizing sustainability, we will ensure that our oldest and rarest forests are protected, while supporting local, sustainable jobs.

Background:

Concerns continue to be raised about the Province's response to protecting old growth forests. Environmental groups and activists assert the Province's actions to defer and protect old growth ecosystems is not enough and too slow.

B.C. plans on releasing the Action Plan in March 2024 – this is the next step in the Province's old growth strategy and as outlined in the modernizing forestry intentions paper. This includes actions that continue and even expand on the work done on the 14 recommendations in the OGSR.

As of Jan. 2024, First Nations support the deferral of 2.4 million hectares. This includes 1.23 million hectares of priority at-risk old growth identified by the Technical Advisory Panel.

On Feb. 15, 2023, B.C. launched several new measures to protect more old growth

including fast-tracking innovation, investments in silviculture research and announcing new Forest Landscape Planning tables.

B.C.'s Intentions Paper on forest policy, released June 1, 2021, included a continued commitment to moving forward on the old growth panel's recommendations. However, it was poorly received by environmental groups and activists who wanted concrete action on old growth deferrals.

On Sep. 11, 2020, government released the independent consultants' report on old growth management in B.C. The Province committed to following through on the recommendations in *A New Future for Old Forests*, written by Garry Merkel and Al Gorley after extensive consultation.

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File Created:	January 16, 2023	
File Updated:	February 14, 2024	

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation -
2 Billion Trees Species at Risk Restoration

Recommend Response:

- 2 Billion Trees (2BT) is a Government of Canada cost-shared grants and contribution program that FOR accesses annually for commercial tree planting purposes.
- Under the 2BT habitat restoration funding stream, Canada also provided British Columbia (B.C.) with a notional allocation of \$104M to support habitat restoration for at risk species.
- WLRS staff have identified several habitat restoration projects and will work in partnership with FOR and First Nations to restore important habitat for caribou and other at-risk species.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- 2BT is one of several federal funds that contribute to commitments under the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation.
- The 2BT agreement, in principle, recognizes that nature-based solutions, such as tree planting, can significantly contribute to reducing the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss.
- Habitat restoration is also a key component of the draft Boreal Caribou Protection and Recovery Plan and other species at risk recovery plans.
- 2BT funding is available until March 31, 2031, and will provide important employment opportunities for many British Columbians and First Nations.

Key Facts:

- BC is home to the greatest biodiversity of any province or territory in Canada. Climate change and habitat degradation over time poses a significant risk to the viability of many of these species. Healthy ecosystems provide a range of environmental, social and cultural and health benefits to many British Columbians.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- In recognition of this threat, in 2019, the Government of Canada committed to planting an additional two billion new trees over 10 years (2021-22 to 2030-31) as part of a broader approach to nature-based climate solutions, with the goal of achieving significant carbon sequestration and restoring habitat for at risk species.
- WLRS staff have are proposing to enter into a new contribution agreement under the current 2BT agreement, in principle, held by FOR to access funding from the habitat restoration stream. The cost recovery is 60 percent.
- Ecosystem restoration under this submission may also help reduce the risk of wildland fire and floods to communities.
- This new proposal aligns with our December 2022 Ministry Mandate letter and relevant commitments, including “Protect wildlife and species at risk, and work collaboratively with First Nations, other ministries, and the federal government to protect and enhance B.C.’s biodiversity through implementing recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review, and the Together for Wildlife Strategy”.
- We intend to plant trees that will result in permanent additions to the forest canopy/cover, improve existing forest, or allow for permanent protection of forests. To this end, selection of tree planting projects will focus on those involving long-term (many decades) maintenance of trees and forests.
- Funds within this agreement will also be allocated deliberately to support First Nations involvement, job creation and leadership where there is interest at a local level. Funding will support B.C.’s *Declaration Act* Action Plan by creating jobs and thus contributing to the social, cultural and economic well-being of numerous Indigenous communities.

Date Prepared/Revised: Feb 5, 2024

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Agreement with Parks Canada – Ecological Corridors Program

Recommend Response:

- B.C. is pursuing a resourcing agreement with Parks Canada to support delivery on goals for wildlife corridors and connected habitats within B.C.
- This agreement is incremental to the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation but consistent with it because it is to be guided by shared priorities for ecological corridors between B.C., Canada, and First Nations.
- Once approved, it will provide resources for provincial coordination, partnerships, planning and policy development to support recognition of wildlife corridors and connected habitats and their consideration in programs, processes, and decisions.

Key Facts:

- The proposed value of the resourcing agreement with Parks Canada is \$5.3M over three years, from 2023/24 to 2025/26.
- Wildlife corridors and connected habitats are part of several government commitments that include the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, the Together for Wildlife Strategy, and the WLRS Ministerial Mandate letter.
- This work does not duplicate work within these initiatives but is complementary and aligned with them, as well as other major biodiversity initiatives (e.g., the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework).
- WLRS provides leadership on the wildlife corridors and connected habitats through the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, the Together for Wildlife Strategy, the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework, as well as its responsibilities for landscape planning and objective-setting, and management of cumulative impacts.
- This topic is gaining profile at stewardship tables and planning forums also because of its significance in climate change adaptation. Part of the work of this agreement will be to position the province to better participate in these discussions from a common information foundation and provincial policy context.
- A wildlife corridor is not a protected area: it is a portion of the landscape that is recognized for its significance to habitat connectivity. Under this agreement, there are no requirements for B.C. to formally recognize a wildlife corridor.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- A wildlife corridor may include a variety of land uses, tenures, etc. It can be a patchwork of ownership, governance, and management where there is a shared interest in maintaining wildlife movement.
- Habitat connectivity is a vital characteristic of biodiversity because organisms need to move safely between different habitats to survive, migrate, mate, etc. and the need to move is exacerbated by a changing climate.
- B.C. is also collaborating with neighbouring jurisdictions on the implementation of the agreement across shared borders.
- Some examples of wildlife corridors in B.C. at different scales and for different species:
 - At a local level, wildlife corridors for reptiles and amphibians occur at Ryder Lake (Chilliwack) and White Lake Grasslands Protected Area (Oliver) where tunnels and fencing provide road crossings next to aquatic habitats.
 - At a landscape scale, scientists recognize the value of north-south valleys in the South Selkirk and Purcell Mountains (Kootenays) for grizzly bears along the US / Canada border. Connectivity through these areas has been enhanced by reducing bear attractants and using non-lethal management of bears.
 - Wildlife corridors used by a broad range of species have been mapped in the Okanagan Valley (e.g., between Okanagan Mountain and K'nmalka Provincial Parks), and areas of high connectivity for bear, lynx, wolverine, and other furbearers are being mapped in both Canada and the US in the Cascade mountains.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 4, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Species at Risk Recovery - General

Recommend Response:

- Species at risk recovery is a priority. The Province will continue to support and implement recovery actions by working collaboratively across ministries, First Nations, and federal counterparts in Environment and Climate Change Canada, Parks Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to establish consistent and effective management actions for species at risk recovery.
- Threats to species recovery are assessed and mitigation options, including both legal and non-legal mechanisms, are identified. Successful recovery often requires multiple approaches and partnerships through intensive management efforts.
- In fiscal year 2023-2024, Land Based Investment Strategy and base budget allocations dedicated over \$1.1M to marbled murrelet, northern goshawk, western-screech owl and whitebark pine recovery across the province.
- An additional \$600,000 in operational funding was also leveraged in 2023-2024 from Grant and Contribution Agreements with Canada.
- Caribou Recovery Program and the Spotted Owl Conservation Breeding and Recovery Program are distinct from a budget perspective.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Specific species recovery plans are developed in collaboration with First Nations Rights and Title Holders and engagement with stakeholders and the public.
- Determining recovery actions begins with identification of a population objective that upholds indigenous rights, as well as the consideration of cultural, social, and economic values.
- A Forest Practices Board Report: *Management of Habitat for Species at Risk under the Forest and Range Practices Act*

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

(FRPA) was released in August 2023. The provincial response highlights the current initiatives underway to update policy and tools for managing species at risk. This includes:

- Updating the list of species at risk under FRPA and related the *Energy Resource Activities Act* (ERAA).
- Updating the Identified Wildlife Management Strategy to align with current initiatives such as the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework and Forest Landscape Planning.
- Removal of “without unduly reducing the supply of timber” from the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation (February 13, 2023) and the Government Action Regulation of FRPA (December 11, 2023).
- Comprehensive review of the *Wildlife Act*.

Key Facts:

- Species at risk recovery in B.C. is led by WLRS. Other ministries in the natural resource sector support the implementation of recovery strategies through establishing objectives, permitting, and authorizing activities as set out in species at risk recovery plans (Land Use Objectives Regulation Orders, Government Actions Regulations, wildlife management, habitat restoration, permit conditions, etc.).
- Recovery actions are guided by numerous statutes and many authorities have now been assigned to WLRS.
- Currently, 288 species in B.C. are listed under *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), 107 species of which have legally identified critical habitat (CH) in final federal recovery strategies for SARA listed species at risk (accounting for overlap, the approximate area of mapped polygons within which CH may be found is 31.3 million hectares). The number of species listed under SARA (in B.C.) has increased by 35 from the previous year.
- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Date Prepared/Revised: March 4, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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ADVICE TO MINISTER

**CONFIDENTIAL
ISSUES NOTE**

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship
Date: Feb. 27, 2024
Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen

Species at risk and related B.C. legislation

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **Many species that have thrived in the past now face challenges due to climate change, habitat loss, invasive species, human activities, and pollution.**
- **We are taking action to prioritize biodiversity and ecosystem health to better protect species before they become threatened or endangered, and to provide improved and more effective management actions for species at risk.**
- **When species become “at risk”, protecting their remaining populations and supporting their recovery in B.C. are key priorities for our government.**
- **We are implementing existing regulatory measures to protect critical habitat for species at risk, as well as actively managing threats and enhancing populations — often in partnership with First Nations.**
- **Overall, long-term ecosystem health and biodiversity are crucial for:**
 - **the well-being of communities;**
 - **economic sustainability;**
 - **maintaining clean air and water; and**
 - **the responsible stewardship of wildlife and natural resources for future generations.**
- **We are seeking additional input on a draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework from communities, municipal leaders, academia, and other interested parties, as well as from the mining, forestry, tourism, and oil and gas sectors.**
- **As recommended in the Old Growth Strategic Review, the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework will help support critical habitat and species at risk for the long term.**

If asked about biodiversity or the “30% by 2030” target:

- **British Columbia has the greatest diversity of species, ecosystems, and habitats of any province or territory in Canada, and we have always been a leader in conservation efforts in this country.**
- **There are currently about 18.5 million hectares of protected and conserved areas in the province, making up nearly 20% of its total land area.**
- **Our government recognizes the adoption of the “30 by 30” target at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference in December 2022. We are working toward conserving and protecting 30% of B.C.’s land base by 2030, in partnership with First Nations.**

If asked about species-at-risk legislation:

- **Protection for at-risk species in B.C. is currently provided through a suite of legislation that includes:**
 - ***Wildlife Act***
 - ***Forest and Range Practices Act***
 - ***Oil and Gas Activities Act***
 - ***Mineral Tenure Act***
 - ***Ecological Reserves Act***
 - ***Park Act***
 - ***Land Act***
- **We are currently reviewing the *Wildlife Act* and regulations under the *Forest and Range Practices Act*, and we have changed the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation to improve its application for species at risk habitat management.**
- **Our commitment to reconciliation means that we consult with First Nations rights and title holders on policy and legislative changes, so we’re going to work with them and other partners to ensure that any legislation changes we make are effective in protecting at-risk species.**
- **The draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework was made available for review from Nov. 5, 2023, to Jan. 31, 2024.**
- **Additional options to develop new legislation or update existing legislation — as well as other enabling tools to achieve the vision and**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

intent of the framework — will be assessed after the first phase of engagements.

- We are already working with First Nations peoples and other partners on new approaches to protect ecosystems and species at risk, enhance biodiversity, restore habitat, and strengthen ecosystem resilience to climate change.
- The Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation was signed by the B.C. government, the federal government, and the First Nations Leadership council in November 2023. It will support our mutual commitment to strengthening conservation and stewardship provincewide through the coordination of priorities and funding.

If asked about the Ecojustice lawsuit regarding migratory birds and species at risk:

- The Ecojustice lawsuit was directed at Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) in respect to ECCC's protection statement regarding the federal *Migratory Bird Convention Act* and migratory birds under the *Species at Risk Act*, including the marbled murrelet.
- The Federal Court recently ruled against Canada's position and has ordered the minister to redetermine the protection statement regarding its application to the nests of birds. Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications
- The B.C. government continues to work to protect species at risk and address threats to their habitats.
- This includes our work with the federal government and First Nations on an agreement and regulatory measures that establish habitat protection thresholds, which are being incorporated into Forest Stewardship Plans, and in the future, Forest Landscape Plans.
- B.C.'s policy on protecting habitat for the marbled murrelet does not rely on identifying and protecting individual nests. It works by mapping the best nesting habitat across the landscape and working through land use planning processes to maintain this habitat in various types of conservation designations or reserves.

Application; Intergovernmental Communications

- **B.C. is also undertaking a comprehensive review of the *Wildlife Act* to explore opportunities to better manage wildlife and wildlife habitat, including species at risk.**

If asked about the Forest Practices Board's special investigation on Species at Risk management under the Forest and Range Practices Act:

- **We appreciate the Forest Practices Board's report on managing habitat for species at risk under the *Forest and Range Practices Act*, and specifically for the northern goshawk.**
- **As noted in the report, industry is meeting and, in some cases, exceeding requirements of legal objectives related to at-risk species habitat.**
- **Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship staff are reviewing the current policy framework that guides habitat management, as well as emerging policies associated with the Together for Wildlife Strategy and the Old Growth Strategic Review.**
- **This review will ensure that habitat stewardship is a key part of forestry planning and meets our government's responsibilities to uphold First Nations' rights, manage threats to wildlife values, and help species at risk recover.**
- **Our government is also working on other initiatives related to managing habitat for species at risk. They include:**
 - **updating the list of species at risk associated with the *Forest and Range Practices Act* and the *Oil and Gas Activities Act* to better manage species and ecosystems that may be threatened**
 - **moving forward on land and water planning, including Forest Landscape Planning and Land Use Planning, which include consideration of species at risk**
 - **working with First Nations and stakeholders on the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework, which will better protect species and conserve vital ecosystem resources**
 - **reviewing current species-at-risk policies and programs**
- **Ministry staff will thoroughly review the Forest Practices Board's report and respond to the board's report.**

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KEY FACTS AND BACKGROUND:

British Columbia has the greatest diversity of species, ecosystems, and habitats of any province or territory in Canada and has one of the highest percentages of protected areas among provinces and territories. However, protecting at-risk species is highly complex. The challenges associated with meeting federal and provincial expectations for the protection of species at risk can create uncertainty for First Nations, industry, and stakeholders.

Globally, declines in biodiversity are primarily due to five main factors: climate change; habitat loss or alteration; invasive species; overexploitation; and pollution. Addressing these declines can be difficult, with a multitude of interconnected threats and interactions that involve complicated environmental, social, and economic trade-offs.

Several goals related to biodiversity have been included in ministerial mandate letters, demonstrating the government's commitment and willingness to act. The Province recognizes the need to work collaboratively to enhance biodiversity and has been working to clarify long-term co-ordination needs and roles related to these commitments. This has been a focus of ongoing discussions and work that included the creation of the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship in February 2022.

WLRS now leads the provincial species-at-risk recovery framework and the coordination of multiple ministries that are working together to reconcile mandates and competing objectives and ensure the protection and recovery of species at risk. Our approach begins with setting population recovery goals, prioritizing habitat and First Nations rights, and considering other ecological co-benefits (e.g., carbon, clean water, etc.), as well as cultural, social, and economic values.

The Province led multiple engagement efforts from 2017 to 2019 on this topic, which included members of the public, stakeholders, and Indigenous nations. The Province has also led discussions with the federal government, local governments, professional associations, environmental non-governmental organizations, academic experts, and industry groups to help improve and streamline B.C.'s approach to species-at-risk management.

Nature Agreement

In February 2021, the B.C. and federal governments committed to developing a new "nature agreement" that would support their mutual commitment to strengthening conservation and stewardship efforts provincewide. In December 2022, it became clear that including Indigenous peoples in the agreement was both necessary and desirable.

The Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation (the "Nature Agreement") was signed by B.C., Canada, and the First Nations Leadership Council in November 2023. It includes a shared commitment to work towards true and lasting reconciliation with First Nations. This work is based on recognition and respect for shared stewardship responsibilities, the benefits of healthy ecosystems in B.C., and the inherent right of First Nations to self-determination and self-government.

The Nature Agreement will establish a governance framework and strengthen conservation efforts by using new approaches to protect species at risk, exploring various ways to protect, restore and enhance habitats, and strengthening ecosystem resilience to climate change and

our ability to sequester carbon, along with key considerations for communities and industry innovation.

Ecojustice lawsuit (migratory birds)

The federal Ministry of Environment and Climate Change is responding to media inquiries about this lawsuit, but it's possible that the case may prompt media interest in B.C.'s species at risk legislation and policies.

A federal protection statement was issued in 2022 on the application of the federal *Migratory Birds Convention Act* (MBCA) as it relates to the nests of birds listed under Schedule 1 of the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). The statement clarified that nests of migratory birds are protected under both pieces of legislation, but environmental groups (Wilderness Committee, Sierra Club) considered this an overly narrow interpretation of habitat protection for species at risk, including the marbled murrelet, because it failed to protect nesting stands.

In late April 2022, Ecojustice (on behalf of Sierra Club BC and the Wilderness Committee) filed a lawsuit in federal court against the federal government, alleging that "Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change Steven Guilbeault is failing to meet his statutory duties to ensure the protection of habitat necessary for the survival and recovery of at-risk migratory birds."

The Federal Court ruled against Canada's position and has ordered the minister to redetermine the protection statement regarding its application to the nests of birds.

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

Federal Species at Risk staff are developing an updated Recovery Strategy for the marbled murrelet that will include more detailed mapping of terrestrial "critical habitat". B.C. staff are working closely with federal colleagues on these updates.

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

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Program contact	Christine Petrovcic, director, Species and Ecosystem Recovery, WLRS	Government
File created	April 29, 2022	
File updated	Feb. 27, 2024	

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Spotted Owl Recovery

Recommend Response:

- British Columbia (BC) with the help of First Nations partners and support from the federal government, is doing everything we can to help Spotted Owls (SPOW) recovery.
- BC has been actively working on SPOW recovery since 1991 and has a robust recovery plan to achieve the goal of 250 mature spotted owls (125 breeding pairs) in 50 years.
- Decisions that support SPOW recovery are based on the best available science and Indigenous knowledge, and we are confident in the approach we are taking.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- SPOW populations are at risk due to past habitat loss (primarily from past logging activities) climate change, and competition from invasive barred owls.
- BC has protected more than 280,000 hectares of SPOW habitat and has extended the deferral of logging in two Fraser Canyon watersheds to help protect additional habitat.
- An additional 49,257 hectares of habitat is also managed (allows harvest with retention) in Wildlife Habitat Areas to support recruitment of future habitat.
- BC invests approximately \$600,000 annually to support the world's only conservation breeding and release program; and to actively managing invasive barred owl populations.
- Over the past two summers, in collaboration with Spuzzum First Nation, we released conservation-bred owls into protected habitat to learn and further inform the program.
- We continue to monitor the progress of these owls and are prepared to adapt management strategies to ensure the owls have the best possible chance of survival in the wild.
- Monitoring and new information will inform review of critical habitat protection, finalization of the Federal Recovery

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Strategy, new agreements with Canada and First Nations (linked to Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation) and progress in developing a federal *Species at Risk Act*-compliant action plan.

Key Facts:

- The SPOW (*caurina* subspecies) is listed as an endangered animal under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). It is also red-listed by the BC Conservation Data Centre and identified as a species at risk under *Forest and Range Practices Act* and *Energy Resource Activities Act*.
- Threats to SPOW in BC include the loss and fragmentation of habitat, competition from barred owls, climate change, noise disturbance, and a low population in the wild (the latter in part due to extracting owls for breeding)
- In May 2009, the Interagency Northern Spotted Owl Steering Committee approved a revised provincial Spotted Owl Management Plan that includes the legal protection of 281,284 hectares of SPOW habitat in BC. and a recovery target of 125 breeding pairs (250 mature owls).
- The 281,284 hectares of protected SPOW habitat consists of about 100,000 hectares within Long-Term Owl Habitat Areas (i.e., Wildlife Habitat Areas) and about 180,000 hectares within provincial parks, Greater Vancouver Watersheds, ecological reserves and regional parks.
- In 2021, the BC and federal governments agreed that logging would be deferred in the Spuzzum and Utzlius watersheds in the Fraser Canyon (covering 32,671 hectares) to help the interim protection of additional SPOW habitat. The logging deferral was set to expire on February 28, 2023, but it was extended for two years (until February 28, 2025).
- The Province maintains the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program facility on private property in the Township of Langley.
- There are currently 37 SPOW in BC: 34 at the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program facility in Langley, two released from the breeding center into the wild (July 2023) and one wild born SPOW last detected during 2022.
- In June 2023, Ecojustice sought a judicial review of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada's position and timeliness of decision on whether to issue a Section 80 emergency protection order under the federal SARA.
- The hearing has concluded, and the judgement is still pending (anticipated in early 2024); however, Canada has provided direction to the Province to collaborate on SPOW recovery, including the development an Action Plan.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 5, 2024

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Q&A

Title: Release of spotted owls from breeding facility into the wild in 2022 and 2023

Date: Feb. 28, 2024

Key Messages (general):

- **Our government and our partners are doing everything we can to help spotted owls recover, including running the world's only conservation breeding and release program for this endangered species.**
- **Decisions that support spotted owl recovery are based on the best available science and First Nations' knowledge, and we are confident in the approach we're taking.**
- **We've collaborated with First Nations and biologists to protect more than 280,000 hectares of spotted owl habitat, enough to support a self-sustaining population of 125 breeding pairs in the future.**
- **In 2021, we deferred old-growth logging in two Fraser Canyon watersheds to help protect spotted owl habitat and reduce the risk of noise disturbing these rare birds. In March 2023, we extended these logging deferrals until Feb. 28, 2025.**
- **We continue to work with First Nation partners and the federal government on spotted owl recovery in British Columbia.**

Release of three spotted owls into the wild in **August 2022** and deaths of two of them:

- **The historic release of three male spotted owls into the wild in August 2022 was the result of a partnership between the provincial Spotted Owl Breeding and Release Program and the Spuzzum First Nation, with ongoing support from the federal government, conservation organizations and other groups.**

- **The Spuzzum First Nation's participation and Chief James Hobart's leadership were instrumental in the spotted owl recovery program reaching this point.**
- **It was the first-ever release of captive-born spotted owls anywhere in Canada, so there was always a risk that these three owls would face challenges living on their own in the wild.**
- **On Oct. 23, 2022, one of the three owls released in August 2022 ("Sítist", hatched in 2020) was found beside train tracks in the Fraser Canyon with injuries to a wing and one eye. This bird was taken to the Orphaned Wildlife Rehabilitation Society in Delta for treatment before being returned to the spotted owl breeding facility in Langley, where it made a full recovery.**
- **Unfortunately, it was confirmed in May 2023 that the other two owls released in August 2022 had died. The cause of their death is unknown, but potential causes include physical injury, predation, disease, or starvation.**
- **One of the primary goals of this first release was to learn from the experience to inform protocols and procedures for transporting, releasing, and supporting released owls in future.**
- **The three owls released in August 2022 began hunting for food immediately and survived for five months in the wild, but the greatest challenge for all juvenile spotted owls is surviving their first winter.**
- **Everyone involved in spotted owl recovery efforts in B.C. was saddened by the loss of the two owls, but the experience is helping them learn more about raising and releasing birds raised at the breeding facility, through the use of adaptive management principles.**

Release of two male spotted owls into the wild in July 2023:

- **Following consultations with the Spuzzum First Nation, two male spotted owls born and raised at the breeding facility in Langley**

were moved to an aviary in a protected forest area in the Fraser Valley on July 10, 2023.

- **One of those two birds, named "sítist" [te-syst] is the same owl that was released into the wild in August 2022, was found injured that autumn, and subsequently made a full recovery. The second owl was born in 2022 at the breeding facility and is called "wíkcn" [week-chin].**
- **Both owls were assessed as healthy and ready to fend for themselves earlier that summer, after demonstrating that they could capture live prey and maintain a stable body weight.**
- **The door to the aviary was opened on July 25, 2023 to allow the two owls to forage on their own and acclimatize to their new surroundings.**
- **Ministry staff and project partners have continued to monitor the progress of these owls and are prepared to adapt management strategies as needed to ensure the owls have the best possible chance of survival in the wild.**

Questions & Answers:

When and how were the first three spotted owls released into the wild in August 2022?

- The conservation of spotted owls in B.C. took a significant step forward in early August 2022, when three male spotted owls that had been born and raised in the Langley breeding facility were released into protected habitat within the Fraser Valley.
- It was the first such release of these rare and endangered birds into the wild in Canada.
- All three owls were assessed as healthy and ready to fend for themselves earlier that summer, after demonstrating that they could capture live prey and maintain a stable body weight.
- Although the owls used their hunting skills within the breeding facility, it wasn't known whether they would be able to hunt effectively in a natural environment.

- This was a “soft release”, with the owls kept and fed in aviaries in the forest over a period of weeks so they could acclimate to the environment. After that, the doors were opened so the owls could leave the aviaries and forage on their own.
- An adaptive management approach was implemented so that staff could respond appropriately to changing circumstances and ensure that the owls had the best possible chance of survival.

What happened to the spotted owl that was released into the wild in August 2022 and later found alive but injured?

- On Oct. 23, 2022, one of the spotted owls released in August was found beside train tracks in the Fraser Canyon with injuries to a wing and one eye.
- It was taken to the Orphaned Wildlife Rehabilitation Society in Delta for treatment before being returned to the spotted owl breeding facility in Langley, where it made a full recovery.

When did the ministry learn that the other two owls released in August 2022 were dead?

- On May 2, 2023, ministry staff confirmed that two of the three released owls had died.
- The release sites were inaccessible over the winter of 2022-23 due to snow conditions, so field crews couldn't visit the area to look for the birds' remains until the spring of 2023.
- Field crews were able to find remains of the two birds using radio telemetry.

What was the cause of death for those two owls?

- The cause of death is unknown. Potential causes include physical injury, predation, disease, or starvation. We may never be able to determine the cause of death with certainty.
- The owls began hunting for food immediately after their release in August 2022 and survived for five months in the wild, but the greatest challenge for all juvenile spotted owls is surviving their first winter.
- This was the first-ever release of captive-born spotted owls in Canada, so there was always a risk that these owls would face challenges living on their own.

How has these deaths affected the Province's spotted owl breeding and release program?

- It's not known whether conservation-bred spotted owls released into the wild can survive and become established, or whether those that do establish territories will successfully breed.
- However, releasing conservation-bred spotted owls into the wild is an essential component of the Province's spotted owl recovery program. The long-term goal is to establish a resilient and self-sustaining spotted owl population within healthy forest ecosystems.
- We are reviewing all the information we can gather from the last known location of the dead owls, including when the data indicates they were last there, weather patterns and other factors.
- It will take time to complete the analysis and apply that knowledge to the spotted owl breeding and release program.
- The population of spotted owls at the Langley breeding facility must continue to grow to produce enough offspring for release into the wild and help support the long-term recovery of this iconic species.
- The release of the three owls in 2022 was part of an ongoing learning process to help spotted owls recover in B.C. It represented a significant milestone, as the program pivoted from only breeding owls to trialing a release into the wild, with the ultimate goal of re-populating the species in its natural habitat.

What can you tell me about the second release of spotted owls from the breeding facility into the wild in July 2023?

- Following consultations with the Spuzzum First Nation, two male spotted owls born and raised at the breeding facility in Langley were moved to an aviary in a protected forest area in the Fraser Valley on July 10, 2023.
- One of these two birds (named "Sítist") was the owl that was released into the wild in August 2022, was found injured that fall, and subsequently made a full recovery. The second owl (named "wíkcn") was born in 2022 at the breeding facility.
- Both owls were assessed as healthy and ready to fend for themselves earlier that summer, after demonstrating that they could capture live prey and maintain a stable body weight.
- The door to the aviary was opened on July 25, 2023 to allow the owls to forage on their own and acclimatize to their new surroundings.

- Ministry staff and project partners continue to monitor the progress of these owls and are prepared to adapt management strategies as needed to ensure they have the best possible chance of survival in the wild.

What role has the Spuzzum First Nation played in the spotted owl recovery program?

- The release of spotted owls into the wild in August 2022 and July 2023 was the result of a partnership between the provincial Spotted Owl Breeding and Release Program and the Spuzzum First Nation, with ongoing support from the federal government, conservation organizations and other groups.
- The Spuzzum First Nation's participation and Chief James Hobart's leadership have been instrumental in the spotted owl recovery program reaching the point of releasing owls on the traditional territories of the Spuzzum First Nation.
- These releases were carefully planned as part of a collaborative, government-to-government process that incorporated Indigenous knowledge and guidance from the Spuzzum First Nation.
- The Spuzzum First Nation's land guardians have also provided on-the-ground support by sharing their knowledge of the land and natural resources within their territory and by participating in release operations.

When do you expect to release more spotted owls into the wild?

- It's hoped that the spotted owls currently living at the breeding facility will breed and produce viable offspring for future releases into the wild.
- We will continue to learn from the first two releases of spotted owls in 2022 and 2023, but the long-term goal is to release up to 20 owls from the breeding facility per year.
- No firm decisions have been made yet on the timing of future releases.

How are owls from the breeding facility tracked and monitored once they're released in the wild?

- A comprehensive monitoring plan was established to help ministry staff understand the behaviour and responses of spotted owls after their release into the wild.
- The birds are monitored regularly using radio telemetry, GPS tags, visual checks, and acoustic recording to track their movements and check on their health.

- Spotted owls that are released into the wild are monitored both remotely and in person. Once they demonstrate that they are self-reliant and hunting on their own, the program's adaptive monitoring protocol requires less frequent in-person assessments.
- The GPS tags are initially set up to collect daily location information, although dense tree cover can sometimes obscure the signals. In the case of the August 2022 release, the GPS tags stopped transmitting that December, so real-time monitoring information was only collected until that point.

How much spotted owl habitat has been protected in B.C.?

- We've protected more than 280,000 hectares of suitable spotted owl habitat — an area equivalent to about 690 Stanley Parks — which is enough to support a future population of 125 breeding pairs.
- The Province has also deferred logging in two Fraser Canyon watersheds specifically to help protect additional spotted owl habitat, as well as other areas of old growth forests.
- Additional habitat is protected in provincial parks and lower mainland watersheds for the purposes of drinking water protection. In total, there are about 310,000 hectares of habitat that is likely suitable for spotted owls.

Did the released spotted owls stay within the areas that the government protected for the purpose of spotted owl recovery?

- We want to ensure the best outcome possible for released spotted owls and the species in general so, due to their sensitivity to disturbance, we do not share specific location or movement information.
- However, GPS tracking data indicated that the owls released in August 2022 and in July 2023 travelled in and out of the protected habitat areas but spent most of their time in the protected habitat areas.
- Ministry staff continue to analyze the birds' movements.

Will the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship do anything differently for future releases of captive-bred spotted owls into the wild?

- These carefully planned releases are part of an ongoing learning process to help spotted owls recover in B.C.

- The ministry uses an “adaptive management” approach to releasing spotted owls into the wild, which means that procedures, monitoring practices and responses may be modified as the owls’ circumstances change.
- For example:
 - The two males selected for the second release in July 2023 were switched to a “live prey” diet earlier than was done previously, to give them more time to practise their hunting skills while still at the breeding facility.
 - A new release site within the same general area, which has improved habitat features, was selected for the 2023 release.
 - The GPS monitors have been reprogrammed to increase their transmission frequency, allowing staff to monitor the birds’ movements more closely.
- Releasing spotted owls into the wild gives us an opportunity to learn from the birds’ experiences and adapt how we manage the captive breeding and release program.
- For example, one of the goals is to better understand the optimal age for an owl’s release, the best time of year to release it, and what skills and other requirements the owl needs to survive in the wild.
- Ministry staff analyze the birds’ movements and associated information to determine if current procedures need to be modified.

How did the deaths of two of the owls released in August 2022 affect people involved in the program?

- Everyone involved in spotted owl recovery efforts in B.C. was saddened by the loss of those rare and beautiful birds.
- However, this unfortunate outcome is helping us learn more about raising and releasing spotted owls and that knowledge will continue to guide the recovery process in the years to come.
- We are confident in our overall approach and optimistic that we will see more positive results from future release operations.

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**CONFIDENTIAL
ISSUES NOTE**

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship
Date: Feb. 28, 2024 (update)
Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen

Spotted owl recovery and Ecojustice/Western Canada Wilderness Committee petitions

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **Supporting the recovery of threatened species in B.C. is a priority for this ministry.**
- **Our government and our partners are doing everything we can to help spotted owls recover, including running the world's only conservation breeding and release program for this endangered species.**
- **Decisions that support spotted owl recovery are based on the best available science and First Nations' knowledge, and we are confident in the approach we're taking.**
- **We've protected more than 280,000 hectares of spotted owl habitat — an area equivalent to about 690 Stanley Parks — which is enough to support a future population of 125 breeding pairs.**
- **We've extended the deferral of logging in two Fraser Canyon watersheds specifically to help protect additional spotted owl habitat, as well as other areas of old growth forests.**
- **We continue to work with First Nations partners and the federal government on spotted owl recovery in British Columbia.**

If asked about Spuzzum First Nations approval of the release of conservation-bred owls into the wild...

- **Spuzzum First Nation Chief James Hobart has been directly engaged in the development and implementation of plans to release conservation-bred owls back into the wild.**
- **Members from Spuzzum First Nation have participated in the construction**

of aviaries used in the release program and the monitoring of owls after they were released.

If asked about logging in protected spotted owl habitat...

- To be clear, the areas where the owls were released is protected habitat, and no commercial logging activities are permitted in these areas.
- There have been very small adjustments to these protected areas to allow for the restoration of areas impacted by the 2021 atmospheric river and to address improvements for public infrastructure (roads).

If asked about the release of conservation-bred spotted owls into the wild...

NOTE: A separate key messages/Q&A document (KMQA) is available on this topic with additional details about the release of conservation-bred spotted owls into the wild in August 2022 and July 2023.

- The historic release of three male spotted owls into the wild in **August 2022** was the result of a partnership between the provincial Spotted Owl Breeding and Release Program and the Spuzzum First Nation, with ongoing support from the federal government, conservation organizations and other groups.
- It was the first-ever release of conservation-bred spotted owls anywhere in Canada, so there was always a risk that these three owls would face challenges living on their own in the wild.
- On Oct. 23, 2022, one of the three spotted owls released in 2022 was found injured beside train tracks in the Fraser Canyon. It was taken to the Orphaned Wildlife Rehabilitation Society in Delta for treatment before being returned to the breeding facility in Langley, where it made a full recovery.
- Unfortunately, it was confirmed in early May 2023 that the other two owls released in 2022 had died. Possible causes of death included physical injury, predation, disease, or starvation.
- Although a dedicated team that includes First Nations is doing everything it can to help spotted owls recover, it is a long-term process with no guarantee of success.
- That first trial release in 2022 helped us learn more about raising conservation-bred birds and releasing them into the wild, informing protocols and procedures for transporting, releasing, and supporting

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released owls.

- On July 10, 2023, two male spotted owls born and raised at the breeding facility in Langley were moved to an aviary in a protected forest area in the Fraser Valley. This decision was made as part of a continued partnership with the Spuzzum First Nation.
- One of those two birds, named "sítist" [te-syst], is the same owl that was released into the wild in August 2022, was found injured that autumn, and subsequently made a full recovery. The second owl is called "wíkcn" [week-chin].
- Both owls were assessed as healthy and ready to fend for themselves earlier that summer, after demonstrating that they could capture live prey and maintain a stable body weight.
- The door to their aviary was opened on July 25, 2023 to allow the owls to forage on their own and acclimatize to their new surroundings.
- Ministry staff and project partners have continued to monitor the progress of these owls and are prepared to adapt management strategies as needed to ensure the owls have the best possible chance of survival in the wild.
- The recovery of spotted owls in B.C. will depend both on the continued success of the breeding program and how released owls fare in the wild. The long-term goal is to expand the spotted owl program and release as many as 20 spotted owls into the wild each year.

If asked about the Ecojustice/Wilderness Committee petitions to the federal court:

- We understand the importance of protecting critical spotted owl habitat from activities that could disrupt the birds' recovery.
- That's why we've collaborated with First Nations and biologists to protect more than 280,000 hectares of spotted owl habitat, enough to support a self-sustaining population of 125 breeding pairs in the future.
- There may be additional suitable habitat available for spotted owls that is outside of the existing protections, but the B.C. government has already protected enough land to support 125 breeding pairs.

- **As more owls are reintroduced into the wild, we may need to adjust protected areas as we learn more about how owls make use of this habitat.**
- **In 2021, we deferred logging in two Fraser Canyon watersheds to help protect spotted owl habitat and reduce the risk of noise disturbing the released birds. These deferrals were recently extended until 2025.**
- **An application was filed in federal court on June 6, 2023, on behalf of the Wilderness Committee, seeking to compel the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change to recommend an emergency protection order for spotted owls to the Governor in Council, as well as a declaration that the federal minister's delay in making the recommendation was not reasonable.**
- **The hearing has concluded with judgment pending (anticipated in early 2024). Since this matter is currently before the courts, it would not be appropriate to comment on the case at this time.**
- **The B.C. government remains committed to helping spotted owls recover in the wild, and we are confident we are on the right path.**
- **We also continue to work closely with the federal government on the development of an updated Spotted Owl Recovery Strategy.**

If further pressed about the Ecojustice petition, including about logging activity:

- **In old growth habitat where consultation with local First Nations is ongoing to explore options for additional protection, the issuance of cutting permits is on hold.**
- **No commercial logging is permitted in the protected areas set aside for spotted owls.**

If asked about the lethal removal of invasive barred owls:

- **As a larger species, the invasive barred owl poses a significant threat to spotted owl survival.**
- **Barred owls are aggressive and compete with other owls for prey and habitat. Their behaviour is also known to suppress spotted owl breeding.**

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- To help support spotted owl recovery in B.C., 207 barred owls were relocated or removed between 2007 and fall 2022 under the provincial Barred Owl Control Program.
- This program is ongoing and includes extensive monitoring.
- The United States took similar steps to remove barred owls, and those measures have been effective in stopping spotted owl declines in some instances.

If asked about the property where the breeding facility is located:

- Our government has a month-to-month lease arrangement with the property owner for the portion of land being used by the breeding facility. The current lease expires on Aug. 31, 2024.
- The Province is exploring opportunities to purchase the portion of the property being used by the breeding facility.
- At the same time, the Province is exploring options for a second site or expansion of the facility.

If asked about the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline near the spotted owl breeding facility:

- The success of the breeding program is crucial to our spotted owl recovery plan, and we will continue to work for what's best for the owls.

• Advice/Recommendations; Business Information

- Ultimately, the construction methods were modified by the company to minimize the noise disturbance at the breeding facility, but disturbance was not fully avoided. It is uncertain what impact it had on the spotted owls at the facility.

If asked about the only known wild born spotted owl in the wild prior to the release of conservation-bred spotted owls in August 2022:

- **The only previously known wild spotted owl in B.C. (a female) was last detected by ministry staff in the Spuzzum Valley north of Hope in fall 2022.**
- **Field crews are monitoring the area to see if they can detect this female spotted owl. Even though this bird has not been observed since 2022, there is not enough evidence to indicate a change in her status. Therefore we consider the wild female to be alive at this time.**
- **Supporting the recovery of threatened species in B.C., including spotted owls, is a priority for the ministry.**
- **Our government and our partners are doing everything we can to help spotted owls recover, including running the world's only conservation breeding and release program for this endangered species.**

KEY FACTS:

Oct. 25, 2022, Ecojustice petition

On Oct. 25, 2022, Ecojustice (on behalf of the Wilderness Committee) submitted a petition to the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change (ECCC) for an Emergency Order Recommendation under Section 80 of the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) for the northern spotted owl. Ecojustice claimed:

- spotted owls are on the brink of extirpation due to extreme recent population declines and serious and ongoing habitat degradation and loss;
- a plan to spatially identify critical habitat, as promised in a 2006 recovery strategy, has not been released;
- many of the Province's commitments, particularly critical habitat identification and protection, have gone unfulfilled;
- no permanent protection of the watersheds where the owls are currently is in place; and
- the Province continues to authorize logging in suitable spotted owl habitat; there are presently 452 approved or pending cut blocks overlapping fully or partially with areas identified as suitable spotted owl habitat.

SARA is "safety net" legislation that requires the assessment of the status of species. If the federal minister (Environment and Climate Change Canada) is of the opinion that a species faces an "imminent threat" to its survival or recovery, the minister must prepare a recovery strategy that includes the identification of critical habitat and make a recommendation to provide for the protection of the species.

In a Feb. 14, 2023 letter to Ecojustice, the Canadian Wildlife Service said that Steven Guilbeault, federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change, intends to recommend to the federal cabinet that an emergency order be issued under the federal *Species at Risk Act* to further protect spotted owls in B.C.: *"The Minister has determined that the Spotted Owl is facing imminent threats to its survival and recovery based on an Imminent Threat Assessment that*

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used the best available information, including information provided by Ecojustice and the Government of British Columbia... The Imminent Threat Assessment examined the impact of logging within the Spuzzum and Utzlius Creek watersheds that support the last three remaining Spotted Owls known to exist in the wild in Canada, as well as the impact of forestry and other land clearing activities across the species' habitat in British Columbia. The Minister has determined that any resumption of logging activities in Spotted Owl habitat in the Spuzzum Creek and Utzlius Creek watersheds poses an imminent threat to the survival of the species."

On Feb. 28, 2023, the B.C. government extended logging deferrals in the Spuzzum and Utzlius watersheds for two more years.

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

It is estimated that these protected habitats could currently support up to 93 owl territories, which is more than what's needed for the survival target of 50 breeding pairs. Over time, as trees grow into suitable spotted owl habitat, these protected habitats may support up to 132 owl territories. At full recovery, these protected habitats will in theory satisfy the minimum population target of 250 mature spotted owls, as recommended by the Canadian Spotted Owl Recovery Team.

This is not the first time BC has communicated its science-based plan for SPOW recovery in detail. As early as December 2020 we have provided ample documentation and explanation to ECCC in response to challenges to forests practices (2020 Ecojustice petition), recovery approach (2021 Imminent Threat Assessment from Environment and Climate Change Canada) and threats to spotted owl acoustic habitat at the conservation breeding centre during the Transmountain Expansion Pipeline construction. Our current engagement with First Nations on new partnerships and adaptive management reflect BC's commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and applying new knowledge that is gained through the program to improve the chances of recovery.

There is currently no ability under the *Species at Risk Act* for the federal minister to consider social or economic impacts that may result from recommendations to protect a species. Recommendations by the federal minister under this act are provided to the federal cabinet, where social and economic impacts and other provincial perspectives may be considered.

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

The B.C. government is preparing a formal response to the federal government on next steps, in alignment with the Tripartite Framework Agreement.

June 6, 2023, Ecojustice petition

On June 6, 2023, Ecojustice (on behalf of the Wilderness Committee) filed another petition in federal court, seeking a judicial review of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada's position on whether to issue a Section 80 emergency protection order for spotted owls under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA).

The application claimed that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada failed to issue such an order and that such a delay "is unlawful" under SARA. A court hearing took place on Oct. 18 and 19, 2023. The hearing has concluded but the judgement is still pending (anticipated in early 2024). The Province will not be commenting on this application for a judicial review since it is currently before the courts.

Updated Spotted Owl Recovery Strategy

The Province worked closely with the federal government on the development of an updated draft Spotted Owl Recovery Strategy, which identifies areas of critical spotted owl habitat and "potential" critical habitat (i.e., it has suitable characteristics but is not currently protected, and it's uncertain whether it's needed to achieve the population recovery objective).

Intergovernmental Communications

Intergovernmental . The draft Spotted Owl Recovery Strategy is currently posted online (<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry/recovery-strategies/spotted-owl-amended-proposed-2023.html>). The public comment period for the draft strategy is now closed.

Release of spotted owls into the wild (August 2022 and July 2023)

In **August 2022**, three male spotted owls raised in the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program in Langley were released into protected forests in the Anderson Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA) and the Spuzzum Wildlife Habitat Area in the Fraser Valley. Ministry staff worked on this project in partnership with the Spuzzum First Nation.

It was the first-ever release of conservation-bred spotted owls into the wild anywhere in Canada. The release area is where the only previously known wild spotted owl (a female) in B.C. was located, although ministry staff have not been able to locate that female since 2022.

One of the three released owls was found injured by train tracks in late October 2022, treated, and then returned to the Langley breeding facility where it made a full recovery. On May 2, 2023, ministry staff confirmed that the other two owls released in 2022 had died. They were only

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able to locate parts of the owls' bodies, so the precise cause of death remains unknown. Potential causes include physical injury, predation, disease, or starvation. The greatest challenge for all juvenile spotted owls is surviving their first winter.

Despite these outcomes, the owls' release was a significant step forward in the Province's efforts to help spotted owls achieve a self-sustaining population in B.C. A monitoring plan helped ministry staff better understand the behaviour and responses of the released owls as their movements were tracked using GPS tags and their health was monitored. The GPS tags stopped functioning in December 2022, so real-time monitoring information was only collected until that point.

On **July 10, 2023**, two male spotted owls born and raised at the breeding facility in Langley were moved to an aviary in a protected forest area in the Fraser Valley. This decision was made in continued partnership with the Spuzzum First Nation. One of those two birds, the one named "sítist" [te-syst] is the same owl that was released into the wild in August 2022, was found injured that autumn, and subsequently made a full recovery. The second owl is called "wikcn" [week-chin].

Both owls were assessed as healthy and ready to fend for themselves earlier that summer after demonstrating that they could capture live prey and maintain a stable body weight. The door to their aviary was opened on July 25, 2023 to allow the owls to forage on their own and acclimatize to their new surroundings. Ministry staff and project partners continue to monitor the progress of these owls and are prepared to adapt management strategies as needed to ensure they have the best possible chance of survival in the wild.

Decline and recovery of spotted owls in B.C.

The spotted owl (*caurina* subspecies) is listed as an endangered animal under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). It is also red-listed (a species most at risk of becoming extirpated or extinct) by the B.C. Conservation Data Centre and is listed under both the provincial *Forest and Range Practices Act* and *Oil and Gas Activities Act* as a species at risk.

At the time the Province's 2022 surveys were conducted, only one spotted owl had been detected in the wild in British Columbia, which is the northern edge of the birds' range. The spotted owl population in B.C. has declined from an estimated 100 breeding pairs in 1991. Over the past century, spotted owl population declines have been primarily due to extensive habitat loss and fragmentation associated with human settlement, industrial activities (e.g., forestry) and natural disturbances (e.g., wildfires), as well as competition from barred owls. As a larger species, the barred owl poses a significant threat to spotted owl survival by competing for prey and habitat and, through its aggressive behaviour, suppressing spotted owl breeding.

Spotted owl populations are also in decline in Washington and Oregon. In the July 2021 issue of *Biological Conservation*, a meta-analysis assessed population trends in northern spotted owls in the two states using 26 years of data from 11 study areas. The analysis found that barred owls were the primary factor negatively affecting life history traits (the number of spotted owls, offspring size/sex ratio, timing of reproduction, age/size at maturity, growth patterns and longevity) and rates of population change. It went on to state that spotted owls potentially face extirpation if the negative effects of barred owls are not mitigated, while also maintaining spotted owl habitat.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320721002202>

Threats to spotted owls in B.C. include the loss and fragmentation of habitat, competition from barred owls, climate change, noise disturbance, and a low population in the wild. (The decline in the wild population of spotted owls in B.C. is in part due to the provincial conservation breeding program extracting owls from the wild to establish a breeding population at its facility. Twenty owls — 14 juveniles and six adults — have been removed from the wild over a 14-year period. Two conservation-born and two wild birds from the U.S. have also contributed to the overall breeding program.

Existing and future spotted owl recovery actions include: habitat protection, conservation breeding, barred owl control, and release of conservation-bred spotted owls into the wild. B.C. is aiming to be the “go to” source for accurate information about spotted owl recovery, both for First Nations and others interested in this work.

Breeding and release program

In April 2007, the B.C. government initiated the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program and the Interagency Northern Spotted Owl Steering Committee to oversee all recovery actions for the species, including field research, population monitoring, and the conservation breeding program. In May 2009 (the last year the committee was active), it approved a revised Spotted Owl Management Plan that includes the legal protection of 281,284 hectares of spotted owl habitat in B.C. and a recovery target of 125 breeding pairs (250 mature owls), which is considered to be a self-sustaining population. The 281,284 hectares of protected spotted owl habitat consists of:

- about 100,000 hectares within Long-Term Owl Habitat Areas (i.e., Wildlife Habitat Areas, or WHAs).
- about 180,000 hectares within provincial parks, Greater Vancouver Watersheds, ecological reserves and regional parks.

There are currently 37 known spotted owls in BC: 34 at the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program facility in Langley, 2 released from the breeding centre into the wild (July 2023) and one wild-born spotted owl last detected during 2022 surveys. Mating of owls at the breeding facility is carefully managed to create a more genetically diverse population. Spotted owls that are not released into the wild will remain at the breeding facility in the hope that they can breed and produce viable offspring for future releases. They may also be loaned out to other breeding facilities to help promote B.C.’s recovery program.

Logging deferrals

In 2021, the B.C. and federal governments agreed that logging would be deferred in the Spuzzum and Uztlius watersheds in the Fraser Canyon (covering 32,671 hectares) to help protect spotted owl habitat. This was done in part to forestall the possibility that the federal government would impose an Emergency Order for habitat protection under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). The logging deferral was set to expire on Feb. 28, 2023, but it was extended for two years (until Feb. 28, 2025).

In November 2023, the B.C. government, the federal government, and the First Nations Leadership Council signed the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation to support conservation efforts in this province. The logging deferral in these watersheds supports the agreement’s goal of improving species-at-risk protections and enhancing biodiversity in B.C. The agreement should provide greater certainty related to future land use decisions and adaptive habitat management methods.

The Province is also working closely with the federal government to support the revision and approval of an updated Spotted Owl Recovery Strategy.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

Barred owls

To help support spotted owl recovery, 207 barred owls were removed under the provincial Barred Owl Control Program between 2007 and fall 2022. Barred owls continue to be actively monitored and removed from the area where the spotted owls were released in August 2022 and will be removed from other potential release areas in future.

The removal of barred owls in B.C. could be controversial, with some people possibly questioning the decision to kill one species to protect another. However, ministry staff advise that barred owl removal efforts have been well-publicized since 2007 and no significant opposition to this approach has been received. The United States has undertaken similar measures to remove barred owls, and they have been effective in stopping spotted owl declines in that country.

Trans Mountain pipeline expansion near breeding facility

The twinning of the Trans Mountain Pipeline from central Alberta to Burnaby was approved by the federal government in 2019. The project right-of-way occurs within 40 metres of the nearest spotted owl cage at the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program facility. Advice/Recommendations; Business Information

Advice/Recommendations; Business Information

The company used directional drilling methods to minimize the noise disturbance at the breeding facility, but disturbance was not fully avoided. It is uncertain what impact it had on the spotted owls at the facility.

Status of the breeding facility property

The Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program facility is on private property under the jurisdiction of the Township of Langley and is part of the Agricultural Land Reserve. The B.C. government currently has a month-to-month lease arrangement with the property owner for that portion of the property used by the breeding facility which expires on Aug. 31, 2024. Both the government and the landowner want to ensure that the spotted owl breeding facility remains where it is

Advice/Recommendations

Media Interest: The fate of spotted owls has received considerable media coverage for years, often within the context of logging and old-growth protection.

Communications contact	Thomas Winterhoff, Sr. PAO, GCPE WLRS	778 679-5541
Program contact	Kristina Lensky, Manager, Resource Stewardship, WLRS Jennifer Psyllakis, acting ADM, Resource Stewardship, WLRS	778 572-2179 Government Financial
File created	June 10, 2022	
File updated	Feb. 28, 2024	

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Caribou Recovery Predator Reduction

Recommend Response:

- Predator reduction to support caribou recovery only occurs under very specific conditions.
- Conditions assessed include the density of predator populations, the cause of mortality for caribou, calf:cow ratios; and habitat protection.
- Currently, predator reduction is implemented for 13 of 54 caribou herds to stabilize and reverse declining population trends.
- Two additional herds were granted permits for wolf reduction starting this winter (2023/24).
- Predator reduction methods follow rigorous protocols and an adaptive management framework, informed by years of research.
- Where applied, caribou populations have responded with increases in adult and calf survival leading to positive population growth.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Experience has shown the first couple of years of treatment result in the highest removals of wolves.
- It is important to closely monitor the predator density in treatment areas as well as the response of caribou and other ungulates in the area.
- Caribou population response is enhanced when predator reductions occur in conjunction with other recovery actions such as maternal penning, habitat protection, and habitat restoration.
- The provincial wolf reduction procedure is used by wildlife managers and decision makers to determine if predator reduction is an option.
- All personnel adhere to safe work procedures to ensure worker safety.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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- Ensuring animal welfare is a central principle to the program. Animal Care Applications accompany permit applications and must be approved by the Provincial veterinarian prior to work proceeding.
- Program and partners make efforts to ensure carcasses are made available to First Nations communities based on the interest of specific First Nations.
- Most animal carcasses are left on the ground due to safety requirements of helicopters landing in difficult terrain.

Previous 2 years of predator reduction

Program Area	Wolves Removed 2022	Cougars Removed 2022	Wolves Removed 2023	Cougars Removed 2023	Total cost 2023
Southern Mountain - Southern Group					
Central Selkirks	10	2	2	5	90,000
Columbia North	3	5	2	3	130,000
North Cariboo	7	-	7	-	50,000
Hart Ranges	30	-	7	-	190,000
Southern Mountain – Northern Group					
Graham	10	-	20	-	155,250
Itcha-Ilgachuz	66	-	37	-	213,000
Tweedsmuir	36	-	45	-	267,000
Southern Mountain – Central Group					
South Peace (Quintette, Klinse-Za, Kennedy Siding, Narraway)	26	-	30	-	224,950
Northern Mountain					
Pink Mountain	50	-	41	-	210,900
Boreal					
Chinchaga	40	-	26	-	119,900
New 2023/24					
Barkerville					TBD
Takla					TBD
TOTAL	278	7	217	8	\$1,561,000

Date Prepared/Revised: March 4, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Personal Security; Security Concern

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Personal Security; Security Concern

ADVICE TO MINISTER

**CONFIDENTIAL
ISSUES NOTE**

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship
Date: Feb. 28, 2024
Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen

Caribou recovery, predator reduction and habitat protection

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **The B.C. government is taking action to help caribou populations recover.**
- **That's why we created the Provincial Caribou Recovery Program in 2017. We continue to support this work with an investment of over \$10 million each year.**
- **The program aims to ensure that self-sustaining herds thrive long into the future by making decisions based on science and Indigenous knowledge, engaging with First Nations and the public, and applying appropriate recovery tools.**
- **Caribou recovery is a complex challenge, requiring multiple approaches across the landscape to help stabilize and reverse the decline of caribou herds in B.C.**
- **Long-term actions include:**
 - **habitat protection, restoration, and management, and**
 - **recreation management**
- **Interim, short-term actions include:**
 - **maternity pens,**
 - **supplemental feeding, and**
 - **predator management in some areas**

If asked about predator management:

- **After years of research, we know that predator management is an effective, temporary measure to avoid the further decline of caribou herds in B.C.**
- **The decision to reduce predator populations is not taken lightly. It is based on science and sound wildlife management principles.**

- This is just one tool used to support the recovery of caribou herds.
- Habitat protection, habitat restoration, and maternal penning are also key parts of our caribou recovery strategy – but research has shown that these measures alone are not enough.

If asked about effectiveness of current predator reduction measures:

- Years of research on wolf reduction measures show that this approach has immediate, positive, short-term impacts on caribou populations.
- Predator reduction measures on 13 herds helped to stabilize or increase populations in all these herds, whether implemented alone or with other management strategies. Two additional treatment herds were approved for wolf reduction starting in the winter of 2023-24.
- For example, the Kennedy Siding herd has more than doubled since 2015 — from 49 animals to 133, with predator reduction and supplemental feeding.
- Other examples include:
 - Klinse-za (Scott/Moberly) herd: from 38 animals in 2013 to 132 now, with wolf reduction measures and maternal penning;
 - Columbia North herd: from 124 animals in 2014 to over 200 now, with predator reduction and prey management; and
 - Itcha-Ilgachuz herd: from 385 animals in 2019 to 555 now.

If asked about habitat restoration and protection:

- Human activities such as forestry, mining, oil and gas extraction and recreation (and associated roads, seismic lines, and pipelines) have altered caribou habitat in B.C.
- We have long acknowledged that habitat protection, restoration, and management are crucial for caribou recovery.
- In 2006, the Province protected significant amounts of mountain caribou habitat through the Mountain Caribou Recovery Implementation Plan.
- We're also:
 - enabling the protection of significant high-elevation Central Group and Klinse-Za range caribou through an intergovernmental partnership agreement;
 - enabling habitat protection and restoration through collaborative implementation of the cabinet-endorsed Boreal Caribou

ADVICE TO MINISTER

- **Protection and Recovery Plan, with the Fort Nelson First Nation, for boreal caribou in four ranges; and supporting 34 restoration projects with \$4.2 million in grants through the Caribou Habitat Conservation Fund – to date.**

KEY FACTS:

Caribou recovery is a complex challenge. Multiple measures are required to help stabilize and reverse the decline of this iconic species. Wolves are the primary predators of caribou in most herds, and high wolf populations are directly linked to the decline of caribou populations. There is also a growing body of research that indicates there is a strong relationship between habitat disturbance and declining caribou populations. The Province has identified habitat restoration as a key management tool to help caribou herds recover.

BACKGROUND:

Multiple tools are being applied in caribou habitat to help this iconic species recover. Actions may include: reduction of wolf and cougar populations; management of primary prey (i.e., species that support high predator densities and attract predators to caribou habitat); maternity penning; habitat protection, restoration and management; recreation management; supplemental feeding; and population augmentation.

Predator management: *(Please note that there is a separate Issues Note available that focuses specifically on predator reduction.)*

Predator reduction occurs in 13 of B.C.'s 54 woodland caribou herds. The results of five years of research on wolf reduction in the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou show that predator reduction has immediate, positive impacts on caribou populations. Two additional treatment herds were approved for wolf reduction starting in the winter of 2023-24.

On June 1, 2022, the Honourable Justice Giaschi of the Supreme Court of British Columbia handed down his decision on a petition filed by Pacific Wild Alliance, regarding the lawfulness of the Province's wolf reduction program in support of caribou recovery. The Justice dismissed Pacific Wild's petition and confirmed that B.C.'s statutory decision-makers were within their rights to issue permits to allow for the shooting of wolves by helicopter.

The ruling meant that the provincial predator reduction program to aid caribou recovery could continue (if and where deemed necessary).

Habitat Protection and Restoration:

Efforts to conserve and increase caribou populations through habitat protection and restoration efforts are ongoing throughout the province.

The Intergovernmental Partnership Agreement for the Conservation of the Central Group of the Southern Mountain Caribou (the "Partnership Agreement") was signed in February 2020, enabling the protection of significant high-elevation habitat throughout the Central Group and additional caribou habitat in the Klinse-Za range.

A cabinet-endorsed Boreal Caribou Protection and Recovery Plan with Fort Nelson First Nation outlines approaches to significantly increase habitat protection and restoration in four boreal

caribou ranges in the region (Calendar, Maxhamish, Snake-Sahtaneh, and Westside Fort Nelson).

Created in 2018 with \$2 million, the Caribou Habitat Restoration Fund is part of the Province's ongoing multi-faceted approach to caribou recovery. In 2018, B.C. also committed another \$6.5 million over three years to the program as part of an agreement with the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, which administers the fund. The Province continues to invest up to \$2 million per year into the Fund. To date, the foundation has awarded over \$6.69 million in grants to support 38 caribou habitat restoration projects.

A previous partnership with the BC Oil and Gas Research and Innovation Society played a significant role in increasing our knowledge of boreal caribou habitat and conservation approaches in northeast B.C.

Other measures:

Supplemental feeding is a short-term method to provide nutritional food to caribou in the wild. One project with the McLeod Lake Indian Band found that supplemental feeding contributed to improved caribou health and supported their recovery but was especially effective when combined with predator reduction.

Maternal penning involves capturing females in late winter and holding them in a predator-free pen to give birth and until calves are a few months old. This protects them from predators during a critical period of development. B.C. has worked with partners on three maternal penning projects:

- The Klinse-Za maternal pen, operated by the West Moberly and Saulneau First Nations and Wildlife Infometrics, reversed a population decline in conjunction with predator management.
- The Revelstoke maternal pen, operated by the Revelstoke Caribou Rearing in the Wild Society, improved calf survival but was discontinued due to pen location limitations.
- The Central Selkirks maternal pen, was begun in 2023 by the Arrow Lakes Caribou Society.

Communications contact	Personal Security; Security Concern	
Program contact		
File created	Sept. 12, 2022	
File updated	Feb. 28, 2024	

ADVICE TO MINISTER

**CONFIDENTIAL
ISSUES NOTE**

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship
Date: Feb. 28, 2024 (update)
Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen

**Predator reduction program
(wolves and cougars) to
support caribou recovery**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **The recovery of threatened woodland caribou herds is important for people in B.C. — no one wants to see caribou disappear.**
- **The decision to reduce predator populations is not taken lightly. Our approach is based on science and sound wildlife management principles, and we work with local First Nations to ensure their consent and incorporate Indigenous knowledge.**
- **After years of research across numerous jurisdictions, we know that predator reduction is an effective, temporary measure to halt and reverse caribou population declines and local extinctions in B.C.**
- **This is just one tool we use to support the recovery of caribou herds. We are also taking steps to increase habitat protection, restore caribou habitat, and manage recreational activities. In some areas, supplemental feeding and maternal penning (to protect caribou cows and newborn calves) are also key parts of our caribou recovery strategy.**
- **Conducting predator reduction work as humanely as possible is of the utmost importance. Strict procedures are followed, with oversight of those operations.**
- **Predator reduction actions for caribou recovery are only implemented where long-term measures like habitat protection and habitat restoration are also in place or are planned.**
- **Research has shown that multiple measures taken together is the most effective way to halt and reverse caribou population declines and help this iconic species recover.**
- **Given the current predator/prey imbalance that has resulted from high levels of habitat alteration, we know that without a predator reduction**

program, many caribou herds could face the risk of local extinction before we are able to restore habitats.

- Emergency strategies are necessary in the interim to address this unnaturally high predation pressure and support the recovery of caribou populations.
- We continue to work with First Nations, local communities, industries, and other interested parties to expand existing caribou habitat conservation measures and long-term recovery efforts.

If needed:

- The Province is committed to caribou recovery. That's why we created the Provincial Caribou Recovery Program in 2017. We continue to support this work with an investment of over \$10 million each year.
- We are implementing collaborative research and regular monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of all caribou recovery activities.
- Predator management is only implemented as a wildlife management tool when it is confirmed there is a direct impact to the recovery of a species at risk or confirmed threat to public safety or livestock.

If asked about the photos of killed wolves that were part of FOI responses in 2023:

- The photos provided as part of Freedom of Information responses in 2023 were taken to document that the wolves were killed as quickly and humanely as possible.
- Taking photos was one method previously used to ensure oversight and assessment of the predator reduction program. Direct observation by provincial biologists is another monitoring approach.
- We carefully consider animal welfare and the humaneness of our procedures in the predator reduction program, and we follow the Province's Standard Operating Procedures and the American Veterinary Medical Association's guidelines for best practices while conducting this work.
- The Province does not proactively disclose photographs to the public because it is considered disrespectful by some individuals and cultures, and the distribution of photographs (through advocacy

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groups and on social media) has resulted in threats to the safety of personnel in the past. Due to these reasons, the Province no longer takes photos of deceased wolves.

If asked about effectiveness of current predator reduction measures:

- Years of research on predator reduction measures show that this approach has immediate, positive impacts on caribou populations.
- Predator reduction measures on 13 of B.C.'s 54 caribou herds have helped stabilize or increase populations in all these herds, whether implemented alone or with other management strategies.
- For example, the Kennedy Siding herd has more than doubled since 2015 — from 49 animals to 130, with predator reduction and supplemental feeding.
- Other examples:
 - Klinse-za (Scott/Moberly) herd: from 38 animals in 2013 to 132 now, with predator reduction measures and maternal penning.
 - Columbia North herd: from 124 animals in 2014 to over 200 now, with predator reduction and prey management.
 - Survival rates of adult and calf caribou have increased in nearly all cases where predator population densities have been reduced.
- Wolf reduction treatments were approved for two more herds starting the winter of 2023-24.

If asked about using radio collars to track wolves to their pack:

- In some circumstances, an individual wolf is captured and fitted with a GPS radio collar.
- This method provides data to government biologists about wolf movements and pack territories, and it increases the effectiveness of wolf reduction efforts during the winter.

If asked about the humaneness of the wolf reduction process:

- Conducting this work as humanely as possible is of the utmost importance. Strict procedures are followed with a high level of oversight from ministry staff during those operations.

- **We carefully consider animal welfare and humaneness in all our procedures for the predator reduction program. We follow the American Veterinary Medical Association's guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures for Aerial-Based Live Capture and Lethal Removal of Wolves in this work.**

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KEY FACTS:

Predator reduction is an effective tool in caribou recovery, but the decision to reduce the density of one species to benefit a species at risk is controversial. Some people find the idea of deliberately removing wolves to benefit a species at risk unsettling. However, this approach is supported by science and is necessary if we choose to recover caribou herds that will otherwise go extinct.

In 2023, photos of wolves killed as part of the predator reduction program were provided in a response to a Freedom of Information request. Such photos were taken by contractors or ministry staff to support the assessment of the animal welfare standards that are in place.

BACKGROUND:

Caribou recovery is a complex challenge, requiring multiple tools applied across the landscape. All potential recovery management actions are considered, tested and (where needed) implemented to help stabilize and reverse the decline of caribou herds in B.C.

These actions may include: reduction of wolf and cougar populations; management of primary prey through licensed hunting (i.e., species that support high predator densities and attract predators to caribou habitat); maternity penning; habitat protection and restoration; recreation management; supplemental feeding; and caribou population augmentation.

Wolves are the primary predators of caribou in most herds, and high wolf populations are directly linked to the decline of caribou populations in B.C. (Cougars are a primary predator of caribou in some herds in the Southern Mountain ranges.)

Predator reduction has occurred in 13 of B.C.'s 54 woodland caribou herds. As of winter 2023-24, two additional caribou herds have been approved for wolf reduction, bringing the total number of treatment herds to 15. The results of a five-year analysis (2015-2019) of wolf reduction in the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou showed that predator reduction had immediate, positive impacts on caribou populations. More recent research (publication under review) has found similar positive effects of predator reduction. For example, the Klinseza (Scott/Moberly) herd has tripled in size from 38 animals to 132 since wolf reduction measures began in 2015, in conjunction with maternity penning.

The Province has long acknowledged that habitat protection and restoration is crucial for caribou recovery. Natural disturbances and human activities (such as forest harvesting, mining, and oil and gas extraction, plus associated roads, seismic lines, pipelines, and urbanization) have degraded caribou habitat in B.C.

Predator reduction is used as an interim measure for at-risk herds where the maximum recommended wolf density target has been exceeded. Without undertaking predator reduction in the short term, habitat protection alone will not allow caribou populations to increase, since currently disturbed habitat needs time to recover. Research shows that wolf populations can rebound quickly. Therefore, intensive wolf reduction in localized treatment areas (i.e., caribou herd boundaries) must be achieved to reverse the decline of caribou herds. When wolf reduction has occurred without high rates of removal, there was no beneficial response in caribou populations.

The use of poisons is prohibited in B.C. for the purpose of wildlife control or management.

Public engagement process regarding predator reduction:

In late 2021, the Caribou Recovery Program received approval for a five-year continuation of predator reduction, starting the winter of 2021-2022. Public engagement and First Nations consultations related to this program were conducted from Sept. 15 to Nov. 15, 2021. The public engagement process included:

- introductory letters sent to First Nations
- introductory letters sent to affected tenure holders
- an EngageBC website where members of the public could read about the project, comment on it, and participate in an online survey

A total of 15,196 online surveys were completed from Sept. 15 to Nov. 15, 2021. The overwhelming majority of respondents (98%) feel that caribou recovery is important.

- 42% of the respondents from B.C. were in support of predator reduction.
- People in areas where caribou occur indicated greater support for the application of this management tool (53% to 82%), compared to other areas of the province where caribou are not present (22% to 47%)

Media coverage can prompt responses from advocacy groups and on social media. Some of these comments can be both racist and threatening, but usually do not target individuals. However, monitoring social media is an important consideration when predator reduction is in the news.

Wolf reduction statistics:

A breakdown of the number of wolves removed since the predator reduction program began in B.C. is provided below:

2015: 68
2016: 210
2017: 119
2018: 152
2019: 180
2020: 482
2021: 237
2022: 279
2023: 217

More information about B.C.'s caribou recovery program can be found online:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/wildlife-conservation/caribou/management-activities>

Humaneness of predator reduction activities:

The professionals conducting predator reduction work carefully follow our procedures for animal welfare and humaneness. This is complex work and is conducted by experienced individuals who have sufficient skill to do this work. Contractors and ministry staff follow the American Veterinary Medical Association's *Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals*, *Guidelines for the Depopulation of Animals*, and BC's Standard Operating Procedures for Aerial-Based Live Capture and Lethal Removal of Wolves. According to those guidelines, a gunshot is an acceptable and effective method for humanely killing carnivores and is the preferred method for removing large, free-ranging carnivores from the landscape.

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Aerial-based shooting is conducted in very specific locations where there is high confidence that it will benefit caribou herds. This method also avoids the risk that animals other than wolves will be killed. Aerial-based shooting is only considered after ground-based methods (hunting or trapping) by licensed or First Nation hunters and trappers is deemed not feasible or effective. An analysis of the treatment area, pack sizes and other factors support these decisions. Aerial wolf reduction takes place in late winter, when the previous year's pups are considered sub-adults, are nearing full maturity and adult size, and are contributing to a wolf pack's hunting efforts.

Removing an entire pack, which could include both adults and sub-adults, reduces wolf reproduction rates and therefore the number of wolves that are killed over time. In some circumstances, an individual wolf from a pack is captured and fitted with a radio collar. This method provides data to government biologists who oversee the program and helps with the targeted removal of the entire pack in the specified area.

Communications contact	Personal Security; Security Concern	
Program contacts		
File created	April 29, 2022	
File updated	Feb. 28, 2024	

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Caribou Recovery in North Area and Partnership Agreement.

Recommend Response:

- The Caribou Recovery Program is a long-term commitment to the recovery and stewardship of caribou in B.C.
- We continue to advance partnerships with First Nations governments¹ and improve collaboration with communities, industry and other parties that have a role to play and commitment to recovery efforts.
- The Partnership Agreement is a global model for Indigenous-led conservation, collaboration, and partnership across multiple levels of government.
- Many of the herds are increasing in size and communities are realizing direct benefits from employment and investments that support diversification and well-being.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- On average, B.C. has invested nearly \$10M/year over the last five years. This funding has leveraged partnerships and additional funding such as Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation's Caribou Habitat Trust Fund, Coastal Gas Link offset funds, Fraser Basin Council South Peace Northern Caribou Offset Trust funds. Canada is our largest contributing partner providing up to \$5M/year through Shared Cost Agreements while other leveraged partnerships may provide anywhere from \$200,000 to \$500,000 annually.

Key Facts:

General

- WLRS staff are focusing on herds that have high feasibility of recovery, enhancing existing and exploring new partnerships with First Nations, and collaborating with communities and subject matter experts to develop herd plans and implement specific recovery objectives.

Intergovernmental Communications

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- One of the main factors of caribou population decline is habitat loss and fragmentation due to human activities such as logging, mining, and oil and gas development.
- Successful caribou recovery requires a coordinated approach (depending on the specific conditions faced by a herd) involving a unique combination of actions such as habitat protection and restoration, predator management, management of other prey species like moose and deer and maternal penning.

Partnership Agreement

- The Intergovernmental Partnership Agreement for the Conservation of the Central Group of the Southern Mountain Caribou (“Partnership Agreement”) was signed in February 2020 by Chiefs of the West Moberly First Nations and Saulneau First Nations and Ministers of the Governments of Canada and British Columbia (“the Parties”).
- The Partnership Agreement identifies a Shared Recovery Objective of immediately stabilizing and expeditiously growing the population of the Central Group to levels that are self-sustaining and support traditional Indigenous harvesting activities.
- To achieve this Objective, the Parties agreed to take several actions including habitat protection and restoration, population management, and predator management.
- In 2020, approximately 560,000 hectares in high elevation habitat was placed in an interim moratorium from all industrial activities and the Klinse-Za park addition and expansion will result in a total incremental protection of approximately 200,000 hectares within the Klinse-Za caribou range.
- A Technical Working Group with representatives from all Parties collaborated to develop draft Caribou Recovery Related Land Use Objectives, taking into consideration the most current science and Indigenous Knowledge of these caribou and their habitat requirements.
- In partnership with Saulneau, and West Moberly First Nations, habitat protection, predator management, and maternal penning has reversed the declining caribou population where the population has grown from 162 in 2014 to 525 in 2023.

North Area

- A Section 11 Agreement covering all Southern Mountain Caribou (including Central Group) was also signed in 2020 by B.C. and Canada.
- A bi-lateral contribution agreement for boreal caribou recovery was signed in March 2023 by B.C. and Canada.
- In the North Area, conservation of caribou under the commitments of the Section 11 agreement has been aligned or integrated with Environmental Stewardship Initiatives, Land Use Planning, and Forest Landscape Planning, as well as distinct initiatives led by the Caribou Recovery Program.
- WLRS staff are focusing on herds that have high feasibility of recovery, enhancing existing and exploring new partnerships with First Nations, and collaborating with communities and subject matter experts to develop herd plans and implement specific recovery objectives.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- Table to be provided to append to this Note by March 14.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 4, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Personal Security; Security Concern

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Personal Security; Security Concern

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Table shows the amount of funding leveraged from the Caribou Recovery Program and sources outside of the Caribou Recovery Program.

Source	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Caribou Recovery Program	\$9,311,217	\$5,039,000	\$5,039,000	\$4,823,032	\$5,039,000
ECCC (boreal)	0	0	0	\$1,060,000	\$1,382,052
ECCC (SMC)	\$1,450,000	\$1,449,996	\$1,700,000	\$3,249,999	\$3,418,700
CGL (Hart, Telkwa)		\$365,715	\$354,761		\$412,052
Fraser Basin Council (PNCP – Central, Graham)	\$260,368	\$815,358	\$96,780	\$1,620	\$290,000
MIRR – Indigenous Funding Program	Government Financial Information				
Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information					
Other Recoveries (HCTF, MOF)	\$20,000	Unknown	Unknown	\$70,000	\$75,000
Total	\$11,641,585	\$7,910,069	Cabinet	\$10,020,988	\$12,106,804

9 11 3/4 14 3/4 3/4 3/4

- Data Source: 2023 Protection and Disturbance Analysis
- Definition: Land encumbered by one or more protection designated as protected, full or high.

Designatable Unit	Forestry Restrictions		Oil & Gas Restrictions		Mining Restrictions	
	Area (Ha)	Area (%)	Area (Ha)	Area (%)	Area (Ha)	Area (%)
SMC Northern Group	3,474,913	37%	1,906,313	21%	2,161,913	23%
SMC Central Group (Partnership Agreement)	1,043,335	48%	211,916	10%	1,000,658	46%
SMC Southern Group	3,764,233	42%	1,582,604	18%	2,088,619	24%
Northern Mountain	5,281,482	37%	3,056,129	21%	3,105,785	22%
Boreal	1,011,785	22%	81,176	2%	586,530	13%

Restoration

- Tracking of restoration implementation is currently under development and requires dedicated resources to complete. The below estimates are from projects directly undertaken by the Province, or receiving Provincial funding, and should be considered a conservative estimate.
- Below figures are estimates of work undertaken for the express purpose of caribou habitat restoration and does not include reclamation/deactivation works that are considered part of a tenure holder's legal obligations.

DU or Caribou Herd	Approx. length of linear disturbance Treated (km)
SMC Northern Group	138 km
SMC Central Group (Partnership Agreement)	450 km
SMC Southern Group	72 km
Northern Mountain	0 km
Boreal	125 km

Ecosystems Benefits of Habitat Protection and Management

- Benefits to multiple species beyond caribou
- Enable Treaty rights for First Nations to be met, as well as meeting multiple commitments in Agreements
- Clean air and water
- Fewer wildfires and floods
- Healthy, thriving communities connected to the land

Restoration Economy

- Source: Restoration Economy Calculator ([Restoration Economy Calculator_SMC_Feb2023.xlsx](#) (sharepoint.com))
- Note that restoration planning has not been initiated for boreal ranges, so estimates are based on total length of linear features.

Designatable Unit	Linear Feature Restoration Candidates	# Jobs per Year	Wages per Year	Number Years of Restoration Work	Total Wages
SMC Southern Group	69,218 km	284	\$11,628,624	10	\$116,286,240
Revelstoke Complex	20,793 km	85	\$3,493,224	10	\$34,932,240
SMC Northern Group	32,912 km	135	\$5,529,216	10	\$55,292,160
Partnership Agreement ¹	63,342 km	260	\$10,641,456	10	\$106,414,560
Boreal ²	529,961km	1,086	\$44,516,724	20	\$890,334,480

¹ Includes Scott West; ² Restoration planning has not yet occurred for boreal ranges. Estimates are based on the maximum length of linear features.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Caribou Recovery Program (Southern Group, Central Group, Boreal, Northern Group and Northern Mountain)

Recommend Response:

- The Caribou Recovery Program is a long-term commitment to the recovery and stewardship of caribou in British Columbia (B.C.).
- The programmatic approach supports the efficient implementation of comprehensive recovery actions based on traditional knowledge and science.
- On average, B.C. has invested nearly \$10M/year over the last six years. This funding has leveraged partnerships and additional funding. Canada is our largest contributing partner providing up to \$5M/year through Contribution Agreements.
- To halt and reverse the decline in caribou populations, we will continue this level of investment in the Caribou Recovery Program.
- Partnerships that support achievement of shared goals are a strong focus of the Caribou Recovery Program, including partnerships with First Nations, stakeholders, research organizations and non-governmental organizations.
- A priority this coming year is to engage with First Nation communities, local communities, and stakeholders on specific habitat objectives and herd plans.
- The Section 11 Agreement for Southern Mountain Caribou and the bi-lateral Boreal Caribou Agreement with Canada help ensure a shared understanding of priorities, actions and outcomes.

Key Facts:

- One of the main factors of caribou population decline is habitat loss and fragmentation due to human activities such as logging, mining, and oil and gas development.
- Large areas of mature forests have been converted to young and more open forest landscapes that provide ideal foods for deer, elk, and moose. These ungulate species are the primary prey of wolves and cougars, which has resulted

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

in a higher density of predators, particularly wolves, in areas that were historically predator refuges for caribou.

- Recent implementation of intensive management actions (i.e., maternal penning, supplemental feeding, and predator control) combined with habitat protection has resulted in positive population trends for several herds.
- For example, in partnership with Saulteau and West Moberly First Nations, habitat protection and restoration, predator management, and maternal penning has reversed the declining caribou population where the population has grown from 162 in 2014 to an estimate of 525 in 2023 (a 224 percent increase).
- WLRS staff are focusing on herds that have high feasibility of recovery, enhancing existing and exploring new partnerships with First Nations, and collaborating with communities and subject matter experts to achieve B.C.'s objectives and implement specific recovery actions.
- Successful caribou recovery requires a coordinated approach (depending on the specific conditions faced by a herd) involving a unique combination of actions such as habitat protection, habitat restoration, predator management, management of other prey species like moose and deer, and maternal penning.
- Despite some very positive results where these investments and actions are occurring, three of the five boreal herds and seven of the 33 Southern Mountain caribou herds are in decline with eight herds already extirpated. Six of the 46 remaining herds in B.C. have fewer than 30 animals.
- B.C. will continue to prioritize recovery actions to achieve the goal of self-sustaining herds and to uphold the rights of First Nations. Without continued investment in caribou recovery, B.C. is at risk of federal intervention through a habitat protection order under the federal *Species at Risk Act*.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 2, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Personal Security; Security Concern

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: JPersonal Security; Security Concern

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Together for Wildlife and Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

Recommend Response:

- Since 2021/22, up to \$10M per year is allocated to support implementation of the Together for Wildlife Strategy (T4W).
- T4W establishes five goals and 24 actions intended to ensure thriving and resilient wildlife and habitat, advance reconciliation and co-management, and improve public trust and confidence.
- To ensure the diverse values and perspectives of all British Columbians are considered, the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council (MWAC) has provided independent advice to support implementation of the T4W strategy since September 2020.
- Key priorities include objective-setting; improved information, on-the-ground stewardship; legislative review and funding, regional governance, and communications.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- If MWAC recommendations are raised:
 - Several MWAC recommendations are being incorporated into policy development (e.g. via the *Wildlife Act* review).
 - We continue to work with MWAC on recommendations for T4W implementation and related initiatives (e.g. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health, 30x30).
 - Recent recommendations related to funding for wildlife stewardship through increases in surcharges and a dedicated funding model are being considered.
- If Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees (RWACs) are raised:
 - Action 2 of T4W commits to the establishment of RWACs to guide priorities at the regional scale.
 - These non-decision-making bodies are an avenue to gain multiple perspectives and better understanding of regional differences.

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- In the past year, initiation of three RWACs has begun, and the process is complete or nearly complete in the East Kootenay, Okanagan-Boundary and Thompson-Lillooet.

Key Facts:

- The T4W Strategy is the result of comprehensive discussions with over 120 First Nations communities, 60 stakeholder groups, and over 1400 public comments.
- WLRS leads implementation of T4W across 24 actions defined by five goals:
 1. Governance and communication
 2. Information
 3. Action
 4. Performance
 5. Reconciliation and co-management
- Since the release of T4W, progress has been made on all actions, including:
 - launch of the MWAC;
 - continuation of the First Nations-B.C. Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Forum (the Forum);
 - development of draft policies on objective setting, RWACs and shared decision-making;
 - The Draft Non-Statutory Shared Decision-Making Policy was co-developed with the Forum and establishes a framework for building bridges between knowledge systems through Ethical Space;
 - introduction of amendments to the *Wildlife Act* and launch of a full review;
 - inventory and monitoring of varied species across BC;
 - enhancement of data management and public-facing websites;
 - scholarship grant program to support research; and
 - identifying methods to capture Indigenous knowledge to support sound government decision-making.
- T4W funding is distributed to support actions and program administration.
- The MWAC currently has 15 members. Members are non-representative and are expected to provide expertise, through their diverse perspectives, to build consensus recommendations related to wildlife and habitat stewardship.
- RWACs are advisory bodies. They are intended to provide a venue for diverse perspectives on wildlife management. The structure and focus of each RWAC is collaboratively developed with participants and may not look the same across the province. There are currently five bodies in different stages of development:
 - East Kootenay (Boundary) Wildlife and Habitat Advisory Committee
 - Okanagan-Boundary Wildlife and Habitat Roundtable
 - Thompson-Lillooet Wildlife and Habitat Roundtable
 - TBC Omineca - early conversations with Nations and interest groups
 - Three Nations Wildlife Roundtable (Skeena Region)

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Date Prepared/Revised: February 1, 2024

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: *Wildlife Act Review*

Recommend Response:

- The *Wildlife Act* has not been significantly updated since 1981 and remains largely focused on consumptive activities (e.g., hunting, trapping).
- The *Wildlife Act* review supports reconciliation and the commitment in the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* to align provincial laws with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples.
- Other themes of the review include setting objectives for wildlife and habitat, improved wildlife stewardship, effective and accessible service delivery, and dedicated funding.
- Stakeholders and the public will have significant opportunity to provide feedback and input as the work progresses.

If asked about dedicated funding:

- We have heard from both First Nations and stakeholders that dedicated funding for wildlife stewardship is an important part of the review.
- We are exploring this option as part of the review, but no decision has been made.

Key Facts:

- Action 12 of the Together for Wildlife Strategy commits to a review of the *Wildlife Act*.
- The *Wildlife Act* review expands upon the reconciliation-focused amendments made in Bill 14 in Spring 2022, which support the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge into decision-making and recognize traditional hunting protocols between First Nations.
- Targeted engagement with rights and title holders, advisory bodies (Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council, Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team, First Nations-B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum, Provincial Angling Advisory Team), Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee, other provincial governments, First Nations Leadership Council and other key stakeholder groups, began in the Fall 2023 and is scheduled to conclude in March 2024.
- Public consultation on policy intentions is scheduled for 2025, and proposed changes to the *Act* will be considered at the earliest in Spring 2026.

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- Angling licensing fees were raised in 2023 and another increase is scheduled for 2024. Wildlife licensing fees haven't changed in many years and are being considered under the *Wildlife Act* review as an interim measure.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 4, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: *Wildlife Act* Hunting Regulations

Recommend Response:

- British Columbia is one of the most biologically diverse jurisdictions in North America and offers some of the best hunting opportunities.
- Hunting regulations ensure the conservation of populations and recognition and respect of First Nations food, social and ceremonial rights.
- Provincial hunting regulation amendments respond to the most current information available to ensure the safe, sustainable use of wildlife or to create or improve licensed hunting opportunities.
- Changes to hunting regulations are most often proposed at the regional level in collaboration with First Nations and through engagement with stakeholders.
- Public engagement is an important part of gathering additional input prior to deciding on changes.

If asked about 2024 Skeena Moose/Caribou Regulations

- We are working collaboratively with First Nations in many areas of the province to advance reconciliation and co-management, founded on building a trusted information base and understanding of shared objectives.
- Several regulation proposals were co-developed through government-to-government dialogue to demonstrate a clear prioritization of food, social and ceremonial harvest opportunity, better align provincial law and Indigenous law, incorporate Indigenous Knowledge, and generally improve regulations and reduce conflicts on the land.
- The proposed regulations on moose and caribou in the Skeena Region reflect this work.
- We will review public engagement input prior to deciding on changes.

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If asked about 2022 Peace Moose/Caribou Regulations:

- The 2022 changes to moose and caribou hunting in the northeast were part of broader discussions with Treaty 8 Nations on addressing the findings in the *Yahey* decision.
- The Province engaged with First Nations communities, the Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia and B.C. Wildlife Federation and the public prior to the regulation decision.
- A review of the 2022 regulations is ongoing to determine if refinements are needed. We recognize this review has taken longer than expected; however, we are still collecting data to help inform those decisions.
- The current regulatory package includes some potential changes, including removing antler restrictions for licensed moose hunting, and identifying areas of cultural significance for First Nations' harvest opportunity.
- We will review public engagement input prior to deciding on changes.

Key Facts:

- Every even numbered year the Wildlife Branch publishes the Hunting and Trapping Regulation Synopsis, which includes the most current hunting, trapping, motor vehicle prohibition and firearms restriction regulations.
- The next edition of the Hunting and Trapping Regulations Synopsis is scheduled to take effect from July 1, 2024, until June 31, 2026.
- Informing the decision-making process is feedback from online public engagement, analysis of science-based data, and feedback gathered from First Nations and stakeholders at the regional level.
- Changes to hunting regulations that occur outside of this biennial cycle are typically limited to address conservation or safety concerns.
- Consultation and engagement with First Nations, stakeholders and the general public are key components of the biennial regulation cycle.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 5, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Advice/Recommendations

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Wildlife Co-management

Recommend Response:

- We are collaborating on a new vision of co-management with First Nations for the natural resource sector.
- Amendments were made to the *Wildlife Act* in 2022 to ensure that Indigenous Knowledge is incorporated into decision-making under the Act and to recognize and support traditional hunting protocols between First Nations.
- Legislation to enable shared decision-making, co-management of wildlife, and alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is being considered through a comprehensive review of the *Wildlife Act*.
- The Province is engaging with First Nations to determine the best methods for enabling shared decision-making and co-management in the Act. Early options identified include:
 - enabling section 6 and 7 agreements under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* so that statutory decisions under the *Wildlife Act* can be made jointly or through other consent-based mechanisms,
 - ensuring that key stewardship decisions and processes needed for co-management are reflected in the *Act* (e.g., setting objectives for wildlife and habitat, incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge, principles for co-governance), and
 - removing barriers to Indigenous governments' participation in and leadership of on-the-ground stewardship activities (e.g. wildlife and habitat monitoring, habitat restoration, compliance and enforcement).

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- A public facing webpage was launched in October 2023 to support early engagement. The webpage invites input from all members from the public on the engagement approach.
- Targeted engagement with First Nations, advisory bodies, and key interest groups began in October 2023 and will be completed in March 2024.
- Public engagement and consultation with First Nations on policy intentions is planned for early 2025. A news release will occur when public engagement begins.
- Introduction of any proposed changes to the Act is planned for spring 2026.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Legislation is only one component needed to enable wildlife co-management, and many examples of collaborative work and strong government-to-government relationships engaged in wildlife co-management are already occurring and expanding across the province.
- Examples of wildlife co-management and/or collaborative relationships between the Province and First Nations include the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework, government-to-government agreements that establish collaborative mechanisms for fish and wildlife stewardship, and collaborative development of hunting, trapping and angling regulation proposals.
- When the legislation was changed in 2022 to require the consideration

Key Facts:

- The Together for Wildlife Strategy characterizes co-management as Indigenous governments and the Province working collaboratively through the entire system of resource management – from inventory and supporting methodologies, engagement, analysis, decision-making, and effectiveness monitoring. This is distinct from shared decision-making, in which two governments share decision-making roles under provincial legislation.

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- Using a distinctions-based approach, First Nation governments will determine, in partnership with the Province, what shared decision-making and co-management look like in their respective territories.
- Action 18 of the Together for Wildlife Strategy commits to developing policy and legislative proposals to advance co-management and shared decision-making with Indigenous governments.
- Work on both legislation and policy to advance wildlife co-management and shared decision-making is progressing in partnership with the First Nations-B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum.
- The process currently underway is early engagement specifically designed to do early co-development of policy intentions with First Nations. Other targeted engagement with existing advisory bodies is complementary and intended to focus policy intentions to areas of strong alignment.
- A public facing website supports early engagement, but there was no news release. A new release will occur when public engagement begins.
- One on one meetings and submissions from stakeholders not currently a member of any advisory body are welcomed and occurring on a case by case basis.
- Bill 14 (amendments to the Wildlife Act to incorporate Indigenous Knowledge and to align regulation options with protocol and sheltering agreements) were introduced to the Legislature (and Announced in an Information Bulletin) on March 9, 2022. The Bill passed third reading in the Legislature: April 26, 2022 and received Royal Assent on June 2, 2022.
- The amendments came into force on September 1, 2022.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 4, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Government Financial Information ; Legal Information

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Wildlife Population Summary

Recommend Response:

- Many wildlife populations are surveyed regularly to support wildlife and habitat stewardship and inform sustainable hunting and land use decisions.
- WLRS aims to survey each management unit once every five years. Data are extrapolated from manage unit estimates between years.
- Survey standards are used consistently to assess population trends and other types of demographics.
- Survey information is complemented by other sources of information included research studies, harvest data, Indigenous knowledge, and local knowledge.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Provincial ungulate population estimates are summarized from regional data, updated and posted online every three years.
- Current ungulate data that are publicly available are from 2022.

Key Facts:

Background/Status:

- Wildlife population surveys and inventory support the following objectives:
 - Stewardship of populations, effective regulation to ensure harvesting does not create a conservation concern, ensuring First Nations rights are upheld, and to inform recreational hunting for both residents and non-residents accompanied by a guide outfitter.
 - Acquisition of trusted data to build public trust and confidence.
 - Resolution of First Nation and stakeholder concerns.
 - Inform resource-use decisions.
 - Monitor trends, prioritize areas for applied research and management actions, and on-the-ground habitat enhancement and restoration activities.
- Ungulates
 - **Caribou** are monitored very closely at the herd level, led by the Provincial Caribou Initiative in WLRS.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- **Moose and Elk** are inventoried using aerial surveys by management unit. The ministry aims to survey each important management unit once every five years, although this is not always possible. Where possible, moose surveys are designed to collect information on both population size and bull-to-cow ratios in the populations.
- **Black Tailed Deer, Mule Deer, White Tailed Deer** are abundant throughout their range. Given this abundance, estimates are mostly based on harvest numbers and do not indicate a conservation concern.
- **Bison** data is based on aerial surveys.
- **Sheep and mountain goat:** population trends can vary both regionally and by herd. Populations are monitored for both overall population size and for generation dynamics (e.g. presence of mature males, young).
- **Wolves (pop. est. 8,500):** Limited survey work is done on wolves because there is low conservation concern for wolves in BC. Wolves are very resilient to harvest, and hunter and trapper harvest is relatively light in most of the province. Wolves have recolonized most of their former range in BC except parts of the south Okanagan and the lower mainland.
- **Grizzly bear (pop est. 15,000):** Abundance has been estimated in many places in the province and monitoring of some populations has been on-going for years and in some cases decades, resulting in strong datasets. Grizzly Bear populations are broken down into 55 Grizzly Bear Population units (GBPU), each with its own conservation ranking.
- **Black Bear (pop est. 140,000):** Few inventories have been done for black bears in BC because there has been low conservation concern because hunter harvest is low, and abundance was known to be high. Recent calculations of harvest rate where we have inventory numbers confirm low harvest rates in parts of the interior. There is low confidence in population estimates in coastal areas.
- **Cougar (pop est. 6,000):** We have precise estimates of cougar abundance and trend because hunter demand is high and harvest is managed carefully. Cougar numbers appear to roughly cycle in interior BC and seem to follow deer numbers. On Vancouver Island, numbers are low compared to two decades ago, and do not appear to cycle but are not considered at risk.

See attachment: **Large Ungulate Abundance in British Columbia**

Date Prepared/Revised: January 31, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Large Ungulate Abundance in British Columbia

Region	Moose 2022 Estimate	Elk 2022 Estimate	Black Tailed Deer 2022 Estimate	Mule Deer 2022 Estimate	White Tailed Deer 2022 Estimate	Bison 2022 Estimate	Thinhorn Sheep 2022 Estimate	Bighorn Sheep 2022 Estimate	Mountain Goat 2022 Estimate
1 Vancouver Island	10 - 20	5300-6300	44,000 - 65,000	0	0	0	0	0	1,500 - 2,600
2 Lower Mainland	70 - 100	2,200 - 2,800	17,000 - 29,000	3,000 - 5,000	20 - 50	0	0	0	1,700 - 3,000
3 Thompson	7,000 - 9,000	300 - 500	1,000 - 2,000	30,000 - 50,000	6,000 - 10,000	0	0	1,400 - 1,600	1,600 - 1,800
4 Kootenay	4,000 - 6,000	10,000 - 20,000	0	10,000-20,000	30,000 - 60,000	0	0	1,700 - 2,000	7,000 - 8,000
5 Cariboo	15,000 - 24,000	350 - 500	1,000 - 6,000	15,000 - 25,000	2,000 - 5,000	0	0	350 - 500	3,500 - 5,000
6 Skeena	25,500 - 48,000	300 - 700	35,000 - 55,000	2,000 - 3,000	500 - 1,500	0	4,100 - 7,700	0	19,000 - 25,000
7 Omineca	23,500 - 39,000	1000 - 1800	0	3,000 - 6,000	500 - 1,000	0	300-600	0	4500-8500
7 Peace	37,500 - 60,500	15,000 - 35,000	0	4,000 - 7,000	4,000 - 10,000	1,100 - 1,900**	6,700 - 9,900	100 - 200	4,400 - 6,700
8 Okanagan	4,000 -5,000	2,500 - 3,500	0	28,000 - 42,000	31,000 - 44,000	0	0	600 - 900	200 - 300
PROVINCIAL TOTAL (RANGE)	115,000 - 192,000	35,000 - 71,500	98,000 - 155,000	95,000 - 160,000	74,000 - 135,000	800 - 1,800	11,000 - 18,500	4,000 - 5,500	43,000 - 61,000
PROVINCIAL TOTAL (MIDRANGE)	153,000	53,000	127,000	128,000	105,000	1,300	15,000	5,000	52,000

Region	Moose Estimated Trend	Elk Estimated Trend	Black Tailed Deer Estimated Trend	Mule Deer Estimated Trend	White Tailed Deer Estimated Trend	Bison Estimated Trend	Thinhorn Sheep Estimated Trend	Bighorn Sheep Estimated Trend	Mountain Goat Estimated Trend
1 Vancouver Island	stable	stable to increasing	stable	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	stable
2 Lower Mainland	stable	increasing	stable	stable	stable	n/a	n/a	n/a	increasing
3 Thompson	stable	increasing	stable	stable	stable to increasing	n/a	n/a	declining to stable	stable
4 Kootenay	stable	declining to stable	n/a	stable	declining to stable	n/a	n/a		stable to increasing
5 Cariboo	stable	stable to increasing	stable	stable	increasing	n/a	n/a	declining	stable
6 Skeena	declining to stable	stable to increasing	stable	stable	stable	n/a	declining to stable		declining to stable
7 Omineca	stable	increasing	n/a	stable	stable	n/a	stable	n/a	stable
7 Peace	declining to stable	stable to increasing	n/a	stable	stable	see comment ***	declining to stable	declining	declining to stable
8 Okanagan	stable to increasing	stable to increasing	n/a	stable	stable	n/a	n/a	declining	stable

*note – Vancouver Island region includes a portion of the Central Coast.

**Includes both Plains Bison (700-1,000) and Wood Bison (450-900)

*** Includes three distinct populations. One stable, one shows evidence of decline, and one likely expanding range.

Caribou:

• Caribou are not listed on the above table, but are monitored very closely at the herd level. To review herd data please consult: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/wildlife-wildlife-habitat/caribou/bc_caribou_herds_population_estimates.pdf

Moose, Elk:

• Are inventoried using aerial surveys by management unit. The ministry aims to survey each important management unit once every 5 years. Data are extrapolated from manage unit estimates. Where possible moose surveys are designed to collect information on both population size and bull-to-cow ratios in the populations.

Black Tailed Deer, Mule Deer, White Tailed Deer:

- These species are abundantly present within their natural range. Given this abundance, estimates are mostly based on harvest numbers and do not indicate a conservation concern.

Bison:

- Data based on aerial surveys (data include both Plains Bison and Wood Bison)

Sheep species, Mountain Goats:

- Individual sheep and mountain goat population trends can vary both regionally and by herd. Populations are monitored for both overall population size and for generation dynamics (e.g. presence of mature males, young)

KMs and Q&A

UBC Coyote Research initiative in Stanley Park

Date: Feb. 13, 2024

Key Messages:

- The Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resource Stewardship has supported research being led by scientists at the University of British Columbia on the coyote population in and around Stanley Park, in conjunction with the Vancouver Parks Board.
- This work is being undertaken to better understand the coyote population in that area and assess the effectiveness of measures to reduce the likelihood of negative interactions with park users.

Questions & Answers:

What can you tell me about the recent history of coyote attacks on people in Stanley Park?

- Between December 2020 and August 2021, there were 45 coyote attacks on people in Stanley Park, including several involving children.
- It is not normal behaviour for coyotes to pursue people.
- Aggressive behaviour towards people is usually the result of the animal becoming comfortable due to being fed, either directly or indirectly, by people.

What did the B.C. government do to address those attacks?

- The Conservation Officer Service (COS) spent hundreds of hours patrolling Stanley Park and responding to incidents, which included liaising with park rangers, municipal officials, and law enforcement partners.
- Unfortunately, in order to protect people in the park, Conservation Officers had to kill seven coyotes after people were attacked.
- When that did not resolve the issue, government wildlife biologists implemented an additional reduction in the population of coyotes in the park, euthanizing four more coyotes.
- In total, 11 coyotes were euthanized in 2021.
- Removing the coyotes was a short-term solution to the coyote-human conflicts. The UBC Coyote Project is intended to develop a long-term

solution to prevent coyote attacks and avoid future coyote removals.

What is the UBC Coyote Project?

- The Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resource Stewardship has supported research being led by scientists at the University of British Columbia on the coyote population in and around Stanley Park, in conjunction with the Vancouver Parks Board.
- This work is being undertaken to better understand the coyote population in that area and assess the effectiveness of measures to reduce the likelihood of negative interactions with park users.
- A Wildlife Act Permit was issued by the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship in November 2023 to allow the live capture and release of coyotes by the research team.
- The humane methods being implemented have been reviewed and approved by a B.C. government veterinarian and were reviewed by the UBC Animal Care Committee.
- The trap being used for this research restrains one paw and does not injure the coyote. When a trap is activated, researchers are notified immediately and go directly to the trap, so the coyote is not in the trap for very long. Traps are continuously monitored, and researchers will access captured animals within 15 minutes of their initial capture.
- The coyote is restrained using a long pole, measured, and studied. It's then released.
- Some coyotes are also outfitted with tracking collars.
- More information about the UBC Coyote Project is available at: <https://www.animalcognitionlab.org/ubc-coyote-project>

When do you expect this research project to be completed?

- The research is expected to continue for about two years, concluding in 2026.

What precautions can people take to help avoid human-coyote conflicts?

- Coyotes are wild animals and should be treated as such.
- Coyotes start posing a risk to people when they lose their natural wariness and become comfortable around humans. This is usually a result of direct or indirect feeding by people.

- People should be aware that it is an offence under the B.C. *Wildlife Act* to feed “*dangerous wildlife*”. Coyotes are included in the definition of “*dangerous wildlife*” in that act.
- People are encouraged to learn how they can stay safe when they see wildlife, such as leashing pets, travelling in groups and being aware of your surroundings. For more tips and information, visit <https://wildsafebc.com/>
- If a coyote approaches you, make yourself look as big as possible. Wave your arms, throw objects at the animal and shout at it, but never turn your back or run.
- People can report coyote conflicts to the Conservation Officer Service’s Report all Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line at 1 877 952-7277.

-END-

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Terrestrial Invasive Fauna

Recommend Response:

- Invasive species are a significant threat to B.C.'s environment, economy and Indigenous cultural values.
- WLRS provides science and policy expertise on prevention and management of terrestrial invasive fauna (animals).
- To date, terrestrial invasive fauna are managed on a case-by-case basis with a focus on rapid response for species that have potential to have the most significant impact should they become established.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Invasive species are recognized globally as the second greatest threat to biodiversity after habitat loss.
- They pose significant socio-economic impacts, including loss of productivity in agriculture, aquaculture and forestry; damage to infrastructure; hazards to human health and safety; and degradation or loss of recreational areas and activities.
- The rate of spread of invasive species is expected to increase with the effects of climate change, further emphasizing that early action is imperative to reducing control costs now and into the future.
- Terrestrial invasive fauna with known or potential impacts to B.C. include invertebrates (e.g., giant hornets and Japanese beetles), amphibians and reptiles (e.g., African clawed frogs and snapping turtles) and mammals (e.g., feral pigs and nutria).
- Feral pigs are B.C.'s top terrestrial invasive species priority. WLRS works with other ministries and partners (provincial, national and international) to coordinate the prevention, management and control of feral pigs. WLRS staff are working to identify the funding sources and partnerships needed to resource the management of invasive fauna in the

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long-term.

- The cost of control and damages from established invasive fauna populations is significant (e.g., \$2.5B/year (USD) in damages¹ and \$75M (USD) over five years in control costs for feral pigs in the United States²)

Key Facts:

- Provincially, invasive species are managed by several ministries including WLRS, FOR, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, and Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.
 - Within WLRS, the Resource Stewardship Division is the lead for terrestrial invasive fauna and the Water, Fisheries and Coast Division is the lead for aquatic invasive fauna.
 - FOR (Timber, Range, and Economics division) is the lead for invasive plants.
- WLRS works with the Inter-Ministry Invasive Species Working Group (IMISWG), which is the coordinating body for invasive species management in B.C.
 - The IMISWG brings together provincial ministries, agencies, and Crown corporations (nine different bodies) with invasive species prevention and management responsibilities to collaboratively address both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species through a cross-government approach.
 - The IMISWG works closely with the Invasive Species Council of BC (ISCBC), Indigenous communities, academia and other partners throughout the province to help prevent the introduction and spread of harmful, non-native animals and plants.
- WLRS dedicates a terrestrial invasive fauna coordinator and approximately \$50,000 a year in operational funds.
- FOR holds the primary responsibility for invasive plants with Government Financial in salaries and Government in operational funds typically spent annually.

1. *US Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS). History Highlight: APHIS Establishes National Program to Combat Destructive Feral Swine. https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/newsroom/stakeholder-info/sa_by_date/sa-2022/aphis50-feral-swine (2022).*
2. *US Department of Agriculture (USDA). <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feral-swine-eradication-and-control-pilot-program>*

Date Prepared/Revised: February 2, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Phone: Government

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Grizzly bear and black bear management

Recommend Response:

- Overall, grizzly bear and black bear populations in B.C. are considered healthy and stable.

If asked about the Grizzly Bear Stewardship Framework:

- The draft Grizzly Bear Stewardship Framework is the product of collaboration with western science and Indigenous subject matter experts, engagement with First Nations, stakeholders, and the public.
- Comments received during engagement are under review.
- Consultation with First Nations governments and targeted engagement will be completed prior to provincial approval.
- The framework does not contemplate re-opening the grizzly bear hunt; grizzly bear hunting remains closed.
- Grizzly bear hunting was not used as a population management tool and grizzly bear management continues when bears present a public safety concern, or there is a conservation issue.
- Population estimates for grizzly bear have remained stable.

If asked about bear dens:

- Black bear dens have specific legal protections on Haida Gwaii and the Great Bear Rainforest. They are also an identified wildlife feature in the Kootenays.
- Bear den management policies are under review and research and monitoring is ongoing.

If asked about orphaned bear cubs:

- Orphaned bear cub rehabilitation is permitted in three facilities in B.C. and focuses on animals with the greatest chance of recovery in the wild.

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If asked about grizzly bear recovery in the south:

- Government is working with First Nations in southwest B.C. to augment the Stein grizzly bear population and recovery planning for the North Cascades population.

Key Facts:

Grizzly Bear Stewardship Framework:

- The Framework is a high-level document that can guide the consistent consideration of stewardship and management options consistent with local level circumstance.
- B.C. worked with approximately 85 First Nations communities on the initial development of the framework and federal grizzly bear plans. Approximately 85 separate First Nations communities have been engaged to date.
- Consultation and engagement with a group of stakeholders that hold diverse interests in wildlife then followed, followed by broader online public engagement.

Bear Dens:

- All bear dens are protected on Haida Gwaii and the Great Bear Rainforest under the *Land Act*. Grizzly bear dens are protected in the Kootenay/Boundary region under the *Forest and Range Practices Act*.
- Best Practice guidelines for the protection of bear dens by the forest sector exist for several places in B.C. with minimal effect on timber supply.

Orphaned bear cubs:

- Bear cub rehabilitation only happens if the cub is confirmed orphaned, healthy enough to recover, not food conditioned, and less than one year old.
- Orphaned cubs that do not meet the above criteria, and who are unable to survive in the wild, are humanely euthanized by trained professionals.

Grizzly bear recovery:

- The Stein Nahatlatch grizzly bear population has been declining for several decades and a lack of genetic diversity is the likely cause. Bringing in bears from other areas is likely necessary for population recovery.
- The Stein Nahatlatch and North Cascades grizzly bear populations are culturally important to many local First Nations and recovering the population is an important goal of all local indigenous governments.
- B.C. and Nation partners will coordinate with U.S. agencies if population recovery on both sides of the border is desired.

Date Prepared/Revised: January 29 2024»

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Urban Deer Management

Recommend Response:

- WLRS is the lead agency for wildlife stewardship and management. The Conservation Officer Service addresses wildlife conflict with immediate threats to human safety.
- There is no simple solution to urban deer conflicts, but we are committed to continuing to work with local governments to better understand the specific circumstances and jointly develop approaches to reduce conflicts and mitigate their impacts.
- Given the density of some urban deer populations, there is a higher risk of transmitting Chronic Wasting Disease (recently detected in B.C.). Surveillance is underway in areas of the province where this is the highest concern (e.g., Kootenay Region).

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The Provincial Urban Deer Advisory Committee (PUDAC) is chaired by WLRS staff and has representatives from local governments, the Union of B.C. Municipalities, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).
- PUDAC reviews applications for funding and makes recommendations to provincial decision makers.
- Since 2015, the provincial government has offered \$100,000/year to support locally led urban deer management projects.
- Funding supports:
 - Development of socially acceptable urban deer management solutions,
 - Increased access to tools and equipment for practical solutions, and
 - Overall reduction of costs borne by local governments.

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Key Facts:

- For the past ten years, various projects including translocation, immuno-contraception (birth control), and culling projects have been trialed cooperatively by municipalities, the Conservation Officer Service and WLRS/FOR. Education and outreach are also a consistent aspect of projects.
- Many local governments have passed bylaws in relation to wildlife, including deer.
- Translocation is no longer a supported management option due to the high likelihood of animals returning to location of capture, as well as the increased risk of spreading Chronic Wasting Disease.
- Immuno-contraception (birth control) is still considered experimental. This method is relatively expensive and does not reduce urban deer populations, however, it can be an effective method to keep populations in check once they are reduced through other techniques.
- Since 2017, Oak Bay has been trialing immuno-contraception, with the support of PUDAC. This trial is ongoing, and the final results are pending.
- Some jurisdictions use controlled hunts or contracted wildlife removal services to effectively reduce populations where it is safe to do so.
- Hunts and culls tend to raise strong opposition from some members of the community.
- Cranbrook and Kimberley have suspended municipality-led urban deer removal, seeing the work as increasingly ineffective.
- The Province is exploring a greater leadership in managing urban deer and discussing with municipalities what alternative measures may be acceptable in their communities.
- First Nation consultation is done by municipalities conducting urban deer project work. Provincial permitting is generally supportive of these arrangements and may complement these efforts.
- Key objectives of First Nations consultation include determining if there is opportunity to provide safe First Nations harvest and to provide meat when lethal methods are used.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 4, 2024

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ADVICE TO MINISTER

<p style="text-align: center;">CONFIDENTIAL GCPE-WLRS ISSUE NOTE</p> <p>Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: Feb. 16, 2024 Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Removal of fallow deer on Sidney Island</p>
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ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **We acknowledge that there has been opposition to the eradication of fallow deer on Sidney Island.**
- **Parks Canada is leading ecological restoration efforts on Sidney Island, with the support of local First Nations, the Province of B.C., the Islands Trust Conservancy, and Sidney Island residents.**

If asked about permits under the Wildlife Act:

- **Under the *Wildlife Act*, the deer eradication component of this ecosystem restoration project requires permits from the Province to proceed.**
- **Permits were approved by the Province to allow Parks Canada to proceed with Phase 1 of eradication, which involved deer removal on Sidney Island using helicopter and ground-based shooting.**
- **Careful consideration was given to several factors, including the humaneness of the process, expected effectiveness, and anticipated benefits to sensitive ecosystems on Sidney Island.**
- **The eradication of fallow deer on Sidney Island is being done in an ethical manner by experts, following an animal care protocol supported by wildlife veterinarians from the Province and Parks Canada.**

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KEY FACTS:

Invasive, non-native fallow deer were introduced to James Island in the early 1900s and became established on Sidney Island in the 1960s. In the absence of predators, the fallow deer population on Sidney Island flourished and this has resulted in significant ecosystem degradation. As a result, Sidney Island is considered the least ecologically diverse Gulf Island because of fallow deer over-browsing on vegetation.

There is no provincial Crown land on Sidney Island. Parks Canada (Gulf Islands National Park Reserve) and Sallas Forest Strata Corporation (Sallas) are the landowners on Sidney Island, with the Islands Trust Conservancy (ITC) managing conservation covenants on Sallas strata land. Under its mandate to eliminate invasive species where practical, Parks Canada is leading a project to restore ecological function on Sidney Island by taking a “one island, one project” approach that includes all land on Sidney Island.

Past efforts to reduce the growth of the fallow deer population has seen limited success. Parks Canada’s eradication proposal estimated that 300-900 fallow deer live on the island, but these numbers were not scientifically derived and are difficult to verify.

The Province has been in discussions with Parks Canada on the ecological restoration of Sidney Island (including options to eradicate fallow deer) for over five years. This includes provincial participation in the project’s Steering Committee and Deer Working Group. Parks Canada’s eradication plan aligns with provincial direction to prevent further expansion of the deer population and reduce its overall extent.

Parks Canada initiated the Sidney Island Ecological Restoration Project and has been working with project partners since 2018 to plan the long-term restoration of the forest ecosystem on the island. This project was co-developed with representatives from WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council, Pauquachin First Nation, Tsawout First Nation, Cowichan Tribes, Penelakut Tribe, the Province, Islands Trust Conservancy, and Sidney Island residents.

This team finalized a restoration plan in 2022 that includes the eradication of fallow deer from Sidney Island. The success of fallow deer eradication requires the incidental removal of the small population of black-tailed deer on Sidney Island. Fallow deer eradication is conducted in an ethical manner by experts, following an animal care protocol supported by wildlife veterinarians from the Province and Parks Canada. Parks Canada is funding the project.

Parks Canada applied for *Wildlife Act* permits from the Province to conduct their Phase 1 of eradication activities. Permits were approved in accordance with the provincial statutory framework.

The lethal removal of non-native species to benefit the conservation and management of native species is supported under the Control of Species policy. The criteria to evaluate the skill level of individuals to conduct lethal removal activities from a conveyance (e.g., shooting the deer from helicopters) are outlined in the Evaluating Sufficient Skill under Permit Regulation procedure).

Phase 1 of this eradication project occurred in December 2023 and included helicopter- and ground-based removal of deer using eradication experts. The carcasses were recovered to

ADVICE TO MINISTER

provide meat to Indigenous communities. The carcass recovery teams were comprised of Parks Canada staff and local First Nations. This collaborative method also helped ensure the carcasses were processed in a culturally respectful manner.

Under Section 27 of the *Wildlife Act*, aerial shooting from a helicopter is prohibited unless otherwise authorized by permit. Section 3.1 of the Permit Regulation provides an exemption to Section 27 of the *Wildlife Act* and allows this activity to occur when approved by the Director or Regional Manager. This permitting option is not limited to predators.

Multiple factors were considered in the permitting review process, including:

- Ensuring humane removal techniques were proposed (reviewed by the provincial Wildlife Veterinarian).
- Reviewing the qualifications of the applicants undertaking the work to ensure they are skilled and experienced in this type of work (skilled shooters, etc.).
- A robust engagement plan and history of that engagement on the part of the applicant (Parks Canada).
- First Nations considerations, including expressed support by local First Nations.
- Review by Provincial Registered Professional Biologists (in this case both a senior wildlife biologist and the Regional Manager for West Coast Region).
- Available science on the impacts of the deer and the value to the natural ecosystem in significantly reducing their presence on the land, with potential for full eradication in future.

Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

Biosecurity monitoring via cameras

and reporting are planned into 2025.

Parks Canada will continue to work with its project partners on communications and it intends to lead communications efforts where appropriate.

There has been criticism in the media about this eradication project, including that the cost for each deer removed is considered to be high. Parks Canada is funding the project.

Communications Contact:	Octavian Lacatusu, Public Affairs Officer, GCPE WLRS	250 889-1684
Program Area Contacts:	Logan Wenham, Executive Director of Fish and Wildlife, WLRS	778 698-9221
	Julia MacKenzie, Director of Resource Management for West Coast Region, WLRS	Government
File Created:	Nov. 17, 2023	
File Updated:	Feb. 15, 2024	

ADVICE TO MINISTER

**CONFIDENTIAL
ISSUES NOTE**

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship

Date: Feb. 6, 2024

Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in B.C.

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **On January 31, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency confirmed the first cases of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in B.C. – the disease, which affects species in the cervid family, such as deer, elk, moose and caribou was found in two deer samples from the Kootenay Region.**
- **Staff in my ministry immediately implemented our Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan and are working closely with the Chief Veterinary Officer (MAF) and public health officials to ensure there is no risk to the public and to prevent further spread of this disease in our province.**
- **While there are no known cases of the disease in humans, Health Canada recommends people not eat meat or other parts of an animal infected with chronic wasting disease.**
- **In 2007, in response to the continued spread of CWD in neighbouring jurisdictions, the Province implemented a Surveillance and Response Plan for CWD to mitigate the risk of the disease spreading in B.C. – this plan was last updated in July 2023.**
- **The Province has been proactive in preparing for the potential emergence of chronic wasting disease in the Province. A budget of approximately \$235,000 per year was aimed at providing the diagnostics, outreach and operational needs to both educate about the dangers of chronic wasting disease, how to reduce risk and provide early warning and data, should it arrive.**

KEY FACTS:

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) was confirmed in B.C. in two deer samples from the Kootenay Region on January 31, 2024. The diagnosis was confirmed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency reference laboratory, making it the first CWD detection in B.C.

BACKGROUND:

Chronic wasting disease is an infectious and fatal disease affecting species in the cervid family, such as deer, elk, moose and caribou.

There is no direct evidence that the disease can be transmitted to humans and there have been no cases of the disease in humans. However, to prevent any potential risk of transmission or illness, Health Canada and the World Health Organization recommend people not eat meat or other parts of an animal infected with chronic wasting disease.

Symptoms of CWD are not always evident but in later stages of the disease animals may present with weight loss, drooling, poor co-ordination, stumbling, or generally sick with no obvious reason.

Media Interest: Media attention so far has been steady, however it will likely increase as more information becomes available, and as public awareness of the issue grows.

Communications contact	Octavian Lacatusu, Public Affairs Officer	Number: 250-889-1684
Program contacts	Logan Wenham, Executive Director, Wildlife, Caeley Thacker, Wildlife Veterinarian, Cait Nelson, Wildlife Health Biologist	Number: 778-698-9221 Number: 250-751-3234 Number: 250-751-3219
File created	Date: Feb. 6, 2024	
File updated	Date: Feb. 6, 2024	

ADVICE TO MINISTER

**CONFIDENTIAL
ISSUES NOTE**

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship
Date: 23 January 2024
Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen

Controlled Alien Species in B.C.

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **The Province is committed to protecting the public, wildlife and the welfare of controlled alien species through strong CAS regulations and policies of the *Wildlife Act*.**
- **B.C.'s Controlled Alien Species Regulation is very robust, designating more than 1,200 species of animals as controlled alien species. It is illegal to possess, breed, ship or transport these prohibited species in B.C. without a permit.**
- **The animals prioritized for the Controlled Alien Species (CAS) regulation list are those most likely to pose a potential threat to people, property, wildlife and wildlife habitat.**
- **The Ministry's Wildlife Branch staff reviews existing CAS regulations to determine if additional species should be listed as prohibited CAS and if emerging issues or potential threats that may be posed by unprohibited species of concern are addressed.**
- **Animal care guidelines are a significant aspect of the permitting process.**

Only if asked: Conditions under which CAS are permitted

- **CAS are permitted in the operation of an accredited zoo, a certified educational or research institution or under special circumstances deemed exceptional by the Province's Director of Wildlife such as to temporarily house a seized, abandoned or surrendered CAS while awaiting a decision on options for permanent rehoming.**

KEY FACTS:

The *Wildlife Act's* Controlled Alien Species Regulation, enacted in 2009, controls the possession, breeding, shipping, and release of CAS. It is the policy of the Ministry to reduce the number of privately owned and prohibited CAS in the province. A permit to possess a prohibited CAS may only be authorized if the animal was in B.C. on March 16, 2009—prior to the CAS amendment of the *Wildlife Act*—or for the operation of an accredited zoo, or certified educational or research institution, or under special circumstances deemed exceptional by the Director of Wildlife, as described above.

The CAS list specifically focuses on exotic animals that pose a serious risk to human health and safety, including large cats, primates and venomous snakes. In a number of cases, exotic animals on the CAS list living in B.C. before 2009 were grandfathered under specific permit conditions that included ensuring the animals were housed in safe, secure environments appropriate to their individual needs. Research institutions, film companies, rescue centres and accredited zoos must have government permits in order to keep any CAS listed animals.

Policy, procedure and permit applications refer to the Canadian Council on Animal Care, among other standards and guidelines, to help ensure confidence in animal welfare.

CAS regulations in B.C. are among the strictest in the country and are a minimum standard. Local government bylaws may be more restrictive than the provincial law and practice.

BACKGROUND:

Under the *Wildlife Act*, non-native species that pose a risk to health or safety or a risk to property, wildlife or wildlife habitat can be designated as controlled alien species (CAS). The Province regulates such possession of exotic animals and currently prohibits ownership of 1,256 species that pose a threat to public safety as controlled alien species.

Animal welfare, human safety, and transport plans are required from any individual applying to possess a CAS, and plans are reviewed by the Controlled Alien Species Permit Advisory Committee (CAS PAC), Animal Care Committee and the Conservation Officer Service. These review committees consist of professionals from the BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, the provincial wildlife veterinarian, and federal and provincial specialists. The final decision on permitting rests with the Director of Wildlife.

“Prohibited” controlled alien species cannot be bred, transported or possessed without a permit, nor can they be released under any circumstance. “Restricted” controlled alien species cannot be released under any circumstances, but can be bred, transported or possessed without a permit with conditions.

Other exotic animal species (not listed) continue to being kept as pets, and some advocacy groups have called to address this through a “positive pets” list (i.e., to list only those species that may be permitted rather than those that cannot). One animal that has garnered media attention in particular are serval cats, a medium-sized wild cat native to Africa. Serval are not listed on CAS. A policy review is underway to determine if servals—and other medium sized cats not originally on the CAS regulation list—should be added.

Four servals escaped from their enclosures/residences on Vancouver Island in three separate incidents between October 2022 and December 2022. Escapes attract varying degrees of media interest.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

Media Interest: Public interest campaigns are on the rise for the provincial Minister to take concrete action to reduce the number of exotic animals being kept and raised as pets in B.C.

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Program contact	Rayyan Khudabux	778-698-5976
File created	17 January 2024	
File updated	23 January 2024	

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Watershed Security Strategy and Fund

Recommend Response:

- Protecting water and watersheds is a priority for this government.
- We expect to launch the final Watershed Security Strategy (Strategy) in spring 2024. It will represent a profound shift towards stewarding watersheds more securely.
- Co-development of the Strategy has occurred predominantly through the BC-First Nations Water Table. Ongoing relationships have been made with First Nations leadership, Modern Treaty Nations and through existing government-to-government tables.
- The Strategy will build on commitments made by this government to align provincial legislation with the UN Declaration. While this does mean exploring how the province makes decisions with First Nations, this does not mean that First Nations will have a veto on water related decisions.
- Watershed security, in the time of unprecedented wildfires and drought across B.C., requires the ability for all of us to work together. We need to bring people together to talk about scarcity, talk about climate change and improve our planning. This is work that we need to do together, particularly with First Nations.

Additional Information

- The Ministry is close to completing the final Strategy, which is intended to shape water and watershed stewardship in British Columbia (BC) for the next 20-30 years.
- Ensuring our work is coordinated with other priorities, such as biodiversity and ecosystem health, coastal marine, flood, drought, salmon and drinking water has been central to Strategy development.

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- On March 6, 2023, Government announced a \$100M investment towards the establishment of a permanent Watershed Security Fund (Fund) to support work needed to improve outcomes for our watersheds.
- The Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC) and First Nations are establishing the long-term co-governance of the Fund.

Key Facts:

- WLRS leads the development of the Strategy through the Watershed Stewardship and Security Branch.
 - Drought, flood, climate change and the cumulative effects of development are key watershed issues driving development of the Strategy.
- The draft Strategy intends to address watershed security through action in five key areas, including:
 - Recognizing and affirming First Nations rights to enable the full expression of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
 - Reforming watershed governance in BC to strengthen watershed stewardship and decision-making at the local and provincial scales.
 - Amending, creating and applying policy and law to improve watershed protection and recovery.
 - Mapping and monitoring watersheds to identify cumulative effects, ecosystem services and opportunities for restoration and protection.
 - Undertaking broad education and outreach to encourage everyone to act in ways that respect watersheds.
- Two periods of public engagement have taken place on the Strategy – one in 2022 and another in 2023; engagement with First Nations has been ongoing and will continue through Strategy implementation.
- Developing the Strategy continues to be of significant interest to First Nations in BC because of their relationships with water.
 - The Strategy is an opportunity to advance reconciliation through new partnerships that support advancing shared interests and goals for watershed security.
 - Engagement with First Nations has continued under a multiple pathways approach, with the goal of building enduring, collaborative relationships around provincial-level water policy and legislation, consistent with our commitment to the UN Declaration and to implementing the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.
- Government continues to collaborate with other ministries and engage with other orders of government, environmental non-government organizations, industry and business groups and others as the Strategy is developed.

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- Work is underway to align across related government priorities that include drinking water, wild salmon, flood, drought climate action, coastal marine, biodiversity and ecosystem health, as well as economic initiatives.
- On March 6, 2023, Government and First Nations partners announced a \$100M Provincial investment to kick-start the creation of the Fund.
 - The \$100M provincial contribution seeded a permanent endowment fund, generating earnings and dividends that provide a dependable flow of annual funding for grants, programs and operational investments.
 - Details on funding priorities, process and decision making are being co-developed now.
 - Management and Executive committees have been established by REFBC and First Nations to support the Funds administration and development.
 - Opportunities for granting in 2024 are under discussion now through the REFBC and First Nations co-development process. The province will support any granting process they wish to undertake this fiscal should they choose so.

Date Prepared/Revised: Feb 1, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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BRIEFING NOTE FOR INFORMATION

DATE: March 19, 2024
PREPARED FOR: James Mack, Assistant Deputy Minister - Water, Fisheries and Coast
ISSUE: River Forecast Centre Modelling Approach to Watershed Changes

KEY POINTS:

- Recent B.C. media coverage has highlighted research on the relationship between watershed forest cover and hydrology.
- River Forecast Centre (RFC) modelling accounts for changes in watershed conditions, such as wildfire, forestry practices, and climate change.
- RFC Hydrologists regularly recalibrate models by comparing measured river discharges with model outputs, for a range of conditions.
- RFC staff continue to work closely with researchers and qualified professionals from across the province, and beyond, to identify and implement best practices in modeling, forecasting and communications.
- The importance of enhancing flood forecasting capabilities and early warning systems is one of the actions being advanced through the recently announced B.C. Flood Strategy.

BACKGROUND:

- Several recent B.C. news items have highlighted the ongoing debate about the use of deterministic versus probabilistic methodologies in forest hydrology, specifically referring to research by Dr. Younes Alila, a professor in the University of British Columbia Department of Forest Resources Management, and potential hydrological impacts of B.C.'s forestry practices.
- Dr. Alila has a strong background in probabilistic modelling. He considers probabilistic methodology to often be more appropriate because it accounts for the randomness of factors influencing flooding and therefore, in his assessment, provides a better representation of uncertainty in model projections.
- Deterministic and probabilistic methodologies are both widely used in hydrological research, applications, and decision-making processes (as well as many other scientific and mathematical fields of practice).
- Deterministic models assume that the model inputs (e.g., precipitation, air temperature) and the processes described by the model (e.g., snowmelt) are free from random variation. As a result, deterministic models do not express the probability, or *likelihood*, of a given event. However, deterministic models are nonetheless valuable tools due to the difficulty of characterising complex natural environments.

- Probabilistic models incorporate random variation from both inputs and processes. As such, they are able to depict how likely a given event is to occur.

DISCUSSION:

- The RFC's primary flood forecast models, CLEVER and COFFEE, are deterministic, but they account for random variability through continuous calibration by the RFC's hydrologists.
- RFC modelling accounts for watershed conditions in a bulk, indirect manner. In other words, watershed characteristics such as logged areas or lakes are not considered explicitly. However, the models are sensitive to any physical changes in watersheds (e.g., due to wildfires, logging, or climate change), and the effects of these changes are incorporated on an ongoing basis, as the models are highly adaptable.
- Model errors are assessed on a regular basis. Based on those assessments, the greatest source of error in RFC modelling comes from uncertainty/error in weather forecasting data and limitations/gaps in the weather observation network.
- The RFC continually evaluates model performance and refines our modelling approaches to ensure reliable forecasts. Our hydrologists maintain awareness of current research in the field of hydrological modelling, including Dr. Alila's work, and incorporate peer-reviewed research findings in our operational approach, where feasible and appropriate.

PREPARED BY:

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REVIEWED BY:

	Initials	Date
DM	LH	March 27, 2024
CFO/EFO (if required)		
ADM	JM	March 20, 2024
Program ED	CC	March 20, 2024
Program Dir/Mgr.	AG	March 19, 2024

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: *Water Sustainability Act*

Recommend Response:

- In October 2023, we consolidated responsibility for the *Water Sustainability Act (WSA)* under one ministry, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS).
- 2023 was a challenging year as British Columbians were impacted by province-wide drought.
- WLRS is responsible for the tools under *WSA* that regulate water use to protect the environment and manage the impacts of drought on our communities.

Regarding Drought and the WSA:

- BC is taking a whole-government approach to drought preparation and response. We are collaborating and coordinating our drought mitigation actions across ministries.
- Key Partner ministries include the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Change Readiness.
- We continue to improve *WSA*. In January, WLRS introduced *WSA* administrative penalties, allowing for stronger financial penalties for water-related violations.

Regarding the Watershed Security Strategy (WSS):

- The co-developed *WSS* is expected to launch this spring and will represent a profound shift from previous reactive water management practices.
- Protecting water and watersheds is a priority for this government. WLRS is currently working with First Nations to strengthen watershed security for the province through the co-development of *WSS*.
- *WSS* is intended to shape water and watershed stewardship in BC for the next 20 years.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Key Facts:

Regarding Drought and WSA

- Most designated water managers under WSA are WLRS employees.
- A few British Columbia Energy Regulator (BCER) staff are also designated as WSA water managers.
- A recent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Transportation (MoTI) enables a water manager to be designated within MoTI.
- Drought response tools enabled by WSA include the authority to regulate surface water and groundwater use during low flow conditions, the authority to issue orders to protect the rights of water licensees and the needs of aquatic ecosystems and fish populations, and the authority to undertake compliance and enforcement measures.

New WSA-related regulation on administrative penalties

- On January 12, 2024, WLRS announced the implementation of a WSA-related regulation enabling financial penalties to be issued for violations of WSA.
- This gives the Comptroller of Water Rights the ability to level \$100,000 fines for general contraventions, or as much as \$500,000 for high-penalty offenses, following investigations by Compliance and Enforcement staff.
- Prior to the issuance of the Administrative Penalties Regulation, violation tickets and/or orders were utilized to address non-compliance for low- and high-penalty offenses.

Watershed Security Strategy

- Budget 2023 introduced the Watershed Security Fund, a \$100-million investment in healthy watersheds. This built on a \$30-million commitment from Budget 2022.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Water Sustainability Planning

Recommend Response:

- Our government is committed to protecting water and watersheds in British Columbia (BC).
- Water sustainability planning supports healthy sustainable watersheds by addressing water use conflicts and considering aquatic ecosystem health.
- The Province is in the process of co-developing water sustainability plans with First Nations.
- Water sustainability planning is a collaborative process. Other levels of government, provincial agencies and public with an interest in a watershed are being engaged.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The Koksilah is the first watershed designated for a water sustainability plan (WPS).
- WSP is also being considered in other watersheds throughout the province.

Key Facts:

- WSPs are enabled by Sections 64 – 85 of the *Water Sustainability Act (WSA)* and the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) has the authority to make orders under these sections.
- WLRS will collaborate with First Nations and coordinate with other ministries and governments who have interests in watershed management.
- The WSP program does not have dedicated funding. Projects obtain funding through other programs such as the Indigenous Funding Program and the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework.

Water Sustainability Plans

- An area may be designated for the development of a WSP to address conflicts between water users, conflicts between water users and environmental flow needs, risks to water quality, or risks to aquatic health. They may also be used to identify restoration measures for damaged aquatic ecosystems.
- WSP provisions are augmented by regulation-making authority. Regulations can be developed to restrict or prohibit a specified use of land or natural resources, amend terms and conditions of licences, dedicate water for agriculture, or require other planning processes consider a WSP.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Koksilah WSP

- The Xwulqw'selu (Koksilah) watershed near Duncan, BC, is the first area to be designated for a WSP due to recurring low flows.
- Temporary protection orders were issued in 2019, 2021, and 2023 to restore flows. In 2023, these impacted 108 users at an approximate cost of \$800,000 to agricultural users and \$84,000 to industrial aggregate producers.
- Cowichan Tribes and the Province signed a government-to-government agreement to support the planning process in May 2023 and the Minister designated Cowichan Tribes as the person responsible for developing the Plan in December 2023. Plan development is underway and it will be submitted to the Minister for acceptance in Fall 2026.
- Over the last four years, Cowichan Tribes has received \$626,000 from the Province, an additional \$50,000 from the Freshwater Legacy Initiative and \$500,000 from the Healthy Watersheds Initiative to support this work. Malahat Nation has also received \$40,000 to support their engagement.

Nicola Watershed Governance Partnership

- A partnership with Coldwater, Lower Nicola, Nooaitch, Shackan and Upper Nicola Bands focusing on water planning and governance (\$4.125M over the last four years).
- The Partnership has set up a governance system and began water planning and co-management initiatives that allow indigenous ways of knowing and legal traditions to be considered along side western science and law.
- The Partnership expects to recommend the Nicola watershed for water sustainability planning this spring to address low summer water availability and identify restoration measures for the watershed which was damaged by flooding.

Other areas where a WSP may be developed

- WLRS is engaged in several other watershed planning projects that are considering using water sustainability planning tools in the future, including:
 - **Township of Langley** - Water Management Plan developed under the *Water Act* to address local aquifer declines and nitrate contamination is being transitioned to a WSP (\$117,500 funding from the Province and \$55,650 from the Township of Langley).
 - **Liard Watershed** – early stages of developing a co-governance and shared decision making framework to support water planning (Indigenous Partner: Fort Nelson First Nation; \$12,000 in the last year).
 - **Widzin Kwah Watershed** – considering setting WSA Objectives to protect water quality in the Upper Bulkley and Morice watersheds from land use activities. (Indigenous Partner: Wet'suwet'en; \$550,000 over three years)

Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Groundwater Licensing Policy

Recommend Response:

- Licensing groundwater gives government a more complete picture of groundwater use and helps us better manage this important resource. This information is especially needed when managing for drought.
- In January 2024, WLRS created a centralized team to expedite the processing of existing use groundwater applications. We anticipate this will significantly reduce the processing time of applications.
- There are resources available through FrontCounter BC to help applicants apply for a water licence.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Existing non-domestic groundwater users were given six years (February 29, 2016 - March 1, 2022) to apply to have their date of first use recognized as the licence seniority date.
- Though the 2022 deadline has passed, I still encourage the public to apply for a groundwater licence. We need that application information about where water is being used to inform how best to manage water use in drought conditions.
- To better coordinate the management of water across British Columbia (BC) staff working on the operational implementation of the *Water Sustainability Act (WSA)* were transferred to WLRS in 2022.
- Applicants who applied as existing groundwater users prior to February 29, 2016, are permitted to continue accessing groundwater while awaiting a decision on their water license.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Key Facts:

- WLRS and BC Energy Regulator are responsible for the operational implementation of *WSA* and WLRS is the lead agency on provincial water policy, including *WSA*.
- *WSA* was brought into force on February 29, 2016, and introduced a requirement for people using groundwater for non-domestic purposes to apply for and obtain a water licence.
- Licensing groundwater establishes rights to use groundwater based on the same priority system as surface water users. Many groundwater and surface water sources are interconnected.
- Water rights is an important topic for Indigenous peoples and there are differences of opinion regarding water licensing: some Nations support engaging in the licensing process and hold water licences, whereas others are strongly opposed.
- Many First Nations have expressed concern with *WSA*'s priority of rights system. This policy issue is being considered through Treaty as well as through the co-development of the Watershed Security Strategy with First Nations.
- *WSA* provided a six-year transition window for existing groundwater users to apply for water rights that recognize their date of first use (DOFU) of the water.
- Those who missed the deadline forfeited DOFU recognition, must cease diverting water, and cannot lawfully resume until they apply for and receive a water licence.
- DOFU or priority date is significant in times of water scarcity because those with earliest priority dates gets first access to water.
- Multiple provincial agencies conducted outreach and engaged existing groundwater users throughout the entire six-year transition period. A significant increase in engagement with the public and First Nations occurred in the year leading up to the deadline.
- Government estimated 20,000 existing use applications but 7,711 (44 percent) were submitted by March 1, 2022, with over 40 percent received in February 2022. Government received applications from 44 First Nations.
- It is assumed that many groundwater users who did not apply by March 1, 2022, continue to use groundwater. Those users may be ordered to stop using the groundwater, fined and/or face administrative penalties for unlawful water use.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- The high complexity and large volume of applications received in 2022 resulted in a backlog of 5,572 existing use applications in January 2024. A new centralized team has been formed to expediate the processing these applications.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Source Water Protection and Drinking Water

Recommend Response:

- Clean, safe, and secure drinking water is critical for the health of British Columbians and is a key priority for this government.
- WLRS is responsible for providing strategic leadership for drinking water and leading the development of a provincial action plan for the protection of drinking water, from source to tap.
- WLRS is both leading actions and collaborating across ministries to address the Provincial Health Officer's (PHO) recommendations and to fulfill the Office of the Auditor General's (OAG) 2019 drinking water audit recommendations.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- To address the reduction in water system inspections that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health is working with provincial and external partners and the Health Authorities to action solutions.
- Access to safe drinking water is a top priority of Indigenous communities and engagement with Indigenous peoples and alignment with the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* will be foundational to protecting drinking water sources for all British Columbians.
- Work in progress includes the development of a provincial framework to assess risks to source waters, and the development of a British Columbia (BC) drinking water information system.

Key Facts:

- One of the desired outcomes of the Watershed Security Strategy is to improve how we manage our lands and resources to better protect our drinking water, quality and quantity.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- The *Drinking Water Protection Act (DWPA)* is the primary legislation to protect drinking water in BC.
- The WLRs Minister became responsible (through OIC) for ss. 4.1, 4.2 and Part 5 of the *DWPA* on October 19, 2023. Sections 4.1 and 4.2 require the PHO to deliver to the Minister an annual report on activities under the *Act* and a report on drinking water problems related to provincial government actions, respectively. Part 5 relates to drinking water protection plans.
- The PHO report entitled 'Clean, Safe, and Reliable Drinking Water: An Update on Drinking Water Protection in BC 2017/18 – 2021/22' contains 20 recommendations to improve the protection of drinking water in BC Attachment 1 provides a list of the recommendations and their status.
- The Province is well-positioned to respond to these recommendations following recent consolidation of water program functions under a single WLRs ministry.
- The report notes that most of the population of BC is served by large water systems capable of providing clean, safe, and reliable drinking water; however, many people in the province are served by small water systems lacking the capacity to maintain their systems.
- Key risks to drinking water identified in the report include a reduction in water system inspections due to a lack of capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and data access, as well as capacity limitations and compliance issues with small water systems.
- Water system inspections are only one component of providing oversight of drinking water supplies. Health Authorities (HAs) have continued to support their water suppliers and provide essential services despite these staffing challenges.
- In 2019, the OAG released an audit of the protection of drinking water in BC, identifying source water protection and a provincial strategic plan for the protection of drinking water as key gaps. Attachment 2 provides a summary of the recommendations and current status.
- In July 2023, the OAG released an annual follow-up report stating that the Province had adequately addressed only 25 percent of the OAG's 2019 drinking water audit recommendations by November 30, 2022.
- In February 2024 the OAG concluded (but not yet published) that the Province had adequately addressed 40 percent of the 2019 recommendations by November 30, 2023 instead of the Province's reported 50 percent completion.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 1, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Watershed Stewardship and Sustainability Branch

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Attachment 1: PHO Report Recommendations and Status

PHO Recommendation	Lead Agency	Collaborating Agencies	Status
1. Action Plan and Memorandum of Understanding	WLRS	HLTH	In progress
2. Roles and Responsibilities for Drinking Water on Federal Land	HLTH	WLRS	No action taken
3. Legislative Review of the <i>Drinking Water Protection Act</i>	HLTH	WLRS	In progress
4. Drinking Water Protection Plans	WLRS	HLTH, PHO, HAs	In progress
5. Climate Resiliency and Emergency Response	WLRS	EMCR, HLTH, MUNI	No action taken
6. Climate Change Resiliency and Adaptation	HLTH	WLRS, Comptroller of Water Rights, ENV, MUNI, Regional HAs	No action taken
7. Regulatory Conflict Pertaining to the Authorization of Joint Works and Water Users' Communities	WLRS	HLTH, Comptroller of Water Rights	No action taken
8. Public Assent Processes and the Community Charter	MUNI	None	No action taken
9. Implementation of Drinking Water Indicators for Annual Reporting	Regional HAs	None	In progress
10. Provincial IM/IT Strategy	HLTH	WLRS, HAs, MUNI	In progress
11. Water Quality Data Sharing	ENV	WLRS	In progress
12. Small Water System Strategy	WLRS	HLTH, Comptroller of Water Rights, MUNI, MOTI,	No action taken
13. Operator Training for Small Water Systems and Bulk Water Haulers	HLTH	Regional HAs	No action taken
14. Access to Approved Laboratories	BC CDC	HLTH, HAs	In progress
15. Drinking Water Program Resources and Training Requirements	HLTH, HAs	OPHO, WLRS	In progress
16. Source Water Risk Assessment Framework	WLRS	HLTH	In progress
17. Distribution System Integrity and Maintenance	HLTH	Regional HAs	In progress
18. Asset Management and Financial Planning	MUNI	HLTH, Regional HAs	In progress
19. Bulk Water Haulers	HLTH	Regional HAs	No action taken
20. Investigating Threats to Drinking Water	HLTH	WLRS, Regional HAs	In progress

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Attachment 2: BC OAG 2019 Audit Report Recommendations and Status

OAG Recommendation	Status
<p>1 We recommend that the Ministry of Health:</p> <p>In conjunction with partner ministries lead a review of legislation and regulations that affect drinking water to ensure that legislators are informed of risks and legislative gaps that may affect government's commitments are addressed. These commitments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) clear lines of responsibility;b) safety of drinking water as the first priority in decision making;c) preventative rather than reactive approaches in addressing health hazards;d) tools that mitigate risks; ande) controls to ensure that small water systems provide safe drinking water, and that the creation of unsustainable small water systems is limited.	Complete
<p>2 We recommend that the Ministry of Health:</p> <p>Provide the leadership necessary to develop a cross-ministry commitment to coordinate strategies to address risks to drinking water. This includes establishing clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for all government agencies that are responsible for ensuring safe drinking water.</p>	In progress. Expected completion 2024.
<p>3 We recommend that the Ministry of Health:</p> <p>Lead the development of a provincial strategic plan for the protection of drinking water that includes prioritized activities based on the risks identified in an integrated (interoperable) province-wide data system.</p>	In progress. Expected completion 2026.
<p>4 We recommend that the Ministry of Health:</p> <p>Undertake the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) identify where and what type of risks exist in relation to source protection, drinking water treatment, distribution and small water systems;b) coordinate with ministries and agencies to develop actions to mitigate identified risks; andc) develop a process for the evaluation and adjustment of health's guidelines to ensure they are effective.	In progress. Expected completion 2026.
<p>5 We recommend that the Provincial Health Officer:</p> <p>Take action to improve the oversight of drinking water, including the development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) policy and procedures for reporting significant impediments to the Minister of Health;	Complete

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	<p>b) guidance for drinking water officers on how and when to report situations to the Provincial Health Officer that significantly impact drinking water;</p> <p>c) a process for evaluating and tracking significant impediments;</p> <p>d) a process for monitoring drinking water officers' compliance with guidelines and directives.</p>	
6	<p>We recommend that the Provincial Health Officer:</p> <p>In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, review the legislative provisions regarding drinking water protection plans and report out to the Minister of Health on impediments to the protection plan's implementation.</p>	Complete
7	<p>We recommend that the Ministry of Health:</p> <p>Report out to the public on the progress it is making in improving the protection of drinking water for all British Columbians.</p>	<p>In progress.</p> <p>Expected completion 2025.</p>
8	<p>We recommend that the Provincial Health Officer:</p> <p>Monitor progress and trends in the protection of drinking water and report on a timely basis to the Minister of Health and the legislative assembly on whether activities are mitigating risk.</p>	<p>In progress.</p> <p>Expected completion 2024.</p>

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Drought Operational Readiness

Recommend Response:

- Drought threatens key priorities including community water supplies, power production, business opportunities, food security and the health of aquatic ecosystems and fish. We recognize that the risk of drought, along with wildfire, this summer will be top of mind for people.
- We are doing everything we can to get ready, and we are communicating early to encourage others to plan ahead and conserve water, including early media coverage on snow conditions, letters to water suppliers on drought preparedness, and workshops to help farmers understand how water management decisions are made.
- We are getting better at drought response every year and in 2024 we are coordinating regional technical and strategic tables across the province to share information and apply local knowledge to develop local solutions.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Although much will depend on snow and rain conditions now through spring and summer, early snowpack conditions strongly suggest drought will persist into 2024.
- Coordinated cross-agency communication and outreach on drought will emphasize the need for conservation, advanced planning and risk assessment for all water users and water suppliers.
- *Water Sustainability Act (WSA)* regulatory action may be needed again in 2024 as a last resort to protect fish and critical habitat. These decisions are based on supporting science and socio-economic analysis that considers all water users and multiple ecosystem values.
- Data collection, monitoring and analysis of drought-prone watersheds and high-risk fish populations is ongoing to

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

support any regulatory action and to identify early opportunities for conservation and planning.

- Mailouts to licensees will provide provincially consistent and clear communication on voluntary and regulatory approaches to drought management.
- Planned enhancements to public-facing web products, including the Drought Information Portal, will improve public access to timely data, information and resources to support drought preparedness and planning.

Key Facts:

- With each subsequent snowpack bulletin from the River Forecast Centre, we will get a clearer picture of the potential for drought (and flood).
- The B.C. Energy Regulator also holds regulatory authority under the WSA to take actions that may mitigate the impacts of drought and they have initiated early communications with the oil and gas sector to compel water conservation.
- Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) supports the water scarcity planning and response of local authorities and First Nations, focusing on potable water sources in areas of high drought risk.
- EMCR and Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy are developing and mapping drought hazard and risk data to inform drought risk assessments.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF) provides programs and support to producers that may face economic impacts because of WSA orders to curtail water use.
- AF is leading and scaling up direct cross-ministry communications with farmers and ranchers, including delivering 30 workshops on drought management across the province and encouraging uptake on subsidized crop insurance programs.
- Destination BC is working with the tourism industry to promote water conservation and improve education with industry and visitors.
- Budget 2024 announced funding for infrastructure projects and programs to strengthen drought resiliency, including:
 - \$83M to expand the Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program to help farmers and ranchers manage water better, in addition to \$20M committed to in 2023.
 - \$50M for water metering pilot programs in 21 communities.
 - \$14M to help replace the Cowichan Lake Weir to improve water storage and management of outflows.
 - \$10M to increase the storage capacity and management of environmental flows at Saint Mary Lake on Salt Spring Island.
- Ongoing investments to support drought readiness also include:

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- \$513M over 3 years for the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy, including programs to improve monitoring and forecasting of drought, and to build local government and agriculture resilience.
- \$250M over 5 years for the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund to support mitigation and study of climate change impacts to wild salmon.
- \$15 million for Pacific Salmon Foundation and First Nations Fisheries Council to work on emergency interventions for salmon.
- \$115.4 million available for remaining intakes of the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund to enhance the capacity of First Nations and local governments to respond to hazards, including drought.
- \$100M for the Watershed Security Fund, including support for watershed restoration projects to help mitigate the impacts of drought.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 8, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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ADVICE TO MINISTER

**CONFIDENTIAL
ISSUES NOTE**

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship
Date: Feb. 9, 2024
Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen

Drought

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **My ministry is working with regions to develop area-specific drought response plans with First Nations, local authorities, licensees and stakeholders.**
- **We are updating our Drought Response Plan and setting up regional tables so that communities, local sectors and water suppliers can use their local knowledge to develop local solutions.**
- **I recognize that people across the province are experiencing the escalating impacts of climate change – and they’re counting on us to keep them and their families safe.**
- **We are determined to take action, and have already boosted community emergency response grants, agriculture water infrastructure grant, fisheries protection and a \$100 million watershed security fund.**
- **Every drop counts. That’s why we are calling on everyone in B.C. to conserve water where possible and respect any water restrictions put in place by their local government or First Nations.**
- **I share in everyone’s concern regarding the impacts of drought on the health of our natural habitats and respective wildlife that thrive within.**
- **We know that farmers and ranchers are among those who face the toughest challenges from drought. That’s why the Ministry of Agriculture and Food is hosting in-person workshops in more than 30 communities to help farmers around the province prepare for potential drought and provide information about available financial supports.**

Water restrictions related to drought

- **We are working to communicate and be transparent about how water management decisions are made, particularly with agricultural producers.**
- **We have implemented regulations that will allow financial penalties to be issued for violations of the Water Sustainability Act. The goal is to promote compliance with the legislation and to better manage water resources in B.C., while protecting critical habitat for vulnerable species.**
- **We have been collaborating with First Nations, local governments, and water purveyors on drought response planning.**
- **Communications will be sent out to water licensees in drought prone watersheds as drought levels start to increase, encouraging voluntary water conservation.**
- **We have been supporting communities throughout B.C. to develop water scarcity plans, to prepare for water access impacts of drought conditions.**
- **We will keep working directly with communities affected by drought to offer support as they put in place water restrictions and plans in case of water shortages.**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

KEY FACTS:

Significant and ongoing drought conditions throughout British Columbia have pushed the government to review its water management policies and implement new approaches to tackling province-wide drought.

BACKGROUND:

Last summer, many water basins across the province reached and sustained Level 4 or Level 5 Drought through the summer and fall, and current snowpack conditions indicate a very real potential that the Province will face severe drought conditions again this year.

In April 2023, the BC Drought and Water Scarcity Response Plan was updated and is currently being reviewed in preparation for the 2024 drought season.

Development of additional internal and external-facing committees and working groups are being explored to better support the upcoming 2024 drought season.

One of the first places people see the impacts of drought is escalated wildfire activity, which is why last summer, the Province gave updates on drought alongside its wildfire updates.

Media Interest: Overall media attention around drought remains constant and significant since it remains a central matter of concern for British Columbians. A warmer and drier than usual winter has exacerbated this issue, further fueling public concern of another dry and wildfire-plagued summer across the province.

Communications contact	Octavian Lacatusu, Public Affairs Officer	250-889-1684
Program contact	Doris Leong, a/Director, WSA Implementation and Drought Response	778 698-7323
File created	Feb. 7, 2024	
File updated	Feb. 9, 2024	

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Drought Planning and Governance

Recommended Response:

- In response to multi-year drought conditions, the province has shifted from a 'local and temporary' to 'provincial and long-term' focus for building drought resilience.
- We are taking a whole-of-government approach to drought, through early preparation, better planning, improved governance, and more funding, cross-agency collaboration, and communication with the public on preparing for drought.
- We are working with First Nations to take on-the-ground emergency actions and developing solutions to reduce drought impacts on salmon and other at-risk fish populations.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The responsibility to prepare for drought is shared amongst all of us; local, regional, Indigenous, provincial, and federal governments, water suppliers, and members of the public.
- The Province is hosting in-person workshops in more than 30 communities to help farmers around the province prepare for potential drought this summer.
- In 2023, the Province partnered with the Pacific Salmon Foundation, Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and First Nations on actions to protect salmon, and other high-risk fish, from drought. This work will continue in 2024.

Re Funding

- BC committed an historic \$100M of funding in March 2023 to support healthy watersheds.
- BC's \$500M Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy is building a better, more climate resilient future for communities across the province.
- BC's Agricultural Water Infrastructure Program, initiated with a \$20M investment over three years in 2023, received an

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additional \$83M in 2024 (total \$113M) to fund water supply assessments and system improvements including water storage.

- Through the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) BC and Canada provided \$3.4M to protection and restoration work to improve survival rates of Pacific salmon and other fish stocks through drought and flood events.
- BC's Extreme Weather Preparedness for Agriculture Program increased this year to \$2.5M to help farmers and ranchers improve resilience to extreme weather events.
- The Watershed Security Strategy (expected to launch in Spring 2024) is considering how new approaches to policy and legislation can introduce greater flexibility in how water is managed and better prepare for times of water scarcity.
- The Province granted the Pacific Salmon Foundation \$15M for projects which support salmon in drought, flood and fire.

Key Facts:

- The Village of McBride declared a drought-related State of Local Emergency in September 2023 that is still in effect.
- BC and DFO are working with First Nations in areas impacted by flood, drought, and fire to aid fish and aquatic species recovery and restore aquatic habitat. New Projects will continue this work in 2024.
- Water Sustainability Act (WSA) regulatory action may need to be taken in 2024 to protect fish and critical habitat. Where conditions are not dire, unauthorized use compliance actions will provide existing groundwater users reasonable opportunity to apply before water use restrictions are imposed.
- The new Administrative Penalties Regulation brings into effect stronger regulations for water management best practices and stiffer financial penalties (up to \$500,000) for violating the WSA.

Date Prepared/Revised:

Name: Ted Zimmerman, Executive Director
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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Phone: 778 698-4061

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***Issue:** Livestock Watering

Recommend Response:

- In 2020, the Province developed policy and accompanying legislative changes to the *Water Sustainability Act (WSA)* to secure water rights for the livestock sector.
- The policy proposal aimed to secure water for use by livestock on extensive Crown and private grazing lands, and to protect water quality and riparian habitat. The work was paused in 2021.
- Following a difficult drought year in 2023, WLRS is working with Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF) and Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) to enhance drought preparedness and response through improved communication with agricultural livestock producers about how decisions are made during a drought event and how they can best prepare.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- An article in Beef in BC Magazine (November / December 2023) highlighted the sector's concerns with the issue but characterized the policy proposal inaccurately.
- The policy proposal was developed to recognize the livestock sector's historical water use through three tiers of authorization based on water volumes and exempting low volume use.
- First Nations, the ranching sector, and stakeholder groups were consulted over several years and the policy drafts were reworked in response to input from engagement.
- Work on this policy was paused in 2021, in part due to uneven support across the ranching sector on the proposed policy options.

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- We are likely to experience more drought this summer and will do our best to work through the challenges of water access for livestock in dry times, together.
- We will continue to explore opportunities to consider livestock watering policy in the context of ongoing work related to drought, watershed security and reconciliation.

Key Facts:

- Most ranchers using extensive rangelands (private and Crown) lack authorization under WSA to divert and use surface water needed for their livestock.
- The BC Cattlemen’s Association (BCCA) lobbied government to change policy to recognize their historical use of water on extensive rangelands.
- The Livestock Watering policy development was a cross-ministry collaboration directed by Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs) of the former Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (AFF), the former Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV) and the former Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNR).
- Engagement with First Nations and key stakeholder groups on the policy proposal, followed by broader public notification occurred in 2020.
- Despite the engagement with the BCCA throughout the policy development and a proposal that is largely responsive to their requests, BCCA members were not unanimously supportive of the proposal, as a segment (particularly in northern B.C.) was opposed to government oversight of the sector’s water use.
- The decision was made in 2021 to postpone further work due to BCCA’s lack of full support to enable government to focus on new legislative priorities, address organizational restructuring and to advance development of a WSS.
- Former Ministers Popham (AFF) and Conroy (FLNR) met with the BCCA to advise them of the decision to postpone further livestock watering policy development.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Ted Zimmerman, Executive Director
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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Issue: B.C. Flood Strategy

Recommend Response:

- WLRS, supported by the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, led the development of a B.C. Flood Strategy to support progress toward a more flood resilient British Columbia (B.C.) in a changing climate.
- The Strategy provides a foundation and roadmap for implementing significant changes to integrated flood hazard management over time. It emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach that spans jurisdictions and watersheds, incorporates the UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and considers nature-based solutions.
- We released the Strategy on March 21, 2024, alongside First Nations and local governments, reflecting collaboration to keep our communities safe in the face of climate change.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- We developed the Strategy with First Nations, local governments, and stakeholders, and 'shared the pen' with eight First Nations partners from B.C.'s major watersheds.
- The recent reorganization of water-related mandates to WLRS has created new synergies and reflects the interconnection of flood and drought as water hazards.
- Next, collaboration on a B.C. Flood Resilience Plan will articulate how future work and investment will be implemented. Meanwhile, the Province is advancing flood resilience objectives through existing funding programs.
- The Province supports First Nations and local authorities to advance flood resilience through disaster risk reduction funding programs delivered by the Province in partnership with UBCM and the federal government. Since 2017, the

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Province has approved approximately \$181M for over 440 flood risk reduction projects throughout B.C.

- Additionally, \$23M of the total \$39M from the October intake of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Adaptation stream, of the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF) are for flood specific projects across the province.
- This funding was announced with the release of the Strategy on March 21, 2024.

Key Facts:

- An Intentions Paper for the Strategy was released in October 2022 for public input. It proposed a strategic framework that included a Vision, Outcomes, and Principles for flood resilience in the province.
- It included actions to reduce risk and adapt to flood events, such as the Fall 2021 Atmospheric River event.
- The B.C. Flood Strategy sets direction for more coordinated approaches with other orders of government and partners to inform strategic investments, programs, and policies that lead to a more flood resilient province.
- Flooding is a common, costly disaster in B.C. that often threatens public safety and impacts a range of economic, social, and environmental issues.
- The costs of damage from a major Lower Fraser River flood in the future are estimated at more than \$30B without further flood resilience investments.
- Due to ongoing climate change, flooding is becoming more frequent, with flood frequencies on rivers likely to increase by 10-20 percent by the end of the 21st century.
- The B.C. Flood Strategy supports government's response to the 2018 BC Auditor General's report on B.C.'s management of climate change risks, and the 2018 Abbott Chapman review of the 2017 wildfire and flood season.
- The cost estimate to raise and seismically upgrade existing *Dike Maintenance Act*-regulated Lower Mainland sea dikes and Lower Fraser River high consequence dikes to meet a 1-meter sea level rise by 2100 exceeds \$12B.
- The cost estimate to upgrade orphan dikes to provincial standards is \$1B.
- Work is underway to support alignment of regional flood risk mitigation strategies, such as one under development for the Lower Fraser, with the principles of the B.C. Flood Strategy.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 27, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Issue: Floodplain Mapping

Recommend Response:

- The Ministry continues to advance actions that reduce risk and improve community resiliency in response to increasing natural hazards.
- High quality, accessible floodplain maps are essential tools to understand and communicate flood hazards.
- British Columbia (BC) is investing over \$10.4M through the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy (CPAS) to produce floodplain maps in higher risk areas. We've also seized an opportunity to share costs with the federal government through the Flood Hazard Identification and Mapping Program (FHIMP).

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Work is underway on floodplain mapping in the first six study areas:
 - Prince George to Vanderhoof (Nechako/Fraser Rivers)
 - Houston to Terrace (Bulkley/Skeena Rivers)
 - Upstream of Merritt to Spences Bridge (Nicola River)
 - Upstream of Hope to Kent (Fraser River)
 - Shuswap Lake area
 - Columbia Lake to Golden (Columbia River)
- Mapping products are expected to be shared with communities and made publicly available through the ClimateReadyBC portal as projects are completed in 2024.

Key Facts:

- In addition to the six study areas, four scoping studies are also underway, covering the North, South, Coastal and Lower Mainland areas, to inform priorities for future floodplain mapping projects.
- A province-wide screening level flood hazard layer is also being developed to provide planning tools for communities and an equitable understanding of hazards.

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- First Nations are engaged in the six study areas and will review the mapping products.
- This year's six mapping projects support 81 communities with updated floodplain mapping that incorporates future climate change.
- Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) administers FHIMP, which aims to complete floodplain maps for higher risk areas and make information accessible.
- FHIMP requires 50 percent provincial – 50 percent federal funding, ^{Government of} ~~Financial~~ federal funding is currently committed to BC through to March 2028.
- \$4.53M of federal funding has already been accessed to March 2024.
- BC works with the Fraser Basin Council to coordinate the current provincial floodplain mapping work.
- The Ministry is also preparing guidance for communities toward adopting floodplain maps for regulatory purposes, and addressing related topics such as flood insurance and impacts to property values.
- A previous provincial flood mapping program began in 1974. Under the Canada/British Columbia Agreement Respecting Floodplain Mapping in 1987, BC continued developing flood maps until the early 2000's. At the time, 70 communities were mapped. Federal funding ceased in 1998.
- After 2003, local governments were granted the powers to manage development decisions on floodplains. Accordingly, the lead for floodplain mapping shifted to the local level, guided by BC's professional practice guidelines for floodplain mapping.
- First Nations, local governments and organizations such as the BC. Real Estate Association have called for updated floodplain mapping in BC for many years.
- Engagement toward the BC Flood Strategy indicated that flood hazards do not stop at municipal boundaries and that it is challenging for communities to coordinate regional scale flood mapping projects.
- The BC Flood Strategy Intentions Paper identifies a priority action for floodplain maps as a key component to understanding risk.
- Provincial floodplain mapping provides basic products for emergency management and regulatory use, but the local government lead for floodplain mapping and development decisions remains unchanged.
- Since 2017, the province has also supported First Nations and local governments to conduct enhanced floodplain mapping through programs like the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Freshet Readiness - Spring 2024

Recommend Response:

- WLRS is taking action to reduce flood impacts across the province this spring, and throughout the year.
- We are working closely with the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) and other provincial and federal partners to support First Nations and local governments as we prepare for spring freshet.
- BC has expanded the operational capacity of the River Forecast Centre; this improves flood forecasting capabilities to meet the increasing demands of longer and more intense flood seasons under climate change.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The River Forecast Centre is producing monthly snow bulletins for watersheds across the province and refining hydrologic models, forecasts and flood advisories.
- This gives us information that local governments and First Nations need to warn residents and coordinate emergency works as waters rise.
- Communication is key to coordination during freshet; the Ministry supports daily coordination calls with First Nations and local governments, and we have developed a Common Operating Picture to share observed flood information.

Key Facts:

- Roles and responsibilities for flood preparedness and response (as well as mitigation and recovery) are outlined in the Provincial Flood Emergency Plan.
- During response, each region coordinates a Flood Assessment Unit, with flood observers and assessors who provide technical information to improve situational awareness and decision making.
- The River Forecast Centre updates hydrologic modelling for major watersheds across the province, such as the Fraser River watershed. Based on the model projections and available data from multiple agencies, the River Forecast Centre issues high streamflow advisories, flood watches and flood warnings.

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- The Flood Safety Section provides water level forecasts for the lower Fraser River and regulatory guidance for local diking authorities on dike management.
- There is a continued strong relationship between provincial staff in regions and local governments, helping resolve issues on the ground.
- WLRS also supports EMCR with forecasts and information for seasonal preparedness workshops prior to freshet, and with updated information on daily response coordination calls, as required.
- EMCR leads inventory/pre-positioning of response assets (e.g., tiger dams, sandbags etc.).
- On the impact of wildfires to flood hazards:
 - Recent wildfires may exacerbate flood related risks, changes to soil and vegetation after wildfires change runoff patterns and snowmelt.
 - River Forecast Centre incorporates wildfire impacts to our models through regular calibration with measured flows. This ensures that forecasts reflect the conditions on the ground and that flood advisories are issued with landscape vulnerability in mind.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Transboundary Flood Initiative

Recommend Response:

- The Transboundary Flood Initiative (TFI) collaborative framework, signed in October 2023, brings together British Columbia (B.C.), Washington State, local and First Nation governments to develop solutions to addressing flood risks and ecosystem restoration in the Sumas and Nooksack River watersheds.
- As partners, the signatories are committed to jointly evaluating flood hazards, share data, and leverage funding opportunities to advance flood mitigation projects on both sides of the transboundary area for our collective benefit.
- Last spring, the Province also signed a collaborative framework with Semá:th, Matsqui and Leq'á:mel First Nations, the Cities of Abbotsford and Chilliwack to develop a flood mitigation plan for the Sumas River watershed. The transboundary process will inform that plan.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The Transboundary Flood Initiative emphasizes a collaborative approach that balances all the important interests and considerations at play in the Nooksack and Sumas River watersheds.
- We are having conversations with the federal government about their participation. We want to see the federal government engaged and strongly supporting funding solutions, following through on their commitments around this area.
- To help protect people, communities, food producers and critical infrastructure in the Fraser Valley's Sumas Prairie from future flood events, the Province has committed \$76.6 million to support critical upgrades to the Barrowtown Pump Station.

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- The Transboundary Flood Initiative (TFI) significantly accomplishes the convening function that an International Joint Commission (IJC) reference would achieve. The TFI governance table model was partly based on models the IJC has used elsewhere.

Key Facts:

- The TFI was initiated by former Premier Horgan and Governor Insley in March 2022. B.C. has a strong relationship with our neighbours in Washington State, and our governments are working closely. Leveraging this relationship is preferred at this stage to an International Joint Commission process in which B.C. parties would have less influence over the timelines and outcomes.
- The TFI includes representatives of nine governments – including B.C. Premier David Eby and Washington Gov. Jay Inslee – and by the Semá:th, Matsqui and Leq'á:mel First Nations, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, Lummi Nation, the City of Abbotsford and Whatcom County. The Technical Table includes federal experts (including Environment and Climate Change Canada, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. National Weather Service, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers). Canada has been invited to observe the policy table.
- The TFI approach is aligned with the new *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* (EDMA) and the draft B.C. Flood Strategy.
- Data sharing and lines of communication between Whatcom County and the B.C. River Forecast Centre have been improved, enabling improved forecasting and advisories to the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness and communities subject to potential Nooksack River overflows into Canada.
- B.C. has already provided more than \$4M to establish the Sumas River Flood Mitigation Collaborative Framework and the parties' participation in the Transboundary Flood Initiative.
- Washington State has committed Government for the third-party facilitator to June 30, 2024, and is currently exploring next steps.
- The Barrowtown Pump Station is a critical piece of infrastructure to the Sumas Prairie's flood-protection system. The pump station was built to pump water out of the low-lying lands (formerly a lake) but was nearly overwhelmed when flood waters breached the Sumas River dike during the atmospheric rivers of 2021.
- With this latest investment to the Barrowtown Pump Station, the Province has provided nearly \$180 million to support regional recovery from the 2021 atmospheric river events to help protect people and communities for years.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 15, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Dike Management – Provincial Role in Diking

Recommend Response:

- Under the *Dike Maintenance Act (DMA)* local diking authorities are responsible for maintenance, repairs, and upgrades to dikes.
- Authorities for most regulated dikes in B.C. date back to when they were constructed, often 50-80 years ago.
- British Columbia (B.C.) supports local diking authorities with dike guidelines, training and access to funding programs as part of our comprehensive approach to flood protection.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Dike systems in B.C. are an important tool in protecting our communities, infrastructure, supply chains and culturally significant sites.

Key Facts:

- In B.C., most river and coastal flood protection infrastructure is regulated under the *DMA*.
- The *DMA*, enacted in 1950, is a key piece of legislation to reduce flood risk in B.C., regulating over one hundred diking authorities that own, operate, and maintain over 1,100 km of dikes and other flood infrastructure in B.C.
- The *DMA* provides the Inspector of Dikes (or Deputies) with the authority to establish flood infrastructure standards, monitor management of works, approve changes to dikes and new dikes, and issue orders respecting flood hazard planning.
- A recent misconception in media is that the B.C. downloaded responsibility for dikes to local governments in 2003, which is not the case. A 2003 amendment to the *DMA* gave the responsibility of approving subdivisions, bylaws and variances on floodplains to local governments, but did not change long-established diking authorities.
- The overall cost to upgrade all high consequence Lower Mainland dikes to current standards is estimated at roughly \$7B to \$14B. Most of the high consequence dikes are located in the Lower Mainland.
- Since 2017, the Province has approved approximately \$246M toward over 1900 disaster risk reduction projects for local governments and First Nations. This includes approximately \$181M for over 440 flood risk reduction projects throughout B.C.
- Given the high cost of dike upgrades and related impacts in a changing climate (e.g., land acquisition, operating/maintenance costs), a combination of

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investments in flood protection and work directed towards flood accommodation, risk avoidance, and community-led retreat, can contribute to broader resiliency.

- Decisions on floodplains and local approaches to flood risk reduction are stronger when informed and directed by the relationships and values at the community-level, with support and guidelines from the Province.
- Vulnerabilities ahead of the 2024 freshet include many dikes not meeting current design standards (province-wide), changes in stream channel morphology causing new flow patterns, sediment and debris build up, fire impacted watersheds, orphan/unregistered dikes and poorly maintained dikes.

Date Prepared/Revised: 2024/02/08

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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ADVICE TO MINISTER

**CONFIDENTIAL
ISSUES NOTE**

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship
Date: Feb. 8, 2024
Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen

Dikes and Flood Management

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- We know people are concerned about flood risks, after November 2021's extensive flooding highlighted the importance of flood preparedness.
- We continue to work with local governments, First Nations and other partners to implement a broad range of flood risk reduction options, including investments in dikes.
- Diking is one important piece in how we are reducing flood risk to our communities, critical infrastructure and culturally significant sites.
- Under the Dike Maintenance Act, local diking authorities are responsible for the maintenance, repair, and upgrade of dikes; this has been the case since the dikes were built, often decades ago.
- We continue to improve our support for local diking authorities with updated guidelines, training, and funding programs.

Additional Flood Management:

- We've heard from communities that the current approach isn't working – that's why we're developing a B.C. Flood Strategy with a new vision for flood risk reduction.
- In addition to supporting economic resilience, we are supporting an increase in the use of nature-based infrastructure.
- We are updating our flood infrastructure guidelines to work more closely with nature and supporting community organizations investing in healthy watersheds.
- We are also using federal cost-matching dollars to improve flood hazard mapping in areas that do not currently have adequate maps.

- **This is critical for decision-making on land use planning, infrastructure investment, emergency preparedness and response, and other areas.**
- **Actions on Areas Impacted in 2021 Atmospheric Rivers:**
 - **We have been working proactively and collaboratively with communities and First Nations impacted by the 2021 atmospheric river to address the risk of future flood events.**
 - **We are working with communities in the Nicola Valley, Princeton area and Fraser Valley to provide authorizations and funding to reduce flood vulnerabilities, such as:**
 - **dike repairs,**
 - **erosion mitigation,**
 - **hydrological surveys,**
 - **riverbank restoration, and**
 - **critical infrastructure repairs.**
- **With funding and technical support from the Province, the City of Abbotsford continues to make permanent repairs and plan upgrades to the flood damaged Sumas Prairie dike.**
- **We also assist communities with flood response across many Ministries by providing sandbags and other flood control assets, as well as coordinating provincial resources such as flood assessment flights and BC Wildfire Service crews.**
- **Since 2017, the Province has approved approximately \$246 million toward over 1900 disaster risk reduction projects throughout B.C.; Roughly \$181 million of which was focused on over 440 projects that reduce our flood risk.**

If asked about orphan dikes:

- **We are committed to working closely with local governments and First Nations to identify and implement a broad range of flood risk reduction solutions in areas with orphan dikes, including dike repairs, as guided by an integrated plan.**
- **Orphan dikes are flood protection structures with no registered owner inspecting and maintaining them.**
- **Many of these structures were built during emergencies and although they may provide some flood protection, they were not professionally engineered to be permanent.**

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- **There are at least 100 orphan works in the province and these total more than 85 kilometres in length. These works protect at least 6,000 hectares of land and more than 2,500 buildings in 75 communities.**

KEY FACTS:

Following the November 2021 atmospheric river event, there has been more attention and demand for action on dike maintenance and flood strategy.

BACKGROUND:

On October 21, 2022, the Ministry of Forests released an Intentions Paper toward a B.C. Flood Strategy on October 21, 2022, that focused on specific actions to mitigate flooding. The Intentions Paper provides discussion points about improved assessment, decision making, preparedness and response, and crucial investments to safeguard communities.

Demand for the Provincial government to take back responsibility of dike management has come up repeatedly since the November 2021 event. Authorities for most regulated dikes in B.C. date back to when they were constructed, decades ago – this placed authority for inspection and maintenance with local diking authorities, with costs for design and construction often shared across local, provincial, and federal levels.

A 2003 amendment to the Dike Management Act is often cited as the time diking authority was downloaded to the local level; however, this didn't change diking authorities, but gave the responsibility of approving subdivisions, floodplain bylaws and variances to local governments. This shift in decision making on floodplains was requested from the local government level at the time.

Experiences from across B.C. and around the world have shown that decisions on floodplains and local approaches to flood risk reduction are stronger when informed and directed by the relationships and values at the community-level, with support and guidelines from the Province

Opportunities to advance disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation in B.C. are being explored through Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy and B.C. Flood Strategy, and the recently passed Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA).

Costing on Dike Upgrades

Costing dike upgrades is dependent on many variables, but it is estimated to range from \$7-14 Billion for high-consequence dikes in the Lower Mainland alone. Given the high cost of dike upgrades and related impacts in a changing climate (e.g., land acquisition, operating/maintenance costs), a combination of investments in flood protection alongside work toward flood accommodation, risk avoidance and community-led retreat can contribute to broader resiliency.

Dike Inspections

Under the DMA and the current flood governance model in B.C., local Diking Authorities are responsible for inspections, maintenance, repairs, and leading upgrades to dikes. Ministry staff meet with Diking Authorities on-site for a variety of reasons throughout the year, such as dike inspection training, compliance/enforcement and reviews, or at the request for support from a Diking Authority.

The Province works with Diking Authorities to foster a collaborative environment and encourage corrective actions prior to issuing an order. Historically, DMA orders have been used to stop

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works and activities that would negatively impact the dike, or to enable the Diking Authority to perform their dike related duties when there is land ownership or right-of-way issues. Before escalating to an Order, a compliance letter is generally issued to a Diking Authority, which often resolves a problem without an Order. Compliance letters are issued more frequently than Orders, with the most recent being September 2023 in Delta to repair a dike.

Media Interest: Following the November 2021 atmospheric river event, the Province was criticized in the media for overall lack of preparedness, inferior flood mitigation infrastructure and slow emergency response. Media attention on the Province's flood preparedness remains high to this day, particularly during the winter months.

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Program contact	Andrew Giles, Manager, River Forecast & Flood Safety	778-974-4535
File created	Date: Feb. 8, 2024	
File updated	Date	

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Orphan Dikes

Recommend Response:

- During emergencies and throughout the year, staff with the WLRs and Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) work closely with local governments and First Nations on flood management issues, including repairs to both regulated and orphan dikes.
- British Columbia (B.C.) is committed to working closely with local governments to identify and implement a broad range of flood risk reduction solutions in areas with orphan dikes, including dike repairs, as guided by an integrated plan.
- In 2020, FOR commissioned a risk assessment of B.C.'s orphan dikes that provides information on the condition of over 100 "registered" orphan dikes. This information has been shared with local authorities and helps guide flood preparedness, response and mitigation activities.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Individual orphan dikes vary in their history of development, land ownership, construction standard, values protected, and level of flood protection.
- If there is an imminent risk, a local government may request financial support for temporary emergency works from the Province via an Expense Authorization Form to EMCR.
- B.C. also continues to invest in flood planning and mitigation work, including new investments in Budget 2023 toward disaster mitigation and further extending the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF).

Key Facts:

- Orphan dikes are flood protection structures with no registered local owner inspecting and maintaining them.
- Many of these structures were built during emergencies and although they may provide some flood protection, they were not professionally engineered to be

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permanent. Also, many have unclear land tenure, downstream impacts and limited First Nations engagement in the flood protection decision.

- In addition to orphan dikes, there are also numerous berms and erosion control structures built by property owners and others, often without the knowledge of the province.
- There are at least 100 orphan works in the province and these total more than 85 kilometres in length. These works protect at least 6,000 hectares of land and more than 2,500 buildings in 75 communities. Approximately 60 are considered dikes that should be regulated under the *Dike Maintenance Act*. Most of these works are in rural areas outside of the Lower Mainland.
- Under the *Dike Maintenance Act*, local diking authorities are responsible for maintenance, repairs, and upgrades to dikes.
- The province provides guidance through the Dike Design Guidelines and support for diking authorities in the application of the Dike Maintenance Act.
- EMCR Policy 5.12 stipulates that if temporary flood protection works are needed, they are to be dismantled following the emergency.
- Also, the 2010 Ministry of Forests policy “Diking Authorities for New Dikes”, provides that construction of new dikes, including upgrading of existing orphan works, will only be approved where the local government has agreed to accept ownership, operation and maintenance responsibilities.
- According to the 2020 Risk Assessment of Orphan Dikes in B.C., the estimated costs to upgrade registered orphan dikes to provincial standards is estimated at \$865M..

Date Prepared/Revised: 2024/02/09

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Alternate Contact for Issue

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Development of a Coastal Marine Strategy

Recommend Response:

- The ocean holds great promise for building British Columbia's (BC) economy and improving the well-being of coastal communities, yet BC lacks marine specific policy and legislation to take advantage of this opportunity.
- Subject to final approvals, BC's first ever Coastal Marine Strategy (Strategy)
- outlines a phased approach for actions that government can take to further develop our blue economy, foster community resilience, adapt to climate change, and contribute substantively to reconciliation with First Nations.
- With a 20-year outlook, the Strategy supports existing marine related initiatives and fills critical gaps in our policy response to increasing pressures on the Pacific coast.

Additional Response points:

- Public, stakeholder, and First Nations' feedback on the Coastal Marine Strategy Intentions Paper showed substantial alignment and broad support for the vision and proposed policy direction.
- The Ministry has been working closely with First Nations partners to co-develop the content of a draft Strategy, which government anticipates finalizing and launching later in 2024. This would fulfill the government's mandate letter commitment from 2022.

Key Facts:

Background and Context:

- BC's ocean-based economy contributes approximately eight percent of the province's GDP (\$21.5B annually) and directly employs 131,000 people full time. Three-quarters of BC's population lives in over 200 communities across the coast.

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- First Nations have a deep-rooted relationship with the ocean, which still serves as a primary source of food. Many have identified territories that include the marine environment.
- BC's coastal marine areas are biologically diverse and home to iconic wildlife such as wild Pacific salmon, killer whales, coastal wolves, and many other birds, mammals, fishes and invertebrates.
- Given the close connection BC residents have with the ocean and the importance it has in terms of BC's cultural identity, the Province committed to develop a Strategy.
 - This commitment is included in the mandate letters to Minister Nathan Cullen, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, and Parliamentary Secretary Kelly Greene, Fisheries and Aquaculture.
- The Strategy focusses on accountabilities under provincial jurisdiction (i.e. submerged Crown land and the foreshore). Where there is strategic interest, the Strategy includes actions to address issues under federal jurisdiction, such as fisheries and marine transportation.
- Strategy implementation will be phased over 20 years; pending approval and launch of the Strategy, ministry staff will co-develop an implementation plan that outlines how the provincial and First Nations governments will work together.

First Nations Engagement:

- Ministry staff continue to collaborate with First Nations and Indigenous organizations through a process that reflects distinct rights and interests.
- This “multiple pathways” approach included letters, webinars, interviews, direct meetings and work with existing governance tables to foster participation.
- Sixty-five Nations with identified territories that include a marine component have contributed to the draft Strategy. An Indigenous Youth and Young Professionals Summit in March 2023 brought Indigenous youth into the policy development discussions.

Stakeholder, Local Government, and Government Engagement:

- Over 50 stakeholder groups and 11 of 17 Coastal Regional Districts have participated in several information sessions, with some participating in a Strategy Policy Forum in March 2023.
- The federal government is engaged through formal bilateral governance structures (the Ocean Coordinating Committee and the Pacific Region Committee on Ocean Management). Various agencies/ departments participated in information sessions and commented on the Intentions Paper.
- WLRS staff continue to engage other Ministries to clarify where interests overlap; this includes the Ministries of Forests; Agriculture and Food; Environment and Climate Change Strategy; and Jobs, Economic Development, and Innovation, among others.
- Ministry staff supported MLA-hosted public open house events in Prince Rupert, Campbell River, Richmond, and Victoria in Spring 2023.

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Fiscal Implications:

- WLRS will look to leverage national spending to the extent possible. For example, under the Project for Finance Permanence funding model, Canada committed approx. \$200M for Indigenous-led conservation in the Great Bear Sea.

Date Prepared/Revised: January 30, 2024

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Issue: Coastal Marine Planning Initiatives

Recommend Response:

- The Province of British Columbia (B.C) has made substantive progress on integrated marine planning along the coast, complementing our extensive terrestrial planning work.
- Current initiatives, including South Coast pre-planning through Marine Spatial Planning in southern B.C. (MSP-South), implementation of the Marine Protected Area Network (MPAn), and continued implementation of the Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP), are helping us to proactively plan for the future, support economic development and environmental sustainability, and contribute to lasting and meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.
- B.C. is committed to continuing the important marine planning work underway, in partnership with First Nations and the federal government.

Key Facts:

- There are several marine planning processes currently underway in B.C. in different stages of development and implementation.
- **MaPP:** a co-led initiative between the Province (represented by WLRS) and 17 partner First Nations, developed four sub-regional marine plans covering the marine waters from approximately Bute Inlet/ Quadra Island to the B.C.-Alaska border including Haida Gwaii (an area known as *the Northern Shelf Bioregion or NSB*).
 - The MaPP plans were approved in 2015 with implementation agreements signed in 2016.
 - Implementation of MaPP is being carried out under a public-private partnership model. Since 2019, B.C. provided \$5.2M in funding to MaPP partner Nations to support their capacity and operational needs. BC committed an additional \$1.5M for fiscal year 2022/23, and \$1.8M for both 2023/2024 and 2024/2025. Since 2015, MaPP has also received \$18M from philanthropic sources to enable early implementation and provide a bridge to securing provincial support.
 - In 2021, MaPP received an inaugural B.C. Reconciliation Award from the B.C. Achievement Foundation in partnership with the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of B.C., and more recently was endorsed as a project

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under the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

- In the same geographic area, B.C., 15 First Nations, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) completed the **MPA Network Action Plan** in February 2023.
 - The MPA Network will bolster the level and scope of protection in the region and include federally regulated activities such as fisheries management. This process has been underway for close to a decade, guided by the *Canada-British Columbia Marine Protected Area Network Strategy* jointly agreed to and released in 2014.
 - The MPA Network partners are now at various stages of working towards implementing the Network recommendations at the site level which will see 25% protection by 2025 and 30% by 2030.
- B.C.s also partnering with multiple First Nations, the federal government, and philanthropic donors to improve stewardship of the NSB by advancing marine conservation initiatives led by First Nations through a \$60M grant to be administered by Coast Funds and will support marine initiatives of MaPP and the MPA Network.
- The MPA Network recently received a 2023 B.C. Premier's Award in the category of Regional Impact.
- WLRS is also engaged with the First Nations Fisheries Council and DFO on the **MSP-South program** covering the Strait of Georgia and Southern Shelf bioregions:
 - A Letter of Understanding between the parties was completed in Summer 2022 and sets out principles and structures for working together, as well as the expected scope and outcomes for the process.
 - DFO is the lead on this initiative, inclusive of securing necessary budgets, while WLRS secured \$125k per year for its participation, as one of the Tier 1 (funded) Modernized Land Use Planning projects. With this funding, one dedicated WLRS staff person is assigned to this file with the remainder supporting pre-planning deliverables.
- Given the integrated nature of coastal marine planning, this work touches on the mandates and interests of multiple ministries. WLRS remains the provincial lead for advancing this work, but works with:
 - The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (specifically BC Parks) on designation of coastal marine areas for long-term protection; and
 - The Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation on overarching collaborative governance agreements; and other related reconciliation efforts.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2024

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

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Issue: Provincial Investments in the Great Bear Sea and Project Financing for Permanence

Recommend Response:

- In December 2023, the Province announced a \$60-million grant to Coast Funds to support the development of a Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) initiative for the Great Bear Sea (GBS) in conjunction with contributions from the Government of Canada and third-party investors.
- This GBS PFP utilizes a conservation financing model that will provide stable, long-term funding to support First Nations' capacity to continue co-leading stewardship initiatives in the area, including the implementation of the Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP) and the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network Action Plan and will support the goal of protecting 30 percent of marine areas by 2030.
- This provincial grant to Coast Funds also signals early action in the development of a Coastal Marine Strategy and is part of a progressive, integrated approach to enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem health in British Columbia, which also includes \$150M to establish a new Conservation Financing Mechanism (CFM) and a \$500M commitment from both provincial and federal governments to a Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation.

Additional Response points:

- The GBS PFP is modelled after the successful outcomes of the Great Bear Rainforest (GBR) financing model. As one of the original financial contributors to the GBR, the Province is strengthening a model that has seen First Nations already invest \$109 million in 439 conservation, sustainable energy, and economic development projects that have created over 1,250 jobs since 2008.

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Key Facts:

- Current Partner First Nations, the Government of Canada, and the Government of British Columbia (collectively “the Parties”) share the goal of advancing Indigenous-led conservation, stewardship, and sustainable community and economic development, supported by sufficient and durable funding, as a pathway to delivering positive outcomes for ecosystems, communities, and economies throughout the Great Bear Sea.
- Recognizing the interconnectedness of these goals, and the time-bound opportunity to develop a PFP closing agreement, the Parties established a GBS PFP Table in July 2023, developed a Term Sheet that was signed in January 2024 and are working towards securing a closing agreement by June 2024.
- The GBS PFP Closing Agreement will encompass a number of multilateral and bilateral agreements and commitments including co-governance agreements, grant agreements, and fund governance arrangements. The closing conditions defined in the Term Sheet are intended to reflect the interconnected discussions taking place at multiple tables with varying authorities and mandates.
- To date, the federal government has committed \$800M across four PFPs in Canada – one of them being the GBS PFP – total amounts have not yet been allocated but are anticipated to be in range of \$200M per PFP.
- Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

- Throughout the negotiations, WLRS will continue to represent BC’s interests at the PFP Table and seek input and approval from other Ministries (primarily ENV and IRR) at key decision points throughout the proceedings of the PFP Table.
- Current Partner First Nations of the GBS PFP include: Coastal First Nations – Great Bear Initiative, Council of Haida Nation, Kitasoo/Xai'xais Nation, Nuxalk Nation, Heiltsuk Nation, Wuikinuxv Nation, Mamalilikulla Nation, Tlowitsis Nation, Da'naxda'xw Awaetlala First Nation, Wei Wai Kum First Nation, K'omoks First Nation, Gitga'at First Nation, Gitxaala Nation, Haisla Nation, Kitselas First Nation, Kitsumkalum First Nation, and Metlakatla First Nation.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 2, 2024

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

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Issue: Salmon Aquaculture Policy and Decisions

Recommend Response:

- Since June 2022, the Province follows the Salmon Aquaculture Policy when considering new or amended salmon farming tenures.
- This policy requires operators to have agreements with First Nations in whose territory they intend to operate, as well as meet all federal aquaculture licensing conditions that assure protection to the health of wild salmon.
- This approach provides clarity to industry and outlines our expectations for a sustainable industry that protects wild salmon, embraces reconciliation, and provides good jobs for local communities.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The Salmon Aquaculture Policy is in recognition that First Nations have the abilities and rights to determine their own level of risk and opportunity of the sector.
- The provincial government is dedicated to meaningful engagement with First Nations as demonstrated by this policy, the work done in the Broughton, and *Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)*.
- Many operators already have agreements with several partnering First Nations. Some First Nations do not have these agreements in place and have decided to decommission sites within their territories.

If asked about the federal government's 2025 Transition Plan from open-net pen salmon farming in BC.:

- The federal government is currently deciding how they will manage the sector and the remaining salmon farming licences in the province as part of a 2025 Net-Pen Transition Plan.
- We remain committed to engaging with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in the development of their 2025 Net-Pen Transition plan.

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- We are concerned about the broader economic pressures facing coastal communities and call on the Government of Canada to take a comprehensive approach to support transition for industries, communities, and workers.
- We have asked DFO to include socio-economic considerations in any transition plan, uphold their responsibilities to First Nations, and create a realistic plan given the importance of this decision to coastal communities and First Nations.
- We are supportive of federal efforts to take the time to get this right.

Key Facts:

- On June 20, 2018, the Province announced new conditions for the disposition of Crown land for salmon aquaculture (Salmon Aquaculture Policy) that replaced the “pause” announced in the 2015 bulletin. These new conditions came into effect for new and replacement tenures as of June 2022.
- Under this policy, several First Nations have signed or continued benefit agreements with operators as part of tenure approvals. Others, including Shíshálh (eight sites), have decided to seek removals of tenures that required renewals.
- In general, the sector is moving toward a state where salmon net-pen tenures are located in areas with explicit agreement of the Nation in whose territory they operate.
- Federal Minister, Diane LeBouthillier, has replaced Joyce Murray as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and is tasked with steering the 2025 Net-Pen Transition Plan that was a 2019 federal platform commitment.
- The Province has met with DFO at various levels to engage with them and share provincial priorities around any net-pen transition plan.
- The Plan has undergone three phases which focused on information sharing and directed dialogue in the first two which DFO used to draft a ‘what we heard report.’ Phase Three occurred over the summer and the report was used to explore targeted discussion and solutioning with opponents and proponent groups. Phase Four is intended to continue consultations to address specific concerns and perspectives that can be incorporated into the final transition plan.
- DFO staff have indicated that Phase Four planning and tasks are ongoing, and the component may run into the early new year of 2024. DFO staff have further indicated that there has been little movement with respect to views and positions of the groups as a result of the engagement.
- Intergovernmental Communications
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- A table containing all current salmon aquaculture tenures is included in Appendix 1.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2023

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

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Issue: Wild Salmon Strategy in Action

Recommend Response:

- The Province remains focused on implementing the Wild Salmon Strategy in Action and building on successes and partnerships in recent years.
- Wild salmon values are being integrated into the Watershed Security Strategy and Coastal Marine Strategies that are being co-developed with First Nations.
- BC continues to work with partners from other governments and First Nations to ensure that wild salmon are restored and protected throughout their lifecycle.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- BC has partnered with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) to deliver the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF).
- We have invested an additional \$42.85M, totalling nearly \$86M, in BCSRIF, making it the largest provincial financial commitment to protect wild salmon in the past 20 years.
- Last year, we granted an additional \$15M to the Pacific Salmon Foundation and First Nations Fisheries Council to help them continue their important salmon recovery work in communities across this province.
- *The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act* Action Plan outlines an action for wild salmon and committed BC to developing a wild salmon strategy with Indigenous peoples. To fulfill this commitment, BC has been working with the First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC) to explore a tripartite collaboration between DFO, BC and First Nations.

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Key Facts:

- The Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) has a mandate to continue implementing BC's Wild Salmon Strategy in Action and work with the federal government to double the BCSRIF.
- DFO manages the estimates of salmon stocks based on many variables including previous years returns, estimates of spawning stock, environmental conditions over the lifespan of returning stocks, and other factors. B.C. does not manage the stock status estimates for salmon, except for steelhead.
- The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) currently lists 3 populations of wild Pacific Salmon as extinct, 24 endangered, 10 threatened, 9 of special concern and 11 not at risk, and many more have not yet been assessed.
- Each year, DFO provides a salmon outlook in January and more detailed estimate of returns expected that year in the spring (typically April).
- The overall outlook for most Pacific salmon stocks in 2024 will be generally poor and like 2023, and 2022, which were among the lowest on record. There are some mixed signals for 2024 returns, however some stocks are showing more positive returns (Appendix 1 DFO 2024 Salmon Outlook).
- Salmon returns in 2024 will be highly variable, with an overall continued trend of reduced productivity, especially for southern salmon populations and chinook in most areas.
- B.C. is addressing wild salmon through the Watershed Security Strategy. The Watershed Security Strategy will address management of water and watersheds and can be driven in part by a wild salmon value.
- The Coastal Marine Strategy will also address issues that affect wild salmon survival in the marine environment such as estuary protection.
- The *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act* Action Plan committed BC to developing a wild salmon strategy with Indigenous peoples. To fulfill this commitment, B.C. has been working with the FNFC to develop a tripartite agreement between DFO, BC and FNFC.

- 2018:
 - Launched the Wild Salmon Advisory Council (WSAC) that developed recommendations to support healthy and abundant wild salmon and inform the approach to the Wild Salmon Strategy in Action.
- 2019:
 - Announced a \$42.85M investment in the BCSRIF jointly with DFO (70 percent federal, 30 percent provincial funds).
 - Partnered with First Nations and the salmon farming industry to develop the Broughton Aquaculture Transition Plan.
 - Developed the Salmon Aquaculture Policy that recognized the role of First Nations decision-making (effective June 2022).
 - Provided \$5M funding to the Pacific Salmon Foundation.
 - Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the FNFC.

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- 2020:
 - Released an update on the progress implementing WSAC strategies.
 - Appointed a Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Aquaculture.
 - Announced Healthy Watersheds Initiative \$27M fund.
- 2021:
 - Started work on the Watershed Security Strategy and Coastal Marine Strategies.
 - Nominated a provincial commissioner to the Pacific Salmon Commission
- 2022:
 - Created the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship.
 - Doubled the \$142.85M BCSRIF in partnership with DFO.
 - Appointed the Parliamentary Secretary for Watershed Restoration.
 - Released the *Declaration Act* Action Plan 2022–2027 (action 2.9)
- 2023:
 - Approved a renewed MOU with the FNFC that includes salmon work.
 - \$15M grant to PSF for collaboration with the FNFC.
 - Renewed the MOU with FNFC with capacity funding.
 - Restructured WLRS and Forests to put decision-making authorities under WRLS, completing the “home for salmon.”
 - Advancing *Declaration Act* Action Plan 2.9 through Trilateral Approach with First Nations and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Attachments: Appendix 1 – Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s summary of the Preliminary Outlook for salmon stocks returning in 2024.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 5, 2024

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

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Appendix 1 – Fisheries and Oceans Canada’s (DFO’s) summary of the Preliminary Outlook for salmon stocks returning in 2024, with definition of the outlook categories used. These summary data were provided in January, and stock status updates will be provided later in 2024.

Table1: DFO’s 2024 Outlook Summary

Yukon/Transboundary	North Coast/Central Coast	South Coast	Fraser River/BC Interior
Chinook	Chinook	Chinook	Chinook
ALSEK CHINOOK 3	CENTRAL COAST CHINOOK 2	LOWER GST CHINOOK 4	FRASER FALL RUN 41 CHINOOK 2 4
PORCUPINE CHINOOK 1	HAIDA GWAII CHINOOK Data Deficient	MAINLAND INLET CHINOOK Data Deficient	FRASER SPRING RUN 42 CHINOOK 2
STIKINE CHINOOK 1	NASS CHINOOK 2	MIDDLE GST CHINOOK 2 4	FRASER SPRING RUN 52 CHINOOK 2
TAKU CHINOOK 2	SKEENA CHINOOK 2	UPPER GST CHINOOK 3 to 4	FRASER SUMMER RUN 41 CHINOOK 1 4
YUKON CHINOOK 1		WCVI CHINOOK 1 4	FRASER SUMMER RUN 52 CHINOOK 2
	Chum	Chum	Chum
	CENTRAL COAST CHUM 2 DD	INNER SOUTH COAST CHUM 1 to 2	OKANAGAN CHINOOK 1
	HAIDA GWAII CHUM 1		
	SKEENA/NASS CHUM 1 2 3	WCVI CHUM 2	
		Coho	Coho
	CENTRAL COAST COHO Data Deficient	JST/MAINLAND INLET COHO 3	FRASER CHUM 2
	HAIDA GWAII COHO Data Deficient	STRAIT OF GEORGIA COHO 3	INTERIOR FRASER COHO 2
		WCVI COHO 3	LOWER FRASER COHO Data Deficient
		Pink	Pink
	NASS COHO 4	ECVI/MAINLAND PINK- EVEN 2 to 3	FRASER PINK - ODD na
	SKEENA COHO 3 DD	ECVI/MAINLAND PINK - ODD na	
		WCVI PINK Data Deficient	Sockeye
			FRASER SOCKEYE - EARLY STUART 1
	Pink		FRASER SOCKEYE - EARLY SUMMER 1 2 4
	CENTRAL COAST PINK 2 to 3		FRASER SOCKEYE - LATE 1
	HAIDA GWAII PINK 2 to 3		FRASER SOCKEYE - SUMMER 1 2 3
	NASS PINK 3 to 4		OKANAGAN SOCKEYE 3
	SKEENA PINK 3 to 4		
		Sockeye	
	CENTRAL COAST SOCKEYE 2	ECVI/MAINLAND SOCKEYE 2	
	HAIDA GWAII SOCKEYE 2	WCVI - BARKLEY SOCKEYE 2 3	
	NASS SOCKEYE 4	WCVI - OTHER SOCKEYE Data Deficient	
	RIVERS/SMITH SOCKEYE 1		
	SKEENA SOCKEYE 2		

Table 2: Categories used to assess outlook status.

Outlook Category	CUs or SMUs with references		Data Limited CUs or SMUs	
	Wild Salmon Policy (CU Level)	Precautionary Approach (SMU Level)	Category Definition	Expected spawning abundance
1	Red Zone (i.e. below the LBB)	Critical Zone (i.e. below the LRP)	Well below average	<25 th percentile
2	Amber Zone (i.e. below the LBB, below the UBB)	Cautious Zone (i.e. above the LRP below the USR)	Below Average	25 to 40 th percentile
3	Green Zone (i.e. above the UBB)	Healthy Zone (i.e. above the USR)	Near Average	40 to 60 th percentile
4	Green Zone (i.e. at or above the TRP)	Healthy Zone (at or above the TRP)	Abundant	>60 th percentile
Data Deficient			Insufficient information	Unknown

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Issue: Wild Steelhead

Recommend Response:

- The Province of British Columbia (BC) has identified 36 distinctive groups of wild steelhead.
- Like pacific salmon populations, most are declining.
- Conserving and recovering wild steelhead is a priority.
- We recognize that steelhead recovery is complex. That is why BC is working across governments and partners to build coordinated actions across the full range of threats.
- Primary mortality factors are low ocean survival, predation, and bycatch in fisheries. It now also includes habitat impacts due to climate-based disasters (e.g. drought).
- Resourcing for steelhead management is integrated into base budgets, along with additional project-specific funds, including the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund.

Additional Response Points:

If asked about steelhead, at imminent risk of extirpation:

- For populations at extreme risk, BC wants to reduce all human-caused mortality to retain a base wild population to recover from.

If asked about steelhead hatcheries:

- There are currently nine steelhead hatcheries operating on eight rivers; only where they don't put wild steelhead at risk.
- Due to the complex life history of steelhead, the use of hatcheries for conservation is historically unsuccessful.

If asked about Skeena and Interior Fraser steelhead bycatch

- Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has taken action to reduce bycatch mortality; however, BC continues to request more conservation measures due to continued extremely low population levels.

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Key Facts:

- While there are an estimated 36 distinct steelhead groups, these are further divided into 427 wild steelhead populations in BC.
- Steelhead are found in more than 440 streams across BC, but there is limited population monitoring information on stocks that are remote or haven't supported a fishery. Monitoring focused on stocks with fisheries to ensure BC's statutory decisions on fishing openings/closures were based on robust data.
- Wild stock status is determined by comparing current spawners with historic:
 - "Routine Management Zone" (RMZ) = at least 30 percent of historic.
 - "Conservation Concern Zone" (CC) = 10 percent to 30 percent of historic.
 - "Extreme Conservation Zone" (ECC) = less than 10 percent of historic.
 - "Special Concern" (SC) = stocks not well documented but believed to be low.
- Wild Steelhead are highly resilient with high recovery potential. They carry many eggs, some spawn twice, and they vary time spent in freshwater/ marine.
- The British Columbia Salmon Restoration Innovation Fund has steelhead projects in Phase 2 (2023-26) at \$15.15M. E.g.:
 - The Shuswap Nation Tribal Council received \$1.3M to work on freshwater habitat threats facing wild salmon and steelhead.
 - The "Skeena River Fish Trap Project" got nearly \$2.3M to assess harvesting salmon while reducing bycatch mortality.
 - The Nootka Sound Watershed Society will continue the "Watershed Restoration Solutions for Gold River Steelhead" with \$1.1M.
 - More than \$5M will fund the Scw'exmx Tribal Council for their "Post Flood Support for Fish and Fish Habitat Recovery in the Nicola Watershed".
- Wild steelhead priorities are being incorporated into strategic initiatives, such as the Watershed Security Strategy, Coastal Marine Strategy, Salmon Strategy, and Emergency Response Planning (flood, fire, drought).
- BC is participating in the renegotiation of the Pacific Salmon Treaty to advocate for greater inclusion of steelhead into the implementation of the treaty.
- ROLES:
 - (WLRS leads steelhead population management, fisheries, conservation, and recovery planning. We also lead cross-government collaborations with First Nations and Canada.
 - WLRS sets all steelhead fishing regulations and manages other freshwater fisheries to include conservation measures for steelhead where needed.
 - Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy enforces fisheries regulations and prosecutes through the Conservation Officer Service.
 - The Federal Government, through DFO, is responsible to protect steelhead in federally authorized salmon fisheries.

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Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2024

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Fisheries and Aquaculture 2024 Outlook

Recommend Response:

- The aquaculture and fisheries sectors provide thousands of jobs to British Columbia (B.C.) residents and sustain many Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.
- Continued demand for seafood globally, population growth, and climate change will likely increase the importance and value of fisheries and seafood to B.C. moving forward.
- Increasing uncertainty related to access of the resource combined with some species on declining trends will challenge some of the B.C. seafood sectors.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- B.C.'s seafood sectors are facing increasing levels of uncertainty due to the impacts of climate change, and management decisions being made by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) the agency responsible for marine fisheries management, and aquaculture.

Key Facts:

- WLRS is working with DFO to advocate for fisheries and B.C. based issues.
- WLRS is the lead policy agency for fisheries and aquaculture, and for working with DFO. Since the recent reorganization, WLRS also issues land tenures for aquaculture developments, seafood processing plants, some commercial fishing waterfront infrastructure, and sportfishing lodges.
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Food manages marketing and business development of the seafood industry, and seafood inspection and statistics.
- B.C.'s extensive coastline and unique geography provide for a significant fisheries and seafood industry.
- The aquaculture and fisheries sectors provide thousands of jobs to British Columbians and are specifically important to Indigenous and non-Indigenous rural coastal communities.
- Continued and increasing demand for seafood globally, population growth, and climate change will likely increase the importance and value of fisheries and seafood to B.C. moving forward.

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- First Nations have been participating in fisheries, including shellfish culture, since time immemorial and have been significant participants in B.C. commercial fisheries, primarily in the fishing fleet and as employees in the processing sector and more recently the aquaculture sector.
- Access to marine resources remains important for food, social and ceremonial fisheries, and economic development opportunities for First Nations communities.
- One third of fish harvesting jobs are in First Nations communities. There is growing Indigenous involvement in contemporary aquaculture, with 78 percent of B.C. salmon production in areas covered by partnerships with First Nations who hold approximately 20 percent of the jobs in B.C. associated with salmon farming.
- First Nations are active participants in shellfish aquaculture with increasing interest in the emerging seaweed farming sector. Some First Nations have also established or acquired processing companies with mixed success.
- The 2022 Ahousaht decision that grants a Constitutional right to sell fish for five Nuu-Chah-Nulth First Nations, and other fisheries Indigenous Reconciliation initiatives, will likely change the current market and allocation formulas.

Attachments: Appendix 1 – Species Details

Date Prepared/Revised: «add date»

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Appendix 1 – Species Details

Snapshot of 2024 Seafood Trends

Species	Harvest	Landed Value	Wholesale Value
Wild Salmon	↓	↓	↓
Farmed Salmon	↓	↓	↓
Herring	↔	↔	↔
Halibut	↓	↓	↓
Groundfish	↔	↔	↔
Wild Shellfish	↔	↔	↑
Farmed Shellfish	↔	↔	↔
Marine Plants	↑	↑	↑
Other Species	↔	↔	↑
Total B.C.	↔/↓	↔/↓	↔/↓

B.C. Seafood statistics (Ministry of Agriculture and Food) produces seafood statistics annually which summarizes B.C. seafood trends using three metrics: **Harvest** – the round (whole) weight of fish harvested; **Landed Value** – the price paid to fishers and aquaculturalists; and **Wholesale Value** – Value of fish products after processing which includes imported fish that was processed in B.C. facilities.

Salmon and Finfish Aquaculture:

In 2022, farmed finfish contributed 41 percent of the production (87,000 MT) and 56 percent of the wholesale value (\$1.024B) of B.C. seafood. Within aquaculture, farmed Atlantic salmon are the dominant species group representing 97 percent of the harvest (84,000 MT) and 94.0 percent of the wholesale value (\$973M) and is B.C.’s top agriculture food and seafood export commodity. The landed and wholesale value of farmed salmon in 2022 was \$880M and \$1.204B, respectively. Compared to 2021, these values increased by 25 percent and 32 percent, respectively. Most farmed salmon are Atlantic salmon, with modest amounts of chinook and minor amounts of coho, steelhead and Arctic char. Other finfish species producing minor volumes include sablefish, tilapia, and sturgeon.

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The outlook for the B.C. farmed salmon sector remains tenuous given past and recent policy developments, including the Discovery Island decision, the removal of farms from the Broughton Archipelago the ongoing Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada's 2025 Net Pen Transition Initiative, and the Provincial moratorium (Order in Council 174) from 2008 prohibiting the disposition of crown land in tidal waters for finfish aquaculture on the North Coast.

On February 17, 2023, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada announced that DFO would not reissue 15 marine finfish licenses in the Discovery Islands, citing a need to take a precautionary approach to protect wild salmon. This decision will close approximately 25 percent of the industry in the province and follows a similar reduction in the Broughton Archipelago region.

Additional issues that have resulted in stalled growth and investment of the salmon farming sector include uncertainty over perceived environmental impacts, allocation of Crown land tenures and First Nations' interests. Despite these challenges, the industry had committed to further investment in the sector, which is now uncertain with much investment (in the order of hundreds of millions of dollars) for salmon farming development in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick.

Shellfish Aquaculture:

The dominant farmed shellfish species is oysters, followed by modest production of clams, mussels, and scallops. Demand for B.C. shellfish typically far exceeds supply; however, the growth of the industry is constrained. B.C. set innovation in the shellfish aquaculture industry as one of its priorities for the second intake of the B.C. Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) which resulted in the B.C. Shellfish Growers Association (B.C.SGA) being awarded a \$3.5M sub-fund to provide to various smaller shellfish aquaculture projects in B.C. This funding has gone towards an Innovative Shellfish Handling program for upgrading industry equipment and a Traceability program for shellfish products and gear.

DFO had previously reported a high volume of illegally harvested shellfish being laundered into regular market distribution channels, representing a serious public health risk. DFO has updated the shellfish Conditions of License to assist in the enforcement of proper handling and traceability and continues to work with the industry on traceability.

Commercial Fisheries:

B.C.'s commercial fishing and seafood processing sectors are facing significant uncertainty regarding access. Currently, there are 11 marine planning processes on the B.C. coast at various stages of development and scale. Once implemented, these marine protected areas will significantly restrict access to marine resources and force harvesters to travel further to the grounds or leave the industry. Climate change, ocean

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acidification and hypoxia are also contributing to uncertainty within the sector as species experience increased natural mortality.

Further, it is becoming increasingly common for Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the management agency for fisheries in B.C., to make unexpected or delayed decisions without suitable mitigation strategies which are further described below. Finally, reconciliation objectives set by the governments of Canada and British Columbia provide a level of uncertainty in access and effort on the coast.

'Other' Wild Shellfish:

B.C.'s 'other' wild shellfish fisheries include wild oysters, clams, gooseneck barnacles and swimming scallops. Oyster and clam fisheries are experiencing challenges with poaching and the presence of European green crab. Further, some First Nations are reporting high levels of recreational harvest from tourists coming to harvest clams in their territory. This is impacting their community's ability to harvest traditional foods.

These smaller fisheries face challenges funding their surveys, science, and monitoring as there are not many harvesters, industry is not organized, and this harvest typically takes place in remote areas without quick access to markets. Overall, most wild shellfish stock will likely remain at relatively stable levels again for 2024. The impacts of changing environmental conditions and in particular impacts from climate and ocean acidification, will increase uncertainty in forecast and harvest levels. Market conditions are expected to remain strong.

Shrimp:

Since 2017, there has been a large decline in biomass which resulted in limited fishing opportunity and loss of markets. The fishery is further challenged with market access due to competition from the U.S. and Atlantic Canadian mechanically processed, cheaper products which are Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified. Shrimp biomass is correlated with ocean temperatures, so there will generally be low abundance two years after a warm water event. The 2024 shrimp trawl fishery will remain constrained with many areas' stock biomass being in the critical and cautious zones. Indigenous communities on the North Coast are lobbying DFO for the introduction of eulachon bycatch limits for the North Coast which will impact fisheries in the area. The shrimp trawl industry is currently working with DFO and researchers at the University of British Columbia to improve stock assessment with the goal of opening more areas to shrimp trawling on the coast.

Prawn:

Many harvesters in the prawn sector are turning to domestic markets, selling their prawns direct to consumers and taking home a greater portion of revenue for themselves. The outlook for 2024 is expected to be very similar to 2023. Moving forward, DFO and industry have engaged in standardizing packaging and traceability tagging to resolve previous issues.

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Crab:

The Dungeness crab fishery is one of the most socio-economically important fisheries on the coast. Fishing occurs coast-wide and has one of the highest participation rates, approximately 92 percent of licensed vessels are active. From 2019-2021, Dungeness landings were among some of the largest on record. North Coast fisheries (Areas A and B) account for most Dungeness crab landings. Early in 2024, a large processor of crab in the US that processes a large portion of B.C. crab was destroyed by a fire, so there may be some issues with timely processing of crab during the peak of the fishery. Dungeness crab biomass experienced regular fluctuations in fishable biomass and cannot be accurately forecasted into 2024.

Marine planning initiatives, like the Northern Shelf Bioregion, reconciliation processes, and illegal fishing are creating uncertainty and impeding the success of the Dungeness fishery. Illegal fishing in all crab sectors has now spread coast-wide, but is still largely concentrated on the South Coast.

A recent B.C. Court of Appeal decision (April 2021) has required DFO to reallocate effort (i.e., traps) from Area E on the west coast of Vancouver Island to the Five Nations fishery. Industry was notified of this decision in December 2021 that the commercial trap limits within Area E will be reduced by 50 percent and the commercial harvesters will be forced to divide up this reduced trap limit between its 33 license holders. With high running costs and half of the access to product, most of these small businesses have expressed the inability to continue this season. DFO has expressed that it intends to mitigate and provide license buybacks, leaving the commercial fleet with limited options.

Within further conversations, DFO has heard that the Five Nations will not be equipped to take advantage of the increase in quota immediately upon the start of the new fishing season. DFO has implemented a phased approach that was released after discussion with the Five Nations and Industry. Industry is also in conversation with the Five Nations to discuss potential collaboration of vessel and gear sales as DFO is only discussing the transfer of licenses. DFO released the updated trap limits with the 2022 phased approach and began its buyback program which has left many crab fishers in the area upset as the buyback program is not satisfying their needs.

Wild Pacific Salmon:

The overall outlook for most Pacific salmon stocks in 2024 will be generally poor and like 2023, and 2022, which were among the lowest on record. There are some mixed signals for 2024 returns, with a few bright spots. Thompson and Chilcotin River steelhead populations have reached critical lows and are undergoing Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) reassessment. Several Fraser River bound salmon stocks and steelhead will undergo assessments for potential Federal *Species At Risk Act (SARA)* listing and are stocks of concern. In reaction to low returns, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) launched their \$641M Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI) which included significant conservation closures and plans for restructuring the fleet, as well as rebuilding plans. The flooding in late 2021 remains a

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concern for some returning Fraser salmon in 2024 and may impact future years. The Big Bar rockslide has impeded natural fish passage beyond it, further impacting several salmon species migration in the Fraser River. Like 2021, and 2022 most salmon were able to pass through the Big Bar site unobstructed again in 2023.

Salmon returns in 2024 will be highly variable, with an overall continued trend of reduced productivity, especially for southern salmon populations and chinook in most areas. A key factor is the poor conditions for ocean survival for the sea entry and freshwater rearing years for salmon stocks returning in 2024. Overall warmer sea surface temperatures will be a dominant feature impacting salmon. Also, this will not be a Fraser pink salmon cycle year so there will be little, if any expected Fraser River salmon abundance. This will likely result in more challenges as DFO balances conservation requirements, the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI), and demands for fisheries opportunities for all interests including the US, First Nations, and commercial and sport fishing sectors. There will be limited economic opportunities for all salmon fisheries in the next several years.

- **Sockeye:** Sockeye returns are expected to remain below historical averages in both north and south coastal regions. A relatively large return of Nass is expected, but Skeena sockeye will be low, and there will be very low returns to the Fraser from this group of stocks in 2024. There remains significant uncertainty with these runs. There will likely be very limited economic opportunities for salmon fishermen as a result. Barkley Sound (Somass) sockeye may be average to abundant.
- **Chinook:** Northern and southern populations of chinook salmon are expected to generally produce poor returns. There will be a few bright spots including Fraser River Summer 4 sub1's, and Georgia Strait subunits. Conservation efforts for stocks of concern, reconciliation initiatives for up-river Nations, and further plans for SRKW recovery efforts being considered by DFO may also further limit most commercial and recreational harvest opportunities in 2024.
- **Pink:** 2024 is an even year and therefore not a 'pink year' (odd years see larger returns than even years). Fraser River pink returns are expected to be average. Some Central Coast pink runs could see better than average returns in 2023. Some limited harvest may be available.
- **Coho:** Abundance will remain uncertain and depend on marine survival. Southern coho populations will mostly remain at historic lows for 2024. Harvest restrictions will likely continue. Northern coho populations are expected to be more variable but will likely show declines. Some stocks in the Fraser system are showing signs of improved abundance after years of strict conservation efforts.
- **Chum:** Forecasts are highly uncertain. 2024 is not expected to be as productive as previous years. Poor chum returns are expected in northern systems while southern inside populations may yield some fisheries

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opportunities, despite high stock variability and conservation concerns for other species.

Tuna:

The USA-Canada Albacore Tuna Treaty fishing arrangement has expired. A 3-year roll-over arrangement was agreed to extending from 2020 to 2023 which provided some stability for B.C.'s tuna fishermen. Negotiations to renew fishing arrangements did not result in agreement in 2023, and there were no reciprocal fishing arrangements. Talks are expected to resume in early 2024, but not yet complete. The wholesale value of B.C. albacore tuna products was \$51M in 2021, and \$65M in 2022. Fish behavior in 2021 and 2022 had stocks in Canadian waters for longer, contributing to a productive season. In 2023, albacore tuna behaved differently, the market prices were reported as low, and the harvest was reduced. The harvest from the Canadian zone in 2023 was significantly down, estimated at about 1,100 MT. Catch levels will be uncertain in 2024, dependent on fish distribution, markets and if an agreement is struck. Tuna markets and prices will likely be uncertain.

Herring:

In 2024, the harvest rate was conservatively set at 10 percent, despite the stock science stating that 15 percent harvest rate would meet all conservation objectives. The drop in TAC over the last few years in the Strait of Georgia (SOG) has impacted the commercial fishing industry as well as the seafood processing industry as roe herring is one of the only fisheries that sustains employment through winter months when most other fisheries are closed.

The 2024 TAC for roe herring will remain similar to 2023. Spawn on Kelp (SOK) fisheries were opened for the 2024 season. SOK harvesters also require a Provincial Wild Aquatic Plant Harvest License to harvest the kelp required for their SOK; however, the consultation required with First Nations for harvesting kelp in their traditional territories is a lengthy process that can take longer than the time frame needed to harvest. This timeframe effectively acts as a veto from Nations to not allow SOK fisheries. DFO and B.C. are working together to discuss options for collaborating on efficiencies in this process to allow fisheries to occur.

Hake:

While the 2023 data are not yet finalized, confirmed Canadian hake landings have decreased again from the low in 2022. Data collected through the 2023 fishing season suggests that the 2023 harvest may be at the lowest point in the long-term data series. The decrease is due to lack of recruitment of juvenile hake into the fishery. In 2020 and 2021, the U.S. and Canada were unable to reach an agreement. As part of the Pacific Hake Treaty, the U.S. was advocating for continued high catch levels, and Canada sought a reduction in catch given the long-term status of the stock. Hake stocks are dependent on large recruitment years that bring large harvestable masses of fish that can sustain both countries for years. Large recruitment years occurred in 2014 and

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2017 and the stocks have been decreasing as these are aging out or being caught. This year's negotiations will occur in March 2024.

Halibut:

Halibut stocks are well managed and see expected increases and decreases which inform total catch levels. For the 2024 season, the surveys showed an overall decrease in abundance which resulted in a decrease to the coastwide TAC and Canada's TAC. The 2024 coastwide TAC for Pacific halibut was decreased by 4.57 percent in 2024 after a large decrease of 10.3 percent in 2023. The commercial fishery remains very strong in recent years in B.C. as prices and consumer demand are high. 2024 negotiations resulted in Canada maintaining its proportional share of 18.3 percent of the coastwide catch and both countries took an equal decrease based on the downturn in stock assessment. It is expected that 2025 will see more tense negotiations as they negotiate a new interim agreement with the US pushing for Canada to receive a smaller share.

Other Groundfish:

Groundfish hook and line harvests may show a small decrease or remain stable in 2024 due to navigating area changes due to rockfish conservation concerns, mostly around yelloweye and bocaccio rockfish. Bocaccio rockfish has shown a historic recruitment event that expects to provide enough fish by the 2023 fishing season to satisfy DFO's rebuilding plan and ease pressure on the trawl fisheries. The groundfish trawl outlook is good, however, with similar conservation concerns for some rockfish, including bocaccio rockfish and Arrowtooth flounder. Markets and prices remain strong, and harvest should remain stable through 2024.



ADVICE TO MINISTER

**CONFIDENTIAL
ISSUES NOTE**

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Date: February 26, 2024; UPDATED
Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen

Aquaculture in B.C

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **Wild salmon are critically important to the social, economic and cultural fabric of this province. That's why our government is implementing the Wild Salmon and Watershed Security Strategies, which include protection, restoration and enhancement of wild salmon populations and their habitats.**
- **We also recognize the importance of First Nations' decision making about salmon farming within their territories as well as the federal government's ongoing work to address concerns around this industry in B.C.**
- **While we remain committed to engaging with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) in the development of their 2025 Net-Pen Transition plan with these values in mind, we are concerned about the broader economic pressures facing coastal communities and call on the Government of Canada to take a comprehensive approach to support transition for industries, communities and workers.**

Only if asked – Province's action with Transition Plan

- **We've asked DFO to include socio-economic considerations in any transition plan, given the importance of this decision to coastal communities and First Nations.**
- **We are supportive of federal efforts to take the time to get the Net Pen Transition Plan right. We respect the federal government's authority over aquaculture licensing and acknowledge their recent decision to pause new fish farm licences as well as any increases to existing licensed production while working on the plan's outcomes.**

Only if asked about the Premier's comments regarding the social licence of salmon farming and closed containment technologies

- The Government of Canada has launched development of a transition plan for salmon aquaculture in B.C. The federal approach acknowledges the continued social licence challenges the industry faces with those in B.C. advocating for the withdrawal of open-net pens.
- The federal approach also acknowledges the need to transition from open-net pen systems to new technologies that effectively eliminate interactions between wild and farmed salmon.
- The Premier's comments are reflective of that federal policy direction.
- This kind of a technology transition will take time.
- It is important that a federal transition plan considers the time and supports that allow industry to transition to newer technologies. A transition plan will also need to provide economic supports for coastal First Nations and communities that rely on these industries.
- We also acknowledge that First Nations who have an oversight role over these farms in their territories should have a direct role in determining how this transition should occur.

Only if asked about the herring by-catch mortalities

- We are aware of the recent DFO statistics showing incidental herring bycatch reported in 2022 in Clayoquot sound. We are working with our federal counterparts to investigate the matter further.
- We respect federal jurisdiction in ensuring that aquaculture operations minimize risk to wild fish stocks and the environment.
- We expect these issues to be addressed as part of a responsible DFO Transition Plan, which is committed to minimizing wild-farmed interactions.
- At the same time, we continue to co-develop our Coastal Marine Strategy with First Nations, which will provide a unified vision for our coast and identify opportunities to support coastal First Nations and communities.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

BACKGROUND:

On January 3, 2024, Fisheries and Oceans Canada—the deciding authority on finfish aquaculture in the province—notified all operators in B.C. that they are implementing a pause on new marine finfish aquaculture sites as well as a hold on increases in production at existing fish farms until the direction and outcomes of their Transition Plan of 2025 are clearer.

More than 100 B.C. First Nations support the federal government's plan to transition away from open net pen salmon farms. In contrast, the Coalition of First Nations for Finfish Stewardship advocated that the federal government continue issuing licences for open-net pen salmon operators in territories where there is First Nations consent. The federal Government is expected to continue its transition plan engagement through the fall. The Province's role in finfish aquaculture is to issue tenures under the *Lands Act*, informed by the Salmon Aquaculture Policy. This policy requires proponents to have secured federal licensing and agreements with First Nations in whose territory they intend to operate.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO's) Conditions of Licence for finfish aquaculture include requirements to minimize harm to wild fish that swim into facilities. Facility operators must also maintain an incidental catch log, which is a record of wild fish caught at the facility during harvest and transfer events. This information is submitted to DFO and public reports are posted quarterly.

The Broughton, Discovery Islands, and Sechelt farming site represent nearly half of all finfish aquaculture in the province. The cumulative closure of these sites is expected to impact several coastal First Nations, communities, and supporting businesses that rely on the sector.

While the Province respects the federal government's authority to make decisions on aquaculture licensing, we encourage our federal counterparts to identify and provide a support plan for First Nations, communities and workers that rely on salmon aquaculture for their livelihoods.

DFO is consulting with current salmon farm licence holders about a 2–6 year licence renewal (shorter than industry has asked for) and potential new conditions of licence (such as tougher sea lice thresholds, new tech requirements, area-based management). In February 2024 DFO initiated Phase 4 of their engagement process in developing a transition plan.

Herring by-catch mortalities

The risk of incidental catch of wild herring has been raised as a concern of salmon aquaculture in the Province. It is believed herring may be drawn to net pens in part due to lighting where they may be preyed upon by raised salmon, or captured during certain operations (net cleaning, harvesting, sea lice removal).

Early December 2023, a Clayoquot-based conservation group—Watershed Watch Salmon Society and Clayoquot Action—raised concerns over incidental catch of herring due to hydrolicing operations in Clayoquot Sound. Hydrolicers are ship-based technology that use pressurized water to rinse salmon of sea-lice in lieu of chemical or pharmaceutical treatments.

For 2022, the total reported bycatch was 817,000 fish. The median herring bycatch at any site for a given quarter is four individual fish. The maximum reported bycatch was 332,000 fish for Cermaq Fortune Channel, near Tofino. Eight sites reported quarters with bycatch more than 10,000 fish

which together account for 96% of all reported aquaculture herring bycatch for 2022. All of these were reported in the Clayoquot sound area and are operated by Cermaq.

West Coast Vancouver Island herring stocks have experienced low numbers in recent years, however, have seen an increase in numbers since 2021 and 2022. Due to efforts to rebuild these populations, there have been no herring fisheries openings in this area since 2005.

Cermaq has indicated that the large incidental mortality experienced in 2022 was in part due to elevated herring populations as well as a learning curve in implementing hydrolicizing delousing technology.

They indicate that they identified the issue early on and worked collaboratively with Ahousaht and DFO to shift standard operating procedures through conditions of license and treatments on their farms. They have shared with WLRS that this has resulted in a 32 per cent reduction in treatments as well as incidental mortality being reduced to 43,000 in 2023 versus 813,000 in 2022.

Communications Contact:	Chitra Arcot, PAO, GCPE WLRS	604 209-4043
Program Area Contact:	Mike Turner, Director of Policy (Fisheries, Aquaculture and Wild Salmon Branch: Water, Fisheries and Coastal Policy and Planning Division)	Government
File Created:	23 March 2022	
File Updated:	26 February 2024	

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Issue: B.C. Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund

Recommend Response:

- The protection of wild Pacific salmon is critically important to British Columbia (B.C.)'s environment, history, economy, and way of life. Restoring salmon stocks and the habitat and ecosystems that they rely on are a continued priority for B.C.
- By doubling B.C.'s investment with an additional \$41.99M and extending the timeline to 2026 in the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) total investment in the program is now \$285.7M, showing our ongoing commitment to restoring abundant wild salmon populations.
- On December 14, 2023, I was joined by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), the Honourable Diane Lebovitch to announce \$86M in funding for 58 projects across the province. Since then, nine more projects have been ratified, but are yet to be announced (Appendix A).

Additional Response points (if needed):

- All Phase 1 BCSRIF projects will be completed by March 31, 2024. Currently, 25 projects are complete, but the wider benefits to B.C.'s environment, economy and communities will be reported as the rest of these projects wrap up.
- Indigenous leadership is a key principle of BCSRIF with 41 (42 percent) of the 97 Phase 1 projects (Appendix B) and 29 (40 percent) Phase 2 projects led by Indigenous groups, with over \$50M committed to these projects.
- BCSRIF Phase 2 continues to provide provincial coverage with 28 projects (\$45.4M) on the South Coast and Vancouver Island, 19 projects (\$40.2M) in the Fraser Interior region, 10 projects (\$13.3M) along the Central Coast and Northern

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B.C., and two projects (\$5.5M) in the Columbia basin. The final 14 projects (\$23M) are B.C.-wide, or ocean based.

- Funding is distributed throughout the key priorities with Salmon Ecosystems having 40 projects (\$74M) Salmon Habitat having 20 projects (\$41.7M) and Sustainable Fisheries having 13 projects (\$11.8M) funded.
- Through Phase 1 of BCSRIF, 1,048 people have been employed. Of these jobs, 260 positions are full-time and over 20 percent are in rural or remote communities.
- Between 2019 and 2022, 842 people received training as part of the project activities; 36 percent of those people identify as Indigenous.
- The 97 projects currently funded through BCSRIF have restored a cumulative total of 3,358,500 square meters of fish habitat.

Key Facts:

- In 2019, the B.C. Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund was launched. This \$142.85M fund is a federal-provincial collaboration that helps to restore the habitat of our wild fish stocks in B.C. and protect our wild Pacific salmon species.
- The projects focus on salmon, with 84 percent of Phase 1 projects and 85 percent of Phase 2 projects focus on salmon and salmon habitat.
- Remaining Phase 1 funds, roughly \$1M, resulting from slippage have been allocated to four high priority, high-capacity projects for very short-term additional project elements to be utilised this financial year.
- B.C.'s initial \$42.85 million investment was the largest provincial financial contribution to protect wild salmon in the past 20 years. B.C. announced a second investment of \$42.85M into BCSRIF on August 23, 2022.
- BCSRIF Phase 2 extended the program until March 31, 2026, for DFO and March 31, 2028, for B.C. DFO is working to match B.C.'s timeline.
- Continuing WLRS work on BCSRIF is referenced within both Minister Cullen's and Parliamentary Secretary Greene's Mandate Letter's. This is a key avenue for WLRS to implement the Wild Salmon Strategy in Action and to fulfill commitments under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People's Act*.
- WLRS is overall provincial lead on BCSRIF in collaboration with DFO. The Ministries of Agriculture and Food, Forests, and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation provide input on priority setting for funding and proposal review.
- WLRS's role in BCSRIF is focused on strategic oversight of the initiative; cross-Ministry collaboration; sector and industry engagement; and collaboration with DFO.

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Date Prepared/Revised: February 9, 2024

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Appendix A - Phase 1 and Phase 2 BCSRIF Projects to date

Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
BCSRIF Phase 1 Projects			
Elaho River Chinook Salmon Restoration	Squamish River Watershed Society	The project will restore fish passage and increase chinook productivity in the lower Elaho River.	\$ 522,486
Electronic Application for Enhanced Selective Fishing and Bycatch Avoidance	Canadian Groundfish Research and Conservation Society	The project will develop an electronic application for fishing vessels that utilizes at-sea monitoring data from commercial groundfish vessels in real time to create heat maps showing where marine species of concern (such as Chinook Salmon, Bocaccio Rockfish, etc.) are being encountered to minimize bycatch	\$ 600,000
Jack Brooks Hatchery/Creation of Salmon Conservation Facility	Juan de Fuca Salmon Restoration Society	Funding will support upgrades to the Sooke River Jack Brooks hatchery facility and interpretive center.	\$ 216,349
Enhancing rockfish recovery through citizen science, outreach & field experiments	University of Victoria, School of Environmental Studies	The University of Victoria (UVic) will support BC rockfish recovery and assessment through outreach and citizen-science emphasizing angler awareness of regulations (via MyCatch app) and through an evaluation of the effectiveness of descenders on reducing rockfish mortality. UVic will partner with academia, conservancy organizations and local First Nations	\$ 758,780
Innovative Habitat Restoration Demonstration	British Columbia Conservation Federation (BCCF)	The 'Innovative Habitat Restoration Demonstration' is a multi-year, watershed-scale demonstration project to showcase innovative habitat restoration methods that accommodate the effects of recent ecosystem shifts with benefits to Chinook, coho, sockeye and steelhead.	\$ 4,952,373
National Indigenous Fisheries Institute ENGAGEMENT	National Indigenous Fisheries Institute	This work will encourage increased Indigenous involvement in science partnerships, innovation, and infrastructure investments that would improve productivity, sustainability, and safety across the sector	\$ 355,095
Rehab. of Critical Infrast. to Improve Survival of Thompson Steelhead/Chinoo	Nicola Tribal Association	The Scw'exmx Tribal Association and partners will assess and rehabilitate degraded habitats in the Coldwater River and Guichon Creek watersheds to improve survival of Thompson steelhead and Chinook salmon	\$ 1,314,027
Determination of Bottlenecks Limiting Wild and Enhanced Juvenile Salmon and Steelhead Production in BC using PIT tags	Pacific Salmon Foundation	Together with partners, the Pacific Salmon Foundation will develop monitoring and evaluation framework to determine survival bottlenecks in freshwater and marine environments for hatchery and wild Chinook, Coho, and Steelhead. Research, monitoring, and evaluation activities will seek to maximize the performance of hatchery and wild stocks; and the installation of new infrastructure will support adaptive management of hatchery programs to meet harvest, conservation, and sustainability objectives	\$ 4,619,877
Enhancing Estuary Resiliency	The Nature Trust of BC	The Nature Trust of BC will undertake monitoring and research to assess estuary resiliency to sea level rise and other climate impacts across the coast of BC, followed by restoration projects to restore core natural estuarine processes.	\$ 8,552,415
Innovation for community-run terminal fisheries	Pacific Salmon Foundation	This project will integrate traditional and modern technologies through the development of new computer vision deep-learning programs to automate salmon counting and species identification from video and sonar data.	\$ 410,300

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Enhancing Sustainability of capture & release marine rec. fisheries	UBC	The University of British Columbia will lead a science partnership project to conduct research on improving the sustainability of capture and release marine recreational Pacific salmon fisheries using new tools and technology	\$ 1,938,002
Improving Sustainability of British Columbia's Commercial Spot Prawn Fishery and Prawn Stocks	Pacific Prawn Fishermen's Association	The Pacific Prawn Fishermen's Association will develop a robust Management Procedure to improve the sustainability of the BC Spot Prawn fishery. Funding will allow for the evaluation of expected outcomes of fishing impacts to wild prawn stocks under alternative fishing practices and provide an opportunity for valuable stock assessment, research, and management training for harvesters, First Nations, and others	\$ 117,996
Elephant Hill Fire Riparian Restoration Project	Secwepemcul'ecw Restoration and Stewardship Society	The Secwepemcul'ecw Restoration and Stewardship Society, in partnership with Secwepemc communities and the 100 Mile Natural Resource District will undertake restoration of critical habitat affected by the 2017 Elephant Hill Wildfire in the Traditional territories of the 8 Secwepemcul'ecw Nations	\$ 2,629,833
Plateau Fire Recovery	Baker Creek Enhancement Society with Nazko First Nations	The Baker Creek Enhancement Society will collaborate with the Nazko First Nation to undertake restoration of critical habitat affected by the Plateau Fire. This work will also prevent further habitat degradation from normal precipitation and predictable storm events	\$ 750,000
Place-based Risk of Climate Change to Sustainability of BC Salmon	Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium	The Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium (UVic) will conduct research to improve our understanding of potential threats posed to Pacific salmonids and their habitats posed by climate change. Results from this work provide regional stakeholders with the information they need to develop plans for reducing the risks associated with climate variability and change (CVC).	\$ 1,025,000
Upper Fraser Chinook Strategic Enhancement Project	Spruce City Wildlife Association	Funding will support infrastructure upgrades to the to the Spruce City Wildlife Association's conservation hatchery to improve biosecurity and enhance production at the facility. To support the restoration and rebuilding of Upper & Middle Fraser Spring and Summer 5-2 Endangered or Threatened Chinook stocks.	\$ 240,362
Inkaneep Creek Restoration	Osoyoos Indian Band	This project will support post-mudslide restoration and effectiveness monitoring for Inkaneep Creek and the floodplain.	\$ 360,283
Optimizing RAS for Sustainable Salmon Production	The University of British Columbia	This study aims to provide a BC-based solution for growing larger, more physiologically robust Atlantic salmon smolts in freshwater recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS). This project will help to improve both the sustainability and productivity of BC's aquaculture industry.	\$ 1,829,490
Drivers of Inter-annual variability in Zooplankton Feeding in the Strait of Georgia	University of British Columbia (UBC)	Research to improve understanding of the changing ecosystem facing out-migrating juvenile salmon in the Strait of Georgia by understanding and quantifying the key drivers of their prey's ability to feed.	\$ 165,000
Seymour Watershed Retoration Project	Seymour Salmonid Society	This multi-year, watershed-wide initiative combines rockslide mitigation work to enable upstream fish passage, along with physical habitat enhancement and restoration works to improve the habitat quality and functionality within the watershed.	\$ 618,844
Upper Adams Salmon Restoration Program	Adams Lake Indian Band (ALIB)	The goal of this project is to support Secwepemc leadership in the restoration of the Upper Adams early summer run sockeye to a sustainable level and improve opportunities for sustainable use. Limiting lake nutrients will be applied to Adams Lake rearing habitat to restore historical lake productivity.	\$ 2,521,181

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Broughton wild salmon restoration project	Namgis First Nation	The 'Namgis, Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis, and Mamalilikulla First Nations will partner on activities to use a watershed-based fish sustainability planning framework to assess and prioritize restoration projects for critical salmon habitat in the Broughton Archipelago.	\$ 4,220,529
Phase 1: Independent First Nations' Genomic Lab for BC	Namgis First Nation	The 'Namgis, Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis, and Mamalilikulla First Nations will work together on the first steps towards establishing a genomics lab to analyze samples collected by First Nations with an interest in conducting independent fish health sampling	\$ 50,560
Phase 2: Independent First Nations' Genomic Lab for BC	Namgis First Nation	Project partners will equip the kł cōəlk stīm laboratory with Fluidigm BioMark™ technology to analyze samples collected through the Indigenous Monitoring and Inspection Plan (IMIP), as well as providing services to other First Nations in BC.	\$ 1,977,828
Broughton First Nations Indigenous Monitoring and Inspection Plan	Namgis First Nation	The First Nations will implement the plan, to build monitoring and oversight capacity over finfish farms in the Broughton, capacity to monitor wild salmon, other marine species (and their ecosystems) and to conduct salmon habitat restoration activities.	\$ 7,349,000
Percy Walkus Hatchery Upgrade	Pacific Salmon Foundation	Funding will support upgrades to the Percy Walkus Hatchery in Rivers Inlet, which provides local capacity to enhance three local Chinook salmon stocks of significant cultural and economic significance.	\$ 336,895
Field application and testing of tools for identifying, mapping, and quantifying forage fish populations and habitats	Comox Valley Project Watershed Society	The Comox Valley Project Watershed Society and partners will apply and test tools for identifying, mapping, and quantifying important forage fish populations and their habitats. This work will contribute to the conservation of important food sources for Pacific salmon, including Chinook and coho	\$ 321,779
Lower Fraser Coho PIT Barge and Tagging Project	Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance Society	Funding will contribute to an improved understanding of stock status and trends through the development and demonstration of PIT tag mark-recapture techniques for hatchery Coho Salmon in the Chilliwack River using large PIT arrays to enumerate annual hatchery returning fish during spawning migration.	\$ 679,690
Resilient Waters: Phase 1	MakeWay Charitable Society	A project to identify priority sites requiring infrastructure upgrades and habitat restoration across the Lower Fraser River watershed, which will support the reintegration of vital wild salmon habitat	\$ 598,755
Millstream Fishway Project	Peninsula Streams Society	This urban habitat restoration project will improve fish passage in Millstream Creek by creating a "fishway" that will allow fish to move up to and through a large culvert under Atkins Road near Mill Hill Regional Park.	\$ 300,000
Partnership for a novel framework for assessing and managing Pacific Herring fisheries	Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council	The project will undertake an evaluation of spatial and in-season management options for associated food, social and ceremonial (FSC), and commercial Herring fisheries to ensure the sustainability of these fisheries on the West Coast of Vancouver Island.	\$ 390,500
Cowichan River Salmon Restoration program	Cowichan Valley Regional District	The Cowichan Valley Regional District and partners, including Cowichan Tribes, will conduct an evaluation of the natural boundary of Cowichan Lake to support building critical new water storage infrastructure, to provide flows required to sustain Cowichan salmon populations	\$ 2,999,218
Salish Sea Salmon Action Plan	Pacific Salmon Foundation	The PSF will conduct a science-based review of hatcheries in the Pacific Region to evaluate performance and the effectiveness of current genetic and genomic tools, in order to optimize salmon production in BC	\$ 1,083,498
BC Fish Passage Joint Venture	Canadian Wildlife Federation	The project will bring together partners, including federal and provincial governments, non-governmental organization, First Nations, and communities to prioritize fish passage remediation efforts across B.C.	\$ 3,999,721

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Kitwanga River Sockeye Salmon Recovery Plan Implementation	Gitanyow Fisheries Authority	The Gitanyow Fisheries Authority will undertake small scale enhancement and habitat restoration projects to maximize spawner success over the next five years and to identify the limiting factors to Kitwanga sockeye production.	\$ 867,020
Bear River Autonomous Salmon Enumeration	Skeena Fisheries Commission	Purchase, installation, and operation of an autonomous electronic counter (i.e., Security Surveillance system) on a fish fence in the lower Bear River to increase accuracy and cost-effectiveness of escapement estimates for Chinook, Coho, and Sockeye.	\$ 402,439
Promotion of Habitat Restoration and Stewardship on Agricultural Lands	British Columbia Cattlemens Association	The work will deliver the Farmland riparian interface stewardship program, promoting habitat restoration and stewardship and on agricultural lands in BC and encouraging environmental farm planning within the agricultural sector for more "fish friendly" land management practices around riparian corridors.	\$ 550,000
IYS: International Pan-Pacific Salmon Expedition (2021)	North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission	Pan-Pacific vessel surveys in winter/summer 2021 to monitor distribution, abundance, and productivity of salmon to directly inform fisheries management decision and enforcement efforts.	\$ 3,305,457
BC Fishing App	SFI of BC	The Sport Fishing Institute (SFI) will develop the Fishing BC mobile app, an online information and catch monitoring tool	\$ 910,500
Vision 2021	SFI of BC	SFI's Vision 2021: an action plan to maximize the social and economic potential of the recreational fishery on Canada's Pacific coast.	\$ 700,879
Winter Salmon Survey in the Gulf of Alaska	Pacific Salmon Foundation	This project will support a second year of international research in the Gulf of Alaska to study the abundance, health, and habitat use of Pacific salmonids during winter conditions.	\$ 650,000
The Fermentative production of Microalgae as food for juvenile bivalves in BC	Seed Science Ltd	The project will enable the development of heterotrophic algae production technology for feeding bivalves. Successful completion of the project will contribute to improved health for the bivalves as pathogens transferred with large volumes of algae produced in the traditional methods have been implicated in disease outbreak.	\$ 475,493
Shellfish aquaculture strategic renewal program	BC Shellfish Growers Association	The BC Shellfish Growers Association is proposing to create the Shellfish Aquaculture Strategic Renewal Program which aims to ensure the industry remains a key socio-economic contributor to BC's coastal communities. Key components will include improved traceability of shellfish products and application of innovative handling and processing technology in the BC shellfish industry.	\$ 3,500,000
Evaluation of coastal kelp farms as novel habitat for migrating salmonids and their prey	Cascadia Seaweed Corp	Cascadia Seaweed Corp. and partners will research how coastal kelp farms can provide novel habitat for migrating Pacific salmonids and their food sources by integrating traditional and cutting-edge monitoring technologies. This project will inform how placement of kelp farm tenures can help to mitigate declines in salmon species as the result of declining nearshore nursery habitat. It also serves as a pilot study for the broader application of the monitoring framework.	\$ 1,886,046
Kingfisher intake restoration	Kingfisher Interpretive Centre Society	This project is intended to aid salmon enhancement efforts made by the community hatchery. Repairing critical infrastructure will improve operational conditions for the community hatchery in turn producing a higher survival rate for juvenile Chinook salmon	\$ 43,396
Chapman Creek Hatchery upgrades	Sunshine Coast Salmonid Society	The Society will explore an alternative ground water supply for the Chapman Creek hatchery. This will be done in an attempt to avoid the use of water supplies from Chapman Creek.	\$ 70,000
Seymour Hatchery Infrastructure Renewal	Seymour Salmonid Society	This project will undertake maintenance and facility upgrades over a three-year period to ensure the Seymour hatchery and education center can continue fisheries operations into the future.	\$ 80,410

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Modernizing catch reporting in Canada's Pacific Region Salmon Fisheries	Archipelago Marine Research	The goal of the project is the development of an easy-to-use mobile application for salmon fishermen to record their fishing logbook data and submit daily catch reports and hauls.	\$ 317,557
A-Tlegay Kelp Production and Restoration	A-Tlegay Fisheries Society	The Society will construct at least four permaculture sites located within Johnstone Strait/Northern Strait of Georgia to improve the quality of important marine habitat for salmon and to determine the commercial potential for kelp permaculture in the region.	\$ 171,713
Mitigating impacts of the European Green Crab invasion on Haida Gwaii	Council of the Haida Nation	This project aims to mitigate impacts of the European Green Crab invasion to support the preservation of salmon habitat critical to Haida marine cultural and ecological systems in Haida Gwaii. The project will use intensive and extensive monitoring and research to understand, assess, develop, and then implement management measures.	\$ 2,796,887
Chemainus-Koksilah twinned Watershed Sustainability Project	Cowichan Tribes	This project is a natural extension of existing work and relationships that have been building strength and momentum within the Region and would contribute to the development of BC's first Water Sustainability Plan (WSP) for the Koksilah river as well as exploring groundwater/surface water interactions and water management regimes in the Chemainus river.	\$ 1,192,090
Developing a cumulative effects modelling framework for the recovery of salmon pops.	University of British Columbia (UBC)	This project will develop a framework for modeling cumulative impacts on salmonid populations to guide recovery planning and adaptive management based on stressor-response functions related to multiple threats.	\$ 253,610
UAV Habitat Mapping to Inform wild Salmon Stewardship	First Nations Fisheries Legacy Fund Society	This initiative will develop First Nations' capacity for salmon stewardship through the development of methodologies for community mapping and rapid UAV salmon habitat assessments.	\$ 2,478,221
Skeena Estuary Habitat Manag. and Protection Planning	NCSFNSS	This project proposes a phased, multi-year approach to develop a Skeena Estuary Habitat Management and Protection Plan and to implement identified priority estuarine habitat restoration projects.	\$ 2,334,024
Ecosystem Management of kelp forest	North Pacific Kelp Wild Foods	This project proposes to enhance kelp forest monitoring to stewardship that strengthen rural economic development and restoration of salmon and other species (i.e. northern abalone) in Haida Gwaii.	\$ 99,999
South Coast European Green Crab Control	Coastal Restoration Society	The project seeks to plan for, monitor and subsequently mitigate the proliferation of European green crab (EGC) and their destructive effects as ecosystem engineers engaging in eelgrass destruction; thereby supporting the preservation of wild salmon and wild salmon habitat throughout the South Coast of the Pacific Region.	\$ 3,534,340
Supporting West Coast Oyster Industry	Nova Harvest	This project aims to increase capacity for large high-quality seed through the development of an ocean-based oyster nursery, known as a Floating Upwelling System (FLUPSY), specifically to support the continued development of TDC oyster program.	\$ 210,000
Selective Fishing Using a Salmon Trap	Tsawwassen First Nation	TFN is requesting funds to design and operate a tidal waters salmon trap close to the traditional TFN fishing sites near the mouth of the Fraser River.	\$ 875,325
Highway 16 corridor fish stranding	Kitsumkalum Indian Band	This project intends to perform engineering assessments and determine prescriptions for permanent solutions of up to 16 sites to regain freshwater rearing habitats that have been cut-off due to infrastructure development.	\$ 213,032
Babine Lake Creel Survey	Lake Babine Nation Fisheries	The Lake Babine Nation is proposing to undertake a creel survey to determine the harvest levels of sockeye salmon from the vicinity of Fulton River.	\$ 372,951

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Development and establishment of Vancouver Island Chinook Committee	Island Marine Aquatic Working Group	IMAWG, with support from participating Vancouver Island AAROM's, have requested to facilitate and coordinate the Vancouver Island Chinook Chapter and joint technical working group by building upon the established foundation of the Island Marine Aquatic Technical Working Group.	\$ 397,540
Landslide impact on the flow dynamics, fish migration and genetics of Fraser River Salmon	SFU	This project will seek to understand risks posed by natural earth surface processes, such as landslides and hydraulic barriers, on Fraser River salmon. The work will contribute to a better understanding of the infrastructure needed to enable successful fish migration across hydraulic barriers such as the Big Bar Landslide.	\$ 3,566,728
Assessment methods, Gulf of Alaska March 2022	Pacific Salmon Foundation	Multi-vessel survey to study the distribution of Pacific salmon across the North Pacific Ocean. Parallel sampling with Japanese drift gillnets and longlines will enable direct comparison of sampling capabilities of trawl nets versus other gears in the deep-water environment of the Gulf of Alaska.	\$ 308,000
Causes and consequences of vateritic otoliths in hatchery-reared Coho salmon	University of Victoria	This project will investigate the prevalence of vateritic otoliths by comparing the frequency and percentage coverage of vateritic otoliths between wild-origin and hatchery-reared Coho salmon across hatchery facilities, rearing years, life-stages, and stocks. Secondly, the project will investigate the causes of vateritic otoliths in hatchery-reared Coho salmon.	\$ 512,458
Climate Action Priorities for Salmon	Pacific Salmon Foundation	This project will develop improved genetic baselines to understand genetic differences at a scale finer than Conservation Units; develop a 'playbook' to guide landscape recovery strategies and priorities for salmon following major fires; and assess Fraser River migration impediments.	\$ 3,270,151
Clayoquot Wild Chinook Salmon Initiative	Redd Fish Restoration Society	This project is proposing to restore critical spawning and rearing habitat in Clayoquot Sound for high conservation concern and Endangered wild Chinook and chum salmon.	\$ 500,000
First Nations-led Freshwater Salmon Habitat Assessment & Restoration Planning in the Central Coast	Central Coast Indigenous Resource Alliance	This project will support the development of watershed-scale habitat assessments and prioritization of areas and actions for restoring hydrological function in targeted watersheds in the Central Coast sub-region of BC.	\$ 2,747,628
Kleanza Creek Salmon Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Project	Kitselas First Nation	The Kleanza Creek Salmon Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Project will restore historically productive spawning and rearing habitat by constructing side-channel habitat in lower Kleanza Creek.	\$ 561,335
Penticton Creek Restoration Initiative: Restoration and Innovation Reach	Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC	This project will build on previous restoration works, addressing a 266m section of fish habitat in the Penticton Creek.	\$ -
Applying innovation and collaboration to improve performance of oyster farm	Huu-ay-aht Fisheries LP	The Barkley Sound Oyster Joint Venture farming initiative aims to develop new and underutilized aquaculture tenures in the Barkley Sound by modernizing traditional shellfish farming practices through innovation and use of the latest technology.	\$ 558,015
Gwabalís Aquaculture Opportunity & Sustainability Survey	Gwabalís Fisheries Society	This project aims to identify potential for economic development opportunities for Gwabalís Fisheries Society (GFS) members. GFS will undertake an area-wide aquaculture survey to identify, assess and report on sustainable aquaculture opportunities within the Nations' respective traditional territories.	\$ 107,167

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Exploring Spatial Management for Rockfish using Indigenous Knowledge and Subtidal Surveys	Ha'oom Fisheries Society	This project will use Indigenous Knowledge and the DFO rockfish habitat model to identify survey sites and record the presence and absence of three COSEWIC-listed rockfish species Rockfish and other nearshore rockfish species within the Five Nations' Court Defined Area for groundfish access..	\$ 202,500
Understanding FRIM in the BC Public Fishery	SFI of BC	This project aims to establish a BC-based program to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of the importance of selective fisheries and minimizing Fishing-Related Incidental Mortality (FRIM) amongst local salmon anglers.	\$ 205,916
Modernizing Recreational Catch Monitoring, Data Collection, Communication	Sport Fishing Institute of BC	This project includes improvements to the FishingBC app to enhance and modernize catch log expansion and improve the quality of data collection, as well as public education and outreach to promote awareness of the app and the importance of collecting accurate recreational fishery data.	\$ 343,750
Recreational Release Mortality Studies and FRIM	SFI of BC	The proponent will undertake research on the impact of short-term FRIM and its main causes, to better understand total mortality associated with recreational fishing.	\$ 833,250
Fraser Salmon Management Program	Fraser Salmon Management Council	This project will bring together Indigenous biologist and technical staff, as well as DFO or other agencies, to share findings, and make recommendations for consideration that will support the protection and restoration of Fraser Chinook and other salmon stocks.	\$ 400,000
FRESH Restoration Projects	Ducks Unlimited Canada	This project will restore key Fraser River estuary tidal marsh habitat and provide access to key critical habitats for Fraser River Chinook, coho, steelhead, sockeye, other juvenile salmon species, white sturgeon, and other wild BC fish stocks.	\$ 4,781,409
Conservation Fishing - A First Nations Demonstration Selective Fishing in the Lower Fraser River	Harrison Salmon Producers LP	This project aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of community-led selective fishing through the use of hybrid river seine to trap sites, as well as river purse seining where non-selective gear is restricted. These demonstrations will help to identify effective selective fishing alternatives to gill nets, for when fishing opportunities are most restrictive, and ultimately support the modernization and sustainability of Fraser River salmon fisheries.	\$ 789,200
SFAB Vision - Phased Implementation	SFI of BC	This phase of the project will focus on modernizing the SFAB model by establishing the governance and financial management structure and confirming the long-term funding and operating process for the Board, to ensure that the interests of the recreational fishery are represented to regulators and decision-makers.	\$ 453,324
Salmon River Collaborative Salmonid Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Initiative	Yucwmenlucwu (Caretakers of the Land) 2007 LLP	The proponent and partners will undertake comprehensive research to develop recommendations that will enhance the ecological function of the Salmon River watershed through the application of Indigenous Knowledge, science-based data, and a more holistic approach to better manage and restore ecological flows for a healthy watershed and an increase in local salmonid populations.	\$ 208,289
MakeWay - Resilient Waters Lower Fraser Valley Rehabilitation	MakeWay Charitable Society - Resilient Waters	Building on Phase 1 of the Resilient Water project, this project aims to design, construct, and restore four high priority areas having flood control infrastructure (FCI) that limits fish access to upstream tributaries, through infrastructure upgrades that will reconnect fish with over 50 hectares of habitat.	\$ 2,686,478
Wuikinuxv Assessment and Restoration of Rivers Inlet Salmon	Wuikinuxv Nation	This project aims to build the fisheries expertise and operational capacity within the Wuikinuxv Nation Stewardship Office through three key activities: 1) assessing the productivity of Owikeno Lake; 2) purchasing the sonar equipment needed to count adult salmon returns to the Waanukv River; and 3) building capacity related to procedures and the operation of equipment.	\$ 543,374

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Supporting the Ongoing Use and Development of the Pacific Salmon Explorer	Pacific Salmon Foundation	This project focuses on the expansion, continuous improvement, and application of the Pacific Salmon Explorer (PSE) tool.	\$ 3,776,300
Selective Fishing Using a Salmon Trap in the Lower Fraser River	Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance Society	This project aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of community-led selective fishing to support the modernization of Fraser River salmon fisheries in the face of climate change and declining salmon populations. This project will pilot selective fishing gear in the Fraser River and its tributaries through applying traditional First Nations methods in modern ways to achieve economically sustainable and culturally sensitive outcomes.	\$ 1,293,613
Technology for more sustainable fisheries in BC	T Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation	This project aims to enhance the sustainability of BC's fisheries using innovative technologies to reduce bycatch, increase survivability, and prevent entanglements through two key activities: 1) pilot LED light usage in shrimp trawl fishery; and 2) replace knotted net with knotless net in the salmon and herring seine test fishery.	\$ 320,700
First Nations-led catch monitoring to inform sustainable mixed-stock fisheries manag.	Central Coast Indigenous Resource Alliance	This project aims to fill data gaps related to Central Coast salmon populations, to inform management measures to promote sustainable opportunities for marine and FSC fisheries	\$ 1,533,176
Collaborative Freshwater Research and Restoration Initiative in the Thompson Watershed	Secwepemc Fisheries Commission	This project aims to fill data gaps related to Fraser Coho and Endangered Interior Fraser Summer Steelhead, and Southern BC (42) Chinook), which will be used to inform fisheries recovery and rebuilding plans.	\$ 789,102
Nanaimo Hatchery Upgrades	Nanaimo River Stewardship Society	Upgrades to the Nanaimo River Stewardship Society to address ageing infrastructure and allow the facility to adapt to changing enhancement objectives and watershed activities.	\$ 1,030,431
Coastal First Nations Salmon Enhancement and Restoration Initiative	Great Bear Initiative Society	Upgrade of existing infrastructure at six community hatcheries to incorporate more sustainable technology and enable restoration of wild BC stocks that are of red-listed concern in the region.	\$ 2,826,811
Watershed Restoration Prioritization Tool/Solutions for Gold River Steelhead	Nootka Sound Watershed Society	This project will use a spatial modelling tool and resulting threats assessment to develop an action plan to improve habitat for steelhead and other Pacific salmon species.	\$ 324,953
Kitwanga River Sockeye Salmon Enhancement Project	Simon Fraser University (SFU)	The project is seeking funding to purchase a hatchery in a box (HIB) and to set-up additional infrastructure to enhance Kitwanga River sockeye.	\$ 950,000
Finfish Environmental Assessment - Sablefish Aquaculture	We Wai Kai First Nation (Cape Mudge)	This project aims to investigate the possible environmental impacts and determine the potential business benefits in converting their finfish aquaculture tenures into sable fish aquaculture farm operations in a potential joint venture partnership with Golden Eagle Sable Fish.	\$ 144,200
The application of nanopore technology for the rapid detection	BCCAHS	This project aims to validate Nanopore technology as a rapid and broad-range tool for the detection of salmon pathogens from biological (i.e., body fluids and organs) and environmental samples from hatcheries. The technology will be applied to three applications: broodstock screening,	\$ 306,000

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
and characterization of pathogens in enhancement hatcheries		examination of pathogen sources and distribution in hatchery systems and to identify/characterize the agent/agents associated with disease occurrences.	
Monitoring lipid content of Fraser-bound Chinook at Albion	University of British Columbia (UBC)	The proponent will undertake research on lipid levels, as a proxy for energy density, of returning salmon (Fraser Chinook stocks) to better understand migration and spawning success.	\$ 36,869
Deadman River Hatchery Upgrades	Skeetchestn Indian Band	Infrastructure upgrades to the 33-year Deadman Hatchery to address water supply and human safety issues	\$ 385,000
Rebuilding Wet'suwet'en Sockeye Salmon Abundance and Diversity	Office of the Wet'suwet'en	This project builds on the Rebuilding Plan for the Morice Sockeye Recovery Unit (2019) and aims to fill key data gaps which were outlined in the plan, complimentary to stock-assessment actions.	\$ 848,160
Kus Kus Sum	K'ómoks First Nation (KFN)	This project involves the acquisition and renaturalization of a former industrial sawmill site in the heart of the salmon migration corridor for the watersheds of two major rivers, the Puntledge and the Tsolum.	\$ 1,712,652
BCSRIF Phase 2 Projects			
Fishing BC App	SFI of BC	The Fishing BC app now allows DFO to provide recreational anglers with information about regulations, catch and possession limits, safety notes and species identification on an easily accessible and free mobile platform.	\$ 714,445
Squamish Estuary Chinook Salmon Habitat Restoration Project	Squamish River Watershed Society	The focus of the project is to restore connectivity between the Squamish River and the estuary to outmigrating juvenile salmonids, in particular Chinook salmon (<i>Oncorhynchus tshawytscha</i>) to allow them the time for the important transition from freshwater fry to marine tolerant smolts.	\$ 1,089,720
San Juan and Gordon Rivers – Salmon Estuarine Habitat Restoration	Pacheedaht First Nation	Three restoration projects are proposed in this application, all to occur in the San Juan and Gordon River estuaries, located on the southwest coast of Vancouver Island..	\$ 3,255,606
Aeromonas salmonicida Genome Sequencing	Kwantlen Polytechnic University	The project will perform whole genome sequencing (WGS) for several Aeromonas species, including A. salmonicida (a pathogenic bacterium that severely impacts salmonid populations, and other fish species). The sequences will be made publicly available to the DFO and others.	\$ 278,272
Salmon Recovery - advancing planning and action	Pacific Salmon Foundation	PSF is proposing 5 activities that will work to help advance this challenge. 1) A rapid assessment to identify top priorities for salmon at Conservation Unit and/or Stock Management Unit scales. 2) Develop a Conservation Strategy for the Heart of the Fraser area. 3) Develop a Salmon Recovery Plan in the upper Fraser area 4) Apply a method used successfully in California that can provide salmon seasonal access to floodplain habitat. 5) Develop a “post flood event playbook” to guide priorities and actions for salmon following major flood events.	\$ 2,640,683
Meziadin River Up-looking Hydroacoustic Sockeye Smolt Enumeration	Gitanyow Huwilt Society	This project aims to accurately estimate and sample the sockeye smolt production from Meziadin Lake with an upward looking hydroacoustic technique. Also propose to build and use two IPTs (inclined plane traps) to sample Meziadin Lake sockeye smolts over the study period.	\$ 749,585

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Bute Inlet Salmon Viability Strategy	Xwemalhkwu (Homalco) First Nation	Project is to complete a planning and engineering study for the reconstruction of the Homalco-Taggares Hatchery in Orford Bay; Conduct Southgate River Stock Assessment and Collect Genetic Samples from Chinook Salmon; Enhance Southgate River chinook at Gillard Pass Fisheries Association hatch; and Collaborate with Hakai Institute.	\$ 775,225
Research in support of Sarita Chinook as an Ecological Indicator	Huu-ay-aht First Nations	DFO and Huu-ay-aht First Nations to make Sarita Chinook an ecological indicator for the COSEWIC listed West Vancouver Island, Ocean, Fall (South) population and the Westcoast Vancouver Island (WCVI) Management Unit.	\$ 1,662,046
First Nations led salmon habitat and population monitoring, research and cumulative effects assessment in the Lower Fraser River and Boundary Bay	Salish Sea Indigenous Guardians Association	This project will allow local Indigenous Nations to create a long-term salmon monitoring and restoration program to monitor and address cumulative impacts to COSEWIC listed salmon populations in the Lower Fraser River and Boundary Bay.	\$ 2,222,120
Chinook Salmon Assessments and WCVI Chinook Salmon Rebuilding in the Kaouk and Artlish	Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nation	Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations (KCFN) will undertake work over a 3-year study period in the Kaouk and Artlish Rivers to fill in information gaps regarding the life history of two of three Chinook indicators for the West Vancouver Island.	\$976,813
NEWSS-Salmon Habitat Recovery Projects	Nechako Environment and Water Stewardship Society	NEWSS is proposing projects over multiple streams within the Nechako Valley that will both compliment past and current projects and continue to enhance recovery opportunities of both Chinook and Coho salmon.	\$ 1,500,000
ʔaayaaqa (Herring) Herring Spawn Dynamics	Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council	This project aims to further develop a Nuu-chah-nulth approach to ecosystem-based fisheries management by integrating life-history-driven differences in population response to climate change and fishing into models of WCVI Pacific Herring spawning populations.	\$ 575,960
British Columbia Kelp-Encrusting Bryozoan (BC KEB)	University of Victoria	This project aims to establish a latitudinal network of Sentinel areas along the BC coast where we quantify the spatial-temporal density of KEB and associated environmental conditions.	\$ 948,794
Digital Imaging of Wild Coho Returns to the Lillooet River Conservation Unit	Lil'wat First Nation	This project's two main objectives are to: (1) estimate total aggregate escapement of wild Coho to the Lillooet Conservation Unit from 2023-2025 through the use of digital imaging Sonar at Rogers Creek; and (2) provide this estimate to another BCSRIF/DFO/PSC project to enable the aggregate escapement of Coho to the Lower Fraser River Management Unit.	\$ 694,491
Genetic monitoring of kokanee-sockeye salmon hybrid fitness and longterm	University of British Columbia Okanagan	The experimental sockeye salmon (<i>Oncorhynchus nerka</i>) reintroduction project in Skaha Lake (British Columbia) provides an excellent opportunity to investigate the outcomes of hybridization between anadromous sockeye and resident kokanee over a long-term time series to inform larger-scale restocking and habitat restoration initiatives.	\$ 218,350
Selective Fishing Using a Salmon Trap in the Campbell River Estuary	A-Tlegay Fisheries Society	A-Tlegay Fisheries Society proposed project involves the assessment, design, construction, and operation of a tidal water's selective fishery salmon trap close to their traditional fishing sites in the Campbell/Quinsam rivers estuary on Vancouver Island.	\$ 1,143,114

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Clayoquot Pacific Salmon Recovery Initiative	Redd Fish Restoration Society	This project is designed to effectively revitalize Pacific salmon populations in Clayoquot Sound.	\$ 3,200,000
Estimating agg. Coho salmon escapement to the Lower Fraser M.U.	Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance Society	The objectives of this program are to estimate total escapement of coho to the Lower Fraser and Chilliwack River through the implementation of an assessment fishery and coho passive integrated transponder (PIT) program, respectively.	\$ 543,840
Campbell River estuary salt marsh and eelgrass restoration	Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust	The project entails restoration of two hectares of the Campbell River Estuary towards pre-development conditions, led by Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust in partnership with the Wei Wai Kum First Nation.	\$ 1,676,000
TFN Fish Trap – Capacity Building, Communications and Operations 2023-26	Tsawwassen First Nation	This project will build capacity and support for the Tsawwassen First Nation (TFN) Fish Trap project and ensure that community members, local governments and the general public have a clear understanding of the purpose and achievements of the TFN Fish Trap project.	\$ 810,062
Determining the mechanisms of impacts of a changing climate on zooplankton in the Salish Sea	University of British Columbia Vancouver	This research project proposes to examine the impacts of key climate change-induced stressors on salmon through changes in their prey in the Salish Sea.	\$ 253,963
Basin-scale Events to Coastal Impacts (BECI)	North Pacific Marine Science Organization	BCSRIF funding will be used to advance Canadian interests and develop an innovative approach to ocean forecasting that allows for enhanced down-scaled modelling of the boundary conditions (open ocean) for use in higher resolution coastal models that are in use or being developed.	\$ 1,154,750
Identifying and mitigating hot spots of salmon exposure to toxic road runoff	University of British Columbia Vancouver	Our team aims to document and mitigate the adverse impacts of toxic road runoff on B.C. salmon in the Lower Mainland, with a focus on the emerging tire-related chemical 6PPD-quinone.	\$ 1,747,809
Watershed Futures Initiative	Simon Fraser University,	The overarching goal of the Watershed Futures project is to inform and catalyze the effective stewardship of watershed activities to increase the resilience of BC's salmon watersheds to climate change.	\$ 1,254,022
Restoration of salmon habitat at Cultus Lake	SCBC Stewardship Centre	This project will improve riparian and aquatic habitat and mitigate erosion at Cultus Lake, BC by implementing a collaborative, highly visible Green Shores project.	\$ 531,674
Thompson-Shuswap Salmon Habitat Assessment, Monitoring & Restoration	Shuswap Nation Tribal Council Society	This project, being led by the Secwepemc Fisheries Commission, seeks to conduct a suite of inter-related activities focused on assessing, monitoring, and responding to freshwater habitat threats facing wild salmon and steelhead in the Thompson-Shuswap sub-region. Project outcomes will inform the Thompson-Shuswap Salmon Collaborative's integrated planning process.	\$ 1,306,000
10,000 Wetlands Project	The B.C. Wildlife Federation	The 10,000 Wetlands Project aims to rapidly advance the application of process-based restoration in BC by collaborating with local organizations, academia, First Nations, and industry partners.	\$ 1,538,703
Skeena River Fish Trap Project	Lax Kw'alaams Business Development Ltd.	Lax Kw'alaams Fisheries, in collaboration with the Skeena Fisheries Commission and the Wild Fish Conservancy proposes to build a pound (short for impoundment) net fish trap in the Lower Skeena River in 2023 to 2026.	\$ 2,272,760

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Management strategy evaluation for bottom contact fisheries with assessments of sensitive benthic habitats	Wild Canadian Sablefish, Ltd.	In this project, we aim to develop and demonstrate an innovative adaptive management approach to improving sustainable fishing practices for bottom contact fisheries that includes i) an integrated system of data capture technology for Sensitive Benthic Areas (SBAs), ii) in-situ monitoring and estimation methods to quantify bottom contact from fishing gear, iii) presence-absence modelling to map SBAs, iv) risk assessment for quantifying bottom fishing impacts on SBAs and spatial assessment of conservation status, v) a simulation framework for evaluating fishing impacts on SBAs.	\$ 257,400
Resilient Waters Phase 3	MakeWay Charitable Society	Resilient Waters Phase 3 proposed activities include one large scale restoration project, one research project, a post-restoration monitoring program, along with continued efforts to advance best practices in fish-friendly infrastructure.	\$ 3,613,173
Farmland Advantage	Investment Agriculture Foundation British Columbia	Farmland Advantage (FLA) is an IAF-run program that contracts farmers to take extraordinary care of ecosystems. This multi-year initiative addresses the threat of riparian habitat degradation through improved agricultural practices that benefit salmon ecosystems and multiple Species at Risk.	\$ 3,000,000
Lower Adams Habitat Restoration Initiative (LAHRI)	Little Shuswap Lake Band	The overall objective of the LAHRI project is to focus on re-establishing connectivity and habitat conditions to support and sustain recovery of Adams River sockeye and other salmon and resident fish species.	\$ 1,884,334
Strait of Georgia Herring: Restoring the Salmon Food Web	Pacific Salmon Foundation	Key components of the proposed work are program co-development and capacity building within Strait of Georgia First Nations, particularly with respect to utilization of novel technologies such as small vessel-based hydroacoustic units.	\$ 3,722,499
Restoring Fraser River Estuary Salmon Habitat (ReFRESH)	Ducks Unlimited Canada	This project builds on ongoing successes. Through this research, multiple compensation sites will be prioritised and restored/enhanced to improve fish access and habitat.	
Development of High-resolution Climate Change Freshwater Hazard Data	Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium (PCIC)	The proposed project aims to provide information that will be needed for the assessment of site- and population-specific salmon vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, complementing the broad-scale information that is being produced in the current project.	\$ 558,355
Protection and Rehabilitation of the Deadman Watershed and Critical Salmon Habitat	Skeetchestn Natural Resources Corporation	The Deadman River Watershed Restoration Program (DRWRP) aims to restore the post-wildfire valley-bottom to a climate-resilient riverscape by establishing a comprehensive monitoring and research program, implementing land and riparian restoration treatments, and utilizing beave translocation to establish riparian corridors in critical areas throughout the watershed.	\$ 4,000,000
Charting a Path for Coastal First Nations' Community Salmon Enh... Init...	Great Bear Initiative Society	This project involves six CFN-GBI member Nations. Phase 2 "Charting a Path for Coastal First Nations' Community Salmon Enhancement Initiatives" will focus on providing technical support to the four Nations to implement and share best practices for operating and managing the newly upgraded hatcheries.	\$ 1,699,812
Mitigating Inputs of Tire Wear Toxins to Protect Salmonid Habitat on V.I.	British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF)	This project aims to identify where the major sources of tire wear toxin (TWT) inputs are along eastern Vancouver Island, investigate the spatiotemporal concentration changes of the TWTs from point sources and evaluate the efficacy of engineered solutions to remove and/or prevent TWTs from entering salmon-bearing streams.	\$ 2,293,016

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Mapping, monitoring, and restoring important forage fish habitats in BC to support salmon conservation efforts.	Comox Valley Project Watershed Society	The project brings together a science partnership to apply and refine recently developed research tools and models to identify forage fish spawning, rearing, burying and foraging habitats of Pacific sand lance, surf smelt, Pacific herring, northern anchovy, and other small species in the Salish Sea and off the west coast of Vancouver Island.	\$ 1,402,754
Evaluating climate change scenarios for the Quesnel Watershed	University of Northern British Columbia	This project is based out of the Quesnel River Research Centre (QRRC) in the Quesnel watershed and consists of three components to support salmon ecosystems. This project will build QRRC educational and research capacity, improve Chinook salmon culture and deliver to the adjustment of management protocols for existing Pacific salmon stocks.	\$ 5,000,000
Supporting and connecting community-based monitoring for climate-resilient salmon ecosystems	Pacific Salmon Foundation	1. Scale-up the application of computer-vision tools to empower communities with real-time information on salmon returns that can inform proactive in-season fisheries management; 2. Harmonize community-led monitoring of salmon ecosystems 3. Create opportunities for integration and collaboration among communities and projects	\$ 3,997,861
The Sablefish Solution.	University of Victoria, Department of Biology	The expansion of sablefish aquaculture will enhance wild salmon recovery in Kyuquot Sound and elsewhere by mitigating economic losses associated declining salmon fishery and salmon farm closures.	\$ 378,070
Oolichan From Estuary to Offshore	Ecofish Research Ltd.	This project will focus on the understudied transitional stage of Oolichan larvae from estuaries to offshore environments within Haisla Traditional Territory.	\$ 1,213,354
Watershed Restoration Prioritization Tool/Solutions for Gold River Steelhead	Nootka Sound Watershed Society	This project is a continuation of a previously supported BC SRIF project (BC SRIF 2020_301) and includes three main project components (or activities): 1) stream temperature and hydrometric monitoring network in Nootka Sound; 2) riparian silviculture restoration project implementation and monitoring; and 3) community engagement and expansion of the Nootka Sound Salmon and Watershed Assessment Tool.	\$ 1,165,470
Portage Creek Chinook Salmon Recovery Program	St'át'imc Government Services (SGS)	The program will provide key information to preserving and managing the endangered Portage Creek Chinook population.	\$ 810,602
Post Flood Support for Fish and Fish Habitat Recovery in the Nicola Watershed	Scw'exmx Tribal Council	The work will support strategic post flood recovery actions in the Nicola Watershed.	\$ 5,309,810
Mitigating the Effects of the Invasive European Green Crab on the Central Coast	Heiltsuk Tribal Council	This project addresses a threat to the habitat of juvenile salmon and salmon prey by seeking to functionally eradicate and prevent the future spread of the European Green Crab (EGC) in Heiltsuk territory on the central coast of British Columbia.	\$ 1,423,750
Empirically resolving interspecific competition experienced by N. Pacific salmon	University of British Columbia	Pink and chum salmon hatchery production is at an all-time high and there is enormous potential for resource competition among these species and sockeye salmon. Trawl surveys conducted under the International Year of the Salmon (IYS) have demonstrated that a substantial biomass of other taxa co-occur with these salmon species, including myctophids, squid, and jellyfish.	\$ 186,450

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Investigation of water acidification and habitat on imprinting and homing in Pacific salmon	University of British Columbia	The research will investigate how changes in substrate and pH affect the olfactory responses of salmon during life history phases when they are known to imprint on natal habitats (e.g., pre-emergent alevins and the parr smolt transformation).	\$ 541,750
Skeena Watershed Salmon Habitat Restoration Prioritization, Feasibility and Evaluation Protocol Development	Skeena Fisheries Commission	This project includes 3 activities: - Activity 1 involves the application of a habitat prioritization protocol developed and implemented by NCSFNSS to sites in the mid- and upper Skeena River. - Activity 2 is a habitat rehabilitation cost-benefit analysis on Clear Creek -Activity 3 addresses culvert replacement projects in Gitksan Territory; and proposes to proceed with feasibility, design, and construction.	\$ 677,300
Resilient Estuaries in the Salish Sea: Phase Two (Baseline Assessments and Ground-truthing)	SeaChange Marine Conservation Society	The Resilient Estuaries in the Salish Sea: Phase Two (Baseline Assessments and Ground-truthing) project will build upon research completed in partnership with the Pacific Salmon Foundation and will provide baseline assessments of critical salmonid habitats in the highly resilient estuaries identified during that work.	\$ 1,160,085
Shellfish Aquaculture Sustainability Enhancement Program	British Columbia Shellfish Growers Association	This project will provide support with; 1) Innovative Shellfish Handling technologies, 2) developing capacity for a long-term Broodstock selection program, 3) environmental habitat restoration, 4) providing education, awareness, and direct support to shellfish farmers.	\$ 1,000,000
Towards food security: restoring salmon and their habitat	Wet'suwet'en Treaty Office Society	Our project aims to assess, monitor, and rebuild salmon populations and their habitat throughout Wet'suwet'en ancestral territory.	\$ 565,000
Headwaters to Deepwaters:	Peninsula Streams Society	We will conduct assessments and studies of stream and estuarine habitat conditions using Pacific salmon as focal species across the watersheds while implementing several restoration projects that address known priorities.	\$ 250,000
Establishing baselines, risks, and mechanisms of thiamine deficiency in BC Chinook salmon	University of British Columbia Vancouver,	Thiamine (vitamin B1) deficiency complex (TDC) is a rapidly emerging issue impacting Chinook salmon but has received extremely limited evaluation in BC and may already be a factor in BC Chinook declines and is expected to be a burgeoning issue under climate change. This project will provide baseline knowledge of the status of thiamine in BC Chinook salmon.	\$ 545,151
Highway 16 and CN Corridor Stranding Remediation/Willow Creek Arch Culvert/Mid-Scully Creek Spawning Gravel Addition.	Kitsumkalum Band, Fish & Wildlife	Implement four designs/prescriptions that were deliverables from 2021/22 BCSRIF funding on areas that caused the stranding and death of fish. The sites are located on the HWY 16/CN rail corridor between Terrace and Prince Rupert. These sites all trap fish and cause fish mortality. In addition to preventing fish mortality, these prescriptions will provide two-way fish passage and additional spawning and rearing habitat.	\$ 888,261
Nanwakolas 50 Watersheds Project	Nanwakolas Council Society	An Indigenous-led science partnership and research project to understand, and develop tools to address, the threats posed by climate change and forest management on salmon populations and their habitat.	\$ 2,875,000

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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Identifying factors that influence early marine survival of WCVI Chinook salmon	Pacific Salmon Foundation	We will use PIT-tagging to estimate survival and combine these estimates with individual-based measures of environmental stress using cutting-edge gene-expression tools ("Fit-Chips"). Additionally, we will monitor environmental DNA (eDNA) to determine key rearing habitats, availability of prey, and presence of predators and pathogens across spatial and temporal scales.	\$ 1,150,000
Enhancing Estuary Resilience: A Collaborative Approach to the Monitoring and Restoration of Estuaries with Coastal First Nations	The Nature Trust of BC	The Nature Trust of British Columbia (NTBC) will continue and expand monitoring and research to assess estuary resilience to sea-level rise and other climate impacts across the coast of BC using the Marsh Resilience to Sea Level Rise (MARS) tool and will work with our existing and expanded First Nations partnerships to identify additional estuary restoration opportunities. Funding provided through this project will also be used to augment restoration activities proposed for the Cowichan River estuary to restore core natural estuarine processes.	\$ 3,493,975
Supporting B.C.'s Kelp Industry and Enabling Coastal Restoration & Research by Increasing Hatchery Seed Supply	West Coast Kelp Ltd.	This West Coast Kelp (WCK) led project located in Bamfield, B.C. seeks to support industry development and improve economic stability in B.C.'s emerging kelp sector. The goal of this project is to address a major bottleneck inhibiting Canadian kelp farmers and restoration initiatives: insufficient and unreliable seed supply. In order to address this bottleneck, this project will improve hatchery methods and expand WCK's existing hatchery infrastructure to produce enough kelp seed for seventy-two hectares of kelp farm per year.	\$ 92,434
Xá:y Syi:ts'emilep: Gill Bar Restoration and Management Plan	Stó:lo Service Agency	With the technical professionals of the STSA, the project team aims to assess the area for habitat destruction related to the impacts of long term heavy recreational use, and to conduct an inventory of the habitats and species use. These findings will then feed into an in-river island management plan and associated restoration works.	\$ 1,513,649
Chilako River and Tributary Stream Corridor Restoration Demonstration	Lheidli T'enneh First Nation	The project takes a strategic, process-based approach to recovering impacted spawning and rearing habitat. The objectives are to rehabilitate stream and river corridors such that stability exists during valley wide floods and the floodplain remains connected to the river during the extreme summer low flows.	\$ 3,000,000
Analysis of forestry effects on Pacific salmon in Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw territory.	Salmon Coast Field Station Society	Our project has four components that (i) provide a quantitative and qualitative history of forestry and salmon in Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw territory, (ii) quantifies the effects of forest harvesting histories on salmon, (iii) establishes a temperature, sedimentation, and dissolved oxygen monitoring system and (iv) develops a non-invasive method for studying salmon stress.	\$ 1,519,522
Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda-xw Fully-Integrated Salmon Habitat Restoration Project	Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw Nations	The project consists of three fully integrated components that provide a tempered foundation for complete revitalization, remediation, and viable long-term health of the habitats in the Seymour and Smith Inlet waterways.	\$ 873,215
Boundary Bay Chinook salmon restoration in the TA'TALU watershed	A Rocha Canada	The goal of the proposed project is to provide critical information to allow for an accurate assessment of the Boundary Bay Chinook salmon population and to restore the habitat value of the watershed.	\$ 535,388

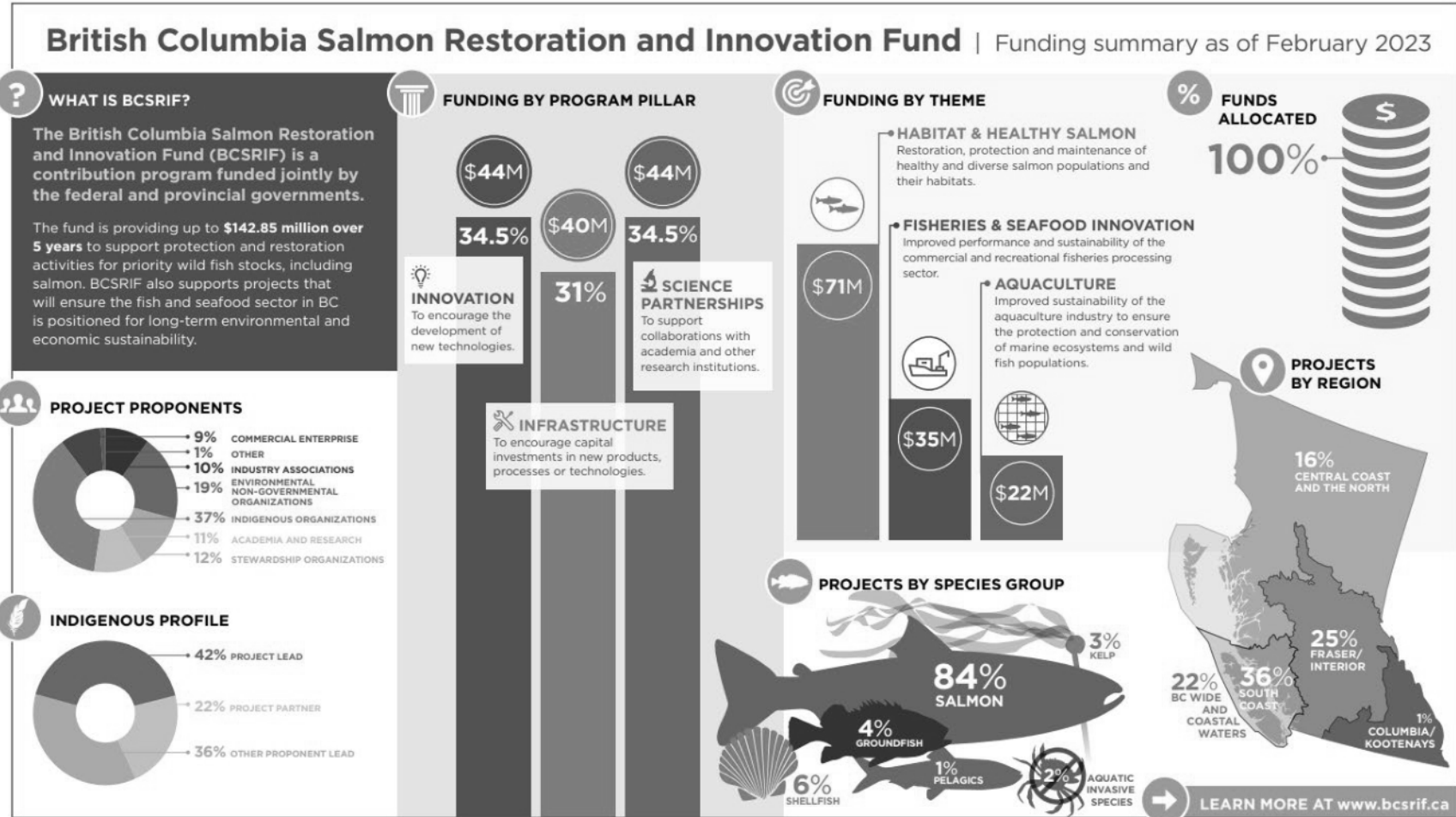
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Project Title	Recipient	Project Description	Funding
Establishing a Test Fishery for Chinook Salmon in key areas of the BC Coast	Sport Fishing Institute of BC	This project will operate a Pilot program to develop a Test Fishery for Chinook Salmon to be used to supplement and verify stock composition data used in the development and management of Marked Selective Fisheries (MSF) for Chinook Salmon, similar to that already used in Washington State (WA). Key areas have been identified, PFMA areas 18 to 21 where there is a lack of sufficient data or existing data is out of date.	\$ 1,573,653
FRIM – Short term mortality holding and respirometry studies	Sport Fishing Institute of BC	This project will build upon the infrastructure and results of current BCSRIF 2020-261, FRIM Short Term Mortality studies in Chinook Salmon and expand the work to study Coho Salmon.	\$ 1,724,644
Informed Approaches to Determine Bottlenecks to Survival for Chinook and Coho Salmon and Steelhead	Pacific Salmon Foundation	The proposed work will utilize and refine PIT tag architecture developed through the ongoing BCSRIF-funded “Bottlenecks Program.” PIT tag-based stage-specific survival estimates will be placed in context by studies of potential mediators of survival bottlenecks; environmental and anthropogenic influences on freshwater emigration, starvation in the first winter at sea, FRIM, and in-river pinniped predation.	\$ 5,096,359

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Appendix B – BCSRIF Phase 1 Funding Summary



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Issue: Pacific Salmon Treaty and Alaskan Bycatch

Recommend Response:

- Many stocks of Pacific salmon and steelhead coastwide are in decline. Climate change impacts and a range of other stressors add to concerns. We all need to support the recovery of salmon together.
- Along with the federal government, through their Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI) and our joint British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) and with First Nations partners, we are working collaboratively to help protect and restore wild Pacific salmon.
- Beyond our focus on implementing the Wild Salmon Strategy in Action, and a new Coastal Marine Strategy, British Columbia (BC) is also investing in watersheds through our new Watershed Security Strategy and Fund, which will in turn help stocks which are important to us – and to neighbors in the South and North.
- BC is concerned about the Alaskan harvest of salmon and steelhead originating in BC rivers. We continue to raise the issue in several forums, including the Canada-United States (US) Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC).
- Through its Commissioner to the PSC, BC continues to engage on these key issues including documentation of BC origin steelhead harvests in Alaska, and in renegotiation of arrangements under the Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST).
- We flag the need for all Pacific Northwest states and BC to do more for salmon, and to support renewal of the PST arrangements before they expire in 2028.
- BC will continue efforts with various governments and partners to encourage the reduction of bycatch in the Alaskan salmon, halibut, and trawl fisheries.

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Additional Response points (if needed):

- We have a mandate to develop new strategies to protect and revitalize BC's wild salmon and steelhead populations.
- BC has taken strong steelhead management actions, which were enhanced in 2019 through the BC-Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) Action Plan that outlined common priorities for that year. These plans are being updated.
- We are working across government to ensure that all of the province's work aligns with the goal of restoring wild salmon and steelhead, and this objective will be built into other strategies that BC is developing (Watershed Security and Coastal Marine).

Key Facts:

- DFO is the jurisdictional lead and is currently developing a long-term strategy to support renewal of the Pacific Salmon Treaty arrangements before they expire in 2028.
- WLRS is working with DFO on providing strategic and scientific advice to manage steelhead and salmon and liaising with international partners to further the conservation efforts around BC salmon. With the recent reorganization, WLRS is now the lead on angling authorizations for freshwater fish, including steelhead.
- The PST, signed by Canada and the US in 1985, provides the framework through which the two countries collaborate to conserve and manage Pacific salmon. The PST and the current agreement reached in 2018, provides a critical foundation for preventing overfishing and achieving conservation and sustainable harvest of Pacific salmon in both countries.
- Pacific salmon stocks including steelhead have suffered significant declines leading to equivalent declines in the ecosystems and economies that rely on them.
- Returns to BC natal streams overall in 2020 were the lowest on record; 2021 and 2022 were similar. For 2024, salmon returns will again be low, much like 2023.
- In 2021, the return of steelhead stocks to the Skeena River dropped dramatically, leading to significant conservation concerns. In 2022, returns improved, but 2023 returns have dropped again. Interior Fraser Steelhead (IFS) remain at extreme conservation concern.
- Over 60 salmon and trout designateable units have been recently, or will soon be, assessed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), for potential listing under the *Species at Risk Act*.
- The bycatch of Canadian origin salmon in Alaska's District 104 fishery – sockeye (from Skeena /Nass) and from the Fraser system, remain a focus of attention, as

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Canadian, and (Southern US stocks) decline, and harvests reduced. Other species such as Northern Coho, Fraser chinook, and steelhead are included.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 12, 2024

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Issue: Herring Fisheries

Recommend Response:

- British Columbia (B.C.) understands the importance of Pacific herring to the marine ecosystem as a forage fish and supports conservative fisheries management approaches that leave an abundance of herring available to the other fish and marine mammals that rely on them.
- B.C. supports science-based fisheries stock assessments and management approaches and has advocated that Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) ensures clearer objectives for managing herring based on their importance to ecosystem processes.
- The province recognizes the socio-economic contributions of herring to First Nations, fisheries sectors, and B.C.'s coastal communities.
- We recognize the ongoing public concern for Pacific herring and will continue to work closely with DFO to ensure sustainable herring stocks for future generations.
- Through programs like the B.C. Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF), the province has invested in projects that are working towards a better understanding of sustainable management of herring fisheries.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- WLRS is committed to economically and environmentally sustainable fisheries and recognizes that B.C.'s fisheries, aquaculture and seafood sectors are significant economic, social, and cultural contributors to the Province.
- We will continue to work with DFO to make sure strong, healthy fish stocks are available for future generations of British Columbians as part of our commitment to sustainable coastal marine ecosystems.

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- I recently met with DFO Minister Lebouthillier and discussed our shared interest in the continued sustainable management of the herring fishery and other shared marine resources.

Key Facts:

- Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is responsible for the conservation and management of marine fish including Pacific Herring. The Province of British Columbia participates in herring management advisory boards and processes to ensure provincial objectives are considered.
- WLRS is the lead for fisheries and aquaculture issues as well as communications with DFO.
- The province supports science-based fisheries management and supports the review of the scientific processes that inform fisheries management decisions.
- Current DFO science outlines that the most influential factor found for determining the annual estimated biomass for herring returning to the Strait of Georgia (SOG) is the natural mortality of Pacific herring which includes factors like ocean conditions and predation by other animals. DFO science provides justification for a 20 percent harvest rate in the SOG showing that fishing harvest has a relatively low impact on future stocks compared to natural mortality.
- Federal Fisheries and Oceans Minister Murray decreased the harvest rate in the SOG to 10 percent in 2022 and again in 2023 and 2024.
- In 2024 (Spawn on Kelp) SOK fisheries are open in the central and north coasts with enough quota for First Nations Food, Social, and Ceremonial (FSC) fisheries and a small number of commercial opportunities. SOK harvesters require provincial licenses to harvest kelp for the SOK fishery; however, there is difficulty issuing these licenses in some areas where the consultation process is lengthy or denied by the Nations in whose territory the proposed kelp is to be harvested.
- In June 2021, the Province sent a letter to then DFO Minister Jordan outlining that the province would like to see clearer objectives for managing herring based on their importance to ecosystem processes. The letter encouraged DFO to ensure timely implementation of the work DFO is doing on the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management and that herring management be considered in conjunction with efforts on wild salmon recovery.
- DFO Science is examining possibilities to understand why spawn in smaller bays is becoming more unpredictable and is declining. DFO is one year into a more intensive genetic study to better understand these localized populations, as current genetic information shows all herring in SOG to be the same stock regardless of spawn location or timing.
- Many members of the public are opposed to the SOG herring fishery and are advocating for a complete moratorium. The fishery occurs nearer to shore in populated areas and therefore more visible than other fishing fleets.

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- Herring processing occurs in late winter months when almost all other fisheries are closed. The closure of the roe herring fishery would cause a major problem for the broader seafood processing industry by causing a several-month period with not enough work leading to retention issues, and further compounding existing labor shortages.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2024

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Issue: First Nation Fisheries Council

Recommend Response:

- Through our work as the provincial lead on fish and aquatic habitat, we have built a successful working relationship with the First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC). The FNFC are a valued partner for the province, with a focus on governance collaborations that support multiple strategic initiatives, such as the First Nations-BC Water Table.
- BC provided the FNFC with a capacity building grant of \$2.25M in 2023 to advance the following priorities: reconciliation on fisheries, aquaculture, freshwater and marine ecosystems, watersheds, wild salmon recovery, and implementation of the *Declaration Act* Action Plan.
- In 2023/2024, over \$1.1M was provided to the FNFC through the Indigenous Funding Program to continue work on existing joint priorities.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- BC and FNFC entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2019 and updated it in January 2023.
- The MOU commits to advance shared priorities for the development of policy, management, and initiatives related to fisheries and aquatic ecosystems.
- The work with FNFC is additional to work this Government does directly with the rights holders and with other Indigenous organizations.
- For the 2024/24 financial year, requests for over ^{Intergov}_{ernment} in continued funding through the Indigenous Funding Program have been submitted through WLRS and the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR).
- In discussions with the Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF) Ministry staff have arranged for the \$15M grant the PSF received to be structured in a way that shares \$7.5M with FNFC to prioritize collaboration on priority projects.

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- The success of FNFC and WLRS-led First Nations-BC Water Table has facilitated the creation of the unprecedented \$100M Watershed Security Fund. FNFC continues to work with the Real Estate Foundation of BC to co-develop the enduring nature of this fund.

Key Facts:

- The FNFC vision is for fish management that focuses on the health and sustainability of ecosystems and species, and the equitable sharing of fisheries and aquatic resources among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike.
- The updated January 2023 MOU was signed on behalf of BC by WLRS, with MIRR and FOR as witnesses.
- WLRS leads the cross-Ministry engagement with FNFC, including confirming annual priorities and budget. This work is done in close partnership with other operational Ministries (e.g., FOR, ENV, and MIRR).
- FNFC was established in 2009. It is one of the three resource councils that reports to the First Nations Leadership Gathering (the BC Assembly of First Nations, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and the First Nations Summit). The other two are the Forestry Council and the Energy and Mining Council.
- FNFC is not a rights holder. It works with, and on behalf of, First Nations.
- FNFC established an MOU with Canada in 2013.
- BC-FNFC collaborations include work on:
 - Wild Salmon Strategy.
 - Coastal and Marine Planning.
 - Watershed Security Strategy.
 - Traditional Knowledge and bio-cultural indicators for salmonid management.
 - Salmonid Cumulative Effects methodology assessments.
- The FNFC Mandate includes:
 - Advancing and protecting Title and Rights including priority access for food, cultural and economic purposes.
 - Supporting First Nations to build and maintain capacity for fishing, planning, policy, law, management, and decision-making at a variety of scales.
 - Facilitating discussions for a BC management framework that recognizes and respects First Nation jurisdiction, management, and authority.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2024

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Issue: Hatcheries in British Columbia

Recommend Response:

- There are a variety of hatcheries in British Columbia (BC) from very small community-based projects to larger-scale production facilities.
- The purpose of hatcheries ranges from recovering at-risk fish populations to increasing commercial or recreational fishing.
- Decisions on hatcheries, and hatchery releases, must not put the area's wild fish and ecosystem health at high risk.
- The British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) has funded projects related to hatchery innovation and infrastructure across BC.
- BC is also the licencing authority, regulating a hatchery's water use, effluent discharge, and Crown Land tenures.
- BC continues to work with First Nations and Canada to address the underlying causes for the declines of steelhead, salmon, and other fish species.

If asked:

- The use of hatcheries as a conservation tool has had mixed results.
 - White sturgeon conservation hatcheries have been used as a stop-gap measure to supplement the wild population.
 - Hatcheries for steelhead conservation are largely unsuccessful.
 - Some salmon stocks respond very well to hatchery intervention (e.g., chum, chinook) while others (e.g., sockeye) do not.
- For the larger hatcheries,
 - Salmon hatcheries are primarily operated by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)

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- Freshwater fish hatcheries are mainly operated by the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC (FFSBC) under contract to BC.

Key Facts:

- WLRS is the lead for provincial policy for hatcheries in freshwater, including working with DFO on issues relating to their salmon hatcheries in freshwater.
- Hatcheries in BC:
 - There are 23 major hatcheries in BC (eight FFSBC; 15 DFO).
 - There are 20 Community Hatcheries via DFO (includes First Nations).
 - There are 95 small public involvement hatcheries with DFO.
 - WLRS authorizes freshwater fish releases (e.g. steelhead, sturgeon, rainbow) and oversees hatchery production of freshwater fish via FFSBC.
 - DFO hatcheries require federal aquaculture licenses and provincial permitting for water use, effluent discharge, and Crown Land tenures.
- BC shares the interest in salmon hatchery production for Indigenous ceremonial use and food security, and in sustainable recreational and commercial fishing.
- WLRS staff participate in the Salmon Enhancement and Habitat Advisory Board (SEHAB) to ensure that BC is more closely connected to advising DFO.
- Steelhead stocking programs are only used to augment recreational fishing opportunities in locations where the wild population is not at-risk (e.g., Vedder and Chilliwack Rivers), or there is no remaining wild steelhead population.
- For species at extreme conservation risk, BC is taking an all-threats approach and working with Federal and Indigenous Governments to align actions.
- BCSRIF Phase 1 has provided \$8.7M in funding to projects that address hatcheries; Phase 2 has provided another \$3.9M to fund four hatchery projects.

Project Title	Proponent	BCSRIF \$	Project Location
BCSRIF Phase 1			
Creation of Salmon Conservation Facility	Juan de Fuca Salmon Restoration Society	\$920,000	Charters River, Sooke
Upper Fraser Chinook Strategic Enhancement Project	Spruce City Wildlife Association	\$240,362	Middle and Upper Fraser Watershed (Prince George)
Percy Walkus Hatchery Upgrade	Pacific Salmon Foundation	\$336,895	Rivers Inlet
Salish Sea Salmon Action Plan - Effectiveness of Enhanced Salmon Production	Pacific Salmon Foundation	\$1,083,498	Salish Sea
Kingfisher intake restoration	Kingfisher Interpretive Centre Soc.	\$43,396	Enderby
Chapman Creek Hatchery water supply and capacity upgrades	Sunshine Coast Salmonid Society	\$70,000	Sechelt
Seymour Hatchery Infrastructure Renewal	Seymour Salmonid Society	\$80,410	North Vancouver

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Project Title	Proponent	BCSRIF \$	Project Location
Causes and consequences of vateritic otoliths in hatchery-reared Coho salmon	University of Victoria	\$512,458	University of Victoria
BCSRIF Phase 2			
Bute Inlet Salmon Viability Strategy	Xwemalhkwu (Homalco) First Nation	\$775,225	Bute Inlet/Campbell River
Charting a Path for Coastal First Nations' Community Salmon Enhanc't Initiatives	Great Bear Initiative Society	\$1,699,812	North/ Central Coast
Baselines/risks/mechanisms of thiamine deficiency in BC Chinook salmon	University of British Columbia	\$545,151	Straight of Georgia
Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda-xw Fully Integrated Salmon Habitat Restoration Project	Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw Nations	\$873,215	Smith/Seymour Inlets

Date Prepared/Revised: February 9, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Issue: Provincial White Sturgeon

Recommend Response:

- British Columbia (BC) is the lead Government responsible for sustainable management and recovery of white sturgeon.
- There are six white sturgeon populations in BC.
 - Four have Species at Risk (SAR) designations (Kootenay, Columbia, Nechako, and Upper Fraser populations).
 - Two undergo regular SAR assessments (the Lower Fraser and Mid-Fraser populations).
- WLRS leads cross-government (Provincial, Federal, and Indigenous Government) collaborations and management planning.
- The budget for sturgeon management is a combination of:
 - Operational budgets.
 - Augmented through project specific funding.
 - SAR funds from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)
 - The BC Conservation Surcharge on sturgeon fishing licences, which flows to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF) for allocation.
 - Funding is also provided by partners, such as the Nechako Environmental Enhancement Fund.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Hatcheries: Hatcheries are used as part of the recovery plan for the Columbia, Kootenay, and Nechako populations.
- Fishery: WLRS administers a carefully monitored catch-and-release fishery in the mid and lower Fraser River. This fishery is valued at more than \$30M annually.
- Co-Management: First Nations are key Government partners in the conservation and recovery of sturgeon.

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Key Facts:

- White Sturgeon often live more than 100 years. Females can take up to 35 years to mature and spawn every two to seven years. Juvenile recruitment into spawning adults is a recovery priority for all populations. Additional measures include protecting and remediating spawning habitats and use of hatchery supplementation as a stopgap.
- A recreational catch-and-release fishery on the lower Fraser River is valued at >\$30M (direct and in-direct) to the economy.
- Current population estimates:

White Sturgeon Population	SARA?	Wild Population	Hatchery?
Columbia River	Yes	1100	(US and Canada)
Kootenay River / Lake	Yes	1700	(US only)
Fraser Watershed – Lower Fraser R.	No	45,000	No
Fraser Watershed – Mid Fraser R.	No	10,000 (Note – believed to be close to historic)	No
Fraser Watershed – Nechako R.	Yes	553	Yes (BC)
Fraser Watershed – Upper Fraser R.	Yes	800 (Note – believed to be close to historic)	No

FIRST NATIONS.

- First Nations have Rights related to fish, which continues to be affirmed through case law. For example, the 2022 court case (*Thomas and Saik'uz First Nation v. Rio Tinto Alcan Inc*) affirmed an Aboriginal right to fish in the Nechako watershed, specifically including salmon and sturgeon.
- White sturgeon holds deep cultural importance, including spiritual linkages to ancestors, and traditional medicines.
- First Nations are core partners in the conservation and recovery of sturgeon.
- For the Fraser River populations, BC and First Nations have established a steering committee to co-develop a plan (Lower, Mid, Upper, Nechako).

ROLES

- WLRS is responsible to:
 - ensure an effective multi-government management strategy is in place.
 - lead science and policy in support of recovery.
 - lead formal SAR processes and updates with Canada.
 - oversee hatchery production of white sturgeon.
 - Oversee sturgeon recreational fisheries (no fishery on SAR listed groups).
 - Provides local/regional fish expertise.
- Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy enforces fisheries regulations through the Conservation Officer Service.
- DFO evaluates SAR Recovery actions.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2024

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

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Issue: Fish Species at Risk

Recommend Response:

- WLRS leads a coordinated approach to address issues facing our aquatic ecosystems and the numerous fish and aquatic species that rely on them.
- WLRS leads the cross-ministry involvement in federally-led Species at Risk (SAR) processes.
- WLRS leads cross-ministry conservation strategies for species that British Columbia (BC) deems at high-risk, to rebuild healthy populations (e.g., Salmon, Steelhead).
- In addition to species-specific plans, WLRS is taking action on the underlying factors such as managing for biodiversity, addressing cumulative effects, and building watershed security.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Jurisdictional responsibility for many of the threats span across the governments. WLRS leads management collaborations with Federal and First Nations Governments.
- Salmon are a keystone species, and WLRS is working collaboratively with Provincial, Federal and First Nations Governments to conserve this iconic fish.
- There are approximately 84 freshwater aquatic species listed Federally as SAR: 44 populations of wild salmon, two populations of steelhead, four populations of White Sturgeon, three molluscs, and 31 other freshwater fishes.

Key Facts:

- Cross Ministry operational management roles:
 - BC is responsible for the sustainable and integrated management of natural resources and preventing species from becoming at risk.
 - WLRS is responsible for developing and implementing cross-Ministry/Government conservation plans and formal SAR recovery plans within the integrated resource management framework.

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- WLRS is also responsible for conserving and protecting ecosystem functionality which at-risk species rely on, including the new Watershed Security Initiative, source-to-tap drinking water, marine planning, and aquatic habitat recovery and restoration.
- As of December 2023, WLRS is also responsible for permitting (e.g., habitat conservation under the *Water Sustainability Act*) and fisheries management decisions (e.g., white sturgeon fishery in the Lower Fraser).
- Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy enforces fisheries regulations through the Conservation Officer Service.
- The Government of Canada's *Species at Risk Act (SARA)* is the legislation that protects fish and wildlife SAR in Canada and aims to prevent them from disappearing (extirpation or extinction).
 - Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is the lead federal agency responsible for SARA listed fish and aquatic species. The BC Government works in close collaboration with DFO on the design and implementation of recovery initiatives.
- A significant number of new fish species are being ranked at high concern, including 42 salmon populations that will be up for a listing recommendation (under SARA) by the province over the next two years.
 - Loss of salmon has huge ripple effects as over 100 species of wildlife eat salmon, including other SAR (e.g., Southern Resident Killer Whales) and bears, and watersheds rely on salmon as fertilization for aquatic and forest ecosystems.
- Indigenous Connections.
 - Fish have been confirmed through court to be an Aboriginal Right. Not only is there a right to fish, but there is a right to have fish available to fish.
 - Aquatic species at risk have a direct link to potential infringement.
 - Salmon holds a central place in Indigenous traditions and culture; losses impact the ability for current practices and cultural revival.
 - Lack of salmon and other fish species has become a profile food security issue for Indigenous Peoples.

Date Prepared/Revised: January 30, 2024

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: BC's Freshwater Recreational Fisheries

Recommend Response:

- WLRS plays a lead role in ensuring the sustainable management for all fish in freshwater.
- WLRS is also responsible for authorizing freshwater fisheries in British Columbia (BC) under the *Wildlife Act*.
- BC's freshwater fishery is an important sector.
 - Economic - Provides >\$500M in annual expenditures.
 - People Involved - Over 330,000 licences sold.
 - Rural Economy - Expenditures are highest in the interior, which faces economic impacts from wildfire and forestry downturns.
- The Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC (FFSBC) contributes to recreational fishing by stocking almost five million trout and kokanee annually into 648 lakes.
- Fish are integral to First Nations' culture and traditions. BC is committed to collaborative management and ensuring this important resource is available for current and future generations.
- Freshwater fisheries are only allowed when they do not put wild fish populations at risk.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The fishing sector in BC is made up of four components and all are provincially important:
 1. The capture fishery (often called commercial);
 2. Aquaculture;
 3. Fish and seafood processing; and
 4. Sport fishing (both marine and freshwater).
- Sport fishing is the highest performing in revenue and jobs.
- During emergency responses to drought and other natural disasters, decisions on closures are completed quickly and can impact guiding businesses. Minimizing business impacts is an important factor in those decisions.

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Key Facts:

Sources of Information

- BC's primary source for economic facts is from BC Stats. The most recent update on fishing is from 2018.
- Additional statistics on BC's freshwater sport fishing come from trusted work of the FFSBC.
- There is an upcoming, yet to be published, report from DFO. Upon reviewing drafts, staff indicate that the Federal results appear to be similar to BC Stats.

BC Stats, 2018 Report:

- Total Value of all four fisheries components is \$3.3B in revenue.
 - An estimated 15,000 British Columbians were employed.
 - Total wages and salaries were estimated at \$465.0M.
- The Sport Fishing subset is \$1.1B in revenue. Marine and Freshwater:
 - 9,000 of the 15,000 people are employed by sport fishing.
 - Wages and salaries are \$236.5M (out of \$465M).

2013 FFSBC Economic Report.

- BC Stats did not provide a break down between salt and freshwater fishing.
- The Freshwater Sport Fishing subset is \$546M in revenue; and almost \$1B in combined direct/indirect.
- As determined by Destination BC, freshwater recreational fishing is one of BC's top five adventure tourism activities promoted internationally. For example, anglers spend three times more on fishing equipment than skiers.

First Nations

- BC government continues to advance co-developed and co-delivered fish management and recovery partnerships with First Nations.
- Inland fisheries are increasing in importance for Indigenous food security given challenges from reduced salmon escapement.

Freshwater Fisheries

- A substantial portion of revenues are generated from the interior of BC and associated with the management of small lakes fisheries.
- The Skeena and Chilliwack rivers are prominent fisheries for steelhead with large economic benefits to those rural communities.
- The Lower Fraser supports a catch-and-release sturgeon fishery estimated to contribute more than \$30M annually to the local economy.
- BC freshwater fisheries are considered as destination places, with a large contingent of the fishers coming from urban centers.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 29, 2024

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Freshwater Fisheries Society of British Columbia Financial Overview.

Recommend Response:

- British Columbia (BC) has globally renowned freshwater fishing.
- Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC (FFSBC) is a non-profit organization that operates under contract to the Ministry to deliver our hatchery and stocking programs.
- All revenue from freshwater licence sales go to FFSBC, providing an annual operating budget of approximately \$10-\$12M.
- Additional licence “surcharge” fees are approximately \$3-\$4M and directed to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF) to support projects.
- On average, there are approximately 350,000 freshwater fishing licences purchased annually.

If asked:

- FFSBC has been impacted by increases in inflation while revenue has remained relatively stable.
- With no changes since 2003, there was an increase in license fees of 9.9 percent in 2023-2024 and 4 percent in 2024/2025, which has not fully offset costs of inflation.
- A recent Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) survey outlines recreational freshwater fishing supports 2975 jobs and \$526M in expenditures for the BC economy.
- FFSBC operational activities are conducted under the authority of the *Wildlife Act*, including stocking releases, hatchery releases, brood stock collection.

Key Facts:

- The work of the FFSBC was originally part of ministry operations.
- Over the past several years, FFSBC has completed numerous cost-savings improvements to their operations.

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- FFSBC implemented efficiency recommendations that delivered a 50 percent reduction in kilowatt hours of power used at facilities.
- In 2024-25, the Ministry will partner with FFSBC to complete a fish stocking program review and then rationalize the cost/benefit of stocking each lake. The objective is to reduce stocking of some strains between 11 percent and 28 percent (over the next five years) without impacting total angler overall use.
- The FFSBC Board is also reviewing operations for facilities and offices to see if corporate savings are possible.
- Impacts to FFSBC revenue streams include more anglers shifting into the 65 and above license category and paying the reduced (\$5) seniors' fee, along with increasing capital costs associated with aging facilities.
- Examples of FFSBC outcomes:
 - In 2023, FFSBC stocked approximately 648 lakes with 4.92 million trout, char, and kokanee to support recreational fishing.
 - In 2023, 2.75 million kokanee eggs were collected and redirected to Kootenay Lake in recovery efforts.
 - In 2023, 918 Learn to Fish sessions were held reaching 30,604 participants. The Learn to Fish Program has now reached over 376,000 participants since its inception in 2006.

Revenue Summary – Fishing Licence Sales and Conservation Grant to FFSBC

Fiscal Year	Angling rev%	Angling revenue that goes to FFSBC (million)	Surcharges that go to HCTF (million)	Total Revenue from Angler Fees (million)	General Revenue - Grant for Conservation to FFSBC (not fees)	Total FFSBC (Fees and Grant)
2015/16	100	\$ 10.593	\$ 3.737	\$ 14.330	\$ 0.825	\$11.418
2016/17	100	\$ 11.109	\$ 3.928	\$ 15.037	\$ 0.825	\$11.934
2017/18	100	\$ 10.563	\$ 3.776	\$ 14.339	\$ 0.825	\$11.388
2018/19	100	\$ 10.466	\$ 3.809	\$ 14.409	\$ 0.825	\$11.425
2019/20	100	\$10.459	\$2.600*	\$13.059	\$ 0.825	\$11.320
2020/21	100	\$10.565	\$2.100*	\$12.665	\$ 0.825	\$11.390
2021/22	100	\$9.344	\$3.100*	\$12.444	\$ 0.825	\$10.196
2022/23	100	\$10.157	\$3.600*	\$13.757	\$ 0.825	\$10.928

- Years have been rounded.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 8, 2024	
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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Climate Disasters and Fish (Flood, Drought, Fire)

Recommend Response:

- Over the last decade, British Columbia (BC) has had an increase in wildfire, flood and drought frequency, size, and severity.
- The effects from these natural events are amplified due to climate change and cumulative impacts within watersheds.
- These events directly impact fish and recovery objectives.
- WLRS is collaborating across ministries to ensure preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery actions put a higher priority on fish (including salmon) and functioning aquatic ecosystems than in the past.
- WLRS is also leading work on the underlying issues that increase the severity of these natural disaster events, including a Watershed Security Strategy, a Source-To-Tap Drinking Water Strategy, and Cumulative Effects Management.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- After the 2021 Atmospheric River Event, WLRS set up a BC-First Nations–Federal (3G) oversight team that guides, supports, and coordinates fish and habitat recovery actions.
- WLRS implements freshwater fisheries closures to protect fish, and people, during disaster events.
- BC provided the Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF) with a \$15M grant to partner with the First Nations Fisheries Council on projects to support salmon in drought, flood, and fire. Examples of action in the 2023 severe drought:
 - Sandbagging stream channels to create deeper water access for returning spawning salmon.
 - The addition of oxygen to streams and the expansion of cold-water rearing habitat for juvenile salmon.
 - Temporary shading to help cool the water.

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Key Facts:

- Aboriginal Rights to fish continue to be asserted and affirmed through case law. The collective impacts are leading to declines that are risking rights-based access to food, social and ceremonial uses.
- In the past years, BC has experienced unprecedented wildfire seasons, an Atmospheric River event, and extreme drought. These have had significant impacts on fish, their habitats, and their watershed-level water quality needs.
- Taking action to support fish health in disasters is not only an ecological and food security goal, but the actions also help to offset economic impacts to other sectors such as agriculture, mining due to water restrictions. *Water Sustainability Act* water restrictions are put in place to address fish requirements.
- BC is working with First Nations in areas impacted by flood, drought, and fire. The goal is to help guide, support, and coordinate fish and aquatic species recovery and restore aquatic habitat.
 - 3G teams have been set up in the Fraser Valley and Nicola watershed to help guide, support and coordinate fish and fish habitat recovery.
 - The 3G work completed 18 remediations for salmon and steelhead.
 - Fisheries & Oceans Canada (DFO) has contributed an additional Intergover for 2024 for provincial capacity.
- In 2023, WLRS worked with the Pacific Salmon Foundation, DFO and First Nations to create a new program for emergency actions in drought, including creating access to spawning grounds, building cooling pits and shade areas, and connecting streams to colder waters for rearing juveniles.
- WLRS is also working across ministries on various provincial natural hazard response initiatives. Including:
 - Integrating fish needs into provincial initiatives related to flood, fire and drought. Initiatives range from fish protection policy development to operational restoration and mitigation.
 - Partnering with Emergency Management and Climate Readiness to update the public facing “ClimateReadyBC” website which provides information on climate risks and funding resources for communities.
 - Leading a fish/aquatic habitat recovery portal, to track the collective site and watershed scale activities, and enable prioritizing actions.
- WLRS has set up an integrated provincial government Water Hazard Committee focusing on interagency collaboration and action alignment. The Committee aims to improve the structure and optimization of resources year-round for drought and flood planning and response.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 12, 2024

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Wild Fish and Indigenous Food and Culture Security

Recommend Response:

- Fish are foundational to First Nations' communities, culture, well-being, identity, and way of life.
- All fish, both freshwater and saltwater fish, are used (e.g., food, medicine, spiritual connections, trade).
- While salmon arrive in abundance once a year, other fish provide the ongoing supply of fresh food (e.g., ice fishing).
- Declines in salmon have led to an increased reliance on other fish to meet nutritional and cultural needs.
- WLRS is leading work to conserve and recover pacific salmon and freshwater species in decline (e.g. white sturgeon).
- WLRS is acting on underlying factors to fish abundance, such as managing for biodiversity, addressing cumulative effects, and building watershed security.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The 2023 drought highlighted growing concerns for fish in food security.
 - WLRS partnered with First Nations and the Federal Government to take on-the-ground action during the emergency event.
 - We strengthened emergency policies and programs to profile fish as a foundation in wild food security.
- The Ministry of Agriculture is leading the cross-Government work on mitigating food security challenges in future climate events.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Key Facts:

Indigenous Connections.

- Fish have been confirmed through court to be an Aboriginal Right. Not only is there a right to fish, but there is a right to have fish available to fish.
- Lack of salmon and other fish species is now a profile food security issue.
- Lack of fish has limited First Nations' ability to practice their inherent and constitutional rights and responsibilities to harvest, manage, and protect.
- Lack of salmon and other fish also impacts Indigenous goals for cultural revival.

Traditional Consumption

- Eating fish has always been an important part of First Nation culture and nutrition. Traditionally, no edible part of the fish was wasted.
- Fish meat and eggs are sources of protein and B vitamins. Protein helps fight sickness; B vitamins help keep nervous systems working.
- Fish heads and bones are a source of calcium; fish heads are still a delicacy in many areas.
- Cold water, oily fish, such as herring, eulachon, salmon, trout, halibut, and cod, are rich in Omega-3 Fatty Acids, protecting against strokes, heart disease and may help protect against diabetes and cancer.
- Many fish, such as salmon are also an excellent source of vitamin D and A.
- Eulachon have long been prized for oil and there were numerous 'grease trails' connecting coastal and interior communities.
- Some Nations use White Sturgeon ceremonies to connect with ancestors.

Salmon

- Salmon is found in almost every part of British Columbia, except for northeast regions that are in the Peace and McKenzie River watersheds.
- Given the massive volume of fish that traditionally return to First Nation territories, treated salmon provide a critical food source throughout the year.
- When salmon are scarce, Nations work hard to obtain salmon for ceremonial and subsistence needs, and neighboring Nations share with each other.

Financial Considerations

- Actions to conserve and recover fish species are part of base budgets, augmented with project specific funding.
- Action to improve watershed health, mitigate cumulative impacts, and embed food security into climate disaster response and recovery is part of base budgets.
- There are significant costs to Government when an infringement on Rights to fish are proven in court.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 9, 2024

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Riparian Areas Protection Regulation

Recommend Response:

- The Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR) sets standards that meet both British Columbia's (BC) legal environmental requirements and the federal *Fisheries Act* requirements.
- WLRS handled approximately 1080 RAPR assessment reports in 2023/2024.
- Conserving remaining pockets of riparian ecosystems, within highly developed communities, is also tied to BC's objectives to protect drinking water, improve flood and drought resiliency, and recover aquatic species including salmon.
- RAPR provides economic benefits to municipalities, including higher property taxes on visually appealing waterfront and lower stormwater management costs.
- WLRS invested over \$500K in additional permanent resources for RAPR in 2023. This eliminated the eight-month permitting backlog and returned to a 30 day maximum turn around time.
- WLRS has made significant strides in additional program improvements to increase compliance and effectiveness.
- WLRS is also responsible for the Housing Action Task Force (HATF) which is supporting RAPR to gain efficiencies, improve the quality of submissions and streamline processes.

If asked for further details on RAPR program changes:

- RAPR program improvements have included: coaching Qualified Environmental Professionals (QEPs); outreach and support to local governments; working with the regulating agency to address poor performing QEP's; streamlined process for affordable housing and improving the regulatory guidance documents.

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Key Facts:

- RAPR integrates fish habitat protection requirements into local government permitting for development (residential, commercial, and industrial).
- RAPR relies on QEPs to ensure proposed development meets both regulatory requirements and site-specific conditions.
- Inclusion of a provincial authority to approve or reject proposals met the commitment to greater oversight and effectiveness of the professional reliance model.
- The current review timeline is now a maximum of 30 days, and we are finding additional efficiencies and program improvement through:
 - Creating a streamlined and risk-based process for specific types of applications, including those from consistently high performing QEPs or for affordable housing.
 - Addressing low performing QEPs, as non-compliant submissions are a significant cause for delay in the overall queue.
 - Working closely with local governments through education and outreach.
- HATF identifies the volume, type, and complexity of applications that are housing-related, accelerate decisions, and address systemic issues that cause duplication, timeline delays, and backlogs. HATF is aligned with RAPR efforts to improve the quality of submissions from QEPs, streamline processes, and use a risk-based approach.
- RAPR applies in the following local governments:
 - Capital Regional District
 - Columbia Shuswap Regional District
 - Comox Valley Regional District
 - Cowichan Valley Regional District
 - Fraser Valley Regional District
 - Metro Vancouver Regional District, other than within the boundaries of the City of Vancouver
 - qathet Regional District
 - Regional District of Central Okanagan
 - Regional District of Nanaimo
 - Regional District of North Okanagan
 - Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
 - Squamish-Lillooet Regional District
 - Strathcona Regional District
 - Sunshine Coast Regional District
 - Thompson-Nicola Regional District

Date Prepared/Revised: February 12, 2024

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Invasive Mussel Defence Program

Recommend Response:

- Healthy watersheds support biodiversity along with the health and economic well-being of communities and people throughout the province.
- That's why it's so important we do everything we can to keep British Columbia (BC) lakes, rivers, and waterways free from aquatic invasive species like zebra and quagga mussels.
- BC's Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP) is delivered by WLRS in partnership with the Conservation Officer Service, program funding partners, and neighboring jurisdictions across Canada and the United States (US).
- We will continue to lead collaboration with jurisdictions across western Canada and the US on a coordinated perimeter defense approach.
- The operating budget for 2024-25 is the same as 2023-24, at a minimum of \$3.3Million.
- We continue to work and explore new or increased financial partnerships.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- IMDP is operating successfully at \$3.3M per year.
- IMDP could develop options for an expanded program with additional activities in monitoring, education, and preparedness.
- Because of reductions in financial contributions from funding partners in recent years, BC has temporarily redirected funds from other priorities to maintain IMDP service levels.

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Key Facts:

- An infestation could result in the collapse of fish populations, including salmon, degrade the environment, and affect drinking water quality within months.
- The WLRS 2023 report “*Potential Economic Impact of Zebra and Quagga Mussels in BC*”, estimates the annual cost should invasive mussels become established in BC ranging from \$64M–\$129M.
- BC has been implementing IMDP since 2015 in partnership with the Conservation Officer Service, program funding partners and neighbouring jurisdictions across Canada and the US with prevention activities focused on:
 - Early detection lake monitoring in priority lakes across the province:
 - Watercraft inspections at stations located at key entry points into BC.
 - Clean, Drain, Dry public outreach campaign.
- Partnering with the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation and other funders, in 2023, 867 samples from 83 priority waterbodies were tested (all were negative).
- The *Wildlife Act* review identified potential ‘pull-the-plug’ legislation. No decision.
- Year-over-year Budget:

Funding Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 (not yet signed)
Program Partners						
BC Hydro	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000	\$750,000	\$500,000	\$350,000	Government Financial Information
Fortis	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$0	\$50,000	\$50,000	
Columbia Power	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	
Columbia Basin Trust	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	
DFO	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$475,000	\$0	
BC Gov	\$1,250,000	\$1,000,000	\$2,250,000	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000	
WLRS Risk Managed					\$775,000	
COS operational savings					\$375,000	
Total Program Budget	\$3,250,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,500,000	\$2,775,000	\$3,300,000	

- Summary of Annual Operational Outcomes

Operational Activity	2022 End of Season	2023 End of Season
Watercraft inspected:	20,100	20,900
People interacted with:	36,400	39,200
High-risk inspections	122	155
Decontamination Orders issued:	66	66
Quarantine Periods issued:	29	36
Mussel-fouled watercraft:	13	14
Operational scope:	32 inspectors across 6 stations + 2 roving crews	43 inspectors across 6 stations + 2 roving crews

Date Prepared/Revised: February 8, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: James Mack, ADM

Phone: (778) 698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Manjit Kerr-Upal, Director

Phone: (250) 896-2231

ADVICE TO MINISTER

<p style="text-align: center;">CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE</p> <p>Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: 28 February 2024 Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Keeping B.C. waterways free of Invasive Mussels</p>
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ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **Healthy watersheds support biodiversity and the health and economic well-being of communities and people throughout the province.**
- **That's why it's so important we do everything we can to keep B.C. lakes, rivers and waterways clean and healthy and free from aquatic invasive species like zebra and quagga mussels.**
- **The Province's Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP) will continue to monitor threats to aquatic invasive species, as we collaborate with jurisdictions across western Canada and the USA to ensure B.C.'s prevention and response efforts are coordinated as part of a perimeter defence approach.**
- **The Province's Invasive Mussel Defence Program strongly encourages all watercraft launching in B.C.'s waters to follow the "Clean, Drain, Dry" approach to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species like zebra and quagga mussels.**

Only if needed – Funding in 2024

- **The Province's focus is to maintain existing program services.**
- **The Province has had to temporarily redirect funds from other programs to maintain IMDP service levels because of reductions in financial contributions from funding partners.**
- **The Province is exploring increased financial partnerships and is expected to announce outcomes of recent discussions with partners early spring.**

Only if needed – Invasive Mussels:

- **Quagga mussel larvae were detected in Snake River, Idaho in September 2023. This marks the first detection of these invasive mussels in the Pacific Northwest.**
- **Immediately following the announcement of the positive detection, B.C.'s IMDP triggered operational changes to treat all boats coming from Idaho as high risk and there have been no additional positive detections in the Columbia River Basin through B.C. or neighbouring jurisdictions.**
- **Provincial program staff in my Ministry and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy are working with the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) to highlight additional precautionary measures at border crossings to continue to keep British Columbia free of zebra and quagga mussels.**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

KEY FACTS:

Zebra and quagga mussels are invasive to B.C. and pose a serious threat to the province's aquatic ecosystems. An infestation could result in the collapse of valuable native fish populations such as sockeye salmon. Invasive mussels can displace native aquatic plants and wildlife, degrade the environment and affect drinking water quality within months.

The Province has been implementing the Invasive Mussel Defence Program since 2015 in partnership with the Conservation Officer Service, program funding partners and neighbouring jurisdictions across Canada and the USA with prevention activities focused on:

- Early detection lake monitoring in priority lakes across the province:
- Watercraft inspection stations checking boats coming into BC at key entry points
- Clean, Drain Dry public outreach campaign.

IMDP funding relies on funding partners, and it fluctuates annually. Funding largely comes from Columbia Basin Trust, Columbia Power, BC Hydro, Fortis BC and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), and the Province. In direct response to reductions in partner funding in recent years, the Government of B.C. has increased support in order to maintain base operations.

Owing to program efficiencies, \$3.3–3.5 million is the minimum annual amount for core operations. Additional funding would be required to increase lake monitoring, inspection stations and the Early Detection Rapid Response Plan and response preparedness in general.

- For the 2022 season, the total operating budget was \$2.7 million.
- For the 2023 season, the total budget was increased to \$3.3 million, which includes more than one million dollars in B.C. risk-managed funds.
- For the upcoming 2024 season, discussions with funding partners are underway.

The report "*Potential Economic Impact of Zebra and Quagga Mussels in BC*", which was released in May 2023, evaluates the cost should invasive mussels become established in B.C. It estimates an annual ranging from \$64–\$129 million. Costs are largely tied to mitigation and repair of water-related infrastructure; including hydro infrastructure; water supply infrastructure for municipal and domestic use, agricultural irrigation, maintenance to boats and marinas, and loss in residential property values due to lost shoreline amenity values.

We strongly encourage boaters, anglers, and recreational users to always practise "Clean, Drain, Dry" to disinfect all gear and boats following use when leaving a waterbody to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) and diseases. This includes removing and cleaning off any visible plants, mud and debris, removing the drain plug before transporting the boat.

AIS Inspectors are trained in watercraft inspection and decontamination following the standard protocol that is used across the Pacific Northwest. The goal of every inspection is to ensure that the watercraft leaves the inspection station Clean, Drained and Dried. As part of the inspection protocol, inspectors check and remind boaters to remove the drain plug before transporting their boat although currently in B.C. it is not mandatory.

“Pull-the-plug” legislation that requires all watercraft to have their drain plugs removed prior to transporting their boat is a regulatory tool that is in place in many jurisdictions across the Pacific Northwest to enforce Clean, Drain, Dry. The Ministry is undertaking a review of the *Wildlife Act* and has identified consideration of pull-the-plug legislation. As this process unfolds, we encourage recommendations to be submitted directly through the public review process (WildlifeActReview@gov.bc.ca).

It is not mandatory for all watercraft to be inspected prior to launching their boat in B.C. waters. However it is mandatory for anyone transporting a boat in B.C. to stop at an open inspection station along their travel route during the boating season from April to October. Watercraft and related equipment include sailboats, motorboats, car toppers, kayaks, canoes, and paddle boards being transported. This approach is consistent with other jurisdictions across the Pacific Northwest and the IMDP collaborates with Alberta, Yukon, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and western U.S. states on enhanced coordination and taking a perimeter defence approach.

As a priority, Conservation Officer Service (COS) Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) staff are following up with each notification from CBSA and conducting the necessary inspections and decontaminations when required. IMDP also launched the AIS K9 (canine) Unit in 2017 with the training of B.C.’s first multi-purpose detection dog (K9), Kilo and in 2020, with a second detection K9 Major. Both K9 teams conducted inspections at the various watercraft inspection stations throughout the inspection season.

For the 2023 season, 43 inspectors operated six inspection stations and two roving inspection crews. The watercraft inspection stations were located at key border crossings along the Alberta and U.S. borders. Crews completed 20,900 inspections and interacted with about 39,200 people to promote Clean, Drain, Dry practices—155 watercraft were identified as high risk, 66 decontamination orders were issued, and 36 watercraft were given quarantine periods to meet the required drying time.

Media interest:

Active. Expected to increase.

Communications contact	Chitra Arcot	604 209-4043
Program contact	Martina Beck	778 698-4364
File created	2 May 2022	
File updated	28 February 2024	

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Aquatic Invasive Fauna

Recommend Response:

- Invasive species are recognized globally as the second greatest threat to biodiversity, after cumulative habitat loss.
- Invasive species pose a significant threat to British Columbia's (BC) natural environment, economy, and Indigenous cultural values.
- WLRS provides science and policy expertise on prevention and management of aquatic and terrestrial invasive fauna.
- Zebra and quagga mussels remain BC's top aquatic invasive priority.
- Other priorities include whirling disease and preventing the introduction of prohibited fish species, such as the snakehead, into BC.
- We are working with provincial, national, and international partners to prevent the spread of invasives into BC.
- To date, high priority Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are addressed on a project-by-project basis as funding can be secured, except the Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP) which receives additional funding from Columbia Basin Trust, Columbia Power, Fortis BC, and BC Hydro.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The costs for control and management would surpass costs for prevention.
- As an example, a 2023 report by WLRS estimates if zebra and quagga mussels were to be introduced into BC, the costs would range from \$64M to \$129M annually.
- Preventing introductions and early action is imperative to mitigating impacts and reducing costs.

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Key Facts:

- Invasive species do not respect borders, hence cross border/jurisdictional collaboration, and partnerships with all levels of government, academia, and non-government organisations is a key to success.
- BC leads the coordination for freshwater aquatic Invasives Species (AIS) prevention, management, and control, while Fisheries and Oceans Canada leads marine AIS (e.g., European green crab).
- WLRS is the lead for both aquatic and terrestrial fauna (animals) while FOR is the lead for invasive plants.
- BC's Inter-Ministry Invasive Species Working Group (IMISWG) is the coordinating body for invasive species management.
 - The IMISWG brings together provincial ministries, agencies, and Crown corporations (nine different bodies) with invasive species prevention and management responsibilities to collaboratively address both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species through a cross-government approach.
- WLRS Water, Fish and Coast Division is the lead for aquatic invasive fauna, including:
 - Delivery of IMDP in partnership with the Conservation Office Service (see the separate note on the IMDP).
 - Science and policy expertise and management leadership on priority aquatic invasive fauna in close partnership with WLRS regions.
 - Education and behaviour change through programs such as "Clean, Drain, and Dry" targeting recreational boaters.
- The IMISWG works closely with the Invasive Species Council of BC, Indigenous communities, and other partners throughout the province to help prevent the introduction and spread of harmful, non-native plants and animals.
- Partnerships with academia fill knowledge gaps about aquatic invasive species distribution and impacts and advancing monitoring tools.

Date Prepared/Revised: January 30, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: James Mack

Phone: (778) 698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Jennifer Davis

Phone: (778) 974-2336

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Okanagan Salmon Reintroduction

Recommend Response:

- Wild salmon recovery remains a priority for British Columbia (BC).
- Conservation aquaculture practices in freshwater can play a role in salmon recovery.
- The number of hatchery fish released must not put other wild fish, or recovery objectives, at risk.
- In support of wild salmon recovery, BC is generating a broad range of actions to improve watershed resiliency, mitigate for climate change, and enhance wild food security.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- All wild fish are connected to First Nations rights regarding fish and are an important element of year-round wild food security (e.g., resident kokanee and rainbow trout).
- Noting that the Introductions and Transfers Committee (ITC) did not support a significant increase in hatchery production without the recommended monitoring, BC does not support significant increases in hatchery releases at this time.
- Final decisions on the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) hatchery releases are the responsibility of the Federal government.

Key Facts:

- The *kt̓cp̓alk̓'stim'* Hatchery opened in 2014 in Westbank. The hatchery is part of the Okanagan Nation Alliances' goal to restore Sockeye in the upper Okanagan watershed, Okanagan Lake, and Skaha Lake systems, and a region of the Columbia River Basin.
- The original application to introduce sockeye salmon raised concerns regarding risks to resident kokanee along with other wild species.
- BC initially opposed the original releases but subsequently supported the cultural/ceremonial releases if the agreed-upon monitoring was done. The monitoring would inform future production levels and adaptive management actions.
- The original monitoring has not yet been fully implemented. As the requested releases have moved from the original levels of approximately 0.35M to the current request of 1.5M, the potential risk to wild fish stocks also increases.

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- Two technical/science groups are involved. BC is an active member of both the Canadian Okanagan Basin Technical Working Group (COBTWG) and the ITC.
- The ITC includes BC and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) with authorities under the BC *Wildlife Act* and the *Federal Fisheries Act*. The ITC can only recommend the Minister issue a license if: “The release or transfer of fish will not have an adverse effect on the stock size of fish or the generic characteristics of fish or fish stocks.”
- BC has requested DFO consider the following expectations from BC:
 - That monitoring and risk assessment measures previously set out are implemented or are jointly updated through a tripartite approach.
 - That agreement on hatchery release amounts is concluded before DFO provides approval of production levels.
 - That there are discussions across working groups (namely COBTWG and ITC), along with other fish conservation and recovery groups in the area, to discuss the relative benefits and risks to salmon, kokanee, and other species, and to build a common understanding of an appropriate path forward.
 - That this initiative is considered in light of the Pacific Salmon Commission’s Okanagan Working Group, given transboundary work with the United States.

Fiscal Implications:

- No fiscal budget implications for BC.

First Nations Implications:

- The ONA may argue that BC’s position over requiring monitoring and assessment prior to supporting increases in hatchery production as counter to reconciliation or self-determination.
- Released salmon do not remain in the lake where they are released. Anecdotally, some adjacent First Nations have also expressed concerns over the levels of hatchery production and risks to wild stocks, their individual rights, and wild food security in the adjacent territories.
- BC is continuing to develop strategic level BC-First Nation collaborations to build solutions for wild fish management, disaster recovery, and watershed security.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 4, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: James Mack

Phone: (778) 698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Jennifer Davis

Phone: (778) 974-2336



Reference: 40428

February 26, 2024

VIA EMAIL: Neil.Davis@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

c/o Neil Davis, Regional Director Fisheries Management Branch
Pacific Region
Suite 200 – 401 Burrard Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6C 3S4

Dear Neil Davis:

Thank you for Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO) letter of February 19, 2024, where you requested confirmation of British Columbia's (B.C.) perspective regarding the potential release of 1.56 million sockeye salmon into Okanagan Lake starting on March 1, 2024.

B.C. is an active member of both the Canadian Okanagan Basin Technical Working Group (COBTWG) and the technical Internal Transfers Committee (ITC). We support both salmon aquaculture and the concurrent need to ensure that levels of hatchery production do not put other species at unacceptable risk. The requirement for monitoring and assessing risks goes beyond ecosystem conservation goals. For example, all wild fish, including kokanee and rainbow trout, are connected to First Nations rights regarding fish and are an important element of year-round wild food security.

Previously, B.C. supported the specific amount of hatchery salmon releases, subject to adaptive management based on the monitoring results and risks. This monitoring was not fully completed. In addition, the requested releases have moved from the original levels of approximately 350,000 to the requested 1.56 million, which also increases risk to wild fish populations. Noting that the ITC did not recommend an increase to release amounts in previous years and that the ITC has indicated their upcoming final response is likely to remain the same, B.C. does not support an increased release at this time.

Noting our concerns above, should DFO still consider approval of an increased release this year, B.C. would set out the following expectations for future management of hatchery releases:

- That monitoring and risk assessment measures previously set out are implemented or are jointly updated through a tripartite approach.

- That agreement on hatchery release amounts is concluded before DFO provides approval of production levels.
- That this initiative is considered in light of the Pacific Salmon Commission's Okanagan Working Group, due to the nature of this river being Transboundary with the United States.
- That there are discussions across working groups (namely COBTWIG and ITC), along with other First Nations-B.C.-DFO fish conservation and recovery groups in the area, to discuss the relative benefits and risks to salmon, kokanee, and other species, and to build a common understanding of an appropriate path forward.

Thank you again for working with the province in consideration of this decision. Please let me know if further discussions are helpful, and how the province can help with any next steps.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Mack', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

James Mack
Assistant Deputy Minister

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Conservation Financing

Recommend Response:

- In October 2023, the Province announced a new \$300M Conservation Financing Mechanism, with \$150M being contributed by the Province and matched by a commitment to raise \$150M by the BC Parks Foundation.
- The Conservation Financing Mechanism will support conservation initiatives across British Columbia (BC) that are led or supported, by First Nations.
- This funding will support the Province in its goals to protect 30 percent of land and marine area by 2030.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The commitment is part of a unique 'made in BC' public-private partnership approach where the BC Parks Foundation guarantees the matching funds to the Province. Donors can contribute to projects knowing their dollars will be matched by provincial funding, and First Nations and other partners can propose projects knowing long-term stable funding is available.
- The funds will be managed by the BC Parks Foundation and will be overseen independently from government by a committee of experts, at least half of whom are First Nations.
- The BC Parks Foundation is coordinating with other organizations in the philanthropic sector to support cooperation across the sector on initiatives that will be funded through the Conservation Financing Mechanism.

Key Facts:

- The BC Parks Foundation has established an interim committee to support the launch of the fund while recruitment continues for the Strategic Oversight Committee that will be established to oversee the fund.
- It is anticipated that the Conservation Financing Mechanism will officially launch in spring 2024 and following the establishment of the committee, will begin to accept project proposals for funding.

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- As part of a project's eligibility criteria, a project would need to align with a Government-to-Government Agreement between the First Nations and the Province. This is to ensure consistency in process and objectives of the Province and the First Nations.
- The establishment of a conservation financing mechanism was mentioned as part of the province's efforts to protect old growth forests across BC and meet the Province's commitment to 30 by 30.
- Conservation initiatives that seek to maintain, restore and enhance biodiversity in the province can lead to new economic opportunities, but can also have economic impacts.
- Conservation financing is a tool that addresses some of the economic realities of conservation, including supporting economic transition and funding remediation or restoration initiatives.
- Meeting the 30 by 30 commitment will require considerable investment and presents an opportunity to leverage philanthropic interest and funds into provincial conservation initiatives.

Date Prepared/Revised: «add date»

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Colin Ward

Phone: (778) 974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Melissa Grimes

Phone: (778) 974-2146

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Issue: Conservation Financing

Recommend Response:

- A new, made-in-BC approach to conservation financing will be set up within six months and will support several key Government priorities including reconciliation, the Old Growth Strategic Review and protecting 30 percent of the provincial land and marine areas by 2030 (30 by 30).
- BC is an attractive jurisdiction for the philanthropic community – part of this is because of the unparalleled diversity of ecosystems and species, but part of it is because of our government’s strong commitment to reconciliation through the adoption of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.
- Indigenous-led conservation and government-to-government processes, such as modernized land use planning and forest landscape planning, will result in the identification and protection of key areas of biodiversity.
- It is the vision that the mechanism be able to support models of conservation financing that we know works, such as the Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) approach in the Great Bear Rainforest to support the development, implementation and long-term sustainability of conservation efforts.
- There is work underway to explore the expansion of this PFP to apply to the adjacent marine area, known as the Great Bear Sea.

Additional Response points (if needed):

Key Facts:

- The establishment of a conservation financing mechanism was mentioned as part of the Province’s efforts to protect old growth forests across BC and meet the Province’s commitment to 30 by 30. The timeline for the creation of the conservation financing mechanism is six months.

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- Conservation initiatives that seek to maintain, restore and enhance biodiversity in the province can lead to new economic opportunities, but can also have economic impacts.
- Conservation financing is a tool that addresses some of the economic realities of conservation, including supporting economic transition and funding remediation or restoration initiatives.
- The 30 by 30 target was one of four targets included in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which was signed at the 2022 United Nations Biodiversity Conference.
- Meeting the 30 by 30 commitment will require considerable investment and presents an opportunity to leverage philanthropic interest and funds into provincial conservation initiatives.
- In December 2022, the Federal Government announced \$800 million in funding for four Indigenous-led conservation initiatives across Canada. The Great Bear Sea was one of the four projects selected.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 1, 2023

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Colin Ward

Phone: (250) 812-7938

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Melissa Grimes

Phone: (778) 974-2146

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Guardians

Recommend Response:

- Since time immemorial, First Nations have been stewards of the water, land and wildlife in their territories and Guardians are continuing those important stewardship roles today.
- Guardians support BC and First Nations to partner in managing lands, water, and resources through activities such as data collection, value assessment and monitoring, mentorship and two-way learning.
- Guardians' collaborative efforts with provincial staff have greatly contributed to shared resource stewardship goals and decisions.
- My Ministry is partnering with First Nations to support Guardians activities through initiatives like the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework and associated regional Forums, Great Bear Rainforest Initiative and the Aboriginal Liaison Program, contributing over \$8M annually directly into Guardians programs through these initiatives.
- In 2023, BC committed \$8.9M over three years to co-develop a training initiative for First Nations Guardians, as part of the Future Ready Action Plan.
- The BC-Guardians Gathering February 28-29, open to all First Nations in BC, to inform the co-development of the training initiative, explore future pathways and priorities for supporting Guardians, and support networking.

Key Facts:

- The term 'Guardians' is used inclusively, some First Nations call these programs other names such as Liaison, Watchmen, Warden, or Ranger initiatives.
- Guardians take on many different roles that reflect the priorities of their First Nation, including stewardship, compliance and education (Appendix A)
- In addition to support from BC, First Nations are using their own funding, funding from Canada and funding from philanthropic organizations to support Guardians programs.

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- The tripartite Nature Agreement and Conservation Financing Mechanism may help support Guardians who are involved in helping to create and implement new conservation and protection designations.
- Guardians' roles reflect the context and priorities of each First Nation, including stewardship, compliance monitoring, protecting cultural heritage, economic activities (e.g., tourism), sharing Indigenous knowledge and public education.
- BC supports Guardians through funding initiatives and partnerships (Appendix B).
- In 2021, engagement with First Nations on Guardians, found that one barrier for growing Guardians programs is lack of capacity for training.
- BC established a working group with First Nations to provide expert advice and help co-develop the Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative and explore future pathways for support Guardians.
- To support broader engagement, BC has also been engaging directly with interested Nations and groups.
- BC organized the BC-Guardians Gathering February 28-29, open to all First Nations in BC, to inform the co-development of the training initiative, explore future pathways and priorities for supporting Guardians, and support networking.
- The training initiative application process and criteria will be announced and open to all First Nations.
- BC showcased Guardians at the April 2023 Collaborative Stewardship Forum Gathering, where the funding was announced for training and education.
- Through the Guardians Working Group, BC is piloting seven initiatives that are supporting Guardians training, and curriculum development. The pilots are informing the broader implementation of the training initiative.
- Many ministries across the NR sector provide support for Guardians (e.g. Kitsoo agreement with BC Parks).

Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Colin Ward

Phone: 778 974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Alanya Smith

Phone: 778 974-2160

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Appendix A: Diversity of Guardians functions identified by BC First Nations



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Appendix B: Summary of B.C. and Collaborative B.C.-First Nations Initiatives that support Guardians

The following is a list of initiatives and programs supported by the B.C. government that are known to support Guardian and Guardian-like activities. The purpose of this inventory is to inform B.C. and First Nations about the breadth of initiatives supporting Guardians.

Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects Division Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship

Description: The Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (CISF) is an innovative form of collaboration and partnership between the Province and First Nations, designed to produce high-quality, accessible and trusted environmental information through regional stewardship forums. The CISF is also intended to explore how information reflecting Western and Indigenous knowledge can enhance natural resource decision-making through a collaborative land stewardship approach. CISF brings together 2 former programs, the Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) and the Collaborative Stewardship Forums (CSF). There are 10 Regional Stewardship Forums ("RSF"): Skeena, Tsay Kay Dene, Carrier Sekani, the Northeast (Treaty 8), North Coast, 3 Nations, Southern Dakelh Nations, Sohl T'emexw Stewardship Alliance (STSA), Ktunaxa, and Nicola.

CISF is designed and implemented collaboratively through a Governance Working Group Executive (GWGE). The vision for collaborative stewardship speaks to a true and enduring partnership in reconciliation and in the stewardship of land, water, fish and wildlife; an enduring program for collaborative stewardship co-designed and delivered by Indigenous and Provincial governments. The vision incorporates: shared responsibility, decision-making, power and authority; blending of Indigenous and western knowledge, laws and practices; mutual understanding, trust and respect; sustainable economy; and transformation and self-determination. The GWGE is made of representatives from all regional stewardship forums and provides governance oversight and guidance for collaborative stewardship forums. Projects are designed to focus on: Ecosystem assessment and monitoring; Ecosystem restoration and enhancement; Ecosystem research and knowledge exchange; and Stewardship education and training. To date, representatives from approximately 124 First Nations, industry, and the federal and provincial governments have participated in the development of 10 regional environmental stewardship projects.

First Nations involved in these initiatives: Kitsumkalum, Kitselas, Metlakatla, Haisla, Gitxaala, Gitga'at, Blueberry River, Doig River, Halfway River, Prophet River, Saulteau, West Moberly, McLeod Lake, Carrier Sekani First Nations, Tsay Keh Dene, Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs, Gitwangak Hereditary Chiefs, Gitxsan Nation, Lake Babine Nation, Witset First Nation, Nee Tahi Buhn Band, Office of the Wet'suwet'en

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(representing Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs), Hagwilget Village Council, Skin Tye Nation and Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Tahltan, Kaska, Taku River Tlingit, ʔaąam (St. Mary's Band), ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation, Yaąan Nukiy (Lower Kootenay Band), Yaąit ʔa-knuq̓i'it (Tobacco Plains Band), Upper Nicola, Coldwater, Lower Nicola, Shackan, Nooaitch, Lhoosk'uz Dené Nation, Lhtako Dené Nation, Nazko First Nation, Uikatcho First Nation, Cheam First Nation, Kwaw'Kwaw'Apilt First Nation, Scowlitz First Nation, Skawahlook First Nation, Skwah First Nation, Sumas First Nation, Yale First Nation And Aitchelitz First Nation, Shxwhà:y Village, Skowkale First Nation, Soowahlie First Nation, Squiala First Nation, Tzeachten First Nation and Yakwekwioose First Nation. , Secwepemc Nations, Syilx, Okanagan Nation Alliance, Lower Similkameen, Tsilquotin (Rangers), and Cariboo Cumulative Effects Forum, Saanich Inlet Nations.

Funding and Support for Guardians activities: CISF funding is determined by the forum members based on their priorities. Generally, funds are used for monitoring activities, which are carried out by Guardians/ similar positions.

Over 73 Indigenous positions funded, and 350 individuals trained, working as Fish and Wildlife Technicians, Land Management Guardians, Cumulative Effects Specialists, and Project Managers. Capacity funding provided through CISF is resulting in an increase in professional land and resource managers at the Nation community level, further supporting the path towards co-management.

Website Link: [Collaborative Stewardship in British Columbia - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/land/indigenous/collaborative-stewardship)

Marine Planning Partnership (MaPP) **Water, Fisheries and Coastal Policy & Planning Division** **Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship**

Description: A partnership between the Province of British Columbia (Province) and 18 member First Nations that is planning for marine uses and long-term ocean health on B.C.'s North Pacific Coast. The MaPP initiative uses a public-private funding model. MOU signed by B.C., First Nations and MakeWay (with a transition currently being made to Coast Funds), which administers the funds. Also have specific implementation agreements on sub-regional marine plan implementation between the B.C. and First Nation partners in each sub-region.

First Nations involved in this initiative: 17 member First Nations are represented by the Coastal First Nations-Great Bear Initiative, the North Coast-Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society and the Nanwakolas Council, Council of the Haida Nation, Old Massett Village Council, Skidegate Village Council, Gitga'at First Nation - Hartley Bay, Gitxaala First Nation - Kitkatla, Kitselas First Nation - Kitselas, Kitsumkalum First Nation - Kitsumkalum, Metlakatla First Nation - Metlakatla, Haisla First Nation - Kitimaat Village, Heiltsuk Nation, Kitasoo/Xai'Xais Nation, Nuxalk Nation, Wuikinuxv

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Nation , Mamalilikulla First Nation, Tlowitsis Nation , Da'naxda'xw Awaetlala First Nation , and Wei Wai Kum First Nation.

Funding and Support for Guardians activities: MaPP currently has an agreement to fund 8 guardians supported with MaPP funding in the Central Coast, with yearly budget around \$385,000. MaPP also supports guardians in North Vancouver Island, but not in the same way as the guardians in the Central Coast. It should also be noted, that in December 2023, \$60 Million in provincial funding was announced to support the Great Bear Sea Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) along with complimentary federal and philanthropic funds to provide long term Indigenous capacity resourcing of MaPP and other projects/collaborations in the Marine Protected Area Network which will likely include some financial support for Guardian activities.

Website Links: [MaPP | Marine Plan Partnership for the North Pacific Coast \(mappocean.org\)](https://mappocean.org), [FAQs | MaPP \(mappocean.org\)](#), [FAQs 20140612New approved \(mappocean.org\)](#) and [Contact Us | MaPP \(mappocean.org\)](#)

Great Bear Rainforest Initiative Regional Operations – Coast Area Ministry of Forests

Description: First Nations have leveraged \$107 million from their investments with Coast Funds to attract additional investment of \$297 million for both completed and active projects. This results in a total of \$404 million in new investment into projects throughout the Great Bear Rainforest and Haida Gwaii since 2007. In 2019, the Province invested \$2.5 million over three years to support conservation and capacity funding for ecological monitoring, aquatic habitat restoration, First Nations strategic planning, land and marine stewardship. The 2016 Great Bear Rainforest Land Use Order and Great Bear Rainforest (Forest Management) Act outlines the forest practices for the area and increases the amount of protected old-growth forest from 50% to 70%. Eight new areas covering almost 295,000 hectares will be off-limits to logging with 85% (3.1 million hectares) of the forest protected and 15% (550,000 hectares) available for logging to support local jobs and strengthen the region's communities.

First Nations involved in this initiative: First Nations involved in this initiative are Coastal First Nations, Gitga'at (Hartley Bay), Heiltsuk Nation (Bella Bella), Kitasoo / Xai'xais Band (Klemtu), Metlakatla First Nation, Nuxalk Nation, Wuikinuxw Nation, Nanwakolas Council, Tlowitsis Nation, Mamalilikulla Qwe Qwa Sot'em Band , K'omoks First Nation (Comox), Wei Wai Kum (Campbell River), Da'naxda'wx Awaetlatla First Nation (Knight Inlet), Dzawada'enuxw First Nation (Kingcome Inlet), Gitxaala Nation (Kitkatla), Gwa'sala Nakwaxda'xw Nation (Port Hardy), Gwawaenuk Tribe (Hopetown/Watson Island), Haisla Nation (Kitimat), Homalco Indian Band, Kitselas Nation (Terrace), Kitsumkalum First Nation, Kwiakah First Nations (Phillips Arm/Frederick Arm), Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation (Gilford Island), Lax

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Kwa'alaams Indian Band, 'Namgis First Nation, Nisga'a Lisims Government, Ulkatcho First Nations and We Wai Kai First Nation (Cape Mudge).

Website Links: [Great Bear Rainforest - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www.gov.bc.ca)
[Welcome - Great Bear Rainforest | Education and Awareness Trust \(greatbearrainforesttrust.org\)](https://www.greatbearrainforesttrust.org)

Aboriginal Liaison Program British Columbia Energy Regulator

Description: The Aboriginal Liaison Program (ALP) is funded through an agreement between the Province and the BC Oil and Gas Research and Innovation Society (OGRIS). ALP supports communication and develops partnerships between First Nations and the B.C. natural resource agencies to facilitate Indigenous involvement in stewardship and monitoring of energy development in northern B.C. ALP provides funding to First Nations to monitor, observe and report to their communities about resource development activities on their traditional territories. The ALP provides training opportunities to improve Liaisons' knowledge and understanding of development activities and impacts, and enables them to inform their community with objective, reliable, and sound information. Liaisons also provide compliance oversight and submit reportable infractions to the regulating agencies while attending ALP activities such as independent monitoring and joint inspections.

First Nations involved in this initiative: First Nations involved in this program are Fort Nelson First Nation, Prophet River First Nation, Blueberry River First Nations, Doig River First Nation, Carrier Sekani First Nations, Lake Babine Nation, Sauteau First Nations, Nisga'a Lisims Government, West Moberly First Nation, and Haisla Nation.

Funding and Support for Guardians activities: Under ALP, BCER has agreements with each First Nation that funds Liaison positions.

Website Links: [Natural Resource Aboriginal Liaison Program | BC Energy Regulator \(BCER\) \(bc-er.ca\)](https://www.bc-er.ca)

Integrated Resource Operations Division, Compliance and Enforcement Branch Ministry of Forests

Description: Ministry of Forests compliance and enforcement branch has agreements, MOUs and joint patrol agreements with Nations across the Province as well as a fully vetted NRO from Musqueam First Nation. These agreements and MOUs aren't funded through Ministry of Forests. Ministry of Forests Compliance and Enforcement Branch also provides training at no cost to Guardian Programs jointly with Conservation Officers from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

First Nations involved: Various across B.C..

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Funding and Support for Guardians activities: N/A - Ministry of Forests partner with the different guardian groups but do not help fund them.

Conservation Officer Service and BC Parks Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

Description: B.C. Parks Rangers partner with guardians in conservation work. B.C. staff deliver training, usually opening up spots or adapting already existing training. This also builds partnerships and supports two-way learning. COS (ENV) are working with a Tla'amin Nation to give one of the Nation's enforcement officer a Special CO appointment which will allow for some provincial authorities to be enforced on treaty lands.

Example: The Kitasoo Xai'xais and Nuxalk First Nations, along with BC Parks, have signed an agreement that could lead to shared compliance and enforcement responsibilities within provincial protected areas in both Nations' territories. The Nuxalk and Kitasoo Xai'xais Nations have collaborated with BC Parks on initiatives within protected areas through long-standing Indigenous Guardian Watchmen Programs that include monitoring for compliance. The new memorandum of understanding (MOU) establishes a collaborative framework to develop a shared compliance and enforcement program, building on the recognition for long-term, sustainable, collaborative arrangements. Once established, the Guardian Shared Compliance and Enforcement Pilot Project will designate select Indigenous guardians with the same legal authorities as BC Parks rangers, making it the first project of its kind in B.C. Kitasoo Xai'Xais and Nuxalk, working with BC Parks (ENV) under a pilot program, have 11 Indigenous guardians that have been designated with the same legal authorities as park rangers within the parks and protected areas in their ancestral territories.

First Nations involved: Various across B.C.

Funding and Support for Guardians activities: Initiative focused on partnerships and activities , not funding for positions.

Website Links: [Indigenous guardians pilot program first of its kind in B.C. | BC Gov News](#)

Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP) Sampling Ministry of Forests

Description: FREP was established in 2003 as a foundational element of the Forests and Range Practices Act (FRPA). FREP's overarching mandate is to promote the sustainable management of British Columbia's forest and range resources under

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FRPA by monitoring and evaluating the condition of 11 FRPA resource values. The data collected under FREP provides a foundation of science-based evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of current forests and range management practices and policies, inform resource managers and enable the continuous improvement of forest and range stewardship in the province.

- Assess the impacts of forest and range activities on the 11 FRPA resource values to determine if on-the-ground results are achieving government's desired outcomes for these values
- Monitor and report on the condition of resource values, including trends and causal factors, and
- Identify opportunities for continued improvement of practices, policies and legislation, and support their implementation.

First Nations involved: Various across B.C..

Funding and Support for Guardians activities: FREP accesses funding, such as through the Indigenous Funding Program and Shared Cost Agreements with First Nations, to support Indigenous engagement in FREP. This supports: training, co-monitoring opportunities and special projects such as collaborative watershed sampling and a pilot project currently underway to pilot a Cultural Heritage Resources monitoring protocol.

Website Links: [Forest and Range Evaluation Program \(FREP\) - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/land/forests/forests-and-range/forests-and-range-evaluation-program-frep) [Forest and Range Evaluation Program reports and publications - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/land/forests/forests-and-range/forests-and-range-evaluation-program-frep-reports-publications) [frepstrategicplan-aug2020.pdf \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/land/forests/forests-and-range/forests-and-range-evaluation-program-frep-strategic-plan)
FREP: FREP@gov.bc.ca
Rangeland values: Forests.RangeBranch@gov.bc.ca

Mines Monitoring

Accompanied Inspection Program

Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation (EMCLI)

Description: EMLCI's Accompanied Inspection Program works to improve mine safety for workers while encouraging investment and job creation with a more efficient approval process. The program includes a greater number of mine inspectors and a new auditing function to increase industry safety. There will also be a new compliance, auditing, and effectiveness monitoring team within the program and it will be in charge of providing independent oversight.

This program partners with First Nations and conducts joint inspections and ride alongs.

First Nations involved: Various across B.C..

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Funding and Support for Guardians activities: Program focused on partnership, not funding

Website Links: <https://www.mining.com/bc-government-creates-new-divisions-improve-mine-safety-promote-investment/>

Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR)

Description: EMCR partners with First Nations on emergency management (coordination).

The First Nations Emergency Management Partnership Tables continue to provide a great regional forum for First Nations emergency managers to build relationships, share knowledge, and guide service-delivery efforts supported by the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR), Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and other key Indigenous service providers. Partnership Tables were co-developed with First Nations to establish foundation of collaboration while honoring Indigenous self-determination and upholding the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. EMCR remains committed to supporting Partnership Table coordination and facilitation efforts with the First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS), the Emergency Planning Secretariat (EPS), along with host First Nation communities. First Nations have highlighted the need to build emergency management capacity at the community level. The province continues to its efforts to address these gaps including significant increases in funding available to First Nations through the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF) as well as stronger partnership with FNESS to support First Nations communities with application processes.

Funding and Support for Guardians activities: First Nations or local authority EOCs might choose to utilize the guardians for emergency management activities, and EMCR could reimburse those communities for eligible costs as predetermined through their Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centre.

Website Links: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/local-government/partnership-tables/emcr_fall_2022_partnerships_tables_report.pdf#:~:text=The%20First%20Nation%20Emergency%20Management%20Partnership%20Tables%20%28Partnership,Canada%20%28ISC%29%20and%20other%20key%20Indigenous%20service%20providers.

Government to Government (G2G) Agreements

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Description: Across B.C. some First Nations may be receiving funding to help support guardians/ guardian like activities under Reconciliation and other Government to Government agreements.

Funding for Guardians activities: B.C. endeavors to support guardians through individual agreements where it is expressed as a key interest of the First Nation and other initiatives to fund guardians are not in place, and as funding / approvals permit.

BC Wildfire Service

Description: B.C. Wildfire Services (BCWS) is mandated to deliver wildfire management and natural hazard preparedness & response services for the province of British Columbia. BCWS and FNESS provide training to individual First Nations through the Strategic Training Project. BCWS is committed to working with individual nations on enhancing wildfire management capacity across the province, specifically within wildfire prevention/mitigation, preparedness, and response streams (e.g. First Nations economic development corporations contracted to provide services), through band and council/community. First Nation Community Liaisons and Community Engagement Specialist provide a conduit between First Nations and Fire Centres and Incident Management Team. Ideally First Nations fill these positions.

First Nations involved in this initiative: Approximately 35 First Nations were working with the BCWS in Aug 2023.

Funding and Support for Guardians activities: Provides training and support to Nations in emergencies.

Modernized Land Use Planning Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects Division Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship

Description: Modernized land use planning is led by the B.C. government in partnership with First Nations and with engagement of communities, local governments, industry and other stakeholders. The intended outcomes of modernized land use planning are: reconciliation, a strong and sustainable economy, and resource stewardship. The B.C. government has been engaging with Indigenous communities throughout the province to inform the design, development and implementation of a modern approach to land use planning and to seek ways of working together.

Funding and Support for Guardians activities: Opportunity to support implementation of land use plans, including guardians activities.

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Website Links: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/crown-land-water/land-use-planning/modernizing-land-use-planning>

Indigenous Skills Training and Education Program Ministry of Post-Secondary and Future Skills (PSFS)

Description:

PSFS delivers two programs that fund Indigenous communities (First Nations, Métis and B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres) to access skills training and post-secondary education leading to employment or self-employment. Some First Nations have used this to fund training for guardians and stewardship work.

Indigenous Food Security and Sovereignty (IFS) Grant Ministry of Agriculture

Description: The Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF) has a mandate to coordinate with EMCR to develop long-term strategy on emergency preparedness for food security in the face of worsening climate-driven disasters. Guardians may have a role in community food security.

Nations can access Food Security and Sovereignty Grants to enhance sustainability and growth of the Indigenous agriculture and food sovereignty, and ultimately improve their food systems' resiliency in emergency events. The intention of the IFS program is to address existing gaps in supporting Indigenous agriculture and food projects while reviving indigenous traditional food systems, processing and resource management strategies that provides greater quantities and improved quality of foods in a sustainable way that promotes community health and lasting positive socio-economic impacts.

Website Links: [Food Security and Sovereignty - New Relationship Trust](#)

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Issue: Co-Management

Recommend Response:

- The Ministry is committed to action on reconciliation, to co-develop new strategies, legislation, and policy and to advance decision-making and land and natural resource co-management arrangements in partnership with First Nations.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Co-developing a co-managed land and resource regime is key to recognizing the rights of First Nations and building durable frameworks that lead to more certainty.
- We have made significant progress through our engagements with First Nations as we work together on
 - the development of a shared vision for land use through modernized land use planning processes,
 - the implementation of initiatives such as the Together for Wildlife strategy, and
 - collaborative work with Nations on the establishment of a policy statement on biodiversity and ecosystem health.
- We are also working to support partnerships with First Nations on the delivery of functions that are the backbone on our land and resource regime, such as support for Guardians programs, Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums and address many regional or local activities related to species at risk management, biodiversity, fish and aquatics.
- We are also supporting the work led by other ministries to implement shared decision-making arrangements. WLRS staff have worked with Indigenous partners on developing a Coastal Marine Strategy, a Wild Salmon Strategy, and a Watershed Security Strategy and Fund.

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Key Facts:

- Each ministry has a responsibility to support reconciliation. There is a broad range of significant work underway led by various Natural Resource Ministries requiring engagement and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples.
 - This includes things like legislative change by the Ministry of Forests to create the space for joint and consent-based decisions on Forest Landscape Plans and the Eskay Creek and Red Chris consent-based Environmental Assessment (EA) decision-making agreement.
- The adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as affirmed through the *Declaration Act* requires government to build management and decision-making frameworks that recognize First Nation rights.
- WLRS has a mandate letter commitment to work with First Nations to build a vision for a co-managed land and resource management regime. A similar commitment is included in the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* Action Plan (Action 2.4 and 2.6).
- Co-management of water, lands, and resources is a broad topic and all NRMs engage with First Nations in support of the management of lands and resources. Government staff across ministries are looking for opportunities to better align and coordinate engagements meant to lead to effective co-management of BC's land and natural resources.
- Many of the challenges ministries face are shared (e.g., governance, shared territories, capacity). Policy development work is intrinsically linked to other critical initiatives in the sector. Progress with developing and implementing solutions and strategies will benefit from strong cross-sector support.
- WLRS has an opportunity to convene and coordinate efforts across the Natural Resource Sector (NRS) and to provide guidance where collaborative efforts go beyond a single ministry mandate.
- Critically important to this work is ensuring a collaborative approach with Indigenous partners to advance new policies and approaches to co-management.
- Intergovernmental Communications

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Intergovernmental Communications

Date Prepared/Revised: March 6, 2023

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Colin Ward, ADM, Reconciliation, Land and Natural Resource Policy Division

Phone: 778 974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Monica Perry, Executive Director, Reconciliation Policy Phone: 778 698-5756

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Issue: Declaration Act Action Plan Items

Recommend Response:

- The ongoing implementation of the 2022-2027 *Declaration Act* Action Plan (Action Plan) advances the implementation of the UN Declaration and advances transformative change in government’s relationship with First Nations.
- The five actions for Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) under the theme of “Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples:” 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, and 2.9, will be on-going over the five-year period of the Action Plan.
- Work is underway in consultation and cooperation with First Nations to develop Action Plan progress indicators.
- This year, progress will be reported publicly on Actions 2.4, 2.6, 2.7 and 2.9.
- Beyond the Action Plan, ministries continue with a full range of obligations and commitments to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, including alignment of laws under Section 3 of the *Declaration Act*.

Additional Response points (if needed):

Action Item	Progress on Action Item
<p>Action 2.4 <i>Negotiate new joint decision-making and consent agreements under section 7 of the Declaration Act that include clear accountabilities, transparency and administrative fairness between the Province and Indigenous governing bodies. Seek all necessary legislative amendments to enable the implementation of any section 7 agreements. (Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR), Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS)).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Led by Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, we are advancing agreements that share statutory decision-making with First Nations.• There are two <i>Declaration Act</i> decision-making agreements in place between the Province and Tahltan Central Government (Eskay Creek and Red Chris mining projects).

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<p>Action 2.6</p> <p><i>Co-develop strategic-level policies, programs and initiatives to advance collaborative stewardship of the environment, land and resources, that address cumulative effects and respects Indigenous Knowledge. This will be achieved through collaborative stewardship forums, guardian programs, land use planning initiatives, and other innovative and evolving partnerships that support integrated land and resource management. ((WLRS, MIRR, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Ministry of Forests, Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation, BC Energy Regulator)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action 2.6 is a multi-ministry action, led by WLRS. Various existing initiatives support this action including Modernized Land Use Planning, Forest Landscape Planning, Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums, collaborative marine planning, and Guardians.
<p>Action 2.7</p> <p><i>Collaborate with First Nations to develop and implement strategies, plans and initiatives for sustainable water management, and to identify policy or legislative reforms supporting Indigenous water stewardship, including shared decision-making. Co-develop the Watershed Security Strategy with First Nations and initiate implementation of the Strategy at a local watershed scale. (WLRS)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In March 2023, First Nations leadership, members of the First Nations Water Caucus and provincial ministers publicly co-launched the second period of public engagement on the Intentions Paper and announced a \$100M Watershed Security Fund. At the same time, they jointly announced the BC First Nations Water Table as a governance body focused on BC's watershed health. • As of March 2024, a co-developed Watershed Security Strategy is in the final stages of completion.
<p>Action 2.8</p> <p><i>Collaborate with Indigenous partners on issues related to conservation and biodiversity in B.C., including the protection of species at risk. (WLRS)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently engaging with First Nations Rights and Title holders and First Nations leadership organizations, tables and forums and planning consultation and collaboration for the co-development of the legislative tools to support the implementation of the Framework.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-developing discussion paper for Wildlife Act Review with the Forum.• Negotiations continue toward a trilateral Nature Agreement with Canada and the FNLC.
<p>Action 2.9 <i>Develop new strategies to protect and revitalize wild salmon populations in B.C. with First Nations and the federal government, including the development and implementation of a cohesive B.C. Wild Pacific Salmon Strategy. (WLRS)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trilateral Collaboration on Salmon with First Nations Fishery Council and Department of Fisheries and Oceans continues and builds on healthy and productive discussions with First Nations leaders.

Key Facts:

The 2022-2023 Annual Report was the first public annual report since the Action Plan was published in June 2023. Last year's report included early progress indicators for Action 2.4 and 2.6.

Agreements under Section 7 of the Declaration Act provide a clear framework for the negotiation of agreements that includes predictable requirements for transparency and accountability.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 1, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Colin Ward

Phone: 778-974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Monica Perry

Phone: 778-698-5756

Name: Kristy Wilson (Actions 2.4, 2.7, 2.8, and 2.9)

Phone: Government

Name: Julia Stoughton (Action 2.6)

Phone: Government

Section: THEME 2. Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples	
Action	Status
<p>2.4 (MIRR lead for reporting) Negotiate new joint decision-making and consent agreements under section 7 of the Declaration Act that include clear accountabilities, transparency and administrative fairness between the Province and Indigenous governing bodies. Seek all necessary legislative amendments to enable the implementation of any section 7 agreements. <i>(Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR), Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRs)).</i></p>	<p>In progress. Business Information; Intergovernmental Communications Business Information; Intergovernmental Communications</p> <p>Intergovernmental Communications</p> <p>Advice/Recommendations</p> <p>More broadly, progress is slow on a coordinated approach to align provincial legislation to enable the implementation of Declaration Act agreements. Government has established funding processes for negotiating long-term, multi-year agreements; however, resourcing the implementation of agreements remains a challenge.</p>
<p>2.6 Co-develop strategic-level policies, programs, and initiatives to advance collaborative stewardship of the environment, land, and resources, that address cumulative effects and respects Indigenous Knowledge. This will be achieved through collaborative stewardship forums, guardian programs, land use planning initiatives, and other innovative and evolving partnerships that support integrated land and resource management. <i>(WLRs, MIRR, Ministry of Environment and</i></p>	<p>In progress.</p> <p>Various existing initiatives across the natural resource sector support this action, including Modernized Land use Planning, Indigenous Stewardship Forums, advancing funding and skills training for First Nations’ Guardians, MOUs, and working directly with First Nations on a government-to-government basis, including through implementing treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements.</p> <p>Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (CISF):Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences</p>

Section: THEME 2. Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples	
Action	Status
<p><i>Climate Change Strategy, Ministry of Forests, Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation, BC Oil and Gas Commission)</i></p>	<p>The CISF Forums continue to demonstrate collaborative stewardship and co-management in action. In 2023/24, CISF outputs informed key resource management decisions and land use plans, with trusted data informing Timber Supply Reviews, Annual Allowable Harvests for wildlife, Forest Landscape Planning, Old Growth Management, and Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health initiatives.</p> <p>As of October 2023, WLRS was engaging 115 First Nations in 19 forums.</p> <p>Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative: In April 2023, B.C. committed \$8.9 million over three years to partner with First Nations representatives to develop the Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative. The “Guardians Working Group (GWG)”, made up of 27 First Nations/organizations with expertise and experience in managing Guardians programs and activities, was convened to support this work, including collaboratively developing draft principles and parameters for the Training Initiative.</p> <p>Working collaboratively with the GWG, WLRS funded 7 pilot initiatives in First Nations that will support training on the ground and inform research into Guardians-related curriculum development. The pilot initiatives will also inform the broader implementation of the Training Initiative.</p> <p>In February 2024, WLRS hosted a BC Guardians Gathering with over 160 attendees from First Nations, providing a chance to network, collaborate and gather feedback on the Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative. In addition to fostering First Nations’ self-determination and governance, Guardians are instrumental in implementing co-management, as they play a crucial role in helping B.C. and First Nations collaboratively manage the natural environment.</p> <p>Collaborative Marine Planning: Collaborative marine planning continues in the Great Bear Sea with implementation of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) network, which provides a planned approach for cultural conservation and the protection of the oceans and their marine environments. This years’ achievements included co-governance agreement drafting and continued work by partner committees on site implementation. Progress on the Marine Planning Partnership (MaPP) Regional Kelp Monitoring Project is ongoing.</p> <p>B.C. is also working with Mamalilikulla First Nation on implementation of the Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) in Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala (Lull and Hoeya Bay) in Knight Inlet, including establishment of governance structures, drafting a collaborative management plan, and implementing a language restoration strategy.</p> <p>Modernized Land Use Planning: B.C. continues to modernize and advance development of the land use planning program and policies in partnership with First Nations in a way that ensures a transparent process that engages and involves local government, industry, and the public. Key policies to be advanced include providing guidance on how to integrate climate change in a land use planning process, s.13</p>

Section: THEME 2. Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples	
Action	Status
	<p>Advice/Recommendations</p> <p>Forest Landscape Planning: Over the last fiscal year, substantive progress was made on 4 Forest Landscape Planning (FLP) pilot projects that are underway in partnership with First Nations. 3 of the 4 FLP pilot projects (Lakes TSA, Quesnel TSA and Sunshine Coast TSA) engaged publicly in 2023 to solicit input on key values and interests to inform the development of the plans in each area. Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications</p> <p>Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications B.C. staff and First Nations participating in all four pilot projects came together for a “Lessons Learned” workshop in February, to identify insights and recommendations from these pilots that could inform guidance for new FLPs.</p> <p>As of November 2023, agreements were reached with First Nations to initiate 5 new FLPs to be developed over 3 years, Advice/Recommendation</p> <p>Advice/Recommendations</p>
<p>2.7 Collaborate with First Nations to develop and implement strategies, plans and initiatives for sustainable water management, and to identify policy or legislative reforms supporting Indigenous water stewardship, including shared decision-making. Co-develop the Watershed Security Strategy with First Nations and initiate implementation of the Strategy at a local watershed scale. (WLRS)</p>	<p>In progress.</p> <p>\$285,000 was spent in FY2021/22 to initiate the BC-First Nations Water Table and engage directly with Indigenous Peoples on the Watershed Security Strategy.</p> <p>Funding was granted in FY2022/23 to the First Nations Fisheries Council to continue the work of the BC-First Nations Water Table. This funding was part of a larger grant coordinated through MIRR.</p> <p>Intergovernmental Communications</p> <p>On March 6, 2022, announcement of \$100-million investment in healthy watersheds and launch of engagement on a co-developed Watershed Security Strategy intentions paper. As of March 2024, a co-developed Watershed Security Strategy is in the final stages of completion.</p>
<p>2.8 Collaborate with Indigenous partners on issues related to conservation and biodiversity in B.C., including the protection of species at risk. (WLRS)</p>	<p>In progress. (Public Reporting only in FY26.)</p> <p>B.C. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework: Government accepted all 14 recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review (OGSR), including the development of a Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework (previously Declaration on Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity).</p> <p>The Province initiated engagement with First Nations on the approach to co-develop the OGSR Action Plan and the Framework. The Framework will set the vision for an ecosystem-based approach that will guide or support the development and implementation of other initiatives (e.g., Together for Wildlife Strategy, Land use planning, Watershed Security Strategy, etc.).</p> <p>Consultation and engagement on the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework ended on January 31, 2024, but with ongoing conversations with First Nations leadership organizations and First Nations Rights and Title holders through tables and forums. Work is underway to finalize the</p>

Section: THEME 2. Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples	
Action	Status
	<p>Framework and to design the planning, consultation, and collaboration process for the co-development of the legislative tools to support the implementation of the Framework.</p> <p>The Wildlife Act Review discussion paper was distributed to rights and title holders and our key fish and wildlife advisory bodies in early October 2023, and is being used to inform our targeted engagement discussions (Fall 2023 to Winter 2024). Advice/Recommendations</p> <p>Advice/Recommendations</p> <p>The BC-Canada-FNLC Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation is in place for \$1B in joint provincial and federal funding. The Tripartite Nature Committee is actively seeking alignment between these federal and provincial initiatives through communications with and leadership by First Nations. Next steps include collaboratively establishing governance systems for administration, progress tracking, and reporting on accomplishments, and negotiating new agreements with First Nations.</p>

Section: THEME 2. Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples	
Action	Status
<p>2.9 Develop new strategies to protect and revitalize wild salmon populations in B.C. with First Nations and the federal government, including the development and implementation of a cohesive B.C. Wild Pacific Salmon Strategy. (WLRS)</p>	<p>In progress.</p> <p>Working with support from Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Aquaculture, WLRS is using the recommendations from the Wild Salmon Advisory Council to protect and revitalize B.C.'s wild salmon populations. A primary mechanism for these actions is the British Columbia Salmon Restoration Innovation Fund (BCSRIF)</p> <p>The province will also work to deliver on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan 2022-2027 to continue development and implementation of a cohesive BC Wild Pacific Salmon Strategy.</p> <p>BC provided more than \$17 million for wild salmon restoration in June 2023. \$15 million was shared equally between the Pacific Salmon Foundation and the First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC) to protect, conserve and restore the abundance of Pacific wild salmon in British Columbia. The remaining \$2.25 million will go to the FNFC to support this work.</p> <p>Staff are currently preparing a Salmon "Update" report that outlines milestones on the wild salmon file since 2019.</p> <p>A Provincial Salmon Strategy Update Report is anticipated to be released in 2024.</p> <p>Salmon is under Federal jurisdiction so there is a large intergovernmental component to this work with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), BC and Nations now working towards the development of a Tripartite Salmon Accord. Parties are working toward signing, potentially in June 2024. First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC) is acting as a convener of dialogue between the Parties and seeking to enable all First Nations in BC the opportunity to participate in the exaction of the Accord. Representatives from all three FNLC organizations are involved. BC recognizes and respects the sovereignty and self-governance of all First Nations and is committed to working with all who wish to participate, regardless of whether they choose to work through FNFC.</p>

Note: The actions will be on-going and achieved over the 5-year period of the Action Plan or beyond. The Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation leads the reporting process. The first year of Annual Reporting on progress on the Action Plan pursuant to the *Declaration Act* was 2022/23.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Toquaht Remediation

Recommend Response:

- The closure of the Toquaht Bay Campground in 2013 had a financial impact to Toquaht Nation.
- The 2023 Remediation and Economic Contribution Agreement sets out a path towards remediating the campground, which will allow Toquaht to develop the area to support other economic benefits.
- Through remediation of the former campground, we are working to create a safe and healthy environment.
- The Province is committed to the implementation of modern treaties and are fulfilling our Treaty responsibility to remediate the site.
- The treaties of today are strong, flexible agreements that uphold, recognize and respect First Nations rights and help create a path forward to reconciliation, a journey which creates a better future for all.

Key Facts:

- The 2011 Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement (Treaty) obligates the Province to remediate the contaminated (mining tailings) Toquaht Bay Campground.
- The differing perspectives of the Province and Toquaht Nation regarding the level of remediation represented a potential conflict or dispute respecting the interpretation, application, or implementation of the Treaty, which may have been had to be resolved through the Treaty dispute resolution process.
- As an alternative, the Ministry of Forests (FOR) worked collaboratively with Toquaht Nation since 2013 to explore potential remedial solutions for the previous Campground Site.
- In 2018, Toquaht Nation presented the idea of an industrial development at the Campground Site location, supported by other regional benefits to provide for longer-term economic opportunities.
- These benefits include a \$7M Long-Term Monitoring and Maintenance Agreement, an \$8M economic development Grant Agreement, a Forest Tenures Opportunity Agreement and decision to initiate a surplus determination for the adjacent Stopper Islands and dryland log sort and offer them for sale to Toquaht Nation, in accordance with the Treaty.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

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- This negotiated approach was finalized in March 2023 with the Remediation and Economic Contribution Agreement and Forest Tenures Opportunity Agreement, signed by Toquaht Nation and FOR.
- The Province is currently remediating the site to a commercial state and is demonstrating the Province's commitment to reconciliation with this important Treaty partner which supports their efforts towards economic resiliency.
- Additionally, since the agreements were signed, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship staff have initiated work to transfer Stopper Islands and the Dryland Log Sort to Toquaht Nation.

Date Prepared/Revised: January 29, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Colin Ward, ADM Reconciliation and
Natural Resource Sector Policy Division

Phone: 778-974-5150

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Lyle Knight, Director, Crown Land
Opportunities and Restoration Branch

Phone: 778-943-6973

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Neucel Pulp Mill Site

Recommend Response:

- The decommissioned Neucel Specialty Cellulose Ltd. pulp mill site (Site) is currently under the control of PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd. as Receiver.

- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

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Key Facts:

- Note: Recommend deferring questions to ENV given that it is the Regulator and still has lead role as the property remains privately held.
- The Environmental Emergencies and Land Remediation Branch (EELR), within the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV), assumed emergency control of the site under the Environmental Management Act in 2019.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers Ltd. (PwC) has been the receiver and trustee over Neucel Specialty Cellulose Ltd. (Neucel) since April 2020.

- Government Financial Information

- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

- Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

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- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Intergovernmental Communications

Date Prepared/Revised: February 27, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Colin Ward, ADM Reconciliation and Natural Resource Sector Policy Division

Phone: 778-974-5150

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Lyle Knight, Director, Crown Land Opportunities and Restoration Branch

Phone: 778-943-6973

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Brunswick Point

Recommend Response:

- The Province is engaged with the farming families and the Tsawwassen First Nation (TFN) to develop a long-term strategy for the Brunswick Point lands.
- The Province's goal is to balance the values and interests of all stakeholders.

Key Facts:

- Approximately 650 acres of agricultural land in Brunswick Point was expropriated in 1968 from the local farming families for the purpose of a port development. The lands were never developed and the province leased the land back to the families after acquisition.
- The Brunswick Point lands are in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).
- In 2006, four of the families submitted a "Petition to Court" for a declaration that, prior to any sale, the province must first offer the lands to them for purchase.
- In 2009, a Right of First Refusal (RFR) over the Brunswick Point lands was granted to the TFN in their Final Agreement (the Treaty).
- In 2011, the families, TFN and the Province entered into a settlement agreement that allowed the families to purchase the lands, while keeping the RFR on the title. The families were unable to secure financing, and the agreement collapsed.
- The leases expired in 2018 and in May 2019, MLA Ian Paton put forward a Private Members Bill that would require the province to give long-term agricultural leases to the families and to ensure the lands were kept for agricultural purposes. The Bill did not move forward.
- In October 2020, TFN expressed their interest in purchasing these lands.
- In February 2021, the families told the province they intended to renew their litigation. In March 2021, MLA Paton reaffirmed support for the measures in his bill.
- The Province has advised TFN, the families and MLA Paton that it is exploring a long-term strategy for Brunswick Point that balances stakeholder values and interests.
- At present, the Province has offered the families five-year, short-term agricultural and residential leases and is working closely with the families during this term to confirm their final interest to purchase the property at Fair Market Value. If agreement cannot be reached, the Province will consider further options regarding a long-term lease to the families or consideration of sale of the parcels (first to TFN and then the broader market).

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Date Prepared/Revised: January 29, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Colin Ward, ADM Reconciliation and
Natural Resource Sector Policy Division

Phone: 778-974-5150

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Lyle Knight, Director, Crown Land
Opportunities and Restoration Branch

Phone: 778-943-6973

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Residential Tenure Pricing

Recommend Response:

- Effective May 1, 2024, a change to pricing for *Land Act* residential leases and licences on Crown land will be implemented, which will benefit *permanent* residential tenure holders.
- The new pricing reduces the annual rental rate from 5.0 percent to 3.0 percent of land value and limits annual rental increases to the allowable increase specified under the *Residential Tenancy Act* (RTA).
- This change was done in response to large annual increases of land values in recent years, resulting in correspondingly large increases to *Land Act* residential rental rates. A rental freeze was implemented for all residential tenure holders for two years and will end on April 30, 2024.

Key Facts:

- Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (formerly Ministry of Forests) completed a pricing review to determine fair market value of *Land Act* residential leases and licences (tenures) on Crown land. Cabinet Confidences
Cabinet Confidences
- During the pricing review, a rent freeze was applied to the approximately 1,246 residential tenures which include both permanent and seasonal uses.
- Prior to the review, *Land Act* residential pricing was three percent of land value for seasonal tenures and five percent for permanent tenures. The new pricing will be three percent of land value for both seasonal and permanent tenures; however, annual rent increases for permanent tenure holders is limited to align with the *Residential Tenancy Act*.
- *Land Act* tenures are not subject to the the RTA nor the *Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act* and the associated limitations to rental increases.
- Seasonal tenure holders in locations of high land value are dissatisfied that they have not been included in the pricing relief. The new pricing model ensures that a rent subsidy is not provided to tenure holders who hold a second property.
- Impacts to provincial revenue from rental reductions are nominal as only approximately 100 tenures are for permanent residential purposes. Advic
Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

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Date Prepared/Revised: February 3, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Colin Ward, ADM, Reconciliation and
Natural Resource Sector Policy Division

Phone: 778-974-5150

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Michelle Porter, ED, Land Programs

Phone: 778-974-5845

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: *Land Title Act* - Discriminating Covenants

Recommend Response:

- Discriminating covenants are not enforceable and the Land Title and Survey Authority of BC (LTSA) has made sustained efforts to amend their records over the years.
- If a landowner has questions about discriminating covenants or would like to initiate the process to have an endorsement be made on an existing land title record noting that the covenant is void and of no effect, the landowner should contact the Registrar of the LTSA.
- When contacted by a landowner, the Registrar will make an endorsement by the covenant indicating that it has been cancelled pursuant to Section 222 of the *Land Title Act*. There is no cost for this amendment.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Section 222 of the *Land Title Act* operates against any registered covenant that has a discriminating effect, whenever registered and in whatever form created, making discriminating covenants void and of no effect.
- Because the Registrar is prohibited under the *Land Title Act* from erasing or rendering illegible the original words on a record, the words are struck through so that it is more apparent on the face of a record that the discriminating language is void.

Key Facts:

- Discriminating covenants are clauses that restrict the sale, ownership, occupation or use of land on the basis of sex, race, creed, colour, nationality, ancestry or place of origin of a person that reflect a different cultural reality in the history of our province.
- Such covenants appear most often on land title records from the first half of the 20th century. In some cases, they appeared to be a standard covenant for all properties in a particular development (e.g., the British Properties in West Vancouver, North Vancouver, Shaughnessy and Kerrisdale).

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- These covenants are not enforceable. Enacted in 1978, Section 222 of the *Land Title Act* operates against any registered covenant that directly or indirectly has a discriminating effect, whenever registered and in whatever form created. In short, discriminating covenants are void and have no effect.
- The LTSA receives a small number (usually less than five) requests annually to strike discriminating covenants from land title documents.
- The LTSA continues to work with Simon Fraser University to explore techniques, including electronic ones, which may assist in identifying occurrences of such covenants. Once detected, discriminating covenants will be struck through by the Registrar.

Date Prepared/Revised: Feb 2, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Colin Ward, ADM / Michelle Porter, Exec. Director

Phone: 778 974-2150 / 778 974-5845

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: David Buchan, Senior Manager, Lands Branch

Phone: 778 974-5865

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: First Nation Registration at Land Title Office

Recommend Response:

- We are proposing measures to address a discriminatory barrier to First Nations ownership of land by using the existing legal framework, while working to implement the *Declaration Act*.
- We will be the first province to develop a solution to the issue of First Nations not qualifying to own and register land in their own name.
- We are enabling First Nations to have a choice of how to register land, furthering the province's reconciliation goals.

Key Facts:

- First Nations who are *Indian Act* bands, and other federal- recognized First Nation entities, are unable to register land in British Columbia's (BC) Land Title Office in their name and must rely on proxies (e.g., corporations, societies, etc.) to hold land.
- The proposal is to confirm in provincial legislation that a First Nation is a person or has the powers of a natural person for the purposes of provincial land legislation.
- This proposal does not impact or take away current provisions that are applicable to Modern Treaty First Nations who have the capacity to hold land as part of a treaty.
- The proposal does not provide First Nations with new rights, transfer land or provide any jurisdictional authority. It is simply a law that provides an ability to register land without first creating a proxy corporation.
- The legislation being amended is the *Property Law Act*, within the responsibilities of the Ministry of Attorney General, but as it relates to land title registration, which is within the mandate of the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. We are working with our provincial colleagues, Ministry of Attorney General and the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

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Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Colin Ward, ADM, Reconciliation and
Natural Resource Sector Policy Division

Phone: 778-974-5150

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Michelle Porter, ED, Land Programs

Phone: 778-974-5845

MINISTRY OF INDIGENOUS RELATIONS AND RECONCILIATION
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Instructions – to be deleted after final approval

Remember, these binders are proactively disclosed.

One page preferred; two pages MAX

Topic (bold, 12 pt): 5-7 words to describe the issue

Key Messages (bold, 11 pt): Bullet form. Only include information that the Minister can say, is written from Minister's perspective, and is similar in tone to GCPE notes.

Background (11 pt): Bullet or paragraph form. This text should only reflect things that are known and confirmed points that Minister can say, i.e. refrain from saying "Potential signing of an AIP with First Nation X in May" as that is not a fact. Pretend you have 2 minutes to explain the situation to someone who has no prior knowledge of it. Avoid duplication from Key Messages section.

Primary Contact: Should be ED/CN level and who will be available during Estimates.

TOPIC: First Nations Registration of Land in the Land Title Office

KEY MESSAGES

- **Currently, unless enabled by specific legislation such as through treaties or other federal legislation, First Nations are unable to directly acquire, hold, and dispose of land through the B.C. Land Title Office.**
- **In order to buy or hold land, First Nations are forced through the additional administrative processes of either setting up a corporation or use alternative arrangements to do something that British Columbians often take for granted.**
- **First Nations have long called for a solution – from any level of government – to remove this discriminatory barrier to land ownership.**
- **We are exploring possible legislative amendments that would give First Nations a choice for how they will acquire, hold, and dispose of land – they can continue using alternative arrangements such as corporations or choose to register in the name of the First Nation.**
- **The proposed legislative amendments represent an important administrative change to enable First Nations to hold lands in their own name.**

BACKGROUND

- Under the Constitution Act (1867), the federal government has authority for "Indians and Lands reserved for the Indians", and the Indian Act does not confer the powers to acquire, hold, and dispose of land.
- The majority of First Nations in British Columbia are unable to register land (other than reserve land) in the Land Title Office in the name of their First Nation as they

MINISTRY OF INDIGENOUS RELATIONS AND RECONCILIATION

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are neither natural persons nor entities recognized in statute with the power to acquire, hold and dispose of land.

- Exceptions exist for Modern Treaty Nations and First Nations with self-government agreements (e.g., shíshálh Nation and Westbank First Nation) which have this power specified in their treaties or agreements with Canada.
- Other First Nations must have individuals or corporations hold and register land interests on their behalf when land is purchased or otherwise acquired through non-treaty agreements.
- The Province has legislative authority for property and civil rights, including the establishment and management of the Province's land title system.
- The proposal is for focused amendments to clarify the capacity of First Nations, and to introduce the administrative requirements related to the registration of land in the Land Title Office which would be similar requirements as are already in place for corporations and Modern Treaty First Nations.
- Broad consultations with First Nations, stakeholders, and Canada have been underway since late 2023 and remain ongoing. More than 40 First Nations have participated in consultation sessions on the proposal.
- Consultation with First Nations, stakeholders, and Canada have indicated general support for the proposed approach.
- Potential tax liability was a common concern raised in consultation with First Nations. Changes to the tax system are not being considered as part of this proposal.

Primary Contact

Kevin Ziegler
Deputy Minister's Office

Cell: Government

ADM Responsible

Carolyn Kamper
Negotiations and Regional
Operations Division

Cell: Government

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Pause on proposed amendments to *Land Act* to enable *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act) decision-making agreements with Indigenous governments

Recommend Response:

- On February 21, 2024, the Province announced that it will not proceed with proposed amendments to the *Land Act*, citing that further engagement is needed to move forward together.
- The Province heard that we need time to demonstrate the benefits of shared decision-making before enabling such provisions in the *Land Act*.
- As such, this is not the right time for the proposed amendments and the right decision is to pause our work on the *Land Act*.
- Moving forward, the provincial priority is to keep working with all our partners to demonstrate how shared decision-making creates benefits for everyone.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- From the very beginning of this process, I promised that we would listen and take the time to get any changes right. That our focus was to make it easier to work together with First Nations and provide more opportunities for better jobs and a stronger future.
- I realize our government did not do enough to inform the public, stakeholders, and our partners about these proposed amendments and regret the frustration, confusion and anxiety this caused.
- This formal engagement process was closed on February 21. People interested in sharing their views on the topic, however, can still submit them by email to landactamendments@gov.bc.ca.
- We will continue to engage with people and businesses, and do the work to show how working together, First Nations and non-First Nations communities, can help bring stability and predictability, and move us all forward.
- [Minister's statement on proposed Land Act amendments](#) | [BC Gov News](#)

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Key Facts:

- On February 21, 2024, the Province announced that it will not proceed with proposed amendments to *the Land Act* citing that further engagement is needed to move forward together.
- The proposed amendments will not lead to broad, sweeping, or automatic changes. There is no impact from the proposed amendments to the public's ability to access Crown land, to existing tenures or decision-making processes.
- There are no changes contemplated to any provisions of the *Land Act* beyond the proposed amendments that enable decision-making agreements. There are no changes to existing Crown land policies, such as permissions, which provide for public access to Crown land.
- The proposed amendments to the *Land Act* enable the use of the tools set out in the Declaration Act.
- Nothing requires the Province to enter into a decision-making agreement. The public interest will be a critical part of any Provincial decision to enter into a negotiation of an agreement.
- Where a future agreement contemplates any changes or impacts to the public or third-party interests, full consultation will be undertaken and impacts considered.
- When the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* was unanimously passed, we acknowledged that there must be authorities within other relevant legislation for the Province to enter into a decision-making agreement with an Indigenous governing body, meaning there would need to be consequential amendments to other legislation to allow for it.
- Reflected first in the *Environmental Assessment Act*, we've seen section 6 and 7 provisions adopted in the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act*, *the Child, Family and Community Services Act*, *the Adoption Act* and while not yet in force, *the Forest and Range Practices Act*.
- Successive court decisions over the past 25 years have continuously upheld the Indigenous rights in the Constitution and directed government to take action to respect them.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 5, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Michelle Porter, ED, Land Programs

Phone: 778-974-5845

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Katharine McCallion, Manager, Land & Indigenous Priorities

Phone: 778-698-7308

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Advice/Recommendations ; Intergovernmental Communications

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Issue: Engagement on proposed amendments to the *Land Act*

Recommend Response:

- On February 21, 2024, the Province announced that it will not proceed with proposed amendments to the *Land Act* citing that further engagement is needed to move forward together.
- Through engagement, the Province heard that we need time to demonstrate the benefits of shared decision-making before enabling such provisions in the *Land Act*.
- I realize our government did not do enough to inform the public, stakeholders, and our partners about these proposed amendments.
- From the beginning, I promised we would listen and take the time to get the changes right as our focus was to make it easier to work together with First Nations and provide more opportunities for better jobs and a stronger future.
- Moving forward, the provincial priority is to keep working with all our partners to demonstrate how shared decision making creates benefits for everyone.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- On January 5, 2024, the Ministry initiated engagement with First Nations and stakeholders and established the public EngageBC site.
- At the beginning of February 2024 in response to feedback, we deepened engagement and met with numerous stakeholder groups, individual businesses, local government representatives and others to ensure that there was clarity regarding what was being proposed and what was not being proposed.
- Through engagement, we heard more time is needed to demonstrate the benefits of shared decision-making.
- As such, this is not the right time for the amendments and the right decision is to pause our work on the *Land Act*.

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- The formal engagement process was closed February 21. People interested in sharing their views can still submit them by email to landactamendments@gov.bc.ca.
- We will continue to engage with people and businesses to show how working together, First Nations and non-First Nations communities, can help bring stability and predictability, and move us all forward.

Key Facts:

- Formal engagement was closed following the February 21 announcement. People interested in sharing their views can still submit them by email to landactamendments@gov.bc.ca.
- First Nations were supportive and seek limitation of legislative requirements for *Land Act*/Declaration Act decision agreements to expedite the parties' abilities to complete agreements.
- Over the past several weeks, the Minister and WLRS team hosted multiple discussions on the proposed amendments to the *Land Act* with over 650 representatives of stakeholder groups representing tens of thousands of British Columbians from mining, forestry, oil and gas, clean energy, cattle ranchers, to adventure tourism operators, snowmobilers, hunters and anglers, and many others.
- Questions regarding tenure replacements and third-party involvement in proposed agreements were raised. The vast majority of respondents told us they want to be partners in the Province's efforts related to reconciliation and that they want the process to work.
- Additional public submissions received through EngageBC included sentiments harmful to Indigenous peoples, as well as questions regarding continued access to lands, treatment of existing tenures, and how these agreements would work. In conversations with these groups, many were surprised to learn that the claims being made about the proposed legislation by some were not true and that there would be no impacts to tenures, renewals, private properties or access to Crown land.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 5, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Michelle Porter, ED, Land Programs

Phone: 778-974-5845

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Lynn Brunsdon, Director, Lands Branch

Phone: 778-698-7303

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Advice/Recommendations ; Intergovernmental Communications

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: First Nation Land Transfers

Recommend Response:

- It's critically important for First Nations to benefit from their land to have healthy communities, preserve culture and promote economies.
- We also know that when First Nations prosper and able to develop a strong economy, the benefits are not just limited to the First Nation and the local and regional economy benefits as well.
- We recognize the need to implement BC's land transfer commitments to First Nations in an efficient way, and changes are underway to make that happen.
- This includes an organizational re-structuring in late 2023, which included the transfer of staff leading the technical work of transferring land to First Nations that has been agreed to from the Ministry of Forests and the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR).

Additional Response points (if needed):

- As WLRS now holds legislation used to establish First Nation ownership of former provincial Crown lands, WLRS is well-positioned to lead the implementation of land-based reconciliation agreements as partner to MIRR.
- I acknowledge that in the past, timelines to meet BC's land transfer obligations have been fraught with delays and I am committed to expediting land returns.

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Key Facts:

- Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information
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- Since December 2023, significant efficiencies have been realized by the restructuring and centralizing land return resources, including expedited ministerial order timelines.
- Work is underway on a delegation matrix for land returns to realize efficiencies under the Land Return Initiative, a large-scale change management plan intended to remove barriers to land returns.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

Name: Ashlyn Schwaiger

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Reconciliation, Land and Natural Resource Sector Policy

Recommend Response:

- NRS Reconciliation Policy and Strategies is a Branch within the Reconciliation, Lands and Natural Resource Policy Division
- One of the most important responsibilities of government is the management of our natural resources. This capacity helps us develop a co-management system for natural resources with First Nations.
- The capacity will allow for improvements to the Province's consultation guidance (policy) and information systems required to support the modernization of consultation practices.
- In past, integrated land and resource management efforts focussed on improving business/systems processes. As the context in which we work today has changed, government needs to evolve, and we recognize there is a need for greater integration in natural resource sector governance, strategies, legislation, and policy.

Key Facts:

- WLRS will work to help ensure that marine, land and resource management policies are grounded in reconciliation, both in terms of their approach and outcomes. To do this successfully, WLRS will be responsible for designing with First Nations:
 - A co-management/shared decision-making regime for the marine and land base.
- This co-management regime will develop the necessary policy, process and tools needed to operationalize *DRIPA* on the ground and will include:
 - Development of effective consultation/engagement on land and marine use policies/practices and objective setting within these environments
 - Development of operational governance structures to co-manage land and marine environments in a wholistic way and in alignment with MIRR's Indigenous Governing Body policy.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- Building out the number and scope of indigenous regional forums to effectively address resource management and cumulative effects.
- Ensuring legislative changes required to support the co-management regime are in accordance with policy/direction set out by the *Declaration Act* Secretariat.
- The Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation is responsible for the corporate reconciliation framework across government, *DRIPA* and the Action Plan, Treaty, fiscal framework, negotiations, and strategic issues management.
- WLRS will take the corporate reconciliation framework and translate it/apply it into necessary policy and practice in the NR sector, effectively operationalizing *DRIPA*.
- **Consultation and Consultation Information Systems**
- The Province makes over 14,000 permitting decisions annually. Prior to reaching a decision, most decisions will require section 35 (Aboriginal and treaty rights) consultation processes with multiple First Nations to protect against negative impacts to First Nation Interests.
- The division is responsible for 12 enterprise applications and datasets, including the First Nation Consultation System (FNCS) that support staff and decision makers to fulfill section 35 consultation obligations with First Nations in permitting processes.
- FNCS and the associated consultative systems were built to simplify and coordinate consultation and accommodation practices. It is estimated that FNCS will save about 13 steps and 6.5 efforts of effort for “normal” processes while adding elements that support coordination and more durable and transparent decisions.
- FNCS was launch in October 2022 and since then, it now has over 1,300 users consulting on over 2775 proposed permits and have completed over 575 – each permit many encompass consultations with multiple First Nations.
- Work is underway to link FNCS with tenure administration systems across the sector and to prepare for planned enhancements, including a dashboard service for First Nations.
- First Nations were introduced to the pending dashboard service for them in a series of forestry workshops hosted by the former Ministry of Forests in 2018. Most recognized the potential benefit of a dashboard service.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 21, 2023

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: LiDAR Status Update

Recommend Response:

- Government is entering into the second year of a six-year, \$38.5M program to collect and process high-quality and accurate LiDAR elevation data to (1) improve British Columbia's (BC) resilience to natural events due to climate change, (2) meet the demands of modern resource management initiatives, and (3) to keep British Columbians safe, productive and economically competitive.
- Year 1 of the program has delivered LiDAR data for over 30,000 km², collected between the Tsilhqot'in area of central BC, parts of the lower mainland and one-third of Vancouver Island. Data products are being processed and will be made available as "open data" in early Summer 2024.
- Year 2 of the program will follow a dedicated acquisition plan, targeting between 250,000 km² and 300,000 km² in BC's northern areas (Northeast, Omineca, North and Central Coast). This acquisition season is expected to last for seven months beginning in April 2024.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is a 3D mapping technology used to collect large amounts of highly detailed spatial data that provide great value for many sectors and groups including Government, First Nations, communities, and industry.
- Government's investment in LiDAR demonstrates its commitment to improve BC's baseline foundational data and make life easier and fairer for its citizens through improved data access.
- Prior to 2023, LiDAR was previously collected for approximately 13.9 percent of the province (130,149 km²).
 - 11 percent of this LiDAR (approximately 105,000 km²) is freely available under the Open Government License.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Key Facts:

- The centralized Provincial LiDAR Program (LidarBC) establishes a framework to ensure LiDAR collected by the Natural Resource Ministries (NRM) is coordinated, consistent, of high quality, broadly applicable and cost-effective.
- Through a centralized acquisition and distribution model, LidarBC enables smaller business areas to access high-quality geospatial data, which otherwise would be cost-prohibitive.
- LidarBC will allow the NRM to attain full provincial LiDAR coverage for under \$40M instead of an estimated \$175M to \$200M using the previous project-by-project contracting approach.
- The following examples demonstrate LiDAR's use to support Government business:
 - FOR FORESTRY: LIDAR is used to model forest inventories, enhance Predictive Ecosystem Mapping, and provide operational tools for precision forestry, including:
 - identification of specific mature stands;
 - updated and accurate terrain modelling; and
 - tools for forest structure analysis (e.g., tree canopy and understory).
 - FOR BIODIVERSITY/LAND USE PLANNING: LiDAR is used to create maps to quantify disturbances and assess levels of vegetation re-growth after disturbance. Land Use Planners and First Nations can use these measurements for biodiversity conservation and resource stewardship applications, including:
 - reclamation planning and prioritization of restoration efforts to protect and recover caribou populations and other listed species at risk and their critical;
 - surveying and ecological assessments; and
 - identifying culturally and ecologically sensitive sites.
 - FOR NATURAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND MANAGEMENT: LiDAR data offers powerful tools to create maps for soil erosion and slide potential. LiDAR-derived datasets are used for risk analysis applications in flood modelling, floodplain delineation and vulnerability assessments or to aid in the identification of areas most affected by natural disaster (e.g., landslides due to flooding).

Date Prepared/Revised: Updated February 9, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Nancy Liesch

Phone: 778-974-3641

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Provincial Interests in Managing Geospatial Data for Next Generation 9-1-1

Recommend Response:

- The functionality of Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) relies upon accurate, authoritative geospatial datasets (e.g., addresses, roads, boundaries) and Geographic Information System (GIS) business processes.
- WLRS is collaborating with the Ministry of Public Safety Solicitor General (PSSG) and other organizations to ensure the GIS data requirements for NG911 are addressed.
- The ministry's Digital Road Atlas (DRA) program has established GIS business processes that satisfy current 911 requirements and is the underlying road and address data currently supporting BC's 911 dispatch needs.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- PSSG is leading a multi-Ministry engagement process to develop a framework to modernize 911 dispatch.
- The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is responsible for regulating Canada's telecommunications service providers. In the absence of a provincial NG911 GIS data authority formally designated through legislation, the CRTC has confirmed that TELUS (BC's network provider) would acquire the responsibility by default.
- The DRA could be less costly to implement for NG911 than other options; however, the role of WLRS to support GIS data services for NG911 implementation will largely be determined by any legislation and agreements with third parties (e.g., TELUS, local governments).

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Key Facts:

- Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) represents an evolution in emergency dispatch services by enabling the transmission of text, photos and/or video along with voice for 911 calls.
- Geospatial call routing is an essential element of NG911. GIS and authoritative geospatial datasets are used to locate callers, route calls and dispatch emergency responders. Datasets must be current, seamless, and accurate to support NG911 functionality.
- In BC, the required GIS datasets for NG911 are available from many different organizations and maintained to different standards. There is no provincial-level program to aggregate disparate data and perform quality assurance against NG911 standards.
- Without a provincially-designated GIS authority, the CRTC mandates each regional telecommunication provider (TELUS) to be responsible for aggregating data for NG911 functionality. Individual First Nations, local governments, and Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) will in turn need to maintain authoritative geospatial datasets for NG911.
- As the largest primary PSAP in Canada, Emergency Communications for British Columbia Incorporated (E-Comm) handles 99 percent of BC's initial 911 call volumes and heavily relies upon geospatial data aggregated by WLRS through its DRA program.
- Throughout the implementation of NG911, WLRS will advocate for improved public access to high quality geospatial data that delivers the broadest and best use as a strategic asset.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 13, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Operational Use of Drones in the Public Service

Recommend Response:

- Drone technology provides significant benefits to Government in the collection and use of essential quality data with increased safety, reduced costs, and fewer environmental impacts.
- The natural resource sector is using drones to deliver significant benefits in site reconnaissance and remote sensing for business areas, including wildlife monitoring, forest inventorying, compliance and enforcement, hazard identification, emergency response, wildfire management, and infrastructure inspections (e.g., dams, dikes, and pipelines).
- By leveraging drone technology, timely post-disaster assessments for events such as wildfires, landslides, and flooding have facilitated swift response and recovery efforts.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Operational use of drones continues to advance by implementing cutting-edge technology such as infrared scanning, LiDAR and multi-spectral imaging to support resource management programs and initiatives.
- Drone Program leadership is provided through WLRS for administration, policy, and training, and FOR for specialized operations and business applications.

Key Facts:

- Drones are remotely operated aircraft systems. They are called “systems” to recognize that they consist of aircraft, sensors, telecommunications technology, ground control stations and flight crew.
- In Canada, the use of drones falls within the federal government's exclusive jurisdiction, with TC having responsibility. As of June 2019, new regulations for drones under the Canadian Aviation Regulations (CARs) came into effect and apply to all drone operations in Canadian airspace.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- The NRM Drone Program is fully accountable to Transport Canada (TC) through a Chief Pilot based at GeoBC (WLRS) and maintains a nationally recognized operations manual, as well as privacy, policy, and training standards.
- WLRS and FOR jointly deliver the NRM Drone Program.
- Regular pilot training delivered through the NRM Drone Program is of high quality and costs approximately a third of industry-led training. Pilots are approved to operate drones based on operating procedures established by a Corporate Operations Manual endorsed by TC.
- Currently, the NRM Drone Program has 581 provincial government staff members, including 189 active pilots across six ministries. The program has trained 274 pilots since 2018 and has 277 drones in operation with 3612 flight hours.
- Besides WLRS and FOR, participating ministries/agencies are the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation. Others that cooperate with the program but are not yet in full compliance are the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, the BC Energy Regulator (formerly the Oil and Gas Commission), and the Agricultural Land Commission.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 9, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS)

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Issue: Natural Resource Permitting

Recommend Response:

- Our vision is to create a world-class permitting system that fosters greater transparency, consistency, and data integration, supporting a collaborative environment for reconciliation with First Nations, economic growth, and greater environmental stewardship.
- Funding of \$77M over three years, starting in 2022/23, was provided to have WLRS lead permitting solutions with funds being distributed across WLRS, the other Natural Resources Ministries (NRM), and Ministries of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI), and Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport.
- Processing times for housing-related applications were reduced by 45 days from March 31, 2023, to January 31, 2024, generating an estimated \$16.8M in potential savings for homebuilders.
- The economic benefits to BC during just the construction and building phase are an estimated \$30M increase in gross domestic product (GDP), 240 jobs, and \$9.6M in provincial tax revenue. Long-term impacts of improved access to high-speed internet are estimated at \$432.6M in increased GDP over 20 years, or seven times the initial provincial investment of \$67.4M.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- This is cross-sector work overseen by the Solutions Project Board of Natural Resource Deputy Ministers, BC Energy Regulator Commissioner, and MOTI Deputy Minister.
- The housing focus is intended to increase supply through streamlining authorizations and exploring opportunities to expand availability of Crown land. The priority on connectivity addresses government's commitment to connecting all households in British Columbia (BC) to high-speed internet by 2027.

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS)

- Total caseload for the NRM, (Feb 29) is 13,353; a 281 permit reduction from the previous month. This includes water, lands, Parks, riparian, archaeology, contaminated sites (housing) and transportation (housing and connectivity) applications.

Key Facts:

Strategic Permitting Initiatives

- Focus on delegation of authorities, expanding BC Energy Regulator's single window, deeming authorized or streamlining low-risk permits, and professional reliance has brought forward high-impact changes.
- Designating *Water Sustainability Act* authority to enable MOTI to make decisions on over 300 applications per year for transportation projects and routine work will result in time and cost savings. This will allow WLRS staff to focus on other priority projects. Cost savings are expected to surpass the initial \$77M investment in permitting resources within three years.
- The large volume of existing use groundwater applications received from 2016 to 2022 resulted in a backlog of applications. This improvement is projected to result in ~1000 (~18 percent) of the 5572 applications being completed by the end of 2024 and the associated fees being collected. At completion, this work is anticipated to reduce permitting caseload across the Natural Resource Ministries by 25 percent.

Housing

- In January 2023, WLRS led the cross-ministries Housing Action Taskforce. Since March 2023, 72 percent of housing-related applications have reached decisions, with the potential to create approximately 150,000 new housing units.

Connectivity

- Applications are moving faster through the process while projects with issued permits have increased 280 percent since November 1, 2023.

Broader Permitting Efforts & Achievements in WLRS

- Through digital advancements, the province has introduced application tracking for housing and connectivity priority projects and is breaking down cross-ministry permitting data silos.
- Ninety percent of new applications for Riparian Area Protection assessments are now processed in 30 days, compared to the previous timeline of 9-12 months.
- Water, Lands and Fish & Wildlife active permit application caseload has increased 1.3% between Jan and Feb 2024, while processing times are decreasing or holding steady. (see attached table)

Date Prepared/Revised: March 18, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Karen Spence, A/Exec Director, Permitting Solutions

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WLRS Active Applications

As of February 2024

	Water	Lands	Fish & Wildlife	Riparian
Current Active Applications*	8645	1699	699	56
Target Turnaround Days	140	140	Varies 30/60/90	30
Average Processing Days	344	331	34	168**
Performance Targets Met	53%	56%	71%	54%

* client-initiated applications awaiting decision

** newest applications are meeting the 30 day turn around time

NRM Active Applications

October 2022 – February 2024

(Client Driven Applications Awaiting Decision)

	Caseload			Avg Processing Days		
	October 2022	February 2024	Change	October 2022	February 2024	Change
Land	1780	1699	-81	324	331	+7
Water	8245	8645	400	328	344	+16
Fish & Wildlife	438	699	261	39	34	-5
Parks	334	482	148	283	288	+5
Archaeology	373	448	75	210	223	+13
Riparian	508	56	-452	165	168	+3

التعليقات

- التغيير في عدد الطلبات النشطة في المياه هو نتيجة لتغيير في عدد الطلبات المقدمة من قبل العملاء.
- التغيير في عدد الطلبات النشطة في الأراضي هو نتيجة لتغيير في عدد الطلبات المقدمة من قبل العملاء.

Breakdown of Water Application Caseload

Application Type	Oct 2022	Feb 2024	Change
Existing Use Ground Water	5829	5455	-374
Section 11 (Changes in and about a stream)*	678	535	-143
New Ground Water	43	24	-19
Section 10 (use approval)*	105	125	+20
Water License*	2184	2262	+78
Abandonments	231	244	+13
Total	9070	8645	-425

*Includes new applications and amendments

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL
ISSUES NOTE

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship
Date: Feb. 27, 2024
Minister Responsible: Hon. Nathan Cullen

Permitting and Housing

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **My ministry is leading transformative work to streamline permitting and authorization systems across government, to provide for a faster, more efficient process to serve people better.**
- **This includes a new one-stop shop for housing permits is speeding up homebuilding approvals, getting the homes people need built faster.**
- **We've had early successes breaking down housing permit backlogs which will provide key lessons for permit processes across government – including natural resource projects.**
- **And while we are delivering streamlined permitting, we continue to uphold high environmental standards and advance reconciliation with First Nations.**
- **To date, B.C. has invested more than \$77 million and dedicated 203 full-time employees from across the natural resource ministries to speed up and streamline permitting.**

If asked about how the permitting strategy is speeding up permits needed for housing projects...

- **Since establishing the Housing Action Taskforce in January 2023:**
 - **75% of the 914 initially identified applications related to housing have had decisions.**
 - **Overall processing times for natural resource permits for housing related projects have been reduced by 45 days.**
 - Advice/Recommendations

- **archaeology has reduced overall permitting timelines on housing files by 26 days and**
- **Riparian Area Protection assessments previously took 9 – 12 months to process, now, 90% of new applications are processed within 30 days.**
- **We've seen early successes and will scale these across natural resource sector permits.**

If asked about permitting in the natural resource sector...

- **Progress is being made on permitting but more must be done. We are not only addressing the backlog, but more importantly, fixing the permitting system.**
- **We are expanding the BC Energy Regulator's one-window to include other delegated authorities from natural resource ministries, which is expected to streamline and drive effectiveness for all parties – including First Nations, industry, communities, and regulators.**
- **Our one-window approach to Housing and Connectivity permits has allowed better coordination and collaboration on natural resource sector permitting, not only within the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship but also across the Ministries of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation and Transportation and Infrastructure.**
 - **For example, through the efforts of the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation, there's been a 52% reduction in the backlog of regional mine permit applications – these improvements are getting explorers working on their projects more quickly.**
- **Additionally, we are expanding opportunities for professional reliance and delegated authorities across natural resource ministries as well as**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

opportunities to focus permitting decisions on issues of greatest importance.

- A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship to designate Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure staff as decision makers under the *Water Sustainability Act*, enabling the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to prioritize *Water Sustainability Act* authorizations for transportation and related infrastructure projects and routine maintenance. This is expected to save up to \$30 million annually by mitigating costs due to permitting delays.
- We are reviewing permit processes to ensure that we're paying attention to what is important and eliminating those that are duplicative or low risk and quite frankly just don't make sense.
- We're getting rid of duplicate permits where there is no new disturbance to the land base including sub-tenuring of hydro poles needed to connect remote communities to highspeed internet.

If asked about the Single Housing Application Service:

- In September 2023, our government launched the Single Housing Application Service (SHAS) on the Permit Connect BC website to streamline B.C.'s permitting and authorizations for housing projects and improve coordination across the natural resource ministries.
- The SHAS connects homebuilders to a dedicated staff member known as a 'navigator' to help guide them through all stages of application.
- These experts assist homebuilders through the permitting process and provide a personal, one-stop-shop that helps speed up the process and deliver more homes for B.C. families.

BACKGROUND:

The new Permitting Strategy for Housing was announced in January 2023, just before the Natural Resource Forum.

On Sept. 18, 2023, the Province launched the Single Housing Application Service (SHAS) to help deliver more homes faster by creating a simpler permitting application for homebuilders. The service will help clear permitting backlogs, while maintaining environmental standards. With the introduction of SHAS, the Province expects permit timelines to be reduced by two months.

The SHAS connects homebuilders to “navigators,” dedicated staff in the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, who guide applicants through all stages of provincial permit applications, act as the single, dedicated point of contact for all information relating to provincial home-building permits and co-ordinate permitting decisions across ministries.

The types of permits required for a housing project may include:

- Heritage Conversation Act permits,
- Riparian Area protection assessments,
- Crown land tenures,
- water licences,
- preliminary subdivision and zoning applications and
- contaminated site remediation and assessment forms.

The Permitting Strategy for Housing prioritizes urgently needed housing, including Indigenous-led projects, BC Housing, non-profit housing, and multiple-unit project applications. Communities that have the lowest vacancy rates and greatest demand for housing will be considered as part of the prioritization efforts as well.

Overall permitting transformation efforts continue to evolve across the NRMs including opportunities for significant time and cost savings. The focus on collaboration, integration and reducing both the touchpoints and volume of permits moving across the permitting ecosystem will result in time savings and process efficiencies. This work is imperative to reduce the overall caseload and transform permitting overtime.

Media Interest: There was significant media coverage of the Sept. 18, 2023 announcement, much or most of it positive in tone.

Communications contact	Katie Norris	250 896-7365
Program contact	Jennifer Anthony	250 889-1315
File created	Jan. 14, 2023	
File updated	Feb. 27, 2024	

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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Issue: Housing Action Taskforce

Recommend Response:

- The Housing Action Taskforce (HAT) established in January 2023 is led by WLRS and includes the Ministries of Environment and Climate Change, Forests, and Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI).
- The HAT provides dedicated and coordinated oversight and solutions for provincial natural resource housing authorizations. This includes streamlining decision processes and creating a coordinated single window approach to housing-related permits and authorizations.
- The HAT is prioritizing housing projects that are:
 - Indigenous-led;
 - Projects that provide affordable housing;
 - Projects that provide rental housing; and
 - Multi-housing unit projects.
- Since March 2023, 75 percent of the initially identified 914 housing-related applications have reached a decision, and 72 percent of all identified housing-related applications (new and initially identified) across the Natural Resource Ministries have reached decisions, creating potentially 150,000 new housing units.
- Between March 31, 2023, to January 31, 2024, a total of 1624 decisions have been made on housing-related applications resulting in an overall decrease in the active housing caseload to 634 applications.
- Overall processing times for housing applications have been reduced by 45 days, generating an estimated \$16.8M in potential savings for home builders.

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- The solutions we are implementing for housing are working and are scalable. These successes can be applied across the Natural Resource Sector.

Key Facts:

- Since establishing the HAT, we are permitting more faster while continuing to maintain high environmental standards expected by British Columbians:
 - Overall, the average processing time of natural resource housing-related applications continues to show a downward trend across almost all permit types with the average processing time reduction of 45 days as of January 31, 2024.
 - Advice/Recommendations
 - The Archaeology Branch has reduced overall permitting timelines on housing-related applications by 26 days from March 31, 2023, to January 31, 2024.
 - Riparian Area Protection assessments previously taking 9 – 12 months to process, now, 90 percent of new applications are processed in 30 days.
- Housing-related permits are across several ministries (Environment and Climate Change; WLRS; FOR; MOTI) and laws (*Water Sustainability Act, Land Act, Transportation Act, Heritage Conservation Act, Environmental Management Act, Riparian Areas Protection Act*).
 - Examples include:
 - water licenses,
 - land tenures,
 - contaminated sites authorizations,
 - right-of-way access,
 - rural subdivisions,
 - heritage site inspections, and
 - riparian area assessments.
- \$16.8M in homebuilder savings is based on the estimate of \$25,000/day savings x 45 days x the number of multi-housing unit applications currently in the system (15).

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Phone: 250-889-1315

Alternate Contact for Issue:

Name: Megan Williams, Director, Tactical Solutions

Phone: Government

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Electrification Single Window Approach and Current Status of Independent Power Producers

Recommend Response:

- BC Hydro requires an unprecedented level of construction over the next 10 years, building out British Columbia's (BC) electricity system to power a growing clean economy and communities, and meet CleanBC commitments.
- This cannot be done without prioritizing this work and applying the scalable and implementable strategic and tactical solutions we've developed for housing and connectivity to electrification. We will support electrification with one window, enhanced Navigator service and regulatory efficiencies between the Environmental Assessment process and permitting.
- Through strategic efforts we will continue to shift permitting towards transparency, clarity and timely processes.

Key Facts:

One window:

- We heard loud and clear from the oil and gas sector that the one-window, full-lifecycle regulatory oversight approach with the BC Energy Regulator works for them.
- Over the past year, we have applied the "one-window approach" to housing and connectivity with success, fast-tracking an estimated 150,000 housing units so the very people whom you rely on have homes in communities across the province in which they work.
- We are expanding the BC Energy Regulator's one-window to include other delegated authorities from natural resource ministries, which is expected to streamline and create efficiencies and effectiveness for all parties – including First Nations, industry, communities, and regulators.
- The Ministry of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) is working with the newly formed Clean Energy Major Projects Office within the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation (EMLI) on the advancement of the one window approach for clean energy development in BC.
 - The two ministries are exploring opportunities to leverage the Permit Connect BC set up for housing into the clean energy development space.
 - Improving client guidance materials, such as the Clean Energy Guidebook, along with Environmental Assessment application information guidance documents is expected to occur by Summer 2024, these

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

documents will ensure that expectations with the clean energy industry are clear from the start.

Current State of independent power producers in BC:

- We have seen a significant increase in investigation licenses from proponents who have been on the land base for years as well as new entities looking to submit a bid to the upcoming Call for Power.
- BC Hydro estimates that the 2024 call for power will translate to roughly 15 projects ranging in size between 40-200 Megawatts nameplate capacity.
- This represents a significant workload for the Natural Resource Ministries as they work through investigation permits, engage proponents, start the regulatory process and prepare client guidance materials.
- This work is expected to continue until 2031 as subsequent calls for power occur, and projects progress through regulatory review.
- WLRS is working with BC Hydro, EMLI and the Environmental Assessment Office to advance learnings from Housing and Connectivity to expedite permitting for electrification. Ideas being brought forward include:
 - Centralized review teams will support the One Window, working on Environmental Assessment and permitting matters through the regulatory continuum;
 - WLRS is exploring opportunities to work with BC Hydro in the advanced review of projects to help identify any potential environmental risk along with highlighting First Nations considerations that BC Hydro may consider in their decision-making process; and
 - WLRS is working on prioritizing applications to address the need for decisions by Fall 2024, supporting the 2024 Call for Power.
- While we are committed to faster permitting, we will continue to uphold high environmental standards.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Issue: Crown land tenure holders have lost infrastructure due to recent wildfires, impacting their businesses and revenue.

Recommend Response:

- Although rent relief is not an option available under the *Land Act*, payment plans can be established.
- Requirements in tenure documents can be adjusted while tenure holders rebuild infrastructure or consider amended plans.
- Provincial funding may be available to rebuild bridges on some main resource roads, particularly those serving communities or multiple residences. Other bridge rebuilds would likely require private sector funding.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Other ministries may have support relief available.

Key Facts:

- Wildfires burned very large areas in 2023 damaging or destroying infrastructure as well as forests.
- British Columbia does not have good information on the magnitude of these losses.
- Some industrial infrastructure and bridges as well as smaller camps and cabins associated with trapping and guide outfitting have been impacted.
- Some impacted tenure holders have approached the provincial government for rent relief, and some may abandon their tenures if the impact on their business or the cost of rebuilding is too high.
- The province may be left with damaged, abandoned infrastructure on former tenures and these may present environmental, health or safety concerns. The province would generally be left to recover the cost of any required cleanup through the courts.

Date Prepared/Revised: 26 Feb 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Phone: 778-693-3208

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Issue: Side Channel Dredging and Lower Fraser

Recommend Response:

- The ongoing management of sediment in the side channels of the Fraser River is vitally important to support small craft harbour operations, fisheries, marine-based industry, marinas and float homes.
- In 2023, British Columbia (BC) committed \$2.125M to support the dredging of the Steveston side channel.
- Staff are actively participating in a working group with Canada and several local governments to negotiate a cost-sharing agreement for ongoing dredging.
- To date, Canada has not come forward with a fiscal contribution.

Additional Response points:

- The overall sediment delivery to the Fraser Delta has declined, so future dredging in the river will require the development of new approaches to address growing environmental concerns such as marsh recession.

Key Facts:

- In 2009, Vancouver Fraser Port Authority (VFPA) signalled that it would terminate its Fraser River head lease with the province and returned more than 300 filled foreshore and water lot leases to the direct administration of the province.
- VFPA asserted that it would no longer carry the full cost of dredging in the side channels of the Fraser River but would continue to be responsible for the main channels that support commercial deep-sea shipping.
- Side channel navigation is essential to small craft harbour operations, fisheries, marine based industry, marinas and float homes. Dredging is required to maintain the water lot leases as viable (rentable).
- Local Governments, First Nations, and user groups continue to express their urgent concerns about the need for dredging in the side channels.
- In 2013, the province contributed \$3M to a multi-year inter-governmental program for side channel dredging costs. BC's portion, now depleted, was administered through Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI). VFPA hired and managed the dredging contractors.

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- Based on current estimates, total annual costs for dredging in the side channels of the Fraser River are in the range of \$2M-\$2.5M. Local governments are looking to the federal and provincial governments to fund approximately 80 percent of the estimated cost.
- No provincial ministry has this responsibility in its mandate or is funded to cover this pressure.
- In 2023, BC committed \$2.125M (year-end dollars) to the Steveston Harbour Authority (SHA) to fund the dredging of Steveston channel.
- Steveston harbour is home to more than 500 commercial fishing vessels and a modest number of pleasure craft, making it the largest small craft commercial fishing harbour in Canada.
- The SHA is now seeking matching funds from Canada to implement the work.
- Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

- Currently, the total annual revenue from foreshore and water lot leases (all types) in the Fraser River is approximately \$4.1M. Annual revenues are expected to increase in response to a 2020 directive from the Minister of Finance to bring commercial and industrial lease rates to market value in a phased approach.
- Advice/Recommendations

- To date, Canada has not come forward with a fiscal contribution and pressure is building for the province to take on a majority financial role.
- Recent research by faculty and students at Simon Fraser University suggests that overall sediment delivery to the Fraser Delta has declined through time leading to a deficiency in bed material sediment needed to replenish the delta channels in the lower river.
- This is likely to have a negative impact on the fish habitat and marsh ecosystems, therefore new approaches to managing river sediment will be required as a part of the permitting processes.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Alternate Contact for Issue:

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Key Messages – Dredging in Lower Fraser River (to clear navigable channels)

Date: March 4, 2024

Context:

GCPE Finance staff are compiling key messages for Minister of Finance Katrine Conroy's March 8 presentation to the Delta Chamber of Commerce. One of the questions in GCPE Finance's KMQA will touch on whether there is "any plan for consistent and ongoing funding for dredging of the Fraser River."

Although WLRS is responsible for issuing permits for such work, there doesn't appear to be a designated provincial ministry that consistently provides or manages funding for these types of projects. (GCPE MOTI staff say that the federal government used to fund dredging work, but it has not done so in recent years.)

MOTI issued a news release in April 2023 about a one-time B.C. government grant of \$2.1 million grant from year-end contingencies for a dredging project in the Fraser River system near Steveston (<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023MOTI0052-000536>), but GCPE MOTI staff say that their ministry is not responsible for funding dredging projects generally.

Messages:

- Steveston Harbour is a vital economic hub for this region. It's the largest commercial fishing harbour in Canada — supporting thousands of jobs and welcoming visitors from across Canada and abroad.
- The Vancouver Fraser Port Authority is responsible for dredging in the main navigational channels of the Fraser River. In the past, it has also contributed to a multi-jurisdictional local channel dredging program.
- In 2012, the federal government announced a 10-year, \$10-million dredging program that benefitted secondary channels, with funds contributed by the port, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the B.C. government, and the municipalities of Delta and Richmond. The B.C. government provided \$3 million to support that program.
- In May 2022, the Steveston Harbour Authority proposed a partnership to support dredging in Cannery Channel to improve safe access to Steveston Harbour, with the Steveston Harbour Authority, the City of Richmond, the federal government, and the provincial government proposed as partners.
- In April 2023, the B.C. government provided a \$2.1-million grant to support the Steveston Harbour Authority's project, which was to be matched by the Steveston Harbour Authority and the City of Richmond. At the time, the Steveston Harbour Authority was seeking federal participation in that project.
- The Province recognizes the importance of maintaining the Lower Fraser River channel for transportation, commercial and industrial uses, water lot maintenance, and other related uses.

- The Lower Fraser River's side channels face the same issue of sediment infill, and there is a need for a broader regional dredging program and long-term, sustainable channel maintenance program — including dredging.
- Recent research suggests we will need to understand and address the potential cumulative impacts of removing river sediment on the overall amount and distribution of fish habitat and marsh ecosystems, in conjunction with side channel dredging work.
- The Province is ready to participate in such a program, but the federal government is a key lead in the management of the Fraser River, including navigational matters, so the support of the federal government is necessary to undertake this important work.
- The B.C. government is looking into opportunities to work with local governments, the federal government, and others to identify a sustainable funding model for side-channel dredging.

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Issue: Cascade Skyline Gondola Project (CSG) Chilliwack

Recommend Response:

- There are extensive interests including Indigenous, cultural, environmental, public, and natural resource interests which need to be considered as part of a major project review.
- The province is committed to delivering a robust review process that addresses input from stakeholders, the public and recognizes the opportunity to address First Nation rights and title as well as advance reconciliation with First Nation communities.
- The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) is committed to a fair, transparent process and is working actively with the applicants.

Additional Response points:

- The ongoing review process will address competing interests and values and meet the expectations for local community engagement and administrative fairness.

Key Facts:

- The application areas for the CSG project and Bridal Veil Mountain Resorts (BVMR) located near Chilliwack, substantially overlap each other. Both applicants are aware of this.
- WLRS is working with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport to resolve the overlapping applications according to defined Crown Land Allocation Procedures.
- In September 2023, both applicants were informed that the overlap will be resolved through a competitive process to determine a sole proponent.
- Both proposals overlap the traditional territories of three Stó:lō First Nations:
 1. Ts'elxwéyeqw Tribe (which includes seven First Nations).
 2. Pilalt Tribe (including Cheam First Nation); and,
 3. Tait Tribe (including Popkum and Peters First Nation).
- The province is working with the Stó:lō nations to develop a framework for consensus-based decision-making.
- Both applicants have been advised that the next step is to advance the consensus-based engagement with the Stó:lō Nations.

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- Advice/Recommendations: Government Financial Information
-
- Cheam First Nation, an equity partner in the CSG application, are opposed to the BVMR application and have written to Minister Ralston requesting that only the CSG application advance.
- The province recognizes the important economic development opportunity the CSG project would provide to the Cheam First Nation, while at the same time, recognizes the potential impacts to other Stó:lō interests.
- The province is committed to reconciliation through the implementation of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (the *Declaration Act*), which speaks to the importance of building durable relationships between the Province and all Indigenous peoples.
- The *Declaration Act* aims to establish a predictable, collaborative, and secure path towards reconciliation, including tools for decision-making and achieving deep and meaningful reconciliation with all Indigenous peoples.

Date Prepared/Revised: Jan 30, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Issue: Tranquille Lake Development

Recommend Response:

- A water licence decision for a development in the Tranquille area of Kamloops is currently on hold pending a decision by the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO).
- The Province is committed to working collaboratively on resolving priority rights and title issues with Stk'emlúpsenc te Secwépemc Nation (*'ta-kum-loops te sheh-kwep-em'*) (SSN) in their territory.
- B.C. will continue working toward true and meaningful reconciliation by supporting opportunities for First Nations Peoples to be full partners in an inclusive and sustainable province.
- We are committed to the ongoing implementation of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

Additional Response points (if asked about the housing needs):

- Government is focused on building a province where everyone can find a good home, this is why we have accelerated provincial permitting associated with housing.

Key Facts:

- BC Wilderness Tours Inc. is proposing a development in the Tranquille Creek area of Kamloops, BC with 1500+ lots to provide housing for about 3,800 residents.
- The Province received an application on July 15, 2021 for a water licence from Kamloops Lake to supply the development with 1,144,757 cubic metres of water per year.
- Kamloops Lake is a large source and the withdrawal of water would have a negligible impact on lake levels.
- The SSN are opposed to the proposed development on the basis of historic infringements on rights and title.
- Interests of an Indigenous People

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- The SSN have requested that the EAO consider the project a reviewable project. The EAO made a determination that the project does not meet the requirements to make it reviewable.
- Subsequently, the SSN have requested the Minister of Environment to reconsider and designate the project as reviewable under S. 11 of the *Environmental Assessment Act*.
- Based on current water policy, the water licence decision is on hold pending the decision by the Minister of Environment.
- Legal Information

- There have been previous attempts to develop the property which included the potential for land transfers to First Nations communities; however, these previous attempts have been unsuccessful.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Issue: MLA Furstenau -Constituency Issues and Concerns

Recommend Response:

- MLA Furstenau has expressed concerns about water-related issues within her constituency and has specifically asked for an ‘amnesty’ for farmers who missed the Existing Use Groundwater (EUGW) application deadline to be allowed to submit EUGW applications now.
- During summer 2023, Vancouver Island experienced some of the driest conditions in recorded history.
- The Province continues to build on lessons learned from previous drought seasons and is considering the tools available under the *Water Sustainability Act (WSA)* for drought response including establishing advisory boards and developing water sustainability plans.
- Watershed planning is underway for the Koksilah watershed in partnership with the Cowichan Tribes.
- The focused work on processing EUGW applications will support better aquifer mapping and contribute to the management of the water resources of the province.

Key Facts:

Amnesty for EUGW:

- Advice/Recommendations
-
-
- The Minister can meet the intent of the MLAs request with the following key messages:
 - We encourage all commercial groundwater users who did not apply for a water licence to do so. Water licensing helps the Province manage water supplies to reduce the risk of over-allocation, and provides transparency on the order in which water users will likely have access in times of scarcity.

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- Existing non-domestic groundwater users who missed the March 1, 2022 are still encouraged to apply for a water licence.
- Should provincial water use restrictions or compliance action be necessary in drought-impacted areas, enforcement action will start with unauthorized users who have not made application for a licence.
- The Minister of Agriculture and Food has also launched an Agriculture Water Infrastructure program with \$20M invested last year and another \$83M in Budget 2024 to help farmers invest in water solutions so that they can provide food security while being more resilient to flood and drought.

Groundwater Licencing within the Koksilah Watershed:

- Alderlea Farm is a farm-to-table garden and cafe and the owners rely on groundwater for irrigation and operation of their cafe. There is no record of Alderlea Farm applying for an existing use groundwater licence prior to the March 1, 2022, deadline. To secure water rights and continue operations, Alderlea submitted a new water groundwater licence application and is considered a new user. This application is under review by staff. MP Alister MacGregor, of Cowichan-Malahat-Langford, has expressed his support for Alderlea Farm.
- A property owned by Personal Information is in part, leased to Dinter Nursery. Staff identified that non-domestic groundwater was being diverted without authority. To date, WLRS has not received a water licence application from Personal
- Considering annual water scarcity, it is unlikely new water licences will be granted in the Koksilah watershed unless any impacts to Environmental Flow Needs and/or other water rights holders can be avoided or mitigated.

Freshwater Bottling in Merville within the Tsolum Watershed area:

- Conditional Water Licence 500169 was granted in 2017. The licensee has since applied to amend the water use purpose from fresh water bottling to water sales. This application is under review.
- This past summer, flows became so low that the survival of a population of steelhead trout was threatened by drought conditions.
- Under WSA, a Minister's Fish Population Protection Order was put in place as the water levels were not sufficient to divert allocated volumes, this order affected a total of forty-five water licences including Licence 500169.

Elevated Water Levels and flooding and affect on private property in the Duncan area:

- MLA Furstenau wrote to Minister Ralston in June 2023 regarding a dispute between neighbours about flooding related to ornamental ponds on private land owned by Personal Information and the response by Ministry staff.

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- Personal information claims that flood restoration work on his property will cost thousands of dollars.
- Staff exhausted the tools available under WSA to resolve the issue and encouraged the neighbours to seek a collaborative solution or proceed through civil court.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Issue: MLA Olsen -Consistency Issues and Concerns

Recommend Response:

- MLA Olsen has expressed concerns about Crown land tenure applications and issues raised within his constituency.
- Decisions on private dock applications within Quw'utsun Nation (QN) have been stalled for years due to lack of a strategic management plan that addresses First Nations concerns related to cumulative effects. Ministry staff are committed to collaborate with QN on the development of a strategic management plan for private moorage.
- Malahat Investment Corporation has applied for expansion of their quarry and associated barge loading foreshore lease. WLRS is reviewing the application and will work with First Nations in the area to develop and implement cumulative effects analysis and monitoring.
- Roberts Bay Salt Marsh is a restoration project to restore and protect an existing, eroding salt marsh. The applicant (Peninsula Streams Society) is seeking an expedited approval process to align with funding. Engagement on the application has resulted in significant public opposition.

Key Facts:

Quw'utsun Nation – Southern Vancouver Island

- Private moorage was identified as an initial high priority within QN's (core marine) territory as part of a 2021 G2G agreement to advance reconciliation. Intergovernmental Intergovernmental Communications
- MLA Olsen has expressed on multiple occasions constituent concerns regarding delayed adjudication of Crown Land applications for private moorage.
- WLRS staff are working on developing a draft communication update to applicants on the on-going work that is underway. The draft will include QN input.

Bamberton Quarry Application, Mill Bay, BC area

- Malahat Investment Corporation, a Malahat First Nation company, has applied for expansion of their quarry and associated barge-loading foreshore lease. The

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'Bamberton Projects' was referred to the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) for determination as to whether it was a 'reviewable project' under the *Environmental Assessment Act*.

- Review of the foreshore lease expansion application was paused while the EAO completed their determination. The proposed expansion is only in the area of submerged land and no new infrastructure or other improvements are proposed.
- In June 2023, the EAO released its decision that the Bamberton Projects would not be designated a reviewable project. Instead, the quarry expansion is undergoing an enhanced review under the Mines Act permitting process and WLRS will work with First Nations in the area to develop and implement cumulative effects analysis and monitoring. No scope or timelines for the analysis have been determined.
- WLRS Authorizations staff have resumed file review and is proceeding with consultation with other Nations who assert territory in the area, several of whom have indicated that they are opposed to the Bamberton Projects.

Robert's Bay Salt Marsh Application, Sidney, BC

- Roberts Bay is a semi-enclosed bay on the northeast side of Saanich Peninsula and is a federally designated site as a Migratory Bird Sanctuary which provides habitat for migratory and resident species of birds and wildlife. The bay is lined with single-home residential development.
- The proposal is to build approximately seven wave breaks along the historic edge of the marsh using approximately 1360 tonnes of cobble and boulder and backfill with ~4000 tonnes of gravel/sand (over 500 dump truck loads).
- The applicant is seeking an expedited review process due to \$180K of committed federal funding that they might lose at fiscal year end.
- The formal public consultation window closed on February 7, 2024. The general themes of concerns are regarding, riparian rights infringement, project viability and impact of sediment on upland properties, impact to sightlines from installation of breakwaters, impact to kayaking and other boating from breakwaters and fill and impact to wildlife and habitat. First Nations consultation is considered complete with no concerns raised.
- Legal Information

Legal Applicant was instructed on January 30, 2024 to obtain letters of consent from the five potentially impacted upland property owners. Approval will be conditional on consent letters from the property owners with riparian rights.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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Issue: City of Williams Lake Mechanical Weed Harvester

Recommend Response:

- The City has applied for another Section 11, *Water Sustainability Act* authorization for mechanical weed harvesting to remove natural weeds from the foreshore of Williams Lake after their two-year permit issued in 2020 expired.
- In consideration of the sensitive habitat around Scout Island, the species at risk present in the proposed area, and opposition and concern from First Nations, WLRS staff have requested updated information be submitted.
- Once updated information has been received, staff will complete First Nations consultation and move the file to decision.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Qualified Professional studies the city is currently relying on are dated 2020 and do not adequately address invasive species mitigation. The Statutory Decision Maker has requested up to date information.

Key Facts:

- City of Williams Lake applied for and were granted a two-year conditional *Water Sustainability Act (WSA)* Section 11 Changes In and About a Stream authorization to perform mechanical removal of native weeds near Scout Island in Williams Lake in 2020 to 2021 (over two seasons).
- During the course of consideration, an Impact Assessment and Environmental Management plan, both prepared by a Qualified Professional (QP), were submitted in support of the application for consideration; a common practice for WSA authorizations.
- The Statutory Decision Maker made their 2020 approval conditional on mitigations aimed to reduce potential impacts to sensitive wetland habitat and terrestrial and aquatic species including Species at Risk (red listed White Sturgeon and blue listed Western Painted Turtles) while respecting Williams Lake First Nation interests and concerns.
- On June 5, 2023, the City of Williams Lake applied for another *WSA* authorization to harvest native weeds over the same footprint as was applied for in 2020.

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- Intergovernmental Communications

- On November 8, 2023, the Statutory Decision Maker determined that an update to the 2020 information was required to further consider the latest application. The requirement was relayed to the city's staff.
- Water Authorizations staff have not received further report submissions or direct correspondence from the City of Williams Lake regarding the request since November 8, 2023.
- Intergovernmental Communications

- On February 1, 2024, City of Williams Lake Counsellor, Scott Nelson conducted an interview with CBC alleging the Ministry of "moving the goal posts" and stated that "the City has full support of First Nations".

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:

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