ESTIMATES BINDER
FOR MINISTER RANDENE NEILL
APRIL 2025

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Issue: **Budget 2025 Summary**

Recommended Response:

- The 2025/26 estimates budget is $221.318M, representing an increase of $7.051M compared to the original 2024/25 estimates of $214.267M.

- The 2024/25 restated estimates of $219.449M represents an increase of $5.182M for Inter-Ministry Transfers:

  - $5.086M - Budget Realignments due to restructuring and Budget Transfer for fleet inventory from the Ministry of Forests.
  - $0.096M - Budget Transfer for fleet inventory from the Ministry of Environment and Parks.

- The 2025/26 estimates budget is an increase of $1.869M, or 0.85 percent, compared to the restated 2024/25 estimates of $219.449M.

- Base Budget Lifts of $1.869M include:
  - $0.103M – Base Budget adjustment for WLRS Minister's Office.
  - $1.766M – Shared Recovery Mandate lifts

Key Facts:

Budget 2025 Summary Per Divisions

The 2024/25 Estimates (Restated) column reflect changes in WLRS' core businesses and associated budgets.

	2024/25 Estimates (Original) ($M)	2024/25 Estimates (Restated) ($M)	2025/26 Estimates ($M)	Variance ($M)
Ministry Operations by Core Business				
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects	58.428	39.724	39.917	0.193
Resource Stewardship	41.365	37.547	37.761	0.214
Water, Fisheries and Coast	14.244	22.460	22.608	0.148
Natural Resource Information and Digital Services	28.803	29.716	30.134	0.418
Reconciliation, Lands and Natural Resource Policy	11.610	14.874	14.964	0.090
Permitting Transformation	29.516	44.523	44.913	0.390
Executive and Support Services	29.801	30.105	30.521	0.416
Crown Land Special Account	0.500	0.500	0.500	-
Total Ministry Operations	**214.267**	**219.449**	**221.318**	**1.869**
April 2024 Plan	**214.267**	**214.267**	**214.267**	**-**
Total Inter-Ministry Transfers		5.182	5.182	-
Total Base Budget Lifts		-	1.869	1.869
February 2025 Plan	**214.267**	**219.449**	**221.318**	**1.869**
Percentage Change				**0.85%**

Date Prepared/Revised: February 18, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Sonja Martins, ADM/EFO — Phone: (250) 889-1774

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Tamra McQuitty, CFO — Phone: (250) 882-4429

Issue: Budget Transfer Summary: Between Ministry of Forest, Ministry of Environment and Parks and Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Recommend Response:

Budget Realignments due to Restructuring

- On October 19, 2023, an Order in Council was issued for the rebalancing between the Ministry of Forests (FOR) and the Ministry of Water, Land and Resouce Stewardship.

- Following the rebalancing, a comprehensive review was completed after fiscal year end 2023/2024, to identify remaining adjustments required between the ministries.

- As a result of the review, $4.771M was identified to be transferred form FOR to WLRS.

Budget Transfer for WLRS Fleet Inventory

- As part of Budget 2024, the Ministries of Forests (FOR), Water, Land and Resources Stewardship (WLRS), and Environment and Parks (ENV) were directed by Treasury Board to determine the appropriate amount of funding that should be transferred to WLRS to support 25 vehicles that were received from these ministries as part of the October 2023 OIC.

- FOR transferred $0.315M in operational budget and $0.270M of Capital Budget.

- ENV transferred $0.096M in operational budget and $0.060M of Capital Budget.

Key Facts:

Operating Budget Impacts ($M)	
FOR divisions transferred budget to WLRS (Note 1)	5.086
ENV division transferred budget to WLRS (Note 2)	0.096
Total	**5.182**
Capital Budget Impacts ($M)	
FOR divisions transferred budget to WLRS (Note 3)	0.270
ENV division transferred budget to WLRS (Note 3)	0.060
Total	**0.333**

Note 1: Details for $5.086 Operating Budget transfer from FOR to WLRS:

- $0.305M: Right sizing IM/IT Critical Maintenance Budgets
- $4.466M: Budget Realignment related to the October 2023 OIC
- $0.315M: To support the creation of the WLRS Fleet as per Budget 2024 direction

Note 2: Details for $0.096M Operating Budget transfer from ENV to WLRS:

- $0.096M: To support the creation of the WLRS Fleet as per Budget 2024 direction

Note 3: Details for $0.333M Capital Budget transfer:

- $0.270M: To support the creation of the WLRS Fleet as per Budget 2024 direction from FOR to WLRS
- $0.060M: To support the creation of the WLRS Fleet as per Budget 2024 direction from ENV to WLRS

Date Prepared/Revised: February 18, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Sonja Martins, ADM/EFO Phone: (250) 889-1774

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Tamra McQuitty, CFO Phone: (250) 882-4429

Issue: Minister's Office Budget

Recommend Response:

- For FY 2025/26, the Minister's Office budget is $979,000.
- The increase of $103,000 over FY 2024/25 includes:
  - $103,000 – Budget Adjustment from Premier's Office
- The Salary and Benefits budget of $819,000 supports 8 FTEs:

Positions	2025/26 Estimates	Name
Minister	1	Honourable Randene Neill
Chief of Staff	1	Seamus Wolfe
Ministerial Advisor	3	Lisa Dekleer; Jordan Van Schaik; Marshall Scott-Bigsby
Executive Assistant	1	Erin Osbourne
Administrative Coordinator	1	Hailey Walters
Administrative Assistant	1	Isabella Lindsey
Ministers Office Total	**8**	

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Key Facts:

- $74,000 – Lift to Salary and Benefits Budget
- $29,000 – Lift to Operating Budget

STOB	STOB Description	2024/25 Estimates Restated	2025/26 Estimates	2026/27 Estimates	2027/28 Estimates	Variance
50EA	Base Salaries	490,000	587,000	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information		97,000
5298	Employee Benefits	124,000	148,000			24,000
52EA	Legislative Salaries - Indemnities	38,000	24,000			- 14,000
54EA	Legislative Salaries	93,000	60,000			- 33,000
Salary and Benefits Sub-total		**745,000**	**819,000**			**74,000**
57EA	Public Service Travel Expenses	71,000	100,000			29,000
63EA	Information Systems - Operating	12,000	12,000			-
65EA	Office and Business Exenses	17,000	17,000			-
82EA	Legislative Assembly	15,000	15,000			-
85EA	Other Expenses	16,000	16,000			-
Operating Sub-total		**131,000**	**160,000**			**29,000**
Total		**876,000**	**979,000**			**103,000**

Date Prepared/Revised: February 13, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Sonja Martins, ADM/EFO Phone: (250) 889-1774

Program Contact for Issue:
Name: Tamra McQuitty, CFO Phone: (250) 882-4429

MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

Vote 46: Ministry Operations

DRAFT

February 18, 2025

MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP
2025/26 Budget Highlights

OPERATING BUDGET: $221.318M (Increase of $1.869M, or 0.85%, from 2024/25 Restated)

Budget Lifts: $1.869M

WLRS Minister Office Budget Lift	$0.103M
Shared Recovery Wage Mandate	$1.766M

Inter-Ministry Program Transfers: $5.182M

1. Budget Realignments to create the WLRS Fleet

From Ministry of Forest	$0.315M
From Ministry of Environment and Parks	$0.096M

2. Other Budget Realignments

From Ministry of Forest	$4.771M

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

CAPITAL BUDGET: $0.333M

1. Budget 2025 provides $0.333M as recurring CRF capital funding.

Office Furniture and Equipment	$0.003M
Fleet Replacement	$0.330M

FTEs/ STAFFING:

FTEs - 2,314 Approved

1. Budget 2024 included funding for 2,250 FTEs.
2. Budget 2025 adds 64 FTEs as part of the Budget Realignments from FOR

Staffing

1. As of February 1, 2025, the WLRS Headcount is 2,357, with 2,253 Active and 104 On Leave

MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP
2025/26 Budget Briefing
THREE YEAR BUDGET CHANGES FROM FEBRUARY 2025 PLAN
OPERATING ($Ms)

		2024/25 Estimates	2025/26 Estimates	2026/27 Plan	2027/28 Plan
A	**April 2024 Plan**				
	Vote 46 - Ministry Operations	214.267	214.267	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
	Total April 2024 Plan	**214.267**	**214.267**		
	Year-to-year change in 2024/25 Service Plan (See Key Facts - Budget Summary)	**-**	**-**		
B	**Inter-Ministry Transfers**				
	Budget Realignment - from Ministry of Forest	5.086	5.086		
	Budget Realignment - From Ministry of Environment and Parks	0.096	0.096		
	Total Inter-Ministry Transfers	**5.182**	**5.182**		
C	**Base Budget Lifts (Reductions)**				
	WLRS Minister Office Budget Lift	-	0.103		
	Shared Recovery Wage Mandate	-	1.766		
	Total Base Budget Lifts (Reductions)	**-**	**1.869**		
	Total Transfers and Adjustments	5.182	7.051		
	Year-to-year change in 2024/25 Service Plan	**5.182**	**7.051**		
		2.42%	**3.29%**		

		2024/25 Restated Estimates	2025/26 Estimates	2026/27 Plan	2027/28 Plan
D	**February 2025 Plan**				
	Vote 46 - Ministry Operations	219.449	**221.318**	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
	Total February 2025 Plan	219.449	**221.318**		
	Year-to-year change in 2025/26 Service Plan		**1.869**	-	-
			0.85%	-	-
	Year-to-year change from April 2024 Plan to February 2025 Plan		**7.051**	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
			3.29%		

MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP
2025/26 Budget Briefing
THREE YEAR BUDGET CHANGES FROM FEBRUARY 2025 PLAN

Inter-Ministry Transfers ($Ms)

Inter-Ministry Transfers	2024/25 Restated Estimates	2025/26 Estimate	E-Form#	Note
	0.096	0.096	T004165	*To support the creation of the WLRS Fleet as per Budget 2024 direction*
Budget Realignment - from ENV	0.096	0.096		
	0.315	0.315	T004166	*To support the creation of the WLRS Fleet as per Budget 2024 direction*
	0.397	0.397	T004167	*Additional positions related to Budget Realignments due to restructuring between FOR/WLRS*
	0.305	0.305	T004168	*Right sizing IM/IT Critical Maintenance Budgets due to restructuring between FOR/WLRS*
	0.512	0.512	T004169	*Overhead for additional positions related to Budget Realignments due to restructuring between FOR/WLRS*
	3.557	3.557	T004170	*Additional positions related to Budget Realignments due to restructuring between FOR/WLRS*
Budget Realignment - from FOR	5.086	5.086		
Total Inter-Ministry Transfers	**5.182**	**5.182**		

MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP
2025/26 Budget Briefing
THREE YEAR BUDGET CHANGES FROM FEBRUARY 20245PLAN
CAPITAL ($Ms)

		2024/25 Estimates	2025/26 Estimates	2026/27 Plan	2027/28 Plan
A	**April 2024 Plan**				
	Vote 46 - Ministry Operations	0.003	0.003	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
	Total April 2024 Plan	**0.003**	**0.003**		
	Year-to-year change in 2024/25 Service Plan	**-**	**-**		
B	**Inter-Ministry Transfers**				
	Budget Realignment - From Ministry of Forests	-	**0.270**		
	Budget Realignment - From Ministry of Environment and Parks	-	**0.060**		
	Total Inter-Ministry Transfers	**-**	**0.330**		
	Year-to-year change in 2025/26 Service Plan	**-**	**0.330**		
		-	**11,000.00%**		

		2024/25 Restated Estimates	2025/26 Estimates	2026/27 Plan	2027/28 Plan
D	**February 2025 Plan**				
	Vote 46 - Ministry Operations	0.003	**0.333**	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
	Total February 2025 Plan	0.003	**0.333**		
	Year-to-year change in 2025/26 Service Plan		**0.330**	-	-
			11,000.00%	-	-
	Year-to-year change from April 2024 Plan to February 2025 Plan		**0.330**	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
			11,000.00%		

MINISTRY OF WATER, LAND AND RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP
2025/26 Budget Briefing
Budget 2025 Summary ($M)

	2024/25 Estimates (Original) ($M)	2024/25 Estimates (Restated) ($M)	2025/26 Estimates ($M)	Variance ($M)
Ministry Operations by Core Business				
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects	58.428	39.724	39.917	0.193
Resource Stewardship	41.365	37.547	37.761	0.214
Water, Fisheries and Coast	14.244	22.460	22.608	0.148
Natural Resource Information and Digital Services	28.803	29.716	30.134	0.418
Reconciliation, Lands and Natural Resource Policy	11.610	14.874	14.964	0.090
Permitting Transformation	29.516	44.523	44.913	0.390
Executive and Support Services	29.801	30.105	30.521	0.416
Crown Land Special Account	0.500	0.500	0.500	-
Total Ministry Operations	**214.267**	**219.449**	**221.318**	**1.869**
April 2024 Plan	**214.267**	**214.267**	**214.267**	**-**
Total Inter-Ministry Transfers		5.182	5.182	-
Total Base Budget Lifts		-	1.869	1.869
February 2025 Plan	**214.267**	**219.449**	**221.318**	**1.869**
Percentage Change				**0.85%**

	2024/25 Estimates (Original) ($M)	FOR/WLRS Rebalancing ($M)	WLRS Fleet ($M)	IMIT Rebalancing ($M)	STOB Neutral Adjustment ($M)	2024/25 Estimates (Restated) ($M)	Shared Recovery Mandate ($M)	Minister Office Uplift ($M)	Historical Estimates Shift ($M)	2025/26 Estimates ($M)
Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects	58.428	0.029			(18.733)	39.724	0.189		0.004	39.917
Resource Stewardship	41.365	(0.475)			(3.343)	37.547	0.221		(0.007)	37.761
Water, Fisheries and Coast	14.244	0.233			7.983	22.460	0.144		0.004	22.608
Natural Resource Information and Digital Services	28.803	0.298			0.615	29.716	0.425		(0.007)	30.134
Reconciliation, Lands and Natural Resource Policy	11.610	1.611			1.653	14.874	0.088		0.002	14.964
Permitting Transformation	29.516	1.951			13.056	44.523	0.386		0.004	44.913
Executive and Support Services	29.801	0.819	0.411	0.305	(1.231)	30.105	0.313	0.103		30.521
Crown Land Special Account	0.500				-	0.500		-	-	0.500
Total Base Budget	**214.267**	**4.466**	**0.411**	**0.305**	**-**	**219.449**	**1.766**	**0.103**	**-**	**221.318**

Issue: Budget 2025 Revenue

Recommend Response:

The 2025/26 WLRS Revenue is forecast to be $613.000M and includes revenues from: Water Resources, *Wildlife Act* fees and licences, and Crown Land Real Estate Earnings.

Other Natural Resources Revenue

Water Resources revenue for FY2025/26 shows increased revenue expectations as drought conditions decrease across the province.

- 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.
- 100 percent of net angling revenue is allocated to Freshwater Fisheries Society BC annually.

Crown Land Revenue

- Crown Land revenue categories include tenures, land sales and royalties and other interest and other income.
- Crown land revenue is generated from all regions within the province.
- 2025/26 Crown Land revenue shows an increase due to the Surplus Property Program (SPP) shifting sales from 2024/25 to 2025/26.

Key Facts:

- **Total Ministry Revenue** as from the 2025/2026 Budget Forecast by major category is $613.000M in 2025/26; Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information in 2026/27; and Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information in 2027/28.
- The "Other Natural Resources" category aligns with the corresponding row in Table A9 of the 2025/26 Budget and Fiscal Plan.
- 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.

TOTAL REVENUE ($, Millions)

Ministry Revenue Category	2024/25 Revised Forecast	2025/26 Budget Forecast	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target
Other Natural Resources Revenue	456	513	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
Crown Land	76	100		
Other CRF Revenue	1	1		
Total Ministry Revenue	**533**	**613**		

OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES REVENUE ($, Millions)

Ministry Revenue Category	2024/25 Revised Forecast	2025/26 Budget Forecast	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target
Water Resources	383	443	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
Water Recoveries	50	50		
Wildlife Act Fees & Licenses	10	10		
Fish and Wildlife Recoveries	13	10		
Other Natural Resources Revenue	**456**	**513**		

CROWN LAND REVENUE ($, Millions)

Ministry Revenue Category	2024/25 Revised Forecast	2025/26 Budget Forecast	2026/27 Target	2027/28 Target
Land Tenure	57	55	Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information	
Net Land Sales	4	9		
Net SPP Sales	(0)	18		
Land Royalties	14	17		
Interest and Other Income	2	1		
Total	**76**	**100**		

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

*Note: totals may not add up due to rounding

Date Updated: April 02, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: Sonja Martins, ADM/EFO	Phone: 250 889-1774
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Trevor Miller, Director, Revenue	Phone: 778-698-9496

WLRS Approvals – Information for the Deputy Minister

The only approvals received so far are 12 positions that were active requisitions in February.

- Financial position – position funding is recoverable – submits financial recoveries for emergency/safety activities for the sector
- Land and Resource Specialist – supports Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums
- Dam Safety positions x2
- Aquatic Ecosystem – funding recovered from DFAA
- IT positions – mostly supporting BCWS activities
- Geospatial Analyst – supports permitting

Positions that the Deputy Minister has approved to be submitted:

- Fish & Wildlife Tech positions – auxiliaries
- Dam Safety positions x5
- Policy Analyst supporting Land Act tenures in title areas supporting resolution with title holders and 3rd parties
- Biologist auxiliary position – funding is recovered from DFO
- Front counter positions supporting permitting x2
- Director – statutory decision maker for the Water Sustainability Act
- Radio Communications supporting BCWS
- Director, Finance – reporting, forecasting for AF & ENV

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Withheld pursuant to/removed as

Advice/Recommendations

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Withheld pursuant to/removed as

Advice/Recommendations

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Issue: Modern Land Use Planning (Provincial Overall – explaining the program approach)

Recommend Response:

- WLRS has been mandated to "continue land use planning with First Nations, industry, and local communities".
- 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.
- LUP provides a pathway to balancing our shared values by increasing economic predictability for natural resource sectors, addressing critical mineral interests in key areas, reaching BC's commitments to achieving 30 percent protection of public lands by 2030 and advancing reconciliation through the 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 15 projects throughout the province.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The LUP program is collaborating with the Forest Landscape Planning and Water Sustainability Planning program to ensure the provincial approach to strategic and operational planning is aligned/coordinated.
- First Nations in some areas have declared Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA's) within their territories that are an

expression of their vision for the use of the land that can include a wide variety of management objectives.

- Addressing IPCA proposals is best managed through publicly involved land use planning projects that are conducted in partnership with First Nations, and those projects should occur where there are land use conflicts or where new land use objectives are needed.

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 Mining and Critical Minerals.
- Capacity funding is sought annually from the Indigenous Funding Program to support First Nations participation in LUP (Avg. $1.3M annually).
- Other funding mechanisms including those flowing from the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation and Conservation Finance Mechanism may assist in advancing conservation commitments through LUP.
- Projects that are advancing through the four stages of the planning process include:
- Plan Implementation: Namgis-BC: Gwani Project. An implementation plan is developed at this stage and includes implementation of legal tools used to give effect to the LUP, a communication plan, monitoring, governance structures, and a financial plan.
- Plan Development: Northwest (Tahltan-B.C. LUP; Gitanyow-Nisga'a-B.C.: Meziadin Salmon Habitat Plan; Kaska-B.C. LUP; Taku River Tlingit-B.C.: Taku River Watershed Plan) Shishalh- BC LUP on the coast and Northeast (Doig River-BC LUP; Blueberry River-BC Water Management Basin Plan; Halfway River-BC Adaptive Management Plan; Liard-BC LUP). Plan Development will involve:
    - Explore new combinations of land use zones, objectives, and associated impacts including the identification of candidate conservation areas.
    - Explore the need for interim management measures such as and No Registration Reserves and other legal tools that may be used to limit sector activities such as mineral claims in areas with low mineral potential to enable greater predictability and development opportunities in areas with high mineral potential.

- Work with First Nations partners to develop and deliver a strategy for engagement with stakeholders, local government, and the public.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: David Muter, Assistant Deputy Minister, LUPCE Phone: 250-217-5385

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Tricia Morris, Director, Land Use Planning Phone: 778-698-9348

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: March 27, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**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 interim measures in the Gitxaała 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 <u>not</u> 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*.**

- **Our government is firmly committed to implementing the *Mineral Tenure Act* 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 *Mineral Tenure Act* while maintaining a vibrant mineral exploration and mining sector that continues to contribute to reconciliation and economic prosperity for everyone.**

If needed:

- **The *Environment and Land Use Act* was enacted in 1971. Over the course of 54 years, orders have been made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Environment and Land Use Committee, 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 *Environment and Land Use Act* to restrict mineral and coal activities in the Klappan River area in the Northwest.**

- **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 Sliammon Forest Area unless the forest agreement was entered into with the Sliammon First Nation (now Tla'amin) or its representative. That order was enacted for a period of five years.**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

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 Gitxaała 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.

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 Gitxaała 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.

Advice/Recommendations

BACKGROUND

In September 2023, the B.C. Supreme Court declared that the provincial Crown's conduct in establishing an online system that allows for the automatic registration of mineral claims (without creating a system for consultation) breaches the constitutional obligation that the Crown has to consult with First Nations. Justice Ross gave the Province 18 months to make changes to the registration system 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.

The *Environment and Land Use Act* 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 provides LGIC with the flexibility to respond to new and emerging issues quickly.

In the current context, the September 2023 Gitxaała 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 modify the design of the mineral claim registration system 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 Gitxaała and Ehattesaht territory, which would continue to impact their rights until broader legislative changes could take place.

The *Environment and Land Use Act* orders (OICs) that were enacted to defer mining activities on Gitxaała and Ehattesaht territory will support the Province time and space to advance its commitments to reconciliation with the Gitxaała 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 *Environment and Land Use Act* was enacted in 1971. Over the course of 54 years, orders have been made by LGIC, on the recommendation of 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)

Communications contact	Thomas Winterhoff, Sr. PAO, GCPE WLRS	778 679-5541
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File created	March 18, 2024	
File updated	March 27, 2025	

Issue: Northwest Interim Measures and Land Use Planning

Recommend Response:

- The Ministry, along with the Ministry of Mining and Critical Minerals has been mandated "to enable mining exploration and development in British Columbia's northwest in partnership with First Nations in a manner that helps achieve our Provincial commitment to protect 30% of lands and waters by 2030 and creates economic growth and opportunity in the region".
- Ministry staff have been engaged with Tahltan, Taku River Tlingit, Kaska, Gitanyow and Nisga'a First Nations in preparation for upcoming LUP projects spanning 16M ha in Northwest BC.
- Through Land Use Planning, these Nations, along with providing certainty for the mining and exploration sector, are seeking to establish new conservation areas over approximately a third of the area to protect important cultural and ecological landscapes.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Nations have requested that Interim Measures (IMs) be implemented as a temporary measure that will prevent further mineral and placer staking in these areas while the planning projects are underway.
- Government is currently in the process of engaging with the mining sector and with First Nations to determine the best approach forward.

- The northwest LUP area includes the 'Golden Triangle' and other areas of high critical mineral interest and potential, and BC is experiencing a generational opportunity to strengthen the critical minerals (CM) sector, access global markets and secure new jobs. This can only be done if there is clarity on where development can happen and where conservation is needed.

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.
- The annual $7.8M 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 Mining and Critical Minerals.
- IMs for the four NW LUP projects would limit the registration of new mineral, coal and/or placer claims in specified areas. They would be implemented either through a No Registration Reserve (by the Chief Gold Commissioner) under the *Mineral Tenure Act* for smaller targeted areas or through an *Environment and Land Use Act* (ELUA) order under the E*nvironment and Land Use Act* for larger areas.
- As planning projects mature beyond the scoping phase, engagement with affected groups and stakeholders will commence through the formal planning processes. Public engagement will ensure that all affected land users understand and support planning options. Public engagement will be a primary focus of LUP work in the coming year.

February 14, 2024/Revised: April 1, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
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Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Brian Kolman — Phone:

Government Financial Information

Issue: Approach to 30 Percent Conservation by 2030

Recommend Response:

- BC's ongoing commitment to protecting 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030 (30 x 30) reflects the importance of conserving biodiversity and ecosystem health for community well-being, climate change mitigation, and economic stability.
- My mandate letter directs me to work with the Minister of Mining and Critical Minerals to achieve 30 x 30, reflecting the economic challenges BC is facing. The Province will achieve 30 x 30 in a manner that creates economic growth and opportunity.
- Conservation efforts are best advanced through publicly involved land use planning processes that consider environmental, economic, and cultural values. Land use plans in the Northwest, for example, will be foundational to achieving 30 x 30 and will also result in significant economic opportunities for First Nations, industry, and the Province.
- The Province is advancing other important conservation initiatives that will enhance the quality of BC's conservation network and improve climate change resiliency, including advancing the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework and recognizing ecological corridors.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Land use planning is intended to be used in areas where new land use objectives are needed.
- In these areas, the modernized land use planning process will reduce natural resource utilization conflicts and will create improved economic certainty and investment.
- Planning scenarios can result in a shift in the economies in these areas, both positively and negatively.

Detailed socio-economic analysis is done to understand those shifts and to support decision-making.

- Engagement and collaboration are key to this work. The goal of modernized land use planning is to work in partnership with First Nations in a way that also includes meaningful engagement with stakeholders, including local governments, industry, non-government organization, and the public.

Key Facts:

- There is scientific consensus that a minimum of 30 percent protection of lands and waters is required to address the dual biodiversity and climate change crises.
- Formal adoption of 30 x 30 was made at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal in December 2022.
- Areas that can count towards 30 percent must follow international guidelines and fall into two categories:
    - Parks and protected areas – geographically defined areas that are established specifically to provide biodiversity conservation.
    - Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) – geographically defined areas that are not specifically established to provide biodiversity conservation but are managed such that conservation is achieved.
- Aspects of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) are expected to contribute to the 30 percent target once government-to-government planning processes are completed and new land use plans are established. In some cases, IPCAs may contain areas or zones where some level of economic development may occur that would not meet international standards for biodiversity conservation. In these cases, only the areas within an IPCA that provide effective biodiversity conservation would count towards the 30 percent target.
- As of 2023, BC conserved 18.5 million hectares, or 19.7 percent of the land base. This includes 15.6 percent in protected areas and 4.1 percent in OECMs.
- Total additions in 2024 are still being tallied, but it is expected that more than 250,000 hectares were protected or conserved across the province, bringing us to at least 20 percent.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 13, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: David Muter Phone: 250-217-5385

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Heather Wiebe Phone: 778-916-4005

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KEY MESSAGES AND Q&A (KMQA)

Title: "30x30" goal for nature protection
Date: March 19, 2025

Context: In December 2022, the B.C. government committed to protecting 30% of land and water in B.C. by 2030 ("30x30") and it has undertaken a variety of initiatives to help meet that goal. The Province's pledge aligns with a similar federal government commitment to the 30x30 goal.

On March 19, 2025, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) released a nationwide progress report that includes an assessment of how each province and territory is doing "on Canada's commitment to and action on effectively protecting 30% of land, freshwater and ocean by 2030".

Messaging specifically about the March 2025 CPAWS report

- We appreciate all the work that the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society does throughout Canada to advocate for better protection of nature and wilderness.
- We're pleased to see that the progress British Columbia has made to date is recognized in this report, improving from a "C" grade to a "B" grade "thanks to the incredible commitments that the Province has made to conservation".
- This commitment includes our work with the federal government and First Nations to expand B.C.'s protected and conserved areas. More than 250,000 hectares were added in 2024, including a major expansion of Klinse-za/Twin Sisters Park and the establishment of 10 new conservancies in Clayoquot Sound in partnership with Ahousaht and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations.
- We have also worked with Parks Canada toward creating a national park reserve in the south Okanagan.
- We take CPAWS' recommendations seriously, and we will continue to take a cross-government approach as we work to meet our 30x30 commitments.

General key messaging about the 30x30 goal

- British Columbia has the greatest diversity of species, ecosystems, and habitats of any of Canada's provinces or territories.
- Nature is one of our greatest allies in mitigating and adapting to a changing climate, supporting healthy communities, and ensuring a prosperous economy.
- Nature provides clean water and air, resilience to catastrophic weather and fires, access to sustenance for First Nations, and opportunities to enhance people's physical and mental well-being.
- Our government has committed to protecting 30% of the provincial land base by 2030 — often referred to as "30 x 30". These lands will provide opportunity for future generations to make natural resource decisions to support their livelihoods.
- We recognize that sustainable resource development and long-term prosperity for British Columbians cannot be a trade-off between the environment and the economy.
- Choosing between growing the economy and protecting the environment is a "false choice". We can — and we **must** — do both.
- Much of this work begins with government-to-government partnerships with First Nations through effective land use planning, but it does not end there.
- 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.
- Responsible land use planning that benefits all British Columbians needs to reflect the interests of our communities and provide greater clarity for industry leaders and others contemplating decisions about investment and development in this province.
- We use land use planning to identify areas of the province that are suitable for economic development and other areas where we can focus on nature conservation.
- Our land use planning processes are inclusive, meaning that industry, local governments, communities, environmental organizations, and other stakeholders are engaged in planning processes.
- Ultimately, the provincial government will make the final decisions on land use planning.

- B.C. has been a leader in conservation for decades and was among the first provinces and territories to adopt and meet previous conservation targets of 12% and 17%.
- The Province's commitment to 30x30 is closely tied to work done by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at the 15th United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal in December 2022.
- B.C. will continue to be guided by international advice to achieve the 30x30 goal.
- This work is being done in partnership with First Nations and Treaty Nations. Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) will be an important contributor to our 30x30 success.
- Other B.C. government initiatives that contribute to habitat and ecosystem protection include:
    - B.C. Conservation Fund;
    - Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation;
    - Government Action Regulations;
    - Great Bear Sea Project Finance for Permanence (PFP);
    - development of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework;
    - Together for Wildlife strategy;
    - Coastal Marine Strategy;
    - Modernized Land Use Planning;
    - Old Growth Action Plan;
    - a review of the provincial *Wildlife Act*;
    - co-development of a Watershed Security Strategy; and
    - investments in mitigating flood risks and drought impacts.

Q&A:

What does 30% mean in terms of the actual amount of land?

- About 18.5 million hectares of protected and conserved areas in B.C. have been protected, which is about 19.7% of B.C.'s total land area.
- Of that 19.7%, about 15.6% is conserved in parks and protected areas and 4.1% is conserved as other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs).
- To reach the 30% target, an estimated 9.9 million hectares (10.3% of B.C.'s land base will also need to be identified and protected or conserved.

How is land use planning helping the Province reach its 30x30 goal?

- Our government has a mandate to modernize land use planning in B.C.
- Some existing land use plans were developed in the 1990s and early 2000s. In some cases, they were done without First Nations involvement and do not reflect current resource stewardship priorities and challenges.
- Land use planning includes finding durable solutions that address collective goals for sustainable resource industries, conserve important natural values, and ensure that provincial and First Nation governments are aligned on land use direction.
- Key stages of land use planning include:
  - working with First Nations to identify current issues and values on the landbase;
  - developing potential land use scenarios; and
  - seeking feedback and ideas on land use scenarios from industry, local communities, interested parties and the public.
- As land use plans reach the phase where the Province will engage with the public to seek their feedback, the plans will be listed on our land use planning website: https://landuseplanning.gov.bc.ca/

Are you choosing conservation and the 30x30 goal over rural jobs and the natural source sector?

- No. British Columbia is well-positioned to lead in sustainable forestry practices, achieve our Critical Mineral Strategy, and support a strong outdoor adventure tourism industry.
- Nature conservation and a strong economy are not mutually exclusive. Land use planning is about identifying and directing land uses that achieve both our nature conservation goals and our economic goals.
- A sustainable natural resource economy provides good, family-supporting jobs for British Columbians now and for generations to come.
- Land use plans provide long-term clarity for industry for improved investment decisions and efficiency. It also takes into consideration important natural values and the impacts of climate change.

Does the Province count other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) towards the 30x30 goal?

- The main difference between OECMs and protected areas is the primary land use objective the area.
- Protected areas have conservation as their land use objective. OECMs have other land use objectives but still achieve effective conservation.
- The important contribution that OECMs make to conserving biodiversity and achieving the 30x30 goal has been recognized internationally.
- OECMs that count towards the 30x30 goal must follow international and national guidance. B.C.'s reported OECMs were assessed prior to the release of this guidance. Reporting of new OECMs is on pause while a new provincial policy and reporting approach that reflects this guidance is under development.
- The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society has questioned B.C.'s accounting of OECMs, citing that some reported OECMs fall short of international standards. This is being examined in the ministry's current work on OECM policy.

What can you tell me about Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)?

- We respect and acknowledge the efforts of First Nations to protect ecosystems within their territories and to care for the water, land, animals, and other natural resources that their communities have relied on since time immemorial.
- Our preferred approach regarding Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas is to work in government-to-government collaborative processes like modernized land use planning, collaborative stewardship tables, and Guardian programs.
- This ensures that:
  - economic, environmental, social, and cultural values are considered;
  - collaborative processes can be built with First Nations; and
  - robust engagement can be undertaken with stakeholders, local government, and the public.
- Our government welcomes the opportunity to work with First Nations to better understand and share our perspectives and to jointly develop approaches to land stewardship.

How could work towards achieving the 30x30 goal impact existing land tenures, including forestry, mining and exploration tenures?

- When land use plans identify future land use scenarios, those scenarios are subject to a robust socio-economic analysis.
- This analysis is shared through the public engagement phases of land use planning, which allows all parties to understand the likely impacts of any changes in land use direction.
- These impacts can be both positive and negative.
- For example, an area may no longer be available for one kind of resource industry under a new land use plan, but it may be available for another use.
- Furthermore, improved clarity about where industry can operate can result in simpler permit processes, clearer opportunities for investments, and greater certainty that the area will provide longer-term resource economic opportunities and benefits.

Issue: Other Effective Conservation Measures

Recommend Response:

- Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are areas where conservation occurs in harmony with use. These areas are not traditional protected areas where the perception is preservation.
- OECMs play a critical role in conserving biodiversity and are expected to contribute to BC's commitment to protect and conserve 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030 (30 x 30).
- BC is developing an approach to recognizing and reporting OECMs in BC that acknowledges the existing economic and land use context and our commitment to reconciliation while still following international conservation guidelines.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- OECMs offer the opportunity to recognize when effective conservation occurs on lands that are managed for a wider variety of land use objectives.
- This aligns with my ministry's mandate letter direction to advance conservation and support a diversified economic strategy.

Key Facts:

- OECMs are one of two internationally recognized categories of land use that can count towards 30 percent conservation. Protected areas is the other category.
    - Protected areas are geographically defined areas that are specifically established to provide biodiversity conservation.
    - OECMs are geographically defined areas that are not specifically established to provide biodiversity conservation, but are managed such that conservation is achieved.
- OECMs were first recognized by the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010 and were formally defined by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2018 as:

    Geographically defined areas other than Protected Areas, which are governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-

term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio–economic, and other locally relevant values.

- BC has reported 4.1 percent of lands and waters as OECMs, and 15.6 percent as protected areas.
- Environmental non-governmental organizations, including Ecojustice and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) have been critical of BC's OECM accounting, citing that some reported areas fall short of international OECM standards.
- This criticism is being examined as part of the policy work to develop a provincial approach to assessing and reporting OECMs.
- International guidance on recognizing OECMs calls for mechanisms to be in place that that prevent or control activities that negatively impact biodiversity.
- Because of the complexity of BC's land use designations, there is not a straightforward way for BC to prevent or control all activities that negatively impact biodiversity outside of protected areas legislation. This creates a challenge for recognizing and reporting OECMs that current policy work is seeking to address.
- Reporting of new OECMs is on pause while the provincial policy and reporting approach are under development.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 13, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: David Muter	Phone: 250-217-5385
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Heather Wiebe	Phone: 778-916-4005

Issue: Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA)

Recommend Response:

- 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 reflect a First Nations (FN) land use vision, they can help identify land use conflicts and help set priorities where government-to-government land use planning can occur and advance shared goals for conservation and economic stability in BC.
- 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.

If asked about socio-economic impacts

- Provincial response to each declaration is highly dependent on the context of each IPCA and each IPCA identified to proceed as collaborative land use projects must:
    - Address areas where new, shared land use objectives are needed, or where the current land use plan is out of alignment with current government and FN goals;
    - Consider how changes to land management may cause a shift in our economies in these areas, and understanding those shifts will be done through detailed socio-economic analysis; and,

- Be conducted in partnership with FN rights and title holders and include engagement with industry, stakeholders, and local communities to consider environmental, economic and reconciliation outcomes.

If asked about First Nations declarations refusing public access or legally permitted activities:

- The Province acknowledges the rights of FN to declare their rights and interests on their traditional territories; however, IPCAs do not render exclusive land ownership or jurisdiction to declaring FN outside of treaty, title or reserve lands.
- The Province must adhere to legal obligations and commitments and must balance its obligations to administrative fairness for operators/proponents as well as its consultation obligations to First Nations.
- The Province will honour all existing agreements and obligations, including permitting, tenures, contracts, and fee simple land ownership. Land use designations remain in place.

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 and Parks; Energy and Climate Solutions, Mining and Critical Ministers; Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR); and Forests will support this work.
- In 2017, Canada brought together Indigenous experts along with federal, provincial, and territorial government experts to form a committee (Indigenous Circle of Experts, or ICE) that provided the report *We Rise Together* which included 26 recommendations and advice to all governments on considering IPCAs.
- IPCAs continue to be an emerging issue in BC due to various factors including:
  - Direct federal funding to BC FN to pursue IPCAs in their territories (Attachment 1);
  - 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.
- An IPCA declaration does not alter the current legal landscape until there is an agreement through formal and transparent processes.

- The Province's response to IPCA declarations varies depending on the circumstances.
    - An IPCA may signal the FN asserted title and decision-making authority, which then may require the Province and the FN to seek better alignment on these issues through government-to-government processes, such as those led by MIRR.
    - An IPCA may be rooted more in stewardship and land use objectives or operational and local issues such as site-specific stewardship, restoration, or access, etc. In these cases, WLRS may lead a process to explore strategic land stewardship or, the Province may already be working in collaboration with the FN to address these issues.

Date Prepared/Revised: «add date»	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: David Muter	Phone: 250-217-5385
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Rhonda Cage, Director Provincial Initiatives	Phone: 778-256-3952

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Intergovernmental Communications

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: March 3, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs)**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **We respect and acknowledge the efforts of First Nations to protect ecosystems within their territories and care for the water, land, animals, and other natural resources that their communities have relied on for millennia.**

- **Shared decision-making means working in partnership with First Nations and coming to a consensus about how British Columbia's resources are managed, while honouring the commitments we made under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.**

- **Our preferred approach regarding Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas is to work in collaborative and inclusive processes like modernized land use planning, collaborative stewardship tables, and Guardian programs.**

- **This ensures that:**
  - **economic, environmental, social, and cultural values are considered;**
  - **collaborative processes can be built with First Nations; and**
  - **the approach fully involves stakeholders, local government, and the public; and**
  - **the process fully explores both conservation and economic interests, such as critical minerals, to provide certainty and deliver prosperity for all British Columbians**

- **Land use planning helps determine which types of activity could take place on the land base — and where they would be permitted — to promote ecosystem, community, and economic resiliency.**

- **Declarations do not alter the legal status of rights authorized and protected under provincial statutes and the province must adhere to legal obligations and commitments, so legally authorized activities will continue.**

- **The Province will continue to honour its consultation obligations to First Nations as well as obligations related to administrative fairness for operators and development proponents.**

- **Our government welcomes the opportunity to work with First Nations to better understand and share our perspectives and to jointly develop approaches to land stewardship.**

If asked why the Province hasn't recognized a specific IPCA:

- **We respect and acknowledge the efforts of First Nations to protect ecosystems within their territories and care for the water, land, animals and other natural resources that their communities have relied on for millennia.**

- **We understand the importance of doing this in a way that supports Indigenous laws, governance, and knowledge systems.**

- **The Province is open to working with First Nations to understand their perspectives and the values reflected by their communities.**

- **The Province recognizes that each IPCA is unique and reflective of the First Nation's perspective on land and water stewardship.**

- **How the Province responds to each declaration is highly dependent on the context of each IPCA. Some involve the Province working collaboratively with the First Nation on operational and local issues, while others may signal a need for more involved processes such as government-to-government land use planning.**

- **Collaborative planning processes ensure that:**
  - **economic, environmental, social, and cultural values are considered;**
  - **collaborative processes can be built with First Nations; and**
  - **robust engagement can be undertaken with stakeholders, local government, and the public.**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

KEY FACTS AND BACKGROUND:

Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) typically encompass lands and waters where Indigenous governments have a primary role in protecting and conserving ecosystems through Indigenous laws, governance and knowledge systems. They reflect Indigenous peoples' multi-generational perspective on resource stewardship.

Interest in Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship measures such as IPCAs has increased significantly since the 2018 *We Rise Together* report was issued by the Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE). The Province participated in the report's development as a member of ICE, along with a wide cross-section of representatives from Indigenous governments, environmental non-profit organizations, academics, and the federal government.

Dozens of IPCA proposals in various forms currently exist or are being explored by First Nations in B.C. It's expected that more First Nations are planning or preparing to declare IPCAs within their territories. Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

Although IPCAs differ in size and scope, they often include an interest in Guardian-like activities and often include Indigenous-led goals related to:

- maintaining the ecological integrity of the area
- protecting fish, wildlife, and ecosystems
- protecting cultural and archaeological sites and features, or
- protecting harvesting and hunting areas

In some cases, IPCAs have been identified in areas of shared territory between Nations. There may not be agreement amongst those Nations regarding a particular IPCA. IPCAs will not resolve these overlap issues, and further engagement between First Nations and the Province may be required to resolve differing perspectives on land use (including land use planning processes).

First Nations typically develop and declare IPCAs independently and define their desired scope and objectives. They may outline Indigenous values identified through discussions or partnerships with other orders of government and stakeholders, or they may consider other conservation and protection tools that are already in place. IPCAs can complement existing measures, align with their boundaries, and/or overlap areas already addressed by existing measures (e.g., the Marine Plan Partnership). Government funding should not be considered a government endorsement of IPCA proposals or declarations, but an opportunity for First Nations to advance the development of their IPCAs (feasibility, engagement, research, etc.).

IPCA declarations have led to uncertainty regarding public access and activities that would still be allowed on the land base. However, a declaration does not alter the current legal landscape until such time as there is an agreement through formal and transparent processes. The Province will honour all existing agreements and obligations, including permitting, tenures, contracts, and fee simple land ownership. Land use designations remain in place.

As the Province responds to these declarations, it remains committed to a collaborative approach with First Nations that is reflective of the government's obligation to public transparency.

The Province's response to IPCA declarations varies depending on the circumstances. In some cases, the IPCA may signal the First Nation's title and decision-making aspirations, which then may require the Province and the First Nation to seek better alignment on land use objectives. In other cases, the IPCA may be more about land use objectives or operational or local issues such as site-specific stewardship, restoration, access, or management. In these cases, the Province may already be working in collaboration with the First Nation to address these issues.

Examples of declared IPCAs (see more extensive list at bottom of document):

- On April 28, 2022, the Lower Similkameen Indian Band (LSIB) declared an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area in the Ashnola Watershed west of Keremeos, encompassing the entire Ashnola River watershed from its headwaters in the United States to where it joins the Lower Similkameen River. This area is now referred to by LSIB as the sməlqmíx Protected Area (sPA). Provincial funding has been provided to continue developing a shared understanding of stewardship and environmental protection interests in the area.
- In June 2022, the Kitasoo Xai Xais Nation declared a Marine Protected Area in the Kitasu Bay (Gitdisdzu Lugyeks) area of the Central Coast (on the west coast of Swindle Island), stating that the bay "and all of its lands, waters, fish, and wildlife are integral to Kitasoo Xai'xais culture and way of life." The Kitasoo Xai Xais Nation is looking to strengthen protection measures for fish resources in the area, particularly herring, salmon and groundfish.
- In November 2021, the Mamalilikulla First Nation declared part of its traditional territory on the Central Coast as an IPCA, calling for a five-year moratorium on logging and protection of a marine area called Hoeya Sill. The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship and the Ministry of Forests have entered into an agreement with Mamalilikulla First Nation to explore and implement a variety of land/sea integrated management techniques.
    - In August 2024, the Province completed an Enabling Agreement with Mamalilikulla First Nation on their IPCA – aligning with an existing terrestrial designation and marine designation. This enables comprehensive land/sea collaborative management of the area. An announcement is forthcoming on this accomplishment.

Fulfilling IPCA aspirations and Indigenous perspectives related to land and water stewardship is best accomplished through collaborative processes such as land use planning (LUP), collaborative stewardship tables, and Guardian programs. Land use planning is an inclusive and strategic process that includes exploring the interests of First Nations, local communities, industry, businesses, stakeholders and environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) and typically begins by identifying a long-term vision for stewardship.

A stewardship vision generally includes identifying where specified activities (such as resource extraction or recreational use) can occur while also ensuring that natural and cultural values are protected and conserved. Land use planning sets out management responsibilities and roles between governments and other parties and typically identifies financial implementation strategies and resources that would be required for successful stewardship outcomes. Overall, LUP helps ensure a common approach to stewardship between governments.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

Federal funding for First Nations-led conservation initiatives (announced Dec. 7, 2022): On Dec. 7, 2022, the federal government announced "$800 million over seven years, starting in 2023-24, to support up to four Indigenous-led conservation initiatives." Once completed, the four projects could help protect up to one million square kilometres and support the federal government's commitment to protecting 30% of Canada's land and waters by 2030 (as well as the Province's commitment to protecting 30% of British Columbia's land and waters by 2030). (More information: https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2022/12/07/protecting-more-nature-partnership-indigenous-peoples)

One of the four projects involves waters in the Northern Shelf Bioregion of B.C., which includes a design for a marine protected area (MPA) network. This region covers about two-thirds of the B.C. coast from the top of Vancouver Island to Alaska — an area also known as the Pacific North Coast or the Great Bear Sea. On Dec.5, 2023, the Province announced a $60-million investment in Northern Shelf Bioregion/Great Bear Sea initiatives through the Coast Conservation Endowment Fund Foundation. Contributions include $200 million from the Government of Canada, $60 million from the Province of British Columbia, and $75 million from philanthropic organizations in Canada and around the world, for a total of $335 million to go into an ongoing endowment fund.

This initiative aligns with the commitments made to work with the federal government, industry, communities, and First Nations to achieve the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, as well as the goal of protecting 30% of B.C.'s land base by 2030 (including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas).

List of Publicly Declared IPCAs – February 2025

Publicly declared IPCAs are identified below. A hyperlink to the website content is included in the status column if more information is required. (Please note that some First Nations have engaged with the Province in planning for their IPCAs.)

IPCA Name	First Nation	Status (link to website, if available)
Dasiqox-Nexwagwezʔan	Xeni Gwet'in First Nations Government, Yunesit'in Government	Declared
Dene K'éh Kusān	Kaska Dena Council	Declared
Qat'muk	Ktunaxa Nation Council	Declared
Kitasu Bay Marine Protected Area (Gitdisdzu Lugyeks)	Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation	Declared
nʔaysnúlaʔxʷ (Ashnola) IPCA/smelqmix Protected Area	Lower Similkameen Indian Band	Declared
Gwaxdlala/Nalaxdlala (Lull Bay/Hoeya Sound) IPCA	Mamalilikulla First Nation	Declared
K'ih Tsaa?dze Tribal Park	Doig River First Nation	Declared
Gwininitxw Protected Area	Gitxsan Nation - Wilps Gwininitxw	Declared
Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks (4)	Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation	Declared
Hada & Kakaweikan IPCA	Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation	Declared
Rausch Valley IPCA	Simpcw First Nation	Declared

IPCA Name	First Nation	Status (link to website, if available)
T'eqt'aqtn Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area	Kanaka Bar Indian Band	Declared
T'akú Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area	Taku River Tlingit First Nation	Declared
Ha'Ni Tokxw IPCA (Meziadin)	Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs - Wilp Wii Litsxw	Declared
Homayno IPCA	Wei Wai Kum First Nation	Declared
Salmon Parks	Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation	Declared
QEN'T Marine Protected Area	Tsawout First Nation	Declared

Media Interest: Declared IPCAs have received a moderate amount of regional media coverage in recent years. As the number of declared IPCAs increases, more media interest is expected.

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Program contacts	Rhonda Cage, Director, Provincial Stewardship Strategies and Planning, Land Use Policy, Planning, and Ecosystems Division, WLRS	778 256-3952 778 576-8941
File created	July 7, 2022	
File updated	Sept. 27, 2024	
File updated	March 3, 2025	

Issue: Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (CISF)

Recommend Response:

- The Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (CISF) represents BC's fundamental, strategic approach to regional stewardship and collaborative land and resource management between BC and partner First Nations, leading to trust and partnership in planning, permitting and resource development
- Through the establishment of solid partnerships in regions, BC is achieving its goals of regulatory certainty, streamlined permitting and First Nation support and/or participation in the resource development economy.
- CISF is a central delivery mechanism through which multiple government priorities can be efficiently delivered and/or supported, including cumulative effects assessment, value assessment and monitoring, Land Use Planning (LUP), Forest Landscape Planning (FLP), Old Growth forest management, fish and wildlife management and watershed stewardship.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- CISF delivers on Action 2.6 of the *Declaration Act* Action Plan which commits the province to "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 is achieved through collaborative stewardship Forums and requires BC to work with First Nations to develop new policies that better reflect long-term co-management of the land".
- The CISF demonstrates BC'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.
- CISF is increasingly focused on permitting efficiencies and major projects through cumulative effects assessments and Forum-generated outputs to support current WLRS and Natural Resource Sector (NRS) mandates Intergovernmental Communications

Intergovernmental Communications

- BC 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.
- Over 73 Indigenous positions are 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.

Key Facts:

- The CISF model is comprised of 15 regional Forums with 150 Nations involved. There are six Forums in the North Area, five Forums in the South Area and two Forums in the Coast Area, as well as five Forums connected to the Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP) and Great Bear Rainforest (GBR).
- The CISF is guided by a Governance Working Group Executive (GWGE) comprised of senior Nation leadership, elected and hereditary Chiefs. The GWGE advises BC on the design, implementation and strategic direction of the CISF.
- CISF received a Cabinet mandate in October 2022 after WLRS, supporting NRS agencies and partner First Nations, codeveloped a submission that included

recommendations for a long-term commitment to collaborative stewardship and co-management.

- In 2023/24, MIRR transferred $7.3M in annual funding from the Cabinet Confidences Cabinet Confidences to WLRS for the purpose of long-term base funding to the CISF program The provincial budget commitment has been leveraged to attract matching federal investment.
- Through the tri-partite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation (TFANC), Environment and Climate Change Canada and BC negotiated a long-term funding agreement for CISF for fiscal years 2023/24 to 2025/26, Government Financial Information Government Financial Information

- BC is required to match the Government Financial over the term of the Agreement. This represents a three-year partnership, that will merge into the longer-term eight-year TFANC agreement with Canada.
- CISF has provided annual capacity funding to First Nations participating in the Program since 2014. On average, Forums require a minimum investment of Government Financial annually to support Nation capacity and participation, governance, operations, Guardians, and specific resource management projects.
- Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications

References: Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications

Date Prepared/Revised: February 12, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: David Muter, ADM	Phone: 250 217-5385
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Government Financial Information ; Intergovernmental Communications

Issue: Blueberry River First Nations (BRFN) Implementation Agreement

Recommend Response:

- In January 2023, government signed the Blueberry River First Nations (BRFN) Implementation Agreement (BIA).
- The BIA 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 BIA in partnership with the natural resource sector.
- The Province is working with BRFN to reach an agreement on BRFN's civil claim on the first operational land use plan (Gundy Complex) while actively involved with BRFN on completing the Upper Halfway and Grizzly Creek operational land use plans by March 31, 2025.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The BIA and the Consensus Document are complex and include initiatives that have never been done before.
- January 2025 was the second anniversary of these historic agreements, and we know that implementation has had its challenges. We look forward to the three-year review, coming up this fall.
- 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.

Key Facts:

- Wildlife: The Wildlife Working Group (WWG) formed in 2023, remains paused at BRFN's request, with no set date for reconvening.
- Water: The BRFN Environmental Flow Needs (EFN) Framework is in its pilot phase, but a lack of strategic oversight is limiting effective coordination and delivery of Schedule P commitments. Administrative Monetary Penalties for *Water Sustainability Act* compliance issues are now active.
- Restoration: The Blueberry River Restoration Society (BRRS), created in March 2023, is collaborating with the Province to advance restoration priorities aligned with the BIA.
- Revenue Sharing: Fixed revenue-sharing payments were made to BRFN for three years, as they did not opt into the Treaty 8 formula in years two or three.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 19, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
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Alternate Contact for Issue:
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ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: November 12, 2024 Minister Responsible:	**Blueberry River First Nation (BRFN)**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **Our government is committed to taking steps to right past wrongs and uphold the constitutionally protected treaty rights of Blueberry River First Nation and all Treaty 8 First Nations in BC.**

- **That's why we signed an historic agreement with BRFN in 2023 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 – Saulteau, Doig River, Halfway River, Fort Nelson, Mcleod Lake, West Moberly and Prophet River – to protect treaty rights while supporting responsible resource development.**

- **We have made significant progress with BRFN and other Treaty 8 First Nations since signing the agreements, but there is still much work to be done.**

If asked about various legal actions:

- **We can't speak to any issues that are before the courts.**

- **That said, our preferred path is negotiation and agreement-making rather than litigation.**

BACKGROUND:

The BRFN Interim Agreement (IA) was signed in January 2023 and the Consensus Document that enabled letters of agreement with the other Treaty 8 Nations was signed shortly afterward.

These agreements were in response to the June 2021 BC Supreme Court ruling (the Yahey decision) that 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. The agreements 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.

There have been significant achievements since the agreements were signed:

- Protected more than 36-thousand hectares of land in the Gundy Complex from new oil and gas development
- Protected another 432-thousand hectares from oil and gas development in all HV1A (High Value 1-A) areas
- Paused all forestry activity in HV1
- Implemented new requirements for managing for cumulative effects
- Implemented new hunting requirements to better protect treaty rights.

The Implementation Agreement also includes Resource Review Areas (i.e., an interim pause on issuance of new petroleum and natural gas tenure for the purpose of exploration and development) covering 1,664,012.3 hectares.

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

In September 2024, BRFN Council passed a resolution to remove Chief Judy Desjarlais from office and start the process of determining a new chief. Desjarlais has filed a challenge to the decision in Federal court. As of Nov. 2024, no new chief is in place. The IA has specific roles for the Chief to fulfill certain elements, including HV1 (High Value) issue resolution.

One of the issues apparently driving the move to dismiss Desjarlais was the implementation of the Gundy High Value 1 Plan, announced on May 30, 2024.

The Gundy plan is meant to "establish and implement actions to support the restoration and ongoing practice of Blueberry's Treaty Rights and essential elements of their way of life like hunting, fishing, trapping and sacred site preservation, while enabling limited petroleum and natural gas (PNG) development under new rules and conditions. The plan provides clearer direction to petroleum and natural gas tenure holders about where they can undertake development causing new disturbance, and where there are protections."

However, BRFN has filed a notice of civil claim against the province in relation to the Gundy Plan, asserting the approval was not valid and improperly modified disturbance caps for oil and gas development. (NEED SOMETHING HERE ON CURRENT PERMITTING IN GUNDY PER DAVID'S NOTE)

ADVICE TO MINISTER

There are other legal issues at play. A petition for judicial review by Doig River First Nation claims the Province failed to adequately consult and accommodate their Nation prior to signing the BRFN IA. And NorthRiver Midstream NEBC Connector GP Inc has filed a notice of constitutional question with the Canada Energy Regulator challenging the application of provincial requirements for projects that are federally regulated.

Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

Media Interest: Significant media interest in the 2021 Yahey decision and the 2023 signing of the BRFN IA and Consensus Agreement; some coverage, particularly local/regional media in the northeast, of ongoing legal issues and BRFN governance issues in 2024.

Communications contact	Sean Leslie	250 893-4403
Program contact	Name	Number
File created	Date	
File updated	Date	

Issue: Consensus Document (Treaty 8)

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 of industrial development on treaty rights.
    - This co-developed approach was named the "Consensus Document," for six Treaty 8 Nations and the Province and the "workplan" between McLeod Lake Indian Band and the Province.
    - 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 have been 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.

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, Saulteau, and West Moberly First Nations.
- Honouring the Treaty: A working group is developing initiatives to promote Treaty 8 awareness, anti-racism, and educational signage projects.
- Restoration Efforts: Funds support healing and restoration activities across Treaty 8 territories, with substantial funding already provided to the Blueberry River Restoration Society.
- Revenue Sharing: Agreements for 2024-26 have been finalized with the Treaty 8 Nations, with commitments made on sharing PNG royalties, minimum annual payments, and additional capacity funding.
- Wildlife Management: A working group is advancing stewardship initiatives, conducting wildlife inventories, and reviewing hunting and trapping regulations.
- Land Use Planning: Collaborative efforts are creating land use plans to address cumulative effects and provide resource sector certainty, though high-conflict areas remain.
- Cumulative Effects: A Cumulative Impacts Order (effective September 1, 2024) requires decision-makers to consider and mitigate cumulative impacts, with a three-year implementation plan.
- Collaborative Stewardship Forum: A successor Regional Stewardship Forum is being developed to advance cumulative effects measures, building on the Regional Strategic Environmental Assessment (RSEA) process.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 18, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
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2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Intergovernmental Communications

Date Prepared/Revised: February 18, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: David Muter, Assistant Deputy Minister	Phone: 250-217-5385
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
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Issue: Cumulative Effects Framework

Recommend Response:

- Cumulative Effects (CE) assessments under the BC 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 BC 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) major project development and planning; (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 data and information generated under the CEF on various values have been published publicly for all eight Natural Resource Regions and many more reports are in progress.
- Ongoing development of guidance and training for decision-makers on the use of this data and information is being prioritized by the CEF team.
- The CEF has developed a provincial approach to support decision-making based on the tools and resources developed for the Northeast. This includes streamlined access to cumulative effects information and clear and consistent interpretation guides to connect the condition of a value to a set

of recommendations. Expanding this work to the other natural resource regions is underway.

- BC continues to seek opportunities to co-develop cumulative effects information with interested Nations through the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (CISF) model.

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, Moose, and the marine environment 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 with a focus on supporting the consideration of cumulative effects by project proponents and regulating agencies.

Key Facts:

- WLRS 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.
- In the coming year, the CEF will focus on:
    - Ensuring that NRS agencies work in a coordinated manner to increase the effectiveness of cumulative effects management, contributing to faster, more informed permitting and decisions, regulatory certainty and better ecosystem management for long term community sustainability goals.

  - Ensuring that the latest CE data, information and methodologies are used in decision-making and providing open, transparent and readily accessible data to all users.
  - Continued improvement and innovation in CE assessments to ensure rigour and trust in the process.
  - Ensuring data is available to industry engaged in pre-planning and engagement efforts with potentially affected First Nations, and
  - Ensuring that First Nation data, information, knowledge and cultural indicators are incorporated into CE decision supports through co-developed approaches that reflect the Nations' interests.
- CEF recently developed streamlined guides for the interpretation of complex CE data at a permit scale, equipping decision-makers with data, interpretation, and recommended management strategies relevant for permitting decisions. This is a new CEF product that has broad applicability in permitting and authorizations.
- **Audit:** In 2015, the Office of the Auditor General completed an audit on "Managing Cumulative Effects of Natural Resource Development in BC", concluding that FOR 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).
- ***Yahey vs. BC:*** In the 2021 BC 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."
- The passive policy advice approach of the CEF was challenged by the Court as being ineffective in the *Yahey* decision. No new legal requirements or authorities were associated with the policy.
- As a result of the *Yahey* decision, the Blueberry River First Nations Implementation Agreement (BIA) and Treaty 8 (T8) consensus agreements commit to ongoing management of cumulative impact from resource extraction and existing/planned mitigation and restoration.
- A key commitment of the T8 Consensus Document was to issue legally effective direction to decision-makers to consider cumulative effects (the CI Order).
- Under the new CI Order for the Northeast Recording District (effective September 1, 2024, to Dec. 31, 2026), statutory decisions under Natural Resource statutes are required to demonstrate in a written record the steps taken to consider and incorporate CE.
- Across the rest of the province, there is no legal direction like what has been implemented in the Northeast; yet, there are mounting CE pressures, particularly in the Southeast and Lower Mainland.

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

Date Prepared/Revised: Feb. 7, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: David Muter, ADM, Land Use Policy and Cumulative Effects Division	Phone: 250-217-5385
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Carolyn Gibson, Cumulative Effects Framework	Phone: 250-637-1007

Issue: Lower Fraser Cumulative Effects

Recommend Response:

- The Lower Fraser šxʷkʷecxənəm (skwitch-hah-num) Partnership is being led by Tsawwassen First Nation and Musqueam Indian Band to address cumulative effects of development in the Lower Fraser River. BC, along with Canada, Metro Vancouver and the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority are partners in the initiative.
- The multi-government stewardship partnership is intended to provide a comprehensive solution for cumulative effects discussions on current and future projects in the Lower Fraser River.
- Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Intergovernmental Communications

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.

- Individual project proponents cannot, on their own, address regional cumulative effects – governments must come together to manage the Fraser River and the foreshore. To address impacts of that development on asserted and defined rights, First Nations need a strong voice and a leadership role in how those effects are addressed.
- Tsawwassen First Nation and the Musqueam Indian Band 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 on the asserted and defined aboriginal rights.
- Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications
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- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications

  Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications
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2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

Date Prepared/Revised: February 12, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: David Muter, ADM	Phone: 250-217-5385
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Matt LeRoy, Executive Director Coast Area	Phone: 778-676-0784

Issue: Cumulative Effects Forum for Bamberton

Recommend Response:

- WLRS remains committed to co-developing a cumulative effects assessment of the Saanich Inlet alongside First Nations impacted by the Bamberton Quarry.
- WLRS is working together with W̱SÁNEĆ (Wh-Say-neCH) communities to define a shared approach to cumulative effects, building on the communities' expertise in marine stewardship.
- By supporting this work through the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework, we are working towards a shared vision, trusted information, and collaborative stewardship of Saanich Inlet with the people of the Inlet.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The cumulative effects work is independent of the *Mines Act* and *Land Act* processes. The outcomes of this collaborative forum are expected to inform the Bamberton Quarry Environmental Review Committee as required by the *Mines Ac*t permit.

Key Facts:

- The Saanich Inlet is the traditional territory of W̱SÁNEĆ Nation, which includes five communities (Malahat, Tsartlip, Tseycum, Tsawout and Pauquachin), as well as many coastal and landward Coast Salish neighbours.
- The Bamberton Quarry is adjacent to the Saanich Inlet on private land owned by the Malahat First Nation. Products from Bamberton Quarry serve local construction markets and are primarily shipped by barge via the Saanich Inlet.
- Malahat Investment Corporation (MICO) became the quarry permit holder 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 WLRS to amend its foreshore lease.
- During the application stage, BC was asked to review the application under the *Environmental Assessment Act* (EAA) to better address cumulative effects (CE) of the proposed expansion on the Saanich Inlet. This was declined in June 2023

by Minister George Heyman, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change. The Minister determined that two of the three project components were deemed not eligible, and that the specific eligible component (quarry expansion) was unlikely to result in CE on Saanich Inlet after considering proposed mitigation measures.

- Alongside that decision, Minister Heyman recognized the sensitive nature of the Saanich Inlet and the significant public and First Nation concerns. Minister Heyman, in collaboration with Minister Cullen of WLRS, committed to develop and implement a collaborative CE analysis in partnership with affected First Nations.
- The scope of work for the CE analysis was to include an assessment of marine values in the Saanich Inlet area. The geographic extent, and approach will be dependent on participating Nations and collaborative interests.
- Since December 2023, WLRS has been actively engaged with W̱SÁNEĆ communities to build relationships and work towards a collaborative CE analysis of the Saanich Inlet that weaves together shared priorities and interests.
- This work is delivered through the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (CISF), which directly addresses the *Declaration Act* Action Plan by advancing collaborative stewardship in a manner that addresses CE and respects Indigenous knowledge (2.06). This work also aligns with multiple aspects of the Coastal Marine Strategy; in particular, Goal 7 regarding a trusting respectful relationship with First Nations.
- Federal government initiatives to manage CE of marine shipping, implement marine protected areas and manage marine values (among others) have supported Nations to build capacity in this complex jurisdictional space. Federal funding initiatives associated with Trans-mountain accommodation measures are ending in FY24/25, and the Nations are seeking new ways to continue work towards improved stewardship of the Saanich Inlet and reconnect their communities with the water.
- Capacity funding for the Nations to participate in this work was Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications. Fully implemented, the Forum is anticipated to cost Government 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, and the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge. The work is intended to explicitly address the impacts of colonization on Indigenous connections to land and cultural revitalization.

Date Prepared/Revised: Feb 13, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Matt LeRoy, Executive Director	Phone: 778-676-0784
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Monica Pearson	Phone: 778-572-2256

Issue: Dock Management in Southern Gulf Islands

Recommend Response:

- The Southern Gulf Islands (SGI) are treasured by residents and people across the province for their unique character, diverse ecology, natural beauty, and tourism and recreation opportunities. First Nations rights holders also maintain close cultural and economic connections to this area.
- The foreshore in the SGI has become highly developed, and there are growing concerns that structures such as docks may impact the values that British Columbians care about. This has led BC to delay private moorage permitting, which we recognize is frustrating for applicants. We're listening, and we understand the expectation for a lasting solution.
- We are committed to shared resource stewardship with First Nations and are working with Quw'utsun Nation to co-develop an approach that addresses environmental concerns, upholds First Nations' rights, and provides clarity for those seeking approval of their private moorage.
- Meaningful engagement with the public, dock owners, other impacted First Nations, local governments and stakeholders is critical to this process and will get underway this year.
- Progress is also being made on pre-moratorium private moorage applications. These are currently being reviewed by external agencies for comment.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- WLRS is currently evaluating the upcoming expiry of the *Land Act* S10.1 moratorium on new private moorage applications in this area. We are working to understand implications and options to best manage concerns going forward.

Key Facts:

- Per BC Crown Land Use Operational Policy, a private moorage facility is a dock, a permanent boat way (i.e. boat ramp/rail), or a stand-alone boat lift that is permanently affixed to aquatic Crown land and intended for personal and private residential use. It does not include mooring buoys.
- The Southern Gulf Islands and Southeast Vancouver Island (SGI-SVI) foreshore is highly developed with approximately 470 authorized private moorages (PM) and estimated over 600 in trespass. Decision-making on PM in the area has stalled in the last decade due to concerns about cumulative impacts on marine values and First Nations' rights.
- In 2021, BC imposed a *Land Act* Section 10.1 moratorium on new PM applications in the SGI-SVI to provide time to assess and address concerns. The moratorium was replaced in 2023 and now expires in August 2025.
- Approximately 166 PM applications that pre-date the moratorium are currently suspended without a decision, but in fall 2024, were referred to external agencies for review. Public pressure for a resolution is high.
- In 2023, BC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Quw'utsun Nation (QN), an alliance of five First Nations (Cowichan Tribes, Stz'uminus First Nation, Penelakut Tribe, Halalt First Nation, and Lyackson First Nation). The MOU commits to the co-development of a strategic management plan for PM in the SGI-SVI that may include shared decision making, and will be informed by:
    - An understanding of the impacts of PM on values of interest to BC and QN, and how these can be managed (underway);
    - A scan of regulatory approaches in other jurisdictions (underway); and,
    - Engagement with other impacted Nations, local governments, PM owners and applicants, the public, and stakeholders (set to begin in 2025).
- In August 2024, WLRS committed to QN not to issue any *Land Act* decisions on PM applications until after an approach is determined under the MOU.
- FY2024-25 project costs included Government Financial Information capacity funding to each member Nation Government Financial Information; secured from the Indigenous Funding Program (IFP).
- FY2025-26 costs will include Government Financial toward consultant fees secured from WLRS base budget (confirmed) and an expected Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental for First Nations capacity funding and public engagement anticipated to be sourced from IFP and base budgets respectively. Funding will also be required to complete and implement the Plan in future years.

- BC has the duty to consult ten other First Nations with overlapping territory in the SGI-SVI on PM *Land Act* decisions and the development of the Plan.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 27, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: Matt LeRoy, Executive Director	Phone: 778-676-0784
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Caitlin Dorward	Phone: 778-871-3849

Issue: Pender Harbour aka Shishalh Dock Management

Recommend Response:

- BC is working collaboratively with shishalh Nation and local community members to promote resilient ecosystems, conserve archeological sites and cultural practices and support people's ability to enjoy their docks.
- In August 2024, the Province and shishalh Nation made an announcement to change the dock management plan to provide additional predictability for Sunshine Coast dock and boathouse owners, these changes were reaffirmed in the BC-shishalh Foundation Agreement Renewal.
- In addition to the new authorization process for existing dock and boathouse owners on the Sunshine Coast, we are committed to undertaking more archaeological and environmental studies to increase our knowledge of important foreshore values through out the swiya.
- Last year, strong relationships were built through the work of the advisory committee. BC and shishalh remain committed to continuing to work with these partners in the community as the implementation work continues.

Key Facts:

- The Dock Management Plan will be updated to reflect the changes committed to in the August 2024 announcement and the Foundation Agreement Renewal led by the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.
- Engagement will take place with commercial dock owners, and freshwater dock and boathouse owners, and will continue throughout implementation.
- The Foundation Agreement Renewal supports environmental and cultural restoration work, collaborative monitoring and enforcement, and environmental and ecological studies in the shíshálh swiya. The value of these cabinet approved initiatives are:
    - $2.77 million over five years for environmental and cultural restoration work;
    - Up to $710,000 over four years towards a collaborative monitoring and enforcement program in the shíshálh swiya;

    - $500,000 to carry out environmental and ecological studies; and,
    - Additional funding for archaeological and environmental foreshore studies to be determined based on workplan development.
- Meetings with Waterfront Protection Coalition members, the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association and local government staff have continued, presenting opportunities for the community members to share input and feedback from the local community with BC and the shishalh First Nation.
- Meetings with representatives from lake associations began in February, with the initial focus being the scope of the study for the lakes literature review.
- Advice/Recommendations; Legal Information

- A complimentary Estimates Note has been prepared with information about private moorage, and the progress towards the self-registration of docks, 2024 inventory results, and the transition to long-term authorizations through licences of occupation and value of rent.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Matt LeRoy	Phone: 778-676-0784
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Tonianne Mynen	Phone: 604-953-6664

Q&A
Title: shíshálh swiya Dock Management Plan What We Heard Report
Date: March 6, 2024

Key Messages:

- Calibri 14
- minister/spokesperson should be able to address topic using about five bullets
- use subheads for additional KMs if necessary

Questions & Answers:

What We Heard Report

1. **Why is dock management important?**

- The foreshore is an important ecological and cultural resource.
- For many years, pace of development of structures on the foreshore, including docks, has increased significantly in some places in the swiya.
- Provincial monitoring of tenures and their ecological and archeological impacts has been inconsistent.
- Best Management Practices provide guidance for development of docks on the foreshore areas to be completed in ways that reduce and mitigate negative environmental and cultural impacts.
- Incorporating indigenous views, knowledge and practices is important.

2. **Why is the Province involved in the management of docks?**

- Waterfront property owners in British Columbia enjoy the Common Law Right of riparian access to their properties.
- Broadly speaking, this is the right to access any part of their property by boat without the interference of manmade structures.
- However, being the owner of a waterfront property does not give the right to construct a dock, wharf or other moorage facility on Crown land, such as the water over the bed of kalpilin.
- The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, as an administrator of the *Land Act*, has the authority to grant or refuse a private moorage tenure based on the circumstances prevalent in any given location.

3. **Why are docks a concern on the foreshore?**

- Structures on the foreshore impact the ecosystem and cultural resources.
- Cumulative impacts from structures on the foreshore, including docks, negatively impact the sensitive and unique foreshore ecosystem, as well as the cultural resources.
- The foreshore is an important cultural resource for shishalh Nation
- Strong, healthy, robust foreshores provide feeding habitat, nursery areas and shelter for a wide variety of species.
- Protecting the foreshore and mitigating impacts from humans helps maintain the important ecological functions and biodiversity which is necessary for resilient and stable ecosystems.

4. **Will you be releasing the public comments?**

- Over 1700 comments were received through the public engagement process. A thorough summary of the comments received was provided in the What We Heard Report.
- The province is exploring ways we could make all the public comments available. It will take time to redact sensitive, and private information from the public engagement comments before any materials could be made public (for example, information like names, email and personal addresses would be removed).
- The Province upholds strict privacy requirements on information received in order to maintain private information that would be an unreasonable invasion of a third party's personal privacy and potentially harmful to individuals if released to the public without appropriate measure taking place first.

5. **Was anything else considered in the What We Heard Report outside of the comments received through the ACRFD?**

- Many duplicates were received through the ACRFD and other venues, such as emails to the Minister and Ihe hiwus and Council.
- As many of these letters as possible were included for consideration in drafting the WWH report.
- Questions asked at the public meeting with the Sunshine Coast Regional District (including councillors from District of Sechelt) and the three virtual

sessions with Commercial Moorage tenure holders also informed the What We Heard Report.
- Conversations between with stakeholders, the Sunshine Coast Regional and District of Sechelt echoed much of the feedback received and were also considered in the review.

6. What are the key themes identified from public input?
- The What We Heard Report outlines feedback received in the following themes:
    - Flexibility in dock design
    - Grandfathering existing moorage structures
    - Concerns about future of boathouses
    - Concerns about application of DMP in freshwater
    - Importance of the environment
    - Concerns related to economic and financial considerations

Questions about Docks & Boathouses

7. Will boathouses and existing moorage structures be grandfathered in?

Before Thursday:
- The province and shishalh Nation have heard this interest from the public and are considering further changes to reflect the feedback.
- We will share further information on proposed changes to the DMP in the days ahead.

After Thursday:
- One of the proposed changes we are making will address this interest raised in the feedback we received.
- Owners of existing tenured docks and boathouses will be able to apply for renewal as currently built.
- Over time, as dock owners make improvements to their docks, these will need to be in keeping with best management practices.

8. Will my untenured dock be removed?
- The province encourages owners of existing docks that don't have tenure to apply, the application will be reviewed based on their site-specific conditions and the flexible guidelines outlined in the Dock Management Plan to determine if an authorization can be granted.

- Some docks built in trespass within the red zone of kalpilin Management Area are under review for next steps.

9. Will my existing boathouse be removed?

<u>After Thursday</u>

- No, owners with existing tenured boathouses will be able to apply for a renewal tenure based on how the boathouse is built at the time of renewal.
- No, owners with existing untenured boathouses will be able to apply for a new tenure based on how the boathouse is built at the time of application.
- As with all applications, previously untenured boathouses will undergo a review and provincial and federal policies about safety and navigation remain considerations in any dock decision.
- The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, as an administrator of the *Land Act*, has the authority to grant or refuse a private moorage tenure based on the circumstances prevalent in any given location.

10. Will my tenured dock be removed if I can't comply with the Best Management Practices?

<u>After Thursday</u>

- When the current dock tenure comes up for renewal, owners will be able to apply for renewal as currently built, even if parts of their dock are not in compliance with the Best Management Practices.
- Over time, as dock owners make improvements to their docks, these will need to be in keeping with best management practices.

11. What is the cost of removing docks?

- The cost of removing docks varies depending on what type of removal is required.
- For example, removing a small float by hand would be very different than a large float and multiple pilings.

12. How will dock materials be disposed?

- Dock materials should be disposed at appropriate facilities that will accept the type of waste.
- For example, not all facilities will accept creosote pilings

13. What is the length of time that tenures will be given?

- Tenure term lengths of up to 10 years for private moorage tenures remains. Decisions about term lengths are made on a case by case review of the application.
- Tenure term lengths for commercial moorage may be offered for up to 30 years, accounting for operational needs of the dock owner.

14. If you approve my existing boathouse or existing dock, will they ever have to be reduced in size?

- With the proposed changes to the DMP, there is increased flexibility for existing structures.
- Reasonably, it can be expected a replacement application would be approved, however, that cannot be guaranteed without a review of the application to take all considerations regarding the application into account.
- Owners with existing tenured or untenured docks will be able to apply for renewal or new tenure based on the dock's current size at the time of renewal.
- Every application is reviewed on a case-by-case basis, including replacement tenure applications.
- Approving a replacement for a tenure is at the discretion of the decision-maker.

15. If you approve my boathouse, will I ever have to remove it?

- Every application is reviewed on a case-by-case basis, including replacement applications.
- Replacement applications are subsequent tenure agreements to the tenure holder for the same purpose and area.
- Approving a replacement for a tenure is at the discretion of the decision-maker.
- When the current boathouse tenure comes up for renewal, owners will be able to apply for renewal as currently built, even if parts of their structure are not in compliance with the Best Management Practices.
- Reasonably, it can be expected a replacement application would be approved, however, that cannot be guaranteed without a review of the application to take all considerations regarding the application into account.

- The DMP does not change provincial policy elsewhere.

16. Will I have to reduce my dock size if my total length is over 60m?

- When the current dock tenure comes up for renewal, owners will be able to apply for renewal as currently built, even if parts of their dock are not in compliance with the Best Management Practices.
- Over time, as dock owners make improvements to their docks, these will need to be in keeping with best management practices.
- For example, if your dock is currently 70m total length at the time of tenure renewal, the Dock Management Plan has flexibility to permit the existing to continue as is unless there are significant other considerations to be taken into account such as environmental or archaeological concerns.

Questions about Environment and Science

17. What other actions is the Province taking to protect coastal ecosystems?

- Coastal ecosystems are complex and protecting them is too.
- There are many jurisdictions, legal frameworks and governance structures for marine and aquatic conservation and management.
- The Province works collaboratively with the federal government, First Nations and stakeholders to balance environmental, social, economic and cultural values in decisions and policies.

18. Has the Province considered that houseboats and docks have become artificial reefs and that removing docks would have a detrimental impact on the ecosystems?

- The Best Management Practices provide guidance for the development or modification of docks to mitigate the impacts to the environment and cultural resources.
- Allowing existing structures to remain as built slow modifications to existing colonized structures so over time, less impactful structures will be colonized.

19. Are you going to do more studies?

Before Thursday:

- The comments and questions we received during the public engagement have been invaluable in helping guide our next steps forward as we consider further changes to reflect feedback.
- We will share further information on proposed changes to the DMP and our next steps in the days ahead.

<u>After Thursday:</u>

- It has been clear from the feedback received that we need to pause the application of the Dock Management Plan in freshwater lakes and take some more time to understand the impact of docks in the freshwater environment.
- The province and shishalh will undertake further studies in freshwater lakes that will inform revisions to the Dock Management Plan.
- Freshwater lakes provide a wide range of important habitats, and mitigating impacts from humans helps maintain the important ecological functions and biodiversity which is necessary for resilient and stable ecosystems.
- BC and shishalh will communicate closely and often with freshwater dock owners throughout the swiya.

20. Why did you use science from areas that are not applicable to the Northeast and not accurate for PNW to inform your Best Management Practices?

- Best Management Practices are designed to mitigate the impacts to the environment, consideration of Best Management Practices used across a variety of jurisdictions helped inform the dock management plan development.
- In 2018, the Best Management Practices were reviewed by an independent consultant, this informed the use of the Best Management Practices in kalpilin.
- They provide guidance on how to design structures to have the least amount of impact on the foreshore.
- With flexibility they can guide the design of dock structures that have the least impact on the foreshore throughout the swiya.

<u>Questions about Public Involvement and Clarity</u>

21. How did you review comments from the public engagement?

- Staff from the Province and shishalh reviewed and read every single public comment. Each comment was summarized with the key themes, questions and ideas which was summarized into the What We Heard Report.
- The Province of BC is committed to taking action against racism and working to ensure this engagement process is anti-racist and safeguards human rights. Disrespectful and racist comments were not accepted and were removed from the engagement record for consideration.
- The province and shishalh Nation thank everyone for their comments on the proposed amendments to the shishalh swiya Dock Management Plan.

22. Are you going to do further public engagement?

Before Thursday:

- The province and shishalh Nation have heard this interest from the public and are considering further changes to reflect the feedback.
- We will share further information on proposed changes to the DMP in the days ahead.

After Thursday:

- shishalh and the Province have agreed to continue the discussions with dock owners on implementation.
- The province and shishalh Nation have asked a number of representatives from organizations across the Sunshine Coast to be involved in a Dock Management Plan Advisory Group (DMPAG).
- The DMPAG will be a venue for information sharing and building understandings about the changes we are proposing to make.
- We look forward to hearing feedback from the DMPAG about the changes we are proposing.

23. Who selected the DMPAG members?

After Thursday:

- The Province and shishalh will jointly appoint DMPAG members.
- Input was provided by elected members of Local Government and MLA Nicolas Simons.
- The province and shishalh looked for community members who have an interest in the management and protection of environmental and archeological resources across the shishalh swiya through meaningful implementation of the DMP.

- We sought members will be motivated to foster improved understanding of the DMP and support for management that protects the values that all residents of the Sunshine Coast hold important.

24. Who are the DMPAG members?

After Thursday: **** THIS NEEDS TO BE CONFIRMED****

- Technical representative from the Sunshine Coast Regional District (1);
- Technical representative from the District of Sechelt (1);
- Representative from Waterfront Protection Coalition (1);
- Representative from Pender Harbour Area Residents Association (1);
- Representative from Sakinaw Lake Residents Association or swiya Lakes Stewardship Alliance Comments or Ruby Lake Landholders Association (1);
- Representative from the local business community through a Chamber of Commerce (1)
- Representative from an ecological conservation community or Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (1); and
- Representative from a recently permitted dock owner (1).

25. Will the DMPAG be able to make recommendations about more changes?

After Thursday

- The DMPAG members will review and discussed the proposed changes to the Dock Management Plan.
- The DMPAG may also make suggestions to the Province and shishalh that could be used to inform implementation considerations.

26.Is and if yes, how is, the Province going to address concerns about the DMP that were not related to proposed changes in November 2023 (about zoning, light penetration for example)?

After Thursday

- The province and shishalh are proposing changes to the DMP that go beyond the changes we were considering in November. This is in response to the feedback we received from the public.
- We may not have addressed every consideration shared by the public, but we feel that the changes we make create the balance between the environmental and archeological objectives we are working to meet and the interests we heard.

- We will work with the DMPAG to hear their feedback on the proposed changes and review them in consideration of how they help us achieve our shared objectives.

27. Questioning the Province overstepping into LG jurisdiction with zoning and BMPs

- To be added later if needed.

28. How long do you anticipate decision on the DMP will take?

- The Province and shishalh are committed to confirming the changes to the Dock Management Plan in a timely way.
- We understand that uncertainty about how individuals can renew existing tenures or apply for new ones can be stressful. We want to make sure we have a plan that can be implemented and provide the predictability all dock owners are looking for.

29. Who are the decision-makers? What is their authority? How will they make decisions?

- Decision-making will be consistent with provincial legislation and existing agreements.

30. Will your decision-making process be transparent and shared?

- Decision-making will be consistent with provincial legislation and existing agreements.

Questions about Land Act & Decision-Making

31. Are the Land Act Amendments and the Dock Management Plan related?

- The Dock Management Plan changes are not reliant on the *Land Act* changing.
- The Dock Management Plan outlines specific management approaches to mitigate the impacts of docks in the shishalh swiya.
- Decision-making will be consistent with provincial legislation and existing agreements including the Shared Decision-Making approach outlined in the 2018 BC-shishalh Foundation Agreement.

32. Add a question about the Declaration Act Section 7 agreement.-how they are related and when will consultation occur?

- The Dock Management Plan changes are independent from BC's Cabinet approval to scope a Declaration Act Section 7 agreement.
- Consultation with stakeholders has not yet begun.
- The Declaration Act requires that local governmental and stakeholders are consulted.

33. Does the Dock Management Plan give shishalh Nation a veto?

- No, the Dock Management plan does not provide a 'veto,'.
- Decision-making will be consistent with provincial legislation and existing agreements.

34. When will the Dock Management Plan be finalized?

- The province and shishalh will work with the DMPAG over the next number of weeks which will help inform the changes we will make to the Dock Management Plan.
- The province and shishalh will work to release an updated version of the Dock Management Plan later this spring.

35. Will this be precedent-setting and be used as a template for the province?

- The DMP has been jointly developed by the Province and shishalh Nation to address the impacts of dock development on cultural and environmental significant areas in the swiya.
- This plan is unique to the swiya and acts as a guideline from reviewing applications for dock tenures within the swiya.

36. Will the Province be looking at addressing provincial dock management policies and making any changes?

- No, not currently. The shishalh swiya Dock Management Plan is unique to the swiya and is applied along side existing provincial and shishalh policy.
- Existing provincial policy relating to moorage on Crown land continues to apply across the province.

- WLRS is accountable for the effective development of water, land and marine use policy and planning, as well as biodiversity and ecosystem health.

37. Are other similar Dock Management Plans in the works?

- No, however, the province is working in collaboration in many different ways with First Nations to better understand and manage for the potential impacts of private moorage on cultural, ecological and archeological values.
- In some cases this is through consultation on specific applications for Land Act authorizations for moorage.
- In other cases, like in the shishalh swiya ('territory', birthplace, homeland), the province and the nation have co-developed objectives and guidance tools for how to protect and manage important environmental and archeological values.
- In the southern Gulf Islands and southern Vancouver Island, the province has temporarily paused the acceptance of new private moorage applications to allow the province more time to quantify cumulative impacts and consider options for mitigation.
- When considering new management measures, the province will communicate with potentially impacted residents and stakeholder groups.

38. Why does it take so long to get a dock tenure/permit? What are the backlogs?

- To be added later if needed.

39. How is the Province considering concerns from the public about potential economically and financially impacts of the DMP?

<u>Before Thursday:</u>

- The province is committed to the long-term health of coastal communities, and ensuring the viability of marine industries and local businesses recognizes the importance of costal communities.
- The province and shishalh Nation have heard this interests from the public and are considering further changes to reflect the feedback.
- We will share further information on proposed changes to the DMP in the days ahead.

<u>After Thursday:</u>

- The province and shishalh recognize the importance of a strong, sustainable coastal community and are proposing a number of changes to the Dock Management Plan that address concerns raised about the economic and financial impacts of the plan.
    - Many owners of existing tenured and untenured docks and boathouses will have added flexibility in their dock design and they be able to have the time to bring their docks up to better standards as they make improvements to their docks.
    - shishalh and BC are proposing changes that will meet some of the operational needs of commercial dock owners and provide more predictability for all dock owners.
    - The Province and shishalh will work together to identify areas suitable for new additional mooring buoys to support continued boat travel through the swiya.

40. What is the Province's response to people who have expressed strong emotions about the future of their docks?

Before Thursday:

- The province and shishalh Nation have heard valuable and important feedback directly from people who have felt impacted by the proposed changes.
- We will share further information on proposed changes to the DMP in the days ahead.
- We want to get this right and move forward together.

After Thursday:

- We are proposing changes to the DMP that will provide more certainty and clarity for existing dock owners.

41. Why do I need to pay for an annual inspection?

- We have heard this question come up through the feedback.
- The proposed amendment to include annual inspections is for an annual self-inspection which should cost no money.
- The intent is for the dock owner to inspect their dock to ensure the dock is in alignment with their authorization in a safe, clean and sanitary condition.
- Dock owners should be familiar with their docks and the rules around them to ensure they are prepared for upkeep in alignment with their authorization and the Best Management Practices

42. What if I have a property that is water-access only?

- Many owners of existing tenured and untenured docks and boathouses will have added flexibility in their dock design and they will be able to have the time to bring their docks up to better standards as they make improvements to their docks.
- Applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and considerations such as access to the property are included in the review and recommendations for the decision-makers

43. Are you limiting the size of boats able to be moored in the swiya?

- We have heard this question come up through the feedback.
- No, we are not intending to limit the size of boats able to be moored in the swiya.
- The boating and marine industry is an important part of coastal BC's economy, recreation and social values.
- We are proposing changes to the DMP that will provide more certainty and clarity for existing dock owners over the coming years.
- Many owners of existing tenured and untenured docks and boathouses will have added flexibility in their dock design and they will be able to have the time to bring their docks up to better standards as they make improvements to their docks.

44. What are you going to do about the lack of availability of Commercial Moorage?

- Amendments to the Dock Management Plan provide for increased flexibility for Commercial Moorage tenure holders in dock design and allow for a diversity of commercial operations including potential growth.

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 $30M^2$ 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.

Issue: Government Actions Regulation

Recommend Response:

- Under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA), the Government Actions Regulation (GAR) directs how the BC provincial government establishes land designations or stewardship measures for forest and range values.
- GAR orders are an important tool to advance conservation measures while supporting economic activities.
- GAR decisions must consider how the benefits of the order outweigh any adverse impacts on forest and range tenure holders.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- As Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, I am responsible for sections of FRPA that relate to stewardship of wildlife, watersheds, habitat and wetlands including:
  - Establishing ungulate winter ranges, wildlife habitat areas and general wildlife measures;
  - Designating a community watershed and setting water quality objectives;
  - Identifying an area that has significant fisheries values and watershed sensitivity; and,
  - Establishing regulations for the classification of streams, wetlands, and lakes and to establish riparian management areas and temperature sensitive streams.
- General Wildlife Measures can range from excluding forest and range activities in highly sensitive ecosystems, to requiring modified activities to address specific impacts (such as timing windows and forest retention requirements)
- The ministry has applied these sections of FRPA to improve conservation and stewardship of wildlife and habitat, including 44 Wildlife Habitat Areas to protect habitat for

Marbled Murrelet and Northern Goshawk on the coast and Great Blue Heron and Wolverine in the interior.

- The GAR was updated in December 2023 to remove the limitation on actions regarding impacts to timber supply in BC. Consideration of these impacts is still an important part of the decision-making process.

Key Facts:

- On November 18, 2024, Order in Council 596/2024 continued the assignment of responsibilities to me for the sections of FRPA as they relate to matters under WLRS portfolio (e.g., protecting wildlife, habitats, etc.).
- The protection of critical ecosystems is a commitment in WLRS's mandate letter, which requires regulatory tools and legal authorities to establish protections for fish and wildlife habitat over the long term.
- Three areas where WLRS is actively consulting on proposed GAR orders include:
    - Goat habitat in the South,
    - Northern goshawk habitat on the Coast,
    - Boreal caribou habitat in the North-East.
- The vision for FRPA is to balance the economic interests of forest or range tenure holders, the sustainability of the Province's timber supply and the protection of non-timber values.
- 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.
- The GAR enables the establishment of 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 also 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.
- WLRS has the authority to establish protection measures for wildlife under these sections of FRPA, and the authority to issue exemptions to licensees to the requirements of General Wildlife Measures.

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Date Prepared/Revised: February 13, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Eric Valdal, Executive Director
Phone: Government Financial Information

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Tara Skarupa, Director,
Resource Stewardship Operations
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Issue: Backcountry Survey and Mtn Passages Planning

Recommend Response:

- We fully appreciate the importance of backcountry recreation in our province for citizens and visitors and are working hard to find a balanced approach that supports access while protecting the environment and ecosystems.
- Before making any changes to access management, my Ministry goes through a fulsome engagement process with communities, First Nations, and stakeholder organizations.
- Two recent examples of inclusive engagement in the Kootenays are 1) a survey on backcountry access that is seeking a wide range of perspectives, and 2) a Southern Rocky Mountain Passes Planning project that is bringing together a wide variety of interest groups to collaboratively seek solutions to access management.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Management of human access is one of many tools used by my Ministry to meet our commitment to collaboratively protect critical ecosystems alongside First Nations, communities, workers, industry, organizations and the public.
- Roads and trails in the backcountry provide valuable access for citizens and visitors to enjoy nature, but may also impact wildlife and their habitats
- A Backcountry Access Survey was initiated as part of a research project to better understand local citizens' frequency and use of roads and trails for accessing outdoor activities and their perspectives on managing motorized and non-motorized access for the purposes of protecting wildlife and their habitats.

- The Southern Rocky Mountain Passes Planning project was initiated in partnership with First Nations and in collaboration with interest holders (recreation, hunting and trapping), to find solutions that improve wildlife stewardship while considering recreational interests on 13 mountain passes in the Southern Rockies.

Key Facts:

- Management of human access includes legal Motor Vehicle Prohibitions under the *Wildlife Act*, and rehabilitation of roads or trails.

Kootenay Backcountry Access Survey

- This research project involved hiring a scientist to work with staff to develop a survey that was sent to a wide range of stakeholders on March 26, 2025.
- This survey was a first step to test out the methodology and provide opportunities for learning and improvements for any future, broader public surveys.
- A new BC Government email address was created for inquiries about the survey. Unfortunately, an erroneous address was initially published with the survey, which caused confusion. This has been corrected.
- Although many stakeholders have expressed support for the survey, we have heard some concerns about the questions being biased or leading. We appreciate this feedback and will use it to develop any future survey questions to ensure that citizens' views and experiences are reflected in the survey.

Southern Rocky Mountain Passes Planning Project

- The four key objectives for the project are:
  - Increase habitat quality, connectivity, and wildlife migration corridors;
  - Reduce cumulative impacts in the Elk Valley for ecosystem values;
  - Increase compliance in legal access closures; and,
  - Seek opportunities for safe, responsible, and environmentally sustainable access to recreation, hunting, and trapping
- A webinar was held on April 3, 2025, to share perspectives among interest holders.
- The next step will involve targeted small group discussions with key interest holders to develop strategies and solutions.
- A draft plan is anticipated in the summer 2025, and there will be additional rounds of engagement before the plan is finalized.

Date Prepared/Revised: April 4, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Eric Valdal Phone: Government Financial Information

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Tara Szkorupa Phone: Government Financial Information

Issue: BC Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework

Recommend Response:

- Prioritizing ecosystem health and biodiversity in land and resource management is crucial to the health and well-being of communities, economic security, mitigating and adapting to climate change, maintaining clean air and water, and the responsible stewardship of wildlife and natural resources for future generations. A key aim is to build resilience and prepare for future challenges.
- The draft Framework reflects a collaboratively built vision for healthy environments, communities, and economies. It identifies mechanisms to improve the work we need to do together - across levels of governments, with industry, non-governmental organizations, and communities - to achieve the vision.
- The Framework approach is intended to align with the Province's existing responsibilities to advance reconciliation and safeguard the long-term health and well-being of communities. It recognizes the deep interconnection between the environment and the economy - choosing one over the other is a false choice.
- Completing the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework is a commitment in the Old Growth Action Plan and further engagement is anticipated to support its finalization.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- While we confirm the approach to advance the finalization of the Framework, we will continue work towards protection and conservation of high priority habitats and ecosystems, improved stewardship outcomes, and long-term solutions that will help to break down historic barriers to success.
- The Framework aims to align provincial biodiversity and ecosystem health management tools, strategies, and

approaches across all ministries in collaboration with First Nations, local communities, businesses, and the public.

- It is also intended to support a shift to multi-species, ecosystems focused approach that can result in greater benefits across multiple species at a landscape scale and reduce the overall costs and effort toward single-species management.

Key Facts:

- On November 15, 2023, the Province released a Draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework in response to a recommendation made in the Old Growth Strategic Review report.
- The Framework was developed through collaborative engagement in 2023 and early 2024 with First Nations and multi-stakeholders, including environmental groups and industry sectors such as Forestry (Attachment 1 -Overview of the draft Framework). Most responses on the draft Framework expressed support for its vision and actions, with many emphasizing the need for further engagement to ensure clarity and widespread understanding and support.
- Initiatives already leading the way on various aspects of ecosystem health and biodiversity include the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation, Modernized Land Use Planning and the Together for Wildlife Strategy
- The Province has committed to support communities for a continued and resilient forest sector, in addition to a wide range of industries, including energy, technology, tourism, agriculture and other resource development. The Framework will support these sectors and activities.
- The Framework will also support government decision-makers, Government-to-Government tables as well as planning tables (i.e., Forest Landscape Plans, Modernizing Land Use Planning, watershed tables).
- The Framework is not anticipated to have financial implications in of itself and the work to implement the Framework will be advanced as we can within existing resources and budgets. Any future actions and policies developed over time to support the Framework that could have potential socio-economic impacts will be assessed at the time of the proposal and appropriate direction will be sought.
- Future actions under the Framework can work to ensure stronger economic resilience. These include opportunities and incentives for ensuring local social enterprises, and additional ways to diversify the economy.
- The Framework has the potential to catalyse actions to create process efficiencies, enhance decision-making, support risk management to bolster energy, water and food security, all of which can help to promote the Government priority to address economic concerns and future threats to stability.

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Attachment 1. Overview of Draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework

Date Prepared/Revised: February 17, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
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Alternate Contact for Issue:	Government Financial Information
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ATTACHMENT 1: OVERVIEW OF DRAFT BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM HEALTH FRAMEWORK

The Draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework, ("the Framework") comprises the following:

1. A **vision** that sets out an approach and commitment to transform the management and conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems to create economic and ecological resilience for thriving communities by achieving better outcomes for biodiversity.
2. **Pillars** intended to showcase the main areas of focus for actions:
    a. **Pillar 1: a whole-of-government approach**
    b. **Pillar 2: a whole-of-society approach**
    c. **Pillar 3: actions designed to address accountability, openness and transparency**
3. All the of pillars are based on a foundational commitment to reconciliation, to further the legal requirements set out in the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) and commitments in the DRIPA Action Plan.
4. Proposed actions under the 3 pillars include:
    a. **Pillar 1: a whole-of-government approach**
        - The co-development and/or update of legislative tools to support biodiversity and ecosystem health with First Nations
        - Improved policy cohesion and streamlined decisions related to biodiversity and ecosystem health
        - Development of guidance to enable biodiversity and ecosystem health objectives and standards to be developed as part of all planning activities
    b. **Pillar 2: a whole-of-society approach**
        - Build/expand on governance structures to improve collaboration within communities
        - Identification and implementation of incentives (conservation financing
        - Foster innovation, skills and training to support the diversification of the economy
        - Build on education materials, knowledge networks, and share data and information
    c. **Pillar 3: Actions addressing accountability, openness and transparency**
        - Increase and regularize public reporting on state of biodiversity and ecosystem health.
        - Enhance oversight through improved monitoring, compliance and enforcement.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: April 9, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **Biodiversity and ecosystem health are not just environmental issues. They are deeply connected to economic stability and community resilience.**
- **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 and stable economy.**
- **Long-term economic stability and jobs for many British Columbians rely on a healthy environment.**
- **The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework will help achieve a collaboratively built vision of healthy environments, communities, and economies by improving the integration of nature's values into natural resource management decision-making.**
- **The Framework upholds our commitments in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act and commits to working better together across all levels of governments and with industry, scientists, and non-governmental organizations.**
- **Through better alignment across various program areas and initiatives, the Framework will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires, floods, and drought, reduce the need for species-by-species approaches, and better ensure a resilient and prosperous future.**
- **The Framework is being developed in response to a recommendation of the Old Growth Strategic Review and as part of the associated action plan (New Future for Old Forests – From Review to Action), 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 they are central to our identity as British Columbians.**

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

- **Consultations with First Nations and engagement on the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework (the "Framework") with local governments, industry, environmental organizations, and the public took place from November 2023 to January 2024 and resulted in over 7,000 responses.**
- **Most responses expressed support for the draft Framework's vision and key actions to shift from current land and water management systems to one that considers ecosystem health, community well-being, and economic resiliency more holistically.**
- **Many supportive responses emphasized the complexity of this shift and the need for additional consultations and engagement to ensure that the final Framework is well understood, is broadly supported, and the implementation path is clear.**
- **We also heard from respondents that said they want the Province to take concrete steps to protect biodiversity and species at risk, while leveraging opportunities to partner with different levels of government, communities, and industries on innovative options that are more mutually beneficial for jobs and the economy.**
- **Since February 2024, B.C. government staff have been reviewing all the feedback and meeting with:**
    - **First Nations rights and title holders;**
    - **First Nation government-to-government roundtables and forums;**
    - **non-indigenous organizations (e.g., ENGOs, academia);**
    - **local governments;**
    - **industry leaders; and**
    - **health professionals.**
- **Additional consultation and engagement will take place over the coming months.**
- **In the interim, the government continues to advance the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem health through various initiatives aimed at improving landscape resilience and achieving specific targets such as protecting 30% of B.C.'s land and water by 2030.**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

- **The Province will continue to use, and improve, existing regulatory tools to protect and conserve ecosystem and biodiversity values and improve the resilience of B.C.'s landscapes, like the changes made to remove the "unduly" clause in the *Forest and Range Practices Act* and updating the provincial list of species at risk.**

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

- **Healthy ecosystems are a prerequisite for the sustained flow of ecosystem benefits that communities and businesses need to flourish.**
- **This is why our government is building a series of comprehensive and integrated initiatives to safeguard the environment, promote sustainable resource use, support local jobs, and recognize and respect First Nations rights to secure a future with healthy communities and continued opportunity for all British Columbians.**
- **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 opportunities for economic activities, 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.**
- **For example, the Gwa'ni Land Use Plan on northern Vancouver Island will help protect biodiversity and 'Namgis First Nation cultural values, while also providing operational clarity for the forest industry within 'Namgis territory. When compared to the past four years, timber harvest volumes are forecast to increase by about 130,000 cubic metres under the new plan.**
- **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 will help identify "how" we manage land and resources and "why" they are needed for long-term ecosystem, community, and economic resiliency.**
- **The draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework builds on work underway to secure a shared understanding of the natural**

environment, improve transparency of information, and promote effective decision support to include key environmental values into natural resource decision-making. The Framework will focus on sharing information to better co-ordinate work across government and with various partners outside of government.

- **The Framework complements the new BC Conservation Fund 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 in a manner that contributes directly to halting and reversing biodiversity loss and enhancing ecosystems.**
- **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 new protected areas, like in the Incomappleux Valley.**
- **Together with First Nations, and through engagement and partnerships with many communities and stakeholders, we're also implementing B.C.'s Wild Salmon Strategy, B.C.'s first-ever Coastal Marine Strategy, and developing a Watershed Security Strategy.**

Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

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- **We are improving existing regulatory and legislative tools that support species-at-risk recovery. We have removed the "without unduly**

reducing the supply of timber" wording from the *Forest and Range Practices Act*.

- **We are also updating the provincial listing of species-at-risk under the Forest and Range Practices Act and the Energy Resource Activities Act, and we are working on a comprehensive review of the Wildlife Act, expected to be completed in 2026.**

KEY FACTS:

The prosperity and resilience of our societies and economies depend on the health and resilience of nature and biodiversity. Therefore, 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 promote the long-term social and economic well-being of communities throughout the province.

The draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework was made available for public review from Nov. 15, 2023, to Jan. 31, 2024. As part of this review process, the Province consulted with First Nations rights and title holders and engaged with multiple natural resource sectors and industry, as well as local governments and other partners.

The Framework is expected to be finalized following the review of thousands of written responses.

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).

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 a key consideration for the work ahead. 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 support ecosystem, community, and economic resiliency and 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 contacts	Sagarika Saha, Director, Conservation Strategic Initiatives, WLRS Celine Davis, A/Exec. Director, Ecosystems Branch, WLRS	250 952-1193 778 698-4060
File created	Feb. 28, 2023	
File updated	April 9, 2025	

Q&A
Title: Draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework
Date: April 9, 2025

Key Messages:

- Our health, livelihoods and cultures depend on nature.

- We need healthy food and clean air and water. We need the prosperity created by renewable natural resources, which in British Columbia generate billions of dollars every year.

- Our government continues to work closely with First Nations, communities, and stakeholders to develop long-term solutions that balance conservation efforts with sustainable economic and community development.

- The protection and responsible stewardship of wildlife and natural resources are essential to maintaining clean air and water, supporting economic security, mitigating and adapting to climate change, and ensuring the health and well-being of all British Columbians.

- The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework will help us chart the next steps for conserving B.C.'s rich biodiversity and healthy ecosystems that support us all.

- While we are currently assessing the next steps to advance the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework, our work to protect high-priority habitats and ecosystems continues.

- This includes improving stewardship outcomes and addressing long-standing challenges in conservation policy and implementation.

- Additionally, the Province remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting 30% of B.C.'s lands and waters by 2030. Achieving this goal will require continued collaboration with First Nations, local communities, and industry partners to develop effective conservation strategies that align with ecological, cultural, and socio-economic objectives.

- We recognize the importance of legislative tools in achieving these goals, and we remain engaged in discussions about the most effective mechanisms to support biodiversity and species at risk in B.C.

- Our government is developing comprehensive and integrated initiatives to protect the environment, including conservation financing, our accelerated actions to protect old growth forests, and our commitment to conserve 30% of B.C.'s land base by 2030.

- All these efforts are fundamental to mitigating the worst effects of climate change and creating a healthier future for everyone.

- We are doing this work in partnership with First Nations, local governments, industry, scientists, and non-governmental organizations.

Secondary Messages:

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

- The Province remains committed to prioritizing ecosystem health, biodiversity, and species at risk in land and resource management. As part of this commitment, the completion of the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework remains a key objective under the Old Growth Strategic Action Plan.

- This Framework is intended to provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach to maintaining and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem resilience throughout the province.

- It is also intended to support a shift to a multi-species, ecosystems-focused approach that can result in greater benefits across multiple species at a landscape scale and reduce overall costs and effort compared to single-species management.

- We are currently assessing the next steps to advance the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework, but our work to protect high-priority habitats and ecosystems continues. This includes improving stewardship outcomes and addressing long-standing challenges in conservation policy and implementation.

- Additionally, the Province remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting 30 percent of B.C.'s lands and waters by 2030. Achieving this goal will require continued collaboration with First Nations, local communities, and industry partners to develop

effective conservation strategies that align with ecological, cultural, and socio-economic objectives.

- The draft Framework progresses our approach toward stewarding land and water in B.C., an approach that is founded on the principles of reconciliation and commits to:
  - proactively integrating the conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity as part of natural resource management decisions;
  - Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

  - creating biodiversity guidance and standards in partnership with First Nations that will be used to inform land and water use planning.

Questions & Answers:

The B.C. government has already said it intends to protect or conserve 30% of the land base by 2030. What's the purpose of the B.C. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework?

- Our government is building a series of comprehensive and integrated initiatives to safeguard the environment that promote sustainable resource use, support local jobs, and recognize and respect First Nations' rights to secure a future with healthy communities and continued opportunity for all British Columbians.
- The draft Framework is another step forward in the important and ongoing process to safeguard B.C.'s ecosystems and the many species that depend on them to thrive.
- The draft Framework progresses our commitment to stewardship of land and water in B.C. that is founded on the principles of reconciliation and through improved integration of the conservation and management of

ecosystem health and biodiversity as part of natural resource management decisions.

- The draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework builds on work to secure a shared understanding of the natural environment, improve transparency of information, and promote effective support of key environmental values in natural resource decision-making.
- The Framework will focus on sharing information to better co-ordinate work across government and with various partners outside of government to improve efficiency and increase its impact.

What do you mean by biodiversity?

- Biological diversity (or "biodiversity") refers to ecosystems, species and genetic diversity, and the processes that shape them.
- Biodiversity is an integral part of healthy ecosystems, and it supports multiple economic sectors, including forestry, tourism, recreation, hunting, trapping, biological and medical research, and many others.

How will the framework process work? What are the next steps?

- 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*."
- That commitment and the subsequent action plan (New Future for Old Forests – From Review to Action) laid the foundation for the work that is now underway and the work that lies ahead.
- Collaboratively developing the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework and providing a legislative framework to support it consists of two distinct phases:
    - **Phase 1:** finalization of the content of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework.
    - **Phase 2:** exploring legislation options and other enabling tools to achieve the vision and intent of the framework.

What's the timeline for completing the two phases and implementing changes to support the framework?

- Phase 1 of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework development started with collaborative engagement in 2023 with First Nations, as well as input from various interested parties, including sectors that have a stake or interest in biodiversity and ecosystem health.
- Consultation and public engagement took place between November 2023 and January 2024.
- Many supportive responses emphasized the complexity of this work and the need for additional consultations and engagement to ensure the final Framework is well understood and broadly supported, and the implementation path is clear. Advice/Recommendations

Advice/Recommendations

- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

- In the interim, the B.C. government continues to conserve biodiversity and ecosystem health through various initiatives aimed at improving landscape resilience and achieving specific targets, such as protecting 30% of B.C.'s land and water by 2030, in alignment with the B.C. *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.
- The Province will continue to use and improve existing regulatory tools to protect and conserve ecosystem and biodiversity values and improve the resilience of B.C.'s landscapes.

How will First Nations, stakeholders, industry, and communities be involved in this work?

- British Columbians care deeply about the stewardship of their natural spaces, and the Province values their input.
- The content of the Framework and its implementation is being developed and informed by ongoing conversations with First Nations and the mining, oil and gas, tourism, and forestry sectors, as well as local governments, scientists, and other interested parties.
- The aim has been — and continues to be — to invite their ideas and feedback about the Framework and how best to support its implementation.
- Initiatives and activities are already taking place that support the spirit and intent of the Framework, so this additional feedback will help inform its content.

What initiatives and activities are taking place that would support the spirit and intent of the Framework?

- The B.C. government is already leading the way on various aspects of ecosystem health and biodiversity. Examples include:
  - continuing to implement the Together for Wildlife Strategy, including Goal 12 to review and improve the *Wildlife Act*;
  - contributing over $67 million for watershed, wetland, species and ecosystem conservation and restoration projects since 2021;
  - establishing a $100-million Watershed Security Fund; and
  - establishing new conservancy areas in the Incomappleux Valley and Clayoquot Sound area.
- Our government is increasingly moving toward a co-management system with First Nations that fosters improved ecosystem health and is guided by Indigenous knowledge, protocols, and ways of knowing.
- Together with First Nations, we're building on and implementing B.C.'s Wild Salmon Strategy and developing a Watershed Security Strategy, as well as launching B.C.'s first-ever Coastal Marine Strategy.
- Many initiatives are already underway on various aspects of ecosystem health and biodiversity, including:
  - protection of at-risk species;
  - biodiversity enhancement and restoration;
  - development of co-managed land and resource stewardship practices with First Nations;
  - the Together for Wildlife Strategy;
  - the Watershed Security Strategy;
  - the Coastal Marine Strategy;
  - the Wild Salmon Strategy;
  - the Marine Plan Partnership;
  - the Cumulative Effects Framework;
  - the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy;
  - the Old Growth Strategic Review;
  - Land Use Planning;
  - The Conservation Lands Program.
- On Oct. 26, 2023, the Province announced the launch of the Conservation Financing Mechanism (now called the BC Conservation Fund), with $150 million that will be matched by $150 million from the BC Parks Foundation.

- The BC Conservation Fund will support the protection of biological and ecological diversity in B.C. and advance the goal of protecting 30% of B.C.'s landbase by 2030 ("30x30"). This will be done in a manner that considers climate change impacts, is consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and promotes First Nations governance or co-governance, including First Nation-led conservation efforts.
- On Nov. 3, 2023, the Province, the First Nations Leadership Council, and Canada signed the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation to better protect and conserve biodiversity, habitats, and species-at risk in B.C.
- The Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation helps align investments totalling over $1 billion over the eight-year duration of that agreement. The agreement also commits to support First Nations' capacity for governance and First Nations-led stewardship actions.
- The Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation recognizes that First Nations have land-based title and rights in B.C. and are disproportionately affected by climate change and global impacts on biodiversity. Their leadership and knowledge is critical for achieving transformative change and sustained action to deal with these challenges.

How does the commitment to the 30x30 goal relate to the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework?

- The B.C. government's 30x30 goal and the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework both support the Province's commitment to work in partnership with First Nations, the federal government, local communities, and others to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.
- The draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework will help guide and align provincial initiatives that support ecosystem health and the conservation of biodiversity.
- It is intended to help overcome biodiversity loss, adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change, and result in healthy and resilient ecosystems that support clean air and water, healthy communities, and prosperous economies.
- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

When the Partnership Agreement between the Province and two First Nations about caribou in northern B.C. was drafted in 2019, some local communities, residents and stakeholders felt left out of that process, which resulted in racist comments and threats directed at members of those First Nations. If communities and other interested groups are not participating directly in drafting the content of this framework, is there a concern that could happen again? What steps is the government taking to ensure that those parties will be able to provide input on how the framework will be implemented and any potential changes to legislation?

- We know that one of the primary criticisms of the Partnership Agreement process from some local governments and some stakeholders was that they did not feel adequately consulted and felt that the negotiations with First Nations were not sufficiently transparent.
- We acknowledge with deep regret that this process was not the right one to build trust or outcomes that adequately considered input from all interested parties.
- We have learned from that experience and have since developed best practices to use for future projects, including this one.

Will individual British Columbians have an opportunity to provide feedback?

- Yes. The draft Framework was developed through collaborative engagement throughout 2023 and early 2024 with First Nations and with input from local government representatives, multiple industry sectors, and environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs).
- The draft Framework was made available to the public for feedback between November 2023 and January 2024. More than 7,000 written responses were received.
- Once the Framework has been finalized, there will be additional opportunities to engage further throughout the Framework's implementation process.

How will feedback from the public be incorporated into the process?

- Considerable public input was received on the Old Growth Strategic Review recommendations, and that initial feedback helped inform our approach to developing the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework.

- Input received through the consultation and engagement process will be considered as we finalize the Framework and move into the implementation stage.

Could the final Framework adversely affect communities, businesses, or industrial activities such as forestry? If so, how would the B.C. government help mitigate any negative impacts?

- B.C.'s long-term economic stability and many British Columbian jobs depend on a healthy and sustainable environment and on economic resilience.
- We are developing long-term plans for future generations, rather than rely on a shorter planning cycle as we have in the past.
- Implementation of this vision will be done through water and land planning discussions and government-to-government agreements, with active engagement of industry and communities.
- The Province is committed to supporting any affected communities as we embrace a gradual shift to more sustainable jobs and economies.
- This work is already underway with provincial programs like the Rural Economic Diversification and Infrastructure Program's Forest Impact Transition Project, which supports economic recovery and transition in communities affected by changes in the forest sector.
- The Framework could actually help catalyse efforts to diversify and strengthen local economies.

How much will it cost to implement changes to support the Framework?

- B.C. has experienced catastrophic wildfires, unprecedented heat domes, and atmospheric rivers and flooding that caused highway washouts.
- These events posed risks to vulnerable populations, resulted in the loss of infrastructure, and had massive impacts on British Columbians' livelihoods and communities. The cost of responding to these disasters is already in the billions of dollars each year.
- Maintaining the status quo is a costlier option than working together on a shift toward better integrating ecosystem health and biodiversity into decision-making to ensure natural systems can do the work we need them to do.

What's happening with the proposed Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health? Would it rely on existing staff and current budget funding?

- The recommendation to establish an Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health stems from comments received during engagement sessions for various natural resource sector initiatives, including the Old Growth Strategic Review, Together for Wildlife discussions, and the *Forest and Range Practices Act* review.
- A decision about moving forward with an Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health will be made once the Framework is finalized. The structure, purpose, and mandate for such an office has not been determined yet and would likely evolve over time.
- Many anticipated functions of a new Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health already exist within government in different ministries. If this new office is established, we would work with relevant government ministries and agencies to take advantage of existing resources and streamline the proposed office's operations for efficiency.

What's the value of a new Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health?

- An Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health could play a key role in streamlining existing programs and coordinating the management of ecosystem health and biodiversity across the provincial government.
- An Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health could incorporate the B.C. government's work with First Nations to update and co-develop new biodiversity guidance, inform decision-making, and report on the state of biodiversity throughout the province.
- An Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health could begin the implementation of critical elements of the Framework while new or updated legislation is co-developed with First Nations and help ensure accountability through communication of goals and transparently reporting indicators and progress being made through collaborative efforts.

Would the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework lead to a provincial species at risk act?

- Protection for at-risk species in B.C. is currently provided through a suite of legislation that includes the *Wildlife Act*, *Forest and Range Practices Act*, *Energy Resources Activities Act*, *Mineral Tenure Act*, *Ecological Reserves Act*, *Park Act*, and *Land Act*.

- The draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework sets the stage for the co-development of legislation to better protect and conserve biodiversity, including species at risk.
- By focusing on the conservation and management of biodiversity and ecosystem health, the draft Framework and subsequent legislation changes could also address species and ecosystems at risk by adopting a broader focus.
- This more holistic approach would consider activities and other factors that could pose threats to multiple species or ecosystems, while recognizing that managing specific risks for specific vulnerable species may always be necessary.
- The co-development of new or updated legislation with First Nations may not necessarily lead to standalone legislation focusing on species at risk. However, it would lay a foundation to better deal with biodiversity loss — including species and ecosystems at risk — by providing a range of policy and legislative tools to address current and future challenges.

Does the Framework mean that more areas of B.C. may become "off limits" for timber harvesting?

- Integrating biodiversity and ecosystem health factors into decision-making processes does not mean that more areas become "off limits" for timber harvesting. Rather, adopting a consistent approach to considering biodiversity and ecosystem values will help ensure the sustainability of natural resource management and build confidence in related decisions.
- Options will be assessed based on an area's unique attributes and context.
- Decisions on timber harvesting are made under the *Forest Act* and the *Forest and Range Practices Act*. Processes such as Forest Landscape Plans are done in partnership with First Nations and in collaboration with stakeholders.
- The Framework is intended to inform harvesting patterns, silvicultural treatments, forest rotation intervals, and road management (i.e., spatial and temporal aspects of forest management) to improve forest health and resilience.

So the implementation of a Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework wouldn't necessarily mean restricting industrial operations in some areas?

- The draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework acknowledges that biodiversity and ecosystem health is essential for healthy communities and economies for generations to come.
- Forestry, for example, will continue to be a key part of B.C.'s economy and identity. The Ministry of Forests is collaborating with First Nations, local communities, and industry to create stronger and more sustainable forest stewardship practices that align with conserving and managing biodiversity and ecosystem health.
- The draft Framework aims to support the sustainable use of natural resources, not shut down these sectors. The intent is to create conditions necessary for thriving industries and the longevity of natural resource sectors that support B.C. communities.
- A key focus is continuing to build economic resilience and preparing for future challenges.
- By creating efficiencies and working more closely together, we are finding ways to further support thriving industries.
- Through the Old Growth Strategic Review, new steps have been taken to promote sustainable forestry practices. They include alternatives to clear-cutting practices to better support forestry resiliency, ecosystem health, and adaptation to the impacts of climate change.
- The draft Framework promotes ecosystem resilience and the sustainable delivery of economic and social services.
- Future actions under the Framework would promote stronger economic resilience. These could include opportunities and incentives for local social enterprises and ways to diversify the economy.
- The Framework has the potential to make ministry operations more efficient, improve processes, enhance problem-solving and decision-making, and support energy, water and food security.

Issue: Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation – Progress report and implementation

Recommend Response:

- The Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation (the Agreement) is an agreement among the Governments of Canada and British Columbia (BC) and all members of the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC).
- The purpose of the TFANC is to achieve more integrated and collaborative landscape-based approach to conservation that halts and reverses biodiversity loss, advances reconciliation, and ensures a more prosperous future for all British Columbians.
- TFANC represents a combined enabling investment of $1B (for 2023-2026) with the potential for additional future investments (up to year 2030). Canada has committed $500M from several federal programs, and BC committed the same through several existing provincial programs and initiatives.
- The federal and provincial investments have and will continue to generate jobs, support sustainable industries, build capacity for environmental stewardship, and enhance local economies.
- The first progress report, reflecting the collaborative contribution of all parties, was published on March 5, 2025, and reflects the baseline that future reports will measure progress against.

Additional Response points:

- The parties to TFANC formed the Tripartite Implementation Committee to support performance management, coordination of funding, and annual reporting.
- Key accomplishments include adding approximately 300,000 hectares to protected areas; restoring or enhancing

thousands of hectares specifically for wildlife; investing in information, partnerships and engagement that will lead to future actions (see attachment for examples).

Key Facts:

- Investing in conservation efforts helps protect BC's natural resources, promoting long-term environmental, cultural, and economic resilience.
- Federal funds include: the Enhanced Nature Legacy Fund (ENL; $175.76M); the Old Growth Nature Fund (OGNF; $50M); Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund (NSCS; $170.92M) Fund; and the 2 Billion Trees program (2BT; $104M for habitat specific projects).
- BC programs include Land Use Planning; Species at Risk Recovery; Together for Wildlife Strategy; Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework; and, Indigenous Guardian Programs, among others. Funding was also committed to partners, such as the BC Conservation Fund (in collaboration with the BC Parks Foundation), the Watershed Security Fund (in collaboration with the Real Estate Foundation of BC and the First Nations Fisheries Council) and the Guardian and Stewardship Training Initiative (in collaboration with New Relationship Trust).
- This level of collaboration has resulted in incremental additions to the federal funding commitment (e.g., $7.4M from Parks Canada's Ecological Corridors Program) and does not include existing bilateral agreements that support priority species (e.g., caribou) or places partnerships (southern interior grasslands).
- Many of the goals and objectives of the TFANC were underway prior to signing the Agreement in November 2023, including spatial land use and forest landscape planning; restoration of degraded ecosystems; recovery of species at risk; and improved collection and communication of data and information.

Attachment: Examples TFANC Implementation Supplement

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Jennifer Psyllakis Phone: 250-812-7797

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Maryam Mofidpoor Phone: Government Financial Information

Attachment 1. Examples of activities enabled and supported through the Tripartite Framework Agreement for Nature Conservation.

Examples of the progress toward the protected and conserved goals and objectives include:

- Protection of 200,000 hectares with the Klinse-za/Twin Sisters Park in central B.C.
- Protection of 58,000 hectares of rare inland temperate rainforest in southeast B.C. near Revelstoke in the Incomappleux Conservancy.
- Protection of 76,000 hectares of ancient temperate rainforest in Clayoquot Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island.
- 61,000 hectares of native grasslands, forests and wetlands protected in the Bunchgrass Hills Conservation Area in southern interior of B.C.
- Conservation of coastal old growth through purchase of more than 300 hectares of private land.

Examples of the progress toward the restored and enhanced goals and objectives include:

- Support for the creation of a system of passageways in the Rockies to save wildlife from collisions.
- Planted almost 50,000 whitebark pine seedlings.
- Restoration of ~14,000 hectares of priority habitats with federal funding investments.

Examples of the progress toward species and ecosystem recovery goals and objectives include:

- Planted almost 50,000 whitebark pine seedlings.
- Protection of 200,000 hectares of in Klinse-za/Twin Sisters Park in central B.C. supporting caribou recovery.
- 61,000 hectares of native grasslands, forests and wetlands protected in the Bunchgrass Hills Conservation Area home to many species at risk.

Examples of the progress toward data and information goals and objectives include:

- Environment and Climate Change Canada and B.C. assessed 4.8 million hectares and classified 419,187 hectares as wetlands, publishing this data in 2024 on the Canadian National Wetlands Inventory.
- Federal matching of provincial partnerships with First Nations through the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework.

Issue: Species at Risk Recovery - General

Recommend Response:

- B.C. will continue to support and implement recovery actions for species at risk.
- Working collaboratively across ministries, First Nations, and federal counterparts in Environment and Climate Change Canada, Parks Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans enables consistent and effective management actions for species at risk recovery.
- Successful recovery typically requires a combination of population and habitat management.
- In fiscal year 2024-25, over $600K of provincial operational funds, along with $1.1M leveraged from federal grant and contributions with Canada, was dedicated to support the recovery of Marbled Murrelet, Northern Goshawk, Williamson's Sapsucker, Western-Screech Owl and Whitebark Pine.
- Specific programs are operated for both Spotted Owl and Caribou, with additional provincial invests averaging about $11M per year, which also leverages several partnerships and collaborative agreements.

Additional Response points:

- Over 250 species-specific recovery plans have been developed in collaboration with the federal government, providing guidance for recovery and management decisions.
- Ongoing initiatives are focused on updating policies and tools for species at risk management. This includes:
  - Updating the list of species at risk under *Forest and Range Practices Act* and related the *Energy Resource Activities Act*.

- Guidance on the use of implementation tools to integrate with current initiatives like Forest Landscape Planning and the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework.
- Comprehensive review of the *Wildlife Act.*
- Defining and establishing Other Effective Conservation Measures as part of the goal to protect 30 percent of land and 30 percent water in B.C. by 2030.
- Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation between First Nations Leadership Council, Canada and B.C. to advance ecosystem health and biodiversity conservation through a cooperative approach.

Key Facts:

- Species at risk recovery in B.C. is led by WLRS, with support from other natural resource sector ministries. These ministries contribute by implementing recovery plans through objective-setting, permitting, and authorizing activities, as outlined in species at risk recovery plans.
- Determining recovery actions begins with identifying limiting factors, and a population objective that respects Indigenous rights and considers cultural, social and economic values. Recovery actions are guided by multiple statutes, with many authorities now assigned to WLRS.
- Species at risk recovery actions are linked with objectives in Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation.
- In B.C., 289 species are currently listed under the *Species at Risk Act*, with 107 having legally identified critical habitat in final federal recovery strategies. After accounting for overlap, the mapped polygons within which critical habitat may be found cover approximately 31.3 million hectares.
- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

Date Prepared/Revised: February 19, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Jennifer Psyllakis	Phone: 250-812-7797
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Heather Wiebe	Phone: 778-916-4005

Species and Ecosystem Recovery Branch Funding summary- March 2025

Project Title	Program Area	Funding Amount	Total Forecast	Funding Source
NOGO implementation	Northern Goshawk	$150,000.00	$150,000.00	Province
Williamson's Sapsucker Recovery	Williamson's Sapsucker	$63,500.00	$64,104.99	Province
NOGO Implementation	Nothern Goshawk	$9,000.00	$9,000.00	Province
MAMU Implementation	Marbled Murrelet	$57,500.00	$57,500.00	Province
WESO inventory & habitat	Western-Screech Owl	$40,000.00	$40,000.00	Province
Whitebark Pine Recovery BC	Whitebark Pine	$0.00	$0.00	Province
2BT Habitat Restoration (T4W)	2BT Habitat Restoration	$90,000.00	$80,950.45	Province
Whitebark Pine BC Implementation	Whitebark Pine	$80,000.00	$80,000	Province
WESO inventory & habitat	Western-Screech Owl	$55,000.00	$55,000.00	Province
MAMU implementation	Marbled Murrelet	$100,000.00	$100,000.00	Province
NOGO inventory & habitat	Northern Goshawk	$150,000.00	$149,990.16	Canada
MAMU inventory & habitat	Marbled Murrelet	$100,000.00	$100,000.00	Canada
WESO - address info gaps for habitat	Western-Screech Owl	$150,000.00	$149,994.93	Canada
Implementing Key Recovery Actions for WBP	Whitebark Pine	$180,000.00	$178,287.74	Canada
Old Growth Nature Fund	Old Growth	$500,000.00	$499,941.69	Canada
2BT Habitat Restoration NRCAN	2BT Habitat Restoration	$160,000.00	$129,507.94	Canada
Great Blue Heron population genetics	Great Blue Heron	$50,000.00	$50,000.00	Province
WISA - Base Budget	Williamson's Sapsucker	$10,000.00	$9,500	Province
Policy Development - Alana Phillips		$ 5,000.00	$ 5,000.00	Province
IFP Projects	Various	$60,241.00	$60,241.00	Province
Priority Places	Dry Interior/ SW BC	$ 575,000.00	$ 570,000.00	Canada
Enhanced Nature Legacy		$ 532,000.00	$ 531,566.00	Canada
		$3,117,241.00	**$3,070,584.90**	
		Percent	99%	

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: March 12, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Species at risk and related B.C. legislation**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **Many species that used to thrive in B.C. now face challenges due to climate change, habitat loss, invasive species, pollution, and human activity.**

- **That is why our government is 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 habitat to support their recovery is a key priority 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.**

- **As part of government's commitment to the implementation of the Old Growth Action Plan, the planned 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.**

- **While a species-specific approach will always be needed for some species at risk, the Framework is intended to provide flexible**

management tools to more efficiently and effectively meet our stewardship goals.

- **The Framework will uphold our commitments in the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act* and commit to working better together across governments and with industry, scientists, and non-governmental organizations.**

- **Over** Advice/Recommendation **submissions were received from the public on the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework. Staff from the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship continue to work with stakeholders on this feedback.**

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

- **Nature is one of our greatest allies in mitigating and adapting to a changing climate, supporting healthy communities, and ensuring a prosperous economy.**

- **A protected and healthy natural environment provides clean water and air, resilience to catastrophic weather and fires, access to sustenance for First Nations, and support for physical and mental health of the people and communities who care deeply about the nature they live in and rely upon.**

- **We recognize that sustainable resource development and long-term prosperity for British Columbians cannot be a trade-off between the environment and the economy. We can and we must support both.**

- **The B.C. government has committed to protecting 30% of land and water by 2030. Although much of this work begins with government-to-government partnerships with First Nations through land use planning, it does not end there.**

- **About 18.5 million hectares in B.C. have already been protected, which is approximately 19.7% of the province's total land area. Of that 19.7%, about 15.6% is conserved in parks and protected areas, and about 4.1% is conserved as Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs).**

- **To reach the 30% target, an estimated 9.9 million hectares (10.3% of B.C.'s land base (or about) will need to be identified and protected or conserved.**

If asked about species-at-risk legislation:

ADVICE TO MINISTER

- **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.**

- **We are currently developing an updated list of species at risk, regionally important wildlife, ungulates and ecological communities that could be included under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* based on the feedback from multiple engagement efforts with the public, stakeholders and Indigenous Nations.**

- **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 planned Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework will also 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.**

- **We are 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 supports our mutual commitment to strengthening conservation and stewardship provincewide through the coordination of priorities and funding.**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

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 balanced land use decisions that advance conservation measures have been included in recent 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 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.

Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation
In February 2021, the B.C. and federal governments committed to developing a new nature-focused 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 also necessary and desirable.

The Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation (the "Framework 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 Framework Agreement established a governance framework and is strengthening conservation efforts in B.C. 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.

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File created	April 29, 2022	
File updated	March 12, 2025	

Issue: Spotted Owl Recovery

Recommend Response:

- Our government and partners are doing everything we can to help spotted owls recover, including the operation of the world's only conservation breeding and release program for this endangered species.
- B.C. has been actively working to recover spotted owls since 1991 and has a robust recovery program to achieve the goal of 125 breeding pairs over the next 50 years.
- Decisions that support spotted owl recovery are based on the best available science and First Nations' knowledge.We are confident in the approach we're taking.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- B.C. has protected more than 280,000 hectares of habitat specifically for spotted owls, which is enough to support a future population of at least 125 breed pairs. An additional 849,000 hectares of spotted owl habitat is at least partially protected by other conservation measures, ensuring there is a robust contingency of habitat options for spotted owl.
- We adaptively manage habitat protections, based in part on how spotted owls are released into the wild use these habitats, and in the face of climate change and wildfires.
- Over the past three summers, B.C. and Spuzzum First Nation have been working in partnership to release captive-bred spotted owls into protected habitats to learn and further inform the breeding and release program. Each of the six released owls reached a milestone of self-reliance in the wild for several months, but ultimately did not survive.
- B.C., with support from Environment and Climate Change Canada, has invested approximately $1M annually to support the recovery program. This includes funding secured

through the Enhance Nature Legacy Grant and Contribution agreement from Canada as well as B.C. contributions through the Land Base Investment Strategy and financial offset deferral account (e.g. TransMountain Expansion Pipeline mitigation commitment).

Key Facts:

- Northern Spotted Owl is listed as endangered under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) and red-listed by B.C.
- Threats to spotted owl 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).
- Spotted owl is highlighted in the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation between Canada, B.C. and the First Nations Leadership Council.
- In 2023, Canada considered, but ultimately declined, to issue an Emergency Protection Order under SARA based on their assessment of imminent threat to recovery. Federal Cabinet outlined expectations for progress on incremental habitat protection and the development of a SARA Action Plan within one year.
- A SARA Protection Order is undesirable as all habitat disturbances must cease.
- Canada's expectations for incremental habitat protection include an increase in overall area of habitat, and increase of 'effectiveness' of protections, as well as the ongoing protection of the Spuzzum and Utzlius watersheds where the last known wild-born spotted owls were observed.
- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

- In 2021, the B.C. and federal governments agreed that logging would be deferred in the Spuzzum and Utzlius watersheds in the Fraser Canyon (covering 32,671 hectares). The logging deferral was extended on February 28, 2023 and currently set to expire February 28, 2025.
- B.C. maintains the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program facility in the Township of Langley.

- There are currently 37 spotted owls in B.C. 36 at the breeding facility in Langley and one wild-born female in the wild (last detected during 2022).

Date Prepared/Revised: 11 February 2025
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Heather Wiebe, A/ED Terrestrial Species Recovery Phone: 778-916-4005
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Kristina Lensky, DRSO (South Coast), LUPCE Phone: 778-572-2179

Q&A

Title: Release of spotted owls from Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program facility into the wild in 2022, 2023, and 2024

Date: Dec. 20, 2024

Key Messages (general):

- **Our government and our partners are doing everything we can to help spotted owls recover, including running Canada'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 habitat specifically for spotted owls, enough to support a self-sustaining population of 125 breeding pairs in the future.**

- **An additional 849,000 hectares of spotted owl habitat is at least partially protected by other conservation measures, ensuring there are habitat options for spotted owls as we adaptively manage the species' recovery in the face of climate change and other factors, such as wildfire.**

- **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 Northern 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 that point.**

- **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 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.**

- **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.**

- **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.**

- **Everyone involved in spotted owl recovery efforts in B.C. was saddened by the loss of the owls, but the experience helped them learn more about releasing birds raised at the breeding facility.**

Release of two male spotted owls into the wild in **July 2023** and the death of both of them:

- **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 was called "wíkcn" [week-chin].**

- **Both owls had been 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 monitored the progress of these owls and were prepared to adapt management strategies to ensure the owls had the best possible chance of survival in the wild.**

- **Unfortunately, it was confirmed in early June 2024 that both spotted owls released in 2023 had been found dead.**

- **The cause of their death is unknown, but potential causes include physical injury, predation, disease, or starvation.**

Release of two male spotted owls into the wild in **June 2024** and the death of both of them:

- **In partnership with the Spuzzum First Nation, two male spotted owls born at the breeding facility in Langley in 2023 — named skiʔkíyeʔ ("ancestor") and c̓q̓álp ("young Douglas fir") — were**

moved to an aviary in a protected forest area in the Fraser Valley on June 13, 2024.

- **Both owls had been assessed as healthy and ready to fend for themselves that spring, after demonstrating that they could capture live prey and maintain a stable body weight.**

- **The door to the aviary was opened on June 26, 2024, to allow the two owls to forage on their own and acclimatize to their new surroundings.**

- **Unfortunately, both c̓q̓áɬp and skiʔkíyeʔ were found deceased in the fall of 2024 (September 5 and October 6 respectively). The necropsy report for c̓q̓áɬp noted that he was emaciated, and his diminished condition was severe enough to cause death. It's suspected that skiʔkíyeʔ succumbed to a predator.**

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 of that year 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.

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

- 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 monitored the progress of these owls and were prepared to adapt management strategies as needed to ensure they had the best possible chance of survival in the wild.

What can you tell me about the <u>third</u> release of spotted owls from the breeding facility into the wild in <u>June 2024</u>?

- In partnership with the Spuzzum First Nation, two male spotted owls born at the breeding facility in Langley in 2023 — named skiʔkíyeʔ (“ancestor”) and ċq̓áłp (“young Douglas fir”) — were moved to an aviary in a protected

forest area in the Fraser Valley on June 13, 2024.
- Both owls had been assessed as healthy and ready to fend for themselves that spring, after demonstrating that they could capture live prey and maintain a stable body weight.
- The door to the aviary was opened on June 26, 2024, to allow the two owls to forage on their own and acclimatize to their new surroundings.
- Unfortunately, both owls were found deceased in the fall of 2024.

When did the ministry learn that each of the released owls were dead?
- On May 2, 2023, ministry staff confirmed that two of the three owls released in 2022 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 those two birds using radio telemetry.
- In the spring of 2024, ministry staff confirmed that both spotted owls released in 2023 were deceased.
- In the fall of 2024, ministry staff confirmed that both spotted owls released in 2024 were deceased.

What was the cause of death for each of the released owls?
- The cause of death for the birds released in 2022 and 2023 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 and survived for several months in the wild, but the greatest challenge for all juvenile spotted owls is surviving their first winter.
- One of the spotted owls released in 2024 is suspected to have succumbed to a predator. The necropsy report for the other owl noted that he was emaciated, and his diminished condition was severe enough to cause death.
- There was always a risk that these owls would face challenges living on their own.

How has the deaths of the released owls 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 reviewed all the information we could gather from the last known location of the dead owls, including weather patterns and other factors.
- It will take time to fully complete the analysis for all three years 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 conservation-bred owls in 2022, 2023, and 2024 is part of an ongoing learning process to help spotted owls recover in B.C. The 2022 release represented a significant milestone, as the program pivoted from only breeding spotted owls to releasing some of them into the wild and carefully monitoring their response and activities, with the ultimate goal of re-populating the species in its natural habitat.
- We continue to learn and adapt our management techniques with each release.

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, July 2023 and June 2024 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.

How many spotted owls have been released into the wild, and what were the outcomes?

- A total of six conservation-bred owls have been released to date.
- All of the released owls have died, but each experience has provided important information to help improve the program.

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 three releases of spotted owls in 2022, 2023 and 2024, 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 were 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.

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

- We've protected more than 280,000 hectares of habitat specifically for spotted owls — an area equivalent to about 690 Stanley Parks — which is enough to support a future population of 125 breeding pairs.

- An additional 849,000 hectares of spotted owl habitat is at least partially protected by other conservation measures, ensuring there are habitat options for spotted owls as we adaptively manage the species recovery in the face of climate change and other factors, such as wildfire.
- 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.
- There are over 1,220,000 hectares of additional habitat available that is suitable for spotted owls, of which 70% is at least partially protected through other conservation mechanisms. These measures support the dedicated spotted owl protections that have been established to support 125 breeding pairs.

Did the released spotted owls tend to 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.
- The spotted owls released in 2024 largely remained with the protected area where they were released.

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 release candidates were switched to a “live prey” diet earlier than was done in each previous release, to give them more time to practise their hunting skills while still at the breeding facility.

    - The 2024 candidates were fed live prey when they were just a couple of months old, so they were able to develop their hunting skills during winter conditions. This gave them an additional 21 weeks to practice those skills in a variety of weather and temperature conditions, including cold and snow.
    - A new release site with improved habitat features (within the same general area) was selected for the 2023 release of spotted owls.
    - The birds' GPS monitors were reprogrammed to increase the frequency of their transmissions, 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 have the deaths of the released owls affected 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.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: March 18, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Spotted owl recovery**

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 habitat specifically for spotted owls — an area equivalent to about 690 Stanley Parks — which is enough to support a future population of 125 breeding pairs.**

- **An additional 842,000 hectares of spotted owl habitat is at least partially protected by other conservation measures, ensuring there are habitat options for spotted owls.**

- **We adaptively manage the recovery of this species based in part on how spotted owls released into the wild use these habitats, and in the face of climate change and other factors such as wildfires.**

- **We continue to work with First Nations partners and the federal government on spotted owl recovery in British Columbia.**

If asked about logging in protected spotted owl habitat…

- **To be clear, the areas where owls have been released are protected habitat, and no commercial logging activities are permitted in these areas.**

- **There have been very small adjustments to these protected areas in response to natural disasters or support for First Nations or public interests, such as restoration of areas impacted by the 2021 atmospheric river, mitigation of wildfire risks, improvements to public infrastructure such as roads, etc.**

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

[PLEASE 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, July 2023, and June 2024.]

- **Although a dedicated team that includes First Nations representatives is doing everything it can to help spotted owls recover in B.C., it is a long-term process with no guarantee of success.**

- **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 of Spuzzum First Nation have participated in release planning, construction of aviaries used in the release program, and the monitoring of owls after they were released.**

- **Six owls have been released to date and, unfortunately, all have died.**

- **Despite these deaths, the release trials have had considerable success in achieving the program's experimental objectives. Understanding how best to return spotted owls to the wild informs the broader program and approach and is essential to the birds' recovery.**

2022 release:

- **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.**

- **All three owls had been assessed as healthy and ready to fend for themselves that spring, after demonstrating that they could capture live prey and maintain a stable body weight.**

- **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.**

- **Ministry staff and project partners monitored the progress of these owls and were prepared to adapt management strategies as needed to ensure the owls had the best possible chance of survival in the wild.**

- **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.**

- **The first trial release in 2022 helped us learn more about raising conservation-bred birds and releasing them into the wild, which informed protocols and procedures for transporting, releasing, and supporting released owls.**

2023 release:

- **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 was called "wíkcn" [week-chin].**

- **In the spring of 2024, it was confirmed that neither sítist nor wíkcn survived the winter. Possible causes of death included physical injury, predation, disease, or starvation.**

2024 release:

- **In partnership with the Spuzzum First Nation, two male spotted owls born at the breeding facility in Langley in 2023 — named skiʔkíyeʔ ("ancestor") and c̓q̓álp ("young Douglas fir") — were moved to an aviary in a protected**

forest area in the Fraser Valley on June 13, 2024.

- **Unfortunately, both c̓q̓álp and ski?kíye? were found deceased in the fall of 2024 (September 5 and October 6 respectively).**

- **The necropsy report for c̓q̓álp noted that he was emaciated, and his diminished condition was severe enough to cause death. It's suspected that ski?kíye? succumbed to a predator.**

- **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 Ecojustice/Wilderness Committee petitions to the federal court:

- **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 concluded with a judgment on June 7, 2024 that the federal Environment Minister's eight-month delay before recommending an emergency order for spotted owls in B.C. violated the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA).**

- **The B.C. government understands the importance of protecting critical spotted owl habitat from activities that could disrupt the birds' recovery.**

- **We continue to work closely with the federal government on the development of an updated Spotted Owl Recovery Strategy and a B.C. Implementation Plan for the Recovery of Spotted Owl in B.C.**

- **We remain committed to helping spotted owls recover in the wild, and we are confident we are on the right path.**

- **That's why we've collaborated with First Nations and biologists to protect more than 280,000 hectares of habitat specifically for spotted owls, enough to support a self-sustaining population of 125 breeding pairs in the future.**

- **There are over 1,220,000 hectares of additional spotted owl habitat, of which 70% is at least partially protected through other conservation mechanisms. These measures support the dedicated spotted owl protections that have been established.**

- **As more owls are reintroduced into the wild, we may need to adjust these protected areas as we learn more about how owls make use of this habitat.**

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

- **The province is working collaboratively with First Nations to establish new processes for the management of old growth habitat.**

- **No commercial logging is permitted in the protected areas specifically set aside for spotted owls.**

If asked about the status of the two areas in the Fraser Canyon where logging was deferred from 2021 until February 2025 (aka Spotted Owl Designated Area, Part 13 deferral in the Spuzzum and Utzlius watersheds):

- **In 2021, the B.C. government deferred logging in two Fraser Canyon watersheds as an interim measure to support spotted owl recovery.**

- **This deferral expired on February 28th, 2025.**

- **The deferral impacted forest operations for one Timber Sale Lisencee in the Utzlius watershed, and another licensee in the Spuzzum watershed. The cutting in the Utzlius watershed concluded just prior to the deferral coming into effect.**

  The existing Timber Sale Licence in the Spuzzum watershed is valid for another six months and the licensee is now entitled to harvest in that area. However, the resumption of logging activity in the Spuzzum watershed is likely impracticable in the short term due to road damage.
- **The Province remains committed to helping spotted owls recover in the wild, and we are confident we are on the right path.**

- **More than 280,000 hectares of habitat has been protected specifically for spotted owls, enough to support a self-sustaining population of 125 breeding pairs in the future.**

- **Any new spotted owl specific habitat protection will be considered in the context of adaptive management and with the support of First Nations rights and titleholders.**

- **This includes incorporating new knowledge and experience gained when releasing owls, as well as knowledge about other factors such as climate change and assumptions underlying B.C.'s approach to determining the amount and configuration of protected habitats.**

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.**

- **To help support spotted owl recovery in B.C., 216 barred owls were relocated or removed between 2007 and fall 2023 under the provincial Barred Owl Control Program.**

- **Other jurisdictions have taken similar steps to manage barred owls, and in some instances these measures have succeeded in preventing steep declines in spotted owl populations.**

- **We are closely monitoring this ongoing program, and we are ensuring that our efforts to save the spotted owl are focused.**

If asked about the recent 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.**

- **During the construction of the Trans Mountain Expansion Project (TMEP), the Province continually raised concerns with the federal government about noise disturbance from the project, related risks to survival and breeding success at the breeding centre, and the company's lack of appropriate mitigation planning.**

- **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 wild-born spotted owl currently known in the wild 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.**

KEY FACTS:

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.

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.

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 over 280,000 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 280,000 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.

The known B.C. spotted owl population currently comprises 11 females and 25 males at the breeding centre, as well as one known wild-born female in the wild, for a population total of 37. Since the inception of the breeding program in 2007, the number of spotted owls in B.C. has grown by approximately 11% per year.

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.

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, intended 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 specifically identified threats from logging in the Spuzzum Creek and Utzlius Creek watersheds as posing 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 to February 2025. A proposal to again extend the logging deferrals in these areas is under discussion, but a decision has not been made yet.

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

We’ve protected more than 280,000 hectares of habitat specifically for spotted owls, which is enough to support a future population of 125 breeding pairs. An additional 842,000 hectares of spotted owl habitat is at least partially protected by other conservation measures, ensuring there are habitat options for spotted owls as we adaptively manage the species’ recovery in the face of climate change and other factors, such as wildfires. Advice/Recommendations

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

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 made 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 northern spotted owl was identified as a focal species in the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation (TFANC) to ensure that a suite of measures to support spotted owl recovery are implemented. Specifically, Section 8.4.8 of the agreement states "Canada will support B.C. and First Nations actions toward the recovery of Spotted Owl *caurina* including a SARA-compliant action plan, augmenting conservation breeding capacity, control of competitive species, release of conservation-bred owls, and monitoring and adaptive management of both species (e.g., Spotted Owl and Barred Owl) and habitat protection, conservation, and recruitment of owls." Negotiations are underway to support the implementation of this commitment in the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation.

The B.C. government is preparing a formal response to the federal government on next steps, in alignment with the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation. The Province has prepared a draft Implementation Plan for the Recovery of Spotted Owl in B.C., which is SARA-compliant, for adoption as an Action Plan by the federal government. B.C. government approvals were pending as of Nov. 19, 2024.

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, and a ruling was made on June 7, 2024 that the federal environment minister's eight-month delay before recommending an emergency order violated the federal *Species at Risk Act*.

Updated Spotted Owl Recovery Strategy

The Province is working closely with the federal government on the development of an updated draft Spotted Owl Recovery Strategy, which identifies areas of critical spotted owl habitat.

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental

The July 2024 draft Spotted Owl Recovery Strategy is posted online (Spotted Owl caurina subspecies (Strix occidentalis caurina). The public comment period for the draft strategy is now closed.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

Release of spotted owls into the wild (August 2022, July 2023, and June 2024)

In **August 2022**, three male spotted owls raised in the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program in Langley were released into protected forests in the Advice/Recommendations; Conservation of Heritage Sites; Interests of an Indigenous People; Intergovernmental Communications. Ministry staff worked on this project in partnership with the Spuzzum First Nation.

Advice/Recommendations; Conservation of Heritage Sites; Interests of an Indigenous People; Intergovernmental Communications

It was the first-ever release of conservation-bred spotted owls into the wild anywhere in Canada. Information about subsequent releases of spotted owls into the wild in B.C., as well as the outcomes of those efforts, is provided in the "Advice and Recommended Response" bullets above.

These releases represent a significant step forward in the Province's efforts to help spotted owls achieve a self-sustaining population in B.C. A monitoring plan helps ministry staff better understand the behaviour and responses of released owls as their movements are tracked using GPS tags.

Logging deferrals

In 2021, the B.C. 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 protect spotted owl habitat. The deferral provided interim protection while the amount and configuration of spotted owl habitat that's necessary to support recovery was reviewed and discussed with Environment and Climate Change Canada. This approach helped 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 extended in 2023 but expired on Feb. 28, 2025.

The deferral impacted forestry operations for Teal Jones in the Utzlius watershed and BC Timber Sales in the Spuzzum watershed. Teal concluded their active cutting permit just prior to the Part 13 deferral coming into effect.

The BC Timber Sales Licence (TSL) holder in the Spuzzum drainage has six months left on its licence (which was in abeyance during the terms of the Part 13 deferral) and the licence holder is now entitled to resume harvesting in the area. However, it is unlikely they will be able to access the timber in the next three months or longer due to road damage sustained during the 2021 atmospheric river. The Ministry of Forests is currently finalizing plans to address that road access and liabilities, with plans to repair the road subject to the outcome of cabinet decisions. The road runs through a Long-Term Owl Habitat Area (WHA), any road construction work would require an exemption.

WLRS and BC Timber Sales are working cooperatively, but the timing of any construction must avoid the spotted owl breeding season this spring as a condition of the Wildlife Habitat Area exemption. Given this timing, the combination of surveys and roadwork could make it difficult for the licensee to finish harvesting in the previously deferred areas.

The value of the remaining timber was estimated at $1.8 million in 2021 log values. Considering the road situation and related impacts, the TSL holder could seek compensation estimated at $3.2 million from the Province. If compensation is deemed to be owed, BCTS is unable to contribute due to limitations within the Special Account.

Barred owls

To help support spotted owl recovery in B.C., 216 barred owls were relocated or removed between 2007 and fall 2023 under the provincial Barred Owl Control Program.

Other jurisdictions have taken similar steps to manage barred owls, and in some instances these measures have succeeded in preventing steep declines in spotted owl populations.

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.

Status of the breeding facility property

The Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program facility was originally on private property under the jurisdiction of the Township of Langley and part of the Agricultural Land Reserve. In March 2024, the B.C. government subdivided and purchased a portion of the property and converted it to Crown land. An additional lease arrangement is being negotiated for a small portion of the remainder of the lot (where some existing aviaries are located) and to allow continued shared use of water resources and road access while infrastructure is constructed for the new Crown land parcel. Both the government and the landowner want to ensure that the spotted owl breeding facility operations remain undisturbed.

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, Director, Resource Stewardship Operations, WLRS Jennifer Psyllakis, acting ADM, Resource Stewardship, WLRS	778 572-2179 250 812-7797
File created	June 10, 2022	
File updated	March 18, 2025	

Issue: Caribou Recovery: Predator Reduction

Recommend Response:

- Predator reduction to support caribou recovery is a scientifically supported conservation tool and only occurs under very specific conditions.
- Implementation is not taken lightly. Rigorous protocols are followed to ensure humane methods and program effectiveness is assessed under an adaptive management framework.
- Predator reduction is currently applied in 15 of B.C.'s 54 caribou herds. Where applied, caribou populations have responded with increases in adult and calf survival leading to positive population growth.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The B.C. government has made significant investments to assess program effectiveness. Of the 15 caribou ranges where predator reduction is currently implemented, 11 herds have responded positively with increasing population trends, while the other four herds are in the early stages and require further monitoring to evaluate.
- Habitat protection and restoration are key to ensure future self-sustaining caribou populations (i.e. stable or increasing caribou populations without the need for intensive management intervention). The benefits to caribou may take decades to unfold until the habitat recovers.
- Predator reduction is considered an interim recovery action to maintain caribou within prioritized ranges while long-term habitat restoration and protection measures are implemented.

- The provincial wolf reduction procedure is used by wildlife managers to outline a transparent decision-making process towards predator reduction implementation.
- Animal welfare is a priority, and the program follows international and provincial guidelines for humaneness.
- Animal Care Applications accompany permit applications and must be approved by the provincial veterinarian prior to work proceeding.

Previous 2 years of predator reduction

Program Area	Wolves Removed 2023	Cougars Removed 2023	Wolves Removed 2024*	Cougars Removed 2024	Total cost 2024 (actuals spent to date)
Southern Mountain – Southern Group					
Central Selkirks	2	5	0	3	$100,000
Columbia North	2	3	8	3	$130,000
North Cariboo	7	-	15	-	$60,000
Hart Ranges	7	-	25	-	$177,000
Southern Mountain – Northern Group					
Graham	20	-	Canceled	-	N/A
Itcha-Ilgachuz	37	-	59	-	$179,000
Tweedsmuir	45	-	33	-	$269,400
Southern Mountain – Central Group					
South Peace (Quintette, Klinse-Za, Kennedy Siding, Narraway)	30	-	50	-	$157,800
Northern Mountain					
Pink Mountain	41	-	16	-	$169,200
Boreal					
Chinchaga	26	-	Canceled	-	n/a
New 2024					
Barkerville	N/A		14		$52,500
Takla**	N/A		27		$198,700
TOTAL	**217*** **	**8**	**247**	**6**	**$1,493,600**

* Of note, field conditions were very poor for wolf reduction during much of the winter 2024, resulting in lower removal numbers than expected. Some treatment areas were canceled due to poor conditions.
** Co-delivered between Takla Lake First Nation and BC Government.
*** FY24 total cost was $1,591,900.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 11, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Personal Security; Security Concern

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Government Financial Information; Personal Security; Security Concern

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: March 12, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**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 with a five-year commitment of $10 million each year. We continue to support this work with an investment of about $6.5 million this 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 measures, including protection, restoration, and management, and**
  - **recreation management**

- **Interim short-term and medium-term actions include:**
  - **maternity pens,**
  - **supplemental feeding, and**
  - **predator reduction in some areas**

If asked about predator management:

- **After years of research, we know that predator reduction is an effective, temporary measure to avoid the further decline and potential local extinction of caribou herds in B.C. as habitat recovers.**

- **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.**

If asked about effectiveness of current predator reduction measures:

- **Years of research on wolf reduction measures show that this short-term approach has immediate, positive impacts on caribou populations.**

- **Predator reduction measures on 15 of B.C.'s 54 caribou herds have helped to stabilize or increase populations in most herds, whether implemented alone or with other management strategies.**

- **For example, the Kennedy Siding herd has more than tripled since 2015 — from 49 animals to 155 in 2024, with predator reduction and supplemental feeding.**

- **Other examples include:**
  - **Klinse-za (Scott/Moberly) herd: from 38 animals in 2013 to 158 in 2024, 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.**
  - **Survival rates of adult females and calf caribou have increased in nearly all cases where predator densities have been reduced.**

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 caribou range through an industrial moratorium and a significant park and protected area expansion in 2024 within the Klinse-Za range, through an intergovernmental partnership agreement;**
- **enabling habitat protection and restoration through collaborative implementation of the cabinet-endorsed Boreal Caribou Protection and Recovery Plan, with the Fort Nelson First Nation, for boreal caribou in four ranges; and**
- **supporting 38 restoration projects with $6.69 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. Human-caused habitat alteration in caribou ranges throughout southern and central B.C. has disrupted the ecological relationship between ungulates and their shared predators.

This process, where moose and deer numbers increase due to habitat disturbance, leads to more predators (primarily wolves, and in some areas cougars) and results in unsustainable predation levels on caribou. This is the main driving factor behind caribou population declines in B.C. In addition to emergency measures to reduce predators, the Province is also working towards incremental habitat protections and habitat restoration as key management tools 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 15 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.

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. In total, the Province has invested about $12.17 million in 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 partner 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. A trial project is also underway by the Simpcw First Nation to test supplemental feeding in high-elevation winter range in the Wells Gray South area.

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 Saulteau 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 Arrow Lakes Caribou Society began the Central Selkirks maternal pen in 2023.

Communications contact	Personal Security; Security Concern WLRS	Personal Security; Security Concern
Program contact	Personal Security; Security Concern Caribou Recovery Program, WLRS	Personal Security; Security Concern
File created	Sept. 12, 2022	
File updated	March 12, 2025	

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: March 12, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**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 into our decision-making.**

- **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 utmost importance. Strict procedures are in place, with oversight of those operations being undertaken by qualified individuals who uphold internationally recognized standards.**

- **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 being 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 in threatened herd ranges, we know that without a predator reduction program, many caribou herds 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 caused by habitat alteration 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 to allow for long-term recovery.**

If needed:

The Province is committed to caribou recovery. That's why we created the Provincial Caribou Recovery Program in 2017 with a five-year commitment of $10 million each year. We continue to support caribou recovery with an investment of about $6.5 million this year.

- **We are implementing collaborative research and regular monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of all caribou recovery activities.**

- **Predator reduction as a wildlife management tool is only being implemented in this instance because it has a confirmed direct impact on recovery of this at-risk species.**

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**

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 15 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 tripled since 2015 — from 49 animals to 155 in 2024, as a result of predator reduction and supplemental feeding.**

- **Other examples:**
  - **Klinse-za (Scott/Moberly) herd: from 38 animals in 2013 to 158 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 females and calves have increased in nearly all cases where predator densities have been reduced.**

- **Recently published research showed that short-term recovery actions have increased Southern Mountain caribou populations (including several herds in Alberta) by 52% as of 2023, compared to simulations that included no management interventions.**

- **This represents the addition of over 1,500 caribou in threatened Southern Mountain herds, compared to what these populations would have been without predator reduction treatments.**

- **Of the 15 caribou ranges where predator reduction is currently being done, 12 herds have responded positively with increasing population trends. The other three herds require further monitoring to evaluate the impact of predator reduction actions, since they are relatively new recipients of wolf reduction treatments.**

If asked about using radio collars to track individual 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.**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

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 quickly go extinct locally without intervention.

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 15 of B.C.'s 54 woodland caribou herds. 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 (Lamb et al. 2024) has shown that Southern Mountain Caribou abundance has increased by 52% since the onset of recovery efforts, with the strongest population responses resulting from predator reduction. For example, the Klinse-za (Scott/Moberly) herd has tripled in size from 38 animals to 158 (as of 2024) 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 to address the primary cause of declines. 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. and disrupted the predator/prey balance.

Predator reduction is used as an interim measure for at-risk herds where the maximum recommended wolf density target, according to the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) Recovery Strategy, 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
2024: 248

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*

ADVICE TO MINISTER

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.

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 WLRS	Personal Security; Security Concern
Program contacts	Personal Security; Security Concern WLRS Personal Security; Security Concern Caribou Recovery Program, WLRS	Personal Security; Security Concern
File created	April 29, 2022	
File updated	March 12, 2025	

Q&A
Title: MOU for translocating wolves from B.C. to Colorado
Date: March 26, 2025

Key Messages:

- **In January 15 gray wolves, seven males and eight females, were translocated from northern British Columbia and released part of the Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan.**
- **Wolves were captured from priority caribou recovery areas and translocated from B.C. to Colorado between January 9 to January 16, 2025.**
- **Captured wolves included mated pairs and multiple wolves per pack.**
- **Colorado Parks and Wildlife were responsible for all costs associated with the capture and transport of gray wolves.**
- **The Province informed, collaborated and consulted with First Nations within the areas where wolves were identified for capture.**
- **Wolves were tested and treated at source sites to reduce potential spread of disease, and were also measured and collared. Wolves that did not meet the specific requirements of the Colorado program were collared to allow for further study, and were set free.**
- **B.C. has an estimated gray wolf population range between 5,300 and 11,600 animals. This population is widely distributed across the province and is not currently viewed as a conservation concern.**

Questions & Answers:

- **If B.C. can enter into arrangements with other jurisdictions to capture and translocate gray wolves, why does the Province continue to use predator reduction strategies?**
  - To support caribou recovery, wolf reduction must be conducted across large spatial scales over multiple years. Research shows that wolf populations can rebound quickly. Therefore, intensive wolf reduction in localized treatment areas (such as caribou herd boundaries) must be achieved to reverse the decline of caribou herds.
  - Currently, aerial wolf reduction is applied in 15 of the 60 identified woodland caribou populations in BC. A total of 248 wolves were removed in 2023-24 to support caribou recovery efforts. While a translocation program can help support these efforts, it is not logistically feasible to apply this technique on its own.
  - Wolves remain abundant and widely distributed in nearly all regions of B.C. They are territorial and it is not possible to relocate a pack to a different area in the province because they would ultimately conflict with the resident wolf pack that occupies that area.
  - Translocation of wolves must be done carefully as this approach comes with some risk of putting relocated wolves in direct conflict with public or livestock in rural or agricultural areas.
  - The wolf translocation with Colorado has provided a unique opportunity to support highly supervised wolf conservation efforts while also supporting caribou recovery efforts in BC.

- **Has B.C. taken part in wolf capture and translocation previously, and what were the results?**
  - B.C. was one of the western provinces that supported the wolf reintroduction program into the greater Yellowstone area of Montana and Idaho in the 1990s.
  - The first 29 wolves were taken from around Hinton, Alberta in January 1995, coincidently the wolf translocation project occurred exactly 30 years to the exact date of the 1995 project.
  - In 1996, 37 wolves were moved from the area north of Fort St. John B.C. into central Idaho (20 wolves) and Yellowstone National Park (17 wolves).
  - The Yellowstone wolf reintroduction program is internationally recognized by many as a conservation success story.

- **What area of B.C. were the wolves removed from?**
  - We are focusing efforts to translocate wolves from areas that currently have ongoing predator reduction programs to support caribou recovery. For this year, operations were focused in North-Central B.C., within the ranges of the Graham, South Peace (Klinse-za, Kennedy Siding/Burnt Pine, Quintette), and Hart Ranges caribou herds. These caribou are part of the Southern Mountain population and are currently listed as Threatened.

- **What are the initial results of the 2025 wolf translocation project?**
  - Over the course of six days wolves were captured in British Columbia and released in Colorado. Seven males and eight females were translocated.
  - Animal welfare and safety was prioritized throughout all stages of the project and followed an Animal Care Plan drafted by the technical team and approved by the Provincial Wildlife Veterinarian. The translocated wolves received a high level of veterinary care and were vaccinated and collared to support long-term monitoring and to prevent the spread of disease.
  - Sadly, one wolf passed away following its capture. While this is a considered risk during translocation projects, an examination was conducted by the three onsite veterinary staff, and it was noted that the animal's age and underlying condition may have contributed to its passing.
    - There were abnormalities with the lungs and liver that could suggest the presence of a bacterial infection. Tissue samples were taken and have been submitted to BC Animal Health Centre for microscopic investigation and further analysis.
  - CPW biologists, veterinarians and wildlife officers met with B.C. veterinarians, wildlife officials and helicopter capture crews before starting the operation.
  - Temporary pens were constructed for the wolves while waiting to fly out to Colorado. Each pen held hay and ice blocks.
  - Biological samples were collected from each wolf. They were vaccinated for rabies and distemper, and a topical medication given to prevent ectoparasites such as fleas or ticks.
  - All 15 wolves were successfully released in Colorado on January 12, 14 and 18.
  - On March 15, 2025, a wolf identified as one of those translocated to Colorado from B.C. was killed after engaging in livestock depredation. Media reports indicated the male wolf was killed in north-central Wyoming, several hundred kilometres from where it was released in January.

- **Are there any next steps for this project?**
  - B.C., Colorado, and First Nations will conduct a full debrief and document processes in legacy materials.
  - This is the second of three to five release seasons of wolves as part of Colorado's effort to reintroduce gray wolves to the area.
  - It is unknown at this time if B.C. will provide wolves in the future for their project.
  - The Province will continue to communicate with interested First Nations in the area as part of the evaluation of the project.

- **How are wolves safely captured and moved from place to place?**
  - Wolves were captured and transported by professional wildlife capture crews in B.C., (including biologists, veterinarians and helicopter capture crews) placed in a temporary holding area and then flown by plane to Colorado for release.
  - Animal welfare was prioritized through all phases of this project. An approved Animal Care Plan was adhered to.
  - The process follows strict procedures and considerations for animal welfare with a high level of oversight from experienced BC government biologists, wildlife veterinarians, First Nation partners and in partnership with our colleagues from

Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

- **What effect does removal of wolves have on the ecology of specific areas?**
    - Wolves play an important role in ecosystems. Populations help maintain the balance and health of ecosystems by regulating species populations, enhancing biodiversity, and contributing to ecological resilience.
    - Wolves also structure predator–prey systems. In specific areas, attempting to control wolves to reduce predation risk on endangered caribou has been a provincial priority since 2001.
    - Years of research on predator reduction measures in B.C. show that reducing wolf density within prioritized caribou ranges has immediate, positive impacts on caribou populations. The resulting lowered predation pressure from wolves is expected to have a meaningful contribution to increased survival, and ultimately population growth, for B.C.'s threatened caribou herds.
    - B.C. is also monitoring other prey species such as moose, elk and deer within these areas. While wolf reduction programs are conducted strictly to benefit caribou in the short term, they also lessen predation on these other prey species.
    - Wolves remain abundant and widely distributed in nearly all regions of the province. B.C.'s caribou recovery efforts pose little risk to resilient wolf populations due to their ability to reproduce, disperse, and recolonize. Given the localized nature of the wolf reduction efforts to recover caribou, there are no concerns to broader population of wolves distributed abundantly across the remainder of the province.

- **What is the current status of British Columbia's wolf population?**
    - Estimating the population of wolves in British Columbia is challenging because wolves are secretive, range over large areas, and live primarily in forested habitats.
    - Based on models, B.C. has an estimated gray wolf population range of 5,300 and 11,600 with a specific approximation of 8,500.
    - This population is widely distributed across the province and is not currently viewed as a conservation concern.

Issue: Caribou Recovery in North Area and Partnership Agreement.

Recommend Response:

- WLRS is committed to the recovery and stewardship of caribou in B.C.
- In 2024, the new Klinse-Za/Twin Sisters Park and Protected Area resulted in a total incremental protection of 200,000 hectares within the Klinse-Za caribou range.
- We continue to advance partnerships with First Nations governments[1] and improve collaboration with communities, industry and others that lead or support recovery efforts.
- Many of the herds are increasing in size.
- Communities are realizing direct benefits from employment and investments in restoration that support diversification and well-being.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- On average, B.C. invested nearly $10M/year over the first six years of the Caribou Recovery Program (FY2018 – 2024). This funding has leveraged partnerships and additional funding such as Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation's Caribou Habitat Trust Fund, Coastal Gas Link offset funds, and 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.
- 'Advice/Recommendations

[1] Intergovernmental Communications

Advice/Recommendations

Key Facts:

- 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 others to implement recovery objectives.

Partnership Agreement

- The Partnership Agreement is a global model for Indigenous-led conservation, collaboration, and partnership across multiple levels of government.
- The Partnership Agreement was signed in February 2020 by Chiefs of the West Moberly First Nations and Saulteau First Nations, and Ministers of the Governments of Canada and British Columbia.
- The legally binding 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.
- In partnership with Saulteau and West Moberly First Nations, habitat protection, predator management, and maternal penning has reversed the declining trend, and the caribou population has grown from 162 in 2014 to over 580 in 2024.

North Area

- An agreement for all Southern Mountain Caribou (including Central and Northern Groups) 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.
- Conservation of caribou is 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.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Personal Security; Security Concern

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Personal Security; Security Concern

Estimates Notes

Provincial Funding

Table shows the amount of funding leveraged from the Caribou Recovery Program and sources outside of the Caribou Recovery Program. The 2024/25 amounts reflect spend plans as of Feb 2025; prior years reflect actual spending.

Source	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Caribou Recovery Program	$9,311,217	$5,039,000	$5,039,000	$4,823,032	$2,014,248	$2,190,000
ECCC (boreal)	$0	$0	$0	$1,060,000	$1,384,000	$700,000
ECCC (SMC)	$1,450,000	$1,449,996	$1,700,000	$3,249,999	$3,550,000	$3,225,000
NRCAN (2BT)	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$275,000
CGL (Hart, Telkwa)	$0	$365,715	$354,761	$0	$354,000	$350,000
Fraser Basin Council (PNCP – Central, Graham)	$260,368	$815,358	$96,780	$1,620	$301,000	$0
Cabinet Confidences	$600,000	$240,000?	$300,000	$816,337	$1,430,000	$1,741,200
Cabinet Confidences	$0	$0	$1,000,000	$0	$0	$0
Other Recoveries (HCTF, etc.)	$20,000	Unknown	Unknown	$70,000	$69,066	$725,000
Total	**$11,641,585**	**$7,910,069**	**$8,490,541**	**$10,020,988**	**$12,106,804**	**$8,931,200**

Current Protection

- 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

- Data reported: March 2024
- 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

- Date reported: March 2024
- 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.

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

Recommend Response:

- WLRS is committed to the recovery and stewardship of caribou in B.C.
- On average, B.C. invested nearly $10M/year over the first five years of the Caribou Recovery Program (FY2018 -2023). This funding has supported many partnerships and leveraged additional funding.
- 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.
- Together we are demonstrating international leadership in recovery of an iconic species at risk.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Without advancing caribou recovery, B.C. is at risk of federal intervention through a habitat protection order under the federal *Species at Risk Act (SARA)* or litigation from First Nations or environmental groups.
- Canada is our largest contributing partner providing up to $5M/year through Contribution Agreements. These agreements, along with a SARA bilateral Agreement for Southern Mountain Caribou, ensure a shared understanding of priorities, actions and outcomes.
- The Habitat Trust Conservation Foundation is a key partner and administers grants for caribou habitat restoration, associated planning and training. Provincial and federal funding maintains this fund.
- A priority this coming year is to complete engagement and consultation with First Nations, local communities, and

stakeholders on habitat objectives and to advance habitat protections through existing regulatory tools.

- Establishing clear objectives for habitat protection in the near-term will support economic certainty for industry sectors.
- The Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation between B.C., Canada, and the First Nations Leadership Council includes goals and objectives related to the protection and recovery of species at risk and a specific objective to implement the co-developed Boreal Caribou Protection and Recovery Plan, including establishment of incremental habitat protection and increased restoration efforts.

Key Facts:

- A primary factor 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 in a higher density of predators in areas that were historically predator refuges for caribou.
- 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 Central Group caribou population where the population has more than tripled in size from 162 in 2014 to over 580 in 2024.
- WLRS staff are focusing on herds that have high feasibility of recovery, enhancing existing and exploring new partnerships with First Nations, and collaborating with others to achieve B.C.'s objectives.
- Despite very positive results where these intensive investments and actions are occurring, many herds are still in decline, and significant effort is required to achieve the habitat conditions needed for caribou to recover.
- B.C. will continue to prioritize recovery actions to achieve the goal of recovering herds and to uphold the rights of First Nations.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Government Financial Information; 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: March 17, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Motor Vehicle Exemption Permits in caribou closure areas (including snowmobiles)**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **The provincial Caribou Recovery Program aims to ensure that caribou populations in B.C. are self-sustaining.**

- **To achieve this goal, program staff engage and work with other levels of governments, individuals, organizations, and industries.**

- **The Caribou Recovery Program has developed a relationship with the B.C. Snowmobile Federation, including several years of providing capacity funding to support recreation planning and management in the South Peace region.**

- **Given the historic and current use of the South Peace Active Management area by caribou, snowmobile activity is generally not allowed in caribou closure areas frequented by these animals.**

- **Ministry staff are working to assess the current distribution of caribou in these areas.**

- **When Motor Vehicle Exemption Permits have been issued, they include strict conditions to protect caribou herds. Ensuring this is the case requires careful review of all available information and consultations with First Nations.**

- **Exemption permits were issued to three snowmobile clubs in 2022 for three specific areas in the Peace Region. Those permits expired in October 2024.**

- **In December 2024, the Province received new exemption permit applications from the three clubs, which are under active review. The earliest anticipated time for a decision on these applications is late winter 2025.**

- **It would be inappropriate to comment further on those specific applications while the review is underway.**

- **In the meantime, ministry staff are reaching out to the snowmobile clubs to discuss what short-term options might exist for snowmobile riders.**

- **We are absolutely committed to achieving a long-term solution that minimizes administrative burdens and uncertainty, and that is inclusive and effective.**

- **Exemption permits are not a feasible long-term solution, so this is a good opportunity to begin collaborating on a solution that would provide greater certainty and clarity regarding snowmobile use.**

- **In 2025, the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship will assess the effectiveness of Active Management Areas. Riding enhancement proposals identified by the B.C. Snowmobile Federation will be included in this assessment, and we will work with the federation to ensure that these areas are captured properly.**

- **Before winter 2025-26, the ministry will bring together snowmobile clubs and the B.C. Snowmobile Federation to discuss options and identify a long-term solution.**

- **Seasonal closures that would not require an exemption permit, for example, would have snowmobile operators avoid riding in a specific area when caribou are known to be present.**

KEY FACTS:

Three snowmobile clubs that applied for new Motor Vehicle Exemption Permits in December 2024 are eager for the Province to make a decision on those applications. They have also been in contact with opposition MLAs to make their point.

BACKGROUND:

Three snowmobile clubs in the South Peace (Pine Valley Trail Blazers, Tumbler Ridge Riders and MacKenzie Riders) were issued Motor Vehicle Exemption Permits in 2022 to operate snowmobiles in caribou closure areas under certain conditions and in specific locations: an area west of Tumbler Ridge; an area southwest of Chetwynd; and an area east of Mackenzie.

Those permits expired in October 2024.

It is the responsibility of the permit holder to pay attention to the permit's expiry date and apply for a new permit before that date to allow enough time to process a new permit application.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

Caribou Recovery Program staff sent an email to then B.C. Snowmobile Federation Donegal Wilson (now the Conservative Party of B.C. MLA for Boundary-Similkameen) to remind her that the clubs' permits would expire in October 2024.

All three clubs applied for new five-year permits in December 2024. These permit applications triggered a consultation requirement with Treaty 8 First Nations, but that consultation was paused between Dec. 9 and Jan. 6, 2025, because the relevant First Nation government offices shut down for the holiday season.

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

The Province is supportive of backcountry recreation activities and intends to strengthen its relationship with the B.C. Snowmobile Federation. Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

Additional information:

A map showing the Northern Rockies Snowmobile Closed Areas under the *Wildlife Act* (Motor Vehicle Prohibition Regulation) is available at: https://governmentofbc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c33b4da00a774ff8927a77edcd598d4b#

Media Interest: GCPE WLRS has received multiple media requests about this situation in recent weeks.

Communications contact	Personal Security; Security Concern WLRS	Personal Security; Security Concern
Program contacts	Personal Security; Security Concern Personal Security; Security Concern /WLRS Personal Security; Security Concern Personal Security; Security Concern WLRS	Personal Security; Security Concern
File created	March 17, 2025	

Issue: Together for Wildlife and Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council (MWAC)

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; on-the-ground stewardship; *Wildlife Act* review and related funding models and regional governance.

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 Framework, 30x30).
- Advice/Recommendations

- Last year, we increased violation ticket fine amounts under the *Wildlife Act* to further deter non-compliance, better protect wildlife populations, and make it clear that the Province values wildlife. Previous violation ticket fines range from $115 to $575. New violation ticket fines range from $345 to $1495.

- Funding Transparency:
  - Project information including the total spent on implementation each fiscal year is now publicly posted to the T4W Dashboard[1]. Staff will continue to work on improving the timeliness of publishing this information.
  - It is important to note that T4W is just one element of the many investments made to improve habitats and ecosystems. Other examples include training for community guardians, the B.C. Conservation Fund and Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework. These will be reported as part of the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation annual progress reporting.

Key Facts:

- The T4W Strategy is the result of engagement 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 On the Ground
  4. Performance and accountability
  5. Reconciliation and co-management
- Since the release of T4W, progress has been made on all actions, including:
  - establishment of MWAC,
  - continuation of the First Nations-B.C. Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Forum (the Forum),
  - development of draft policies on objective setting, regional governance models and shared decision making,

[1] Together_for_Wildlife_Funding_L1A_Experiencesee

- introduction of amendments to the *Wildlife Act* and launch of a full review,
- inventory and monitoring of varied species across B.C.,
- enhancement of data management and availability,
- scholarship grant program to support research; and
- identifying methods to capture Indigenous knowledge to support sound government decision-making.

- MWAC members are non-representative. They are expected to provide expertise, through their diverse perspectives and build consensus recommendations related to wildlife and habitat stewardship.

- In fiscal year 2024, approximately $6.6M was expended toward T4W priorities[2].

Date Prepared/Revised: February 13, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Jennifer Psyllakis	Phone: 250 812-7797
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Avril Nagel	Phone: 778-698-3517

[2] t4w_2023-2024_project_list.pdf

Issue: *Wildlife Act* Review (includes fees, fines and dedicated funding)

Recommend Response:

- The *Wildlife Act* Review continues to be a priority for the ministry.
- Action 12 of The Together for Wildlife Strategy (T4W) commits to advancing reconciliation, setting objectives, improving wildlife stewardship outcomes, ensuring effective and accessible service delivery and dedicating funding through a review of the *Wildlife Act.*
- Early engagement to date has brought together broad perspectives from First Nations and interest groups.
- We are in the process of reviewing what we've learned so far, narrowing policy themes, and confirming next steps.
- We will update those involved in the early engagement prior to initiating any public engagement.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Wildlife ticket fines under the *Wildlife Act* were increased on June 18, 2024. Previous violation ticket fines range from $115 to $575. New violation ticket fines range from $345 to $1495.
- Angling licensing fees were raised in 2023 (9.9 percent) and 2024 (four percent). The most common basic angling licence for adults increased from $36 in 2022 to $39.56 in 2023 and to $41.15 in 2024.
- Wildlife licensing fees haven't changed in many years and are being considered under the *Wildlife Act* Review.
- Currently, all revenue received through the *Wildlife Act* (~25M) is dedicated to conservation and stewardship either through the Habitat Conservation Trust, a contract with the

Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC, or budget allocations to support implementation of the Together for Wildlife Strategy.

Key Facts:

- The *Wildlife Act* Review targeted engagement with BC First Nations, Ministry wildlife advisory bodies and key stakeholders concluded in Summer 2024.
- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Intergovernmental Communications
- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences
-
-
- A surcharge on most wildlife permits and licences (~$2.6M) as well as natural resource revenues from tenures overlapping Wildlife Management Areas (varies from year to year with a four year average of approximately $136,500), is dedicated to the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund (HCTF) through the *Wildlife Act* and is intended for work that is over and above the responsibility of government (e.g., habitat enhancement, education, restoration, not inventory, monitoring, decision support, etc.).
- Annual reinvestment of wildlife permit and licence revenues (~ $10.0M/year) to support implementation of the Together for Wildlife Strategy was committed in 2020. In FY24 $6.6M was spent on Together for Wildlife actions.
- A surcharge on angling licence sales (~$3.5M) is dedicated to the HCTF each year. Revenue from freshwater fishing licences is dedicated through a contract with the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC (~10.0M/year).

- Principles that guide the costs of fees under the *Wildlife Act* should be maintained (e.g. there should be no economic barriers, hunting is an affordable activity, wildlife is a public resource).

Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Jennifer Psyllakis	Phone: 250 812-7797
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Logan Wenham	Phone: 778 698-9221

Issue: Guide Outfitters (Certificate, Quota and Compensation)

Recommend Response:

- The provincial government continues to support licenced harvest opportunity for both resident and guided hunters, when sustainable.
- The Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia (GOABC) and the Wildlife Stewardship Council (WSC) are key stakeholders in wildlife stewarship, and ministry staff work closely with them.
- We will continue to work together with the guide outfitter community on finding stewardship solutions that ensure we are conserving species, respecting and upholding the constitutional and Treaty rights of First Nations, and providing recreational opportunities that contribute to economies.
- As we advance reconciliation and toward co-management, we continue to work together on solutions that ensure we are conserving species, respecting and upholding Treaty and inherent rights, and providing recreational opportunities.

Additional Response if asked about Compensation:

- The primary purpose of the *Wildlife Act* is to manage all fauna in BC in a manner that is sustainable for the benefit of all British Columbians.
- The Province is under no legal obligation to provide compensation for lost hunting opportunity because of closed or cancelled hunts.
- As these matters are the subject of active litigation, I have no further comment.

Additional response if asked about Certificates and Quota:

- Guide outfitters are provided an annual quota based on their allocation, with some flexibility to account for harvest success and between year variations.
- Changes are rare and occur because of updated wildlife population information or an improved understanding of licensed or First Nations' harvest.
- I understand the GOABC and WSC have put forward several proposals related to changes to guiding territory certificates and quotas.
- We are exploring these options as part of the *Wildlife Act* Review, but no decisions have been made.

Key Facts about Compensation:

- A suite of hunting regulations and management actions implemented to meet the Crown's obligations coming out of both the *Tŝilhqot'in* and the *Yahey* decisions resulted in reduced or eliminated harvest opportunity for guide outfitters and resident hunters alike.
- There are three active litigations that have been brought by members of GOABC against the Province seeking redress for economic impacts related to decreased hunting opportunities:
    - Cariboo Region: The Tŝilhqot'in National Government (TNG) have not granted access to guides nor consented to guide outfitters operating in the Declared Title Area (DTA) since a bridging agreement expired in 2019 impacting four guide outfitters that overlapped the DTA.
    - Peace Region: The 2022 suite of hunting regulations and management actions (including a cap on harvest opportunity and setting of allocation splits between guides and residents) in the Peace region have resulted in reduced or eliminated harvest opportunity for guide outfitters and resident hunters alike.
    - Province-wide: Provincial ban on hunting grizzly bear.
- Advice/Recommendations; Legal Information
- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Legal Information

Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Legal Information

Key Facts about Certificates and Quota:

- A guiding territory certificate grants to the holder the exclusive control over guiding privileges in the area described in the certificate.
- Guide outfitters are provided with a notional allocation for a five-year period to provide business certainty and assist in business planning, while ensuring wildlife populations are sustained. They are provided with an annual quota based on their notional allocation to divide the harvest across years and minimize any risk of over harvest.
- Guide outfitters are participating in the review of the *Wildlife Act* and have presented several proposals related to the administration and management of guide territory certificates and quota, most of which aim to increase certainty for their businesses, ensure regulatory accountability or improve wildlife management.
- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Intergovernmental Communications
-

Date Prepared/Revised: February 10, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Jennifer Psyllakis	Phone: 250-812-7797
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Christine Crockford	Phone: 778 698-5450

Issue: Wildlife Population Summary

Recommend Response:

- Wildlife populations are surveyed to ensure quality of information that informs wildlife and habitat stewardship decisions, including sustainable hunting and land use.
- Surveys help to ensure the Province upholds its stewardship responsibilities to all British Columbians, and constitutional obligations to First Nations.
- Many surveys are conducted in collaboration with First Nations; some are led by First Nations following established methods.
- The ministry aims to survey important management units once every five years to assess population numbers and demographics, including trends.
- Data gathered through surveys are often combined with harvest information, and local and Indigenous Knowledge. Population estimates are extrapolated to the appropriate management unit.
- More intensive methods, like aerial survey from helicopter, are used for species or population with high harvest demands or conservation concerns. More passive methods may be used (e.g., monitoring harvest effort) harvest pressure is low and there are no conservation concerns.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Provincial ungulate population estimates are summarized from regional data, updated and posted online every three years.
- Current ungulate data (available online) are from 2022.
- An updated summary is anticipated late summer – fall 2025. This will include data from surveys currently ongoing.

Population trends vary widely throughout the province, and are highly dependent on regional conditions, including local weather patterns; therefore, it is difficult to generalize.

Key Facts:

- Wildlife population surveys and inventory support the following objectives:
  - Acquisition of trusted data to resolve First Nation and stakeholder concerns with wildlife populations and inform resource-use decisions.
  - Wildlife population inventories to estimate population trends, prioritize areas for applied research and management actions, and on-the-ground habitat enhancement and restoration activities.
  - Ensure confidence in application of the Province's Harvest Allocation Policy, which prioritizes wildlife conservation and sustainability, followed by First Nations' needs for food, social and ceremonial use, resident hunting opportunity, and finally, non-resident hunting opportunity (via guide outfitting).

See attachment: Summary of Select Wildlife Populations in British Columbia

Date Prepared/Revised: February 12, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Jennifer Psyllakis	Phone: 250-812-7797
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Holger Bohm	Phone: 250-420-6340

Attachment: Summary of Select Wildlife Populations in British Columbia

- **Caribou** are monitored very closely at the herd level, led by the Provincial Caribou Recovery Program in WLRS. The decline of many herds has been halted or reversed through the Program activities and partnerships.
- **Moose and Elk** are inventoried using aerial surveys by management unit. Where possible moose surveys are designed to collect information on both population size and bull-to-cow ratios in the populations to determine whether they meet specific objectives. Moose populations are now stable through most of their range, though populations are lower than historic levels. Elk populations are generally increasing, but below historic levels in many areas of the province.
- **Black Tailed Deer, Mule Deer, White Tailed Deer** are abundant throughout most their range. Given this abundance, estimates are mostly based on harvest numbers and effort and do not indicate a conservation concern.
- **Bison** data is based on aerial surveys. Trends are not available.
- **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). Disease has heavily impacted sheep populations in the same areas of the province. Mountain goat populations are generally decreasing.
- **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, each with its own conservation ranking. Generally, populations are stable.
- **Black Bear (pop est. 140,000):** Few inventories have been done for black bears in BC because there has been low conservation concern and hunter harvest is low. Recent calculations of harvest rate where we have inventory numbers confirm low harvest rates in parts of the interior. Coastal areas remain uncertain.
- **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.

KMs and Q&A
UBC Coyote Research initiative in Stanley Park
Date: Aug. 27, 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.

Issue: Terrestrial Invasive Species

Recommend Response:

- Invasive species are a significant threat to B.C.'s economy, environment and Indigenous cultural values.
- WLRS is the lead for the management of terrestrial and semi-aquatic invasive fauna (animals).
- Incursions are managed on a case-by-case basis, with a focus on species with the potential to have the most significant impacts to the province.
- Early action is important to reducing invasive species before they get established and high control costs are incurred.

Additional Response Points (if needed):

- The socio-economic impacts of established invasive species are significant and include 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.
- Conservative estimates of impacts from only 16 invasive species in Canada is $13.3 - $34.5B/year. These estimates are known to be incomplete, and it is widely estimated that the damage resulting from past introductions of invasive plant pests on agricultural crops and forestry is $7.5B annually.Invasive species are recognized globally as the second greatest threat to biodiversity after habitat loss.
- The rate of spread of invasive species is expected to increase with climate change, further emphasizing that early action is imperative to reducing future control costs.
- Terrestrial invasive fauna with known or potential impacts to B.C. include Northern giant hornets, Japanese beetles, spongy moths, bullfrogs, African clawed frogs, snapping turtles, fallow deer, nutria and feral pigs.

- Feral pigs are B.C.'s top terrestrial invasive fauna priority. Established in Canada's prairie provinces, feral pigs are reported in low numbers in B.C. and pose significant economic, epidemiological and ecological threats to the province and the country.
- Established feral pig populations cause substantial costs. For example, in the U.S. feral pigs cause $2.5B/year (USD) in damages and $75M (USD) over five years in control costs.
- WLRS works with provincial, national and international partners to coordinate science and policy for the prevention, management and control of feral pigs.
- WLRS staff continually work to identify funding sources and partnerships needed to resource the management of invasive fauna in the long-term.

Key Facts:

- Invasive species are managed by several ministries including WLRS, the Ministry of Forests (FOR), Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Environment and Parks and Ministry of Transportation and Transit.
  - Within WLRS, the Resource Stewardship Division (RSD) is the lead for terrestrial invasive fauna and the Water, Fisheries and Coast Division is the lead for aquatic invasive fauna.
  - FOR 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 collaboratively to address both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species through a cross-government approach.
  - The IMISWG works closely with the Invasive Species Council of B.C., Indigenous communities, academia and other partners to help prevent the introduction and spread of harmful non-native animals and plants.
- In 2023/24, WLRS-RSD spent $90,000 in salaries (1 FTE) and $91,000 in operations through Together for Wildlife. Recently, the division has added another FTE and will spend approximately $50K this fiscal year in operational funds through Together for Wildlife.
- FOR holds the primary responsibility for invasive plants with $1.3M (12 FTEs) in salaries and $3.6M in operational (including leveraged) funds spent in 2023/24.

Attachment_1_Inter-Ministry Invasive Species Working Group Government Spending Table for FY22/23 and FY23/24

Date Prepared/Revised: February 17, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Jennifer Psyllakis Phone: 250-387-5657

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Celine Davis Phone: Government Financial Information

Table 1. Inter-Ministry Invasive Species Working Group Government Spending Table for FY22/23 and FY23/24.
NOTE: Totals include funds leveraged from other business areas.

	2022/23				2023/24			
Ministry	**FTEs**	**Salaries**	**Operations**	**Total**	**FTEs**	**Salaries**	**Operations**	**Total**
WLRS - RSD (terrestrial animals)	1	$90,000	$65,000	$155,000	1	$90,000	$91,000	$181,000
WLRS - WFCD (invasive mussels (incl. COS) & aquatic animals)	8	$1,841,500	$1,185,300	$3,026,800	8	$2,455,800	$806,600	$3,262,400
FOR - Invasive Plants	12	$1,300,000	$4,027,000[b]	$5,327,000[b]	12	$1,305,000	$3,643,000[c]	$4,948,000[c]
MOTT	3	$220,000	$2,650,000	$2,870,000	1.5	$150,000	$2,650,000	$2,800,000
AF	6	$505,000	$458,000	$963,000	6	$505,000	$458,000	$963,000
ENV (BC Parks)	1.9	$200,000	$180,000	$380,000	1.9	$200,000	$300,000	$500,000
Royal BC Museum	1	$60,000	$0	$60,000	0.75	$30,000	$0	$30,000
MUNI (now HMA)	0.1	$7,000	$0	$7,000	0.1	$7,000	$0	$7,000
EMPR (now ECS & MCM)	0.2	$10,000	$0	$10,000	0.2	$10,000	$0	$10,000
FOR[e] - Other (now in WLRS)	--	--	--	$300,000	--	--	--	$300,000
Total				**$13,098,800**				**$13,001,400**

[a] *Invasive Mussel Defense Program funding includes leveraged funding (BC Hydro, Fortis, Columbia Power Corp, Columbia Basin Trust, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (in 2022/23)) and funding from AF. This was formerly all under ENV but now split between WLRS and ENV.*
[b] *Includes $3.5M fiscal year end transfers.*
[c] *Includes 2.1M fiscal year end transfers.*
[d] *Includes $424K in leveraged federal funds for both fiscal years.*
[e] *Former FOR Fish & Wildlife and Habitat staff spending on invasives with funding from regional operations, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program, and/or Columbia Basin Trust.*

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 extensive collaboration with western science and Indigenous subject matter experts, engagement with First Nations, stakeholders, and the public, all of which have resulted in substantive changes and improvements to the document.
- Additional 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.
- 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 several facilities in B.C. and focuses on animals with the greatest chance of survival in the wild.

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. has worked with approximately 85 First Nations communities on the initial development of the framework and federal grizzly bear plans to date.
- There are expectations from First Nations (that collaborated on the drafts), stakeholders, and the Office of the Auditor General, that the Framework and Strategy be finalized soon.
- Completion of the Framework still requires final consultation with First Nations and approval by the provincial government

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; 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 are coordinating with United State agencies on trans-boundary grizzly bear management activities.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 12, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: Jennifer Psyllakis	Phone: 250-387-5657
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Garth Mowat	Phone: 778-671-9180

Issue: Urban Deer Management

Recommend Response:

- WLRS is the lead agency for wildlife population management. The Conservation Officer Service addresses wildlife conflict with immediate threats to human safety.
- The Province is committed to supporting local government efforts to manage urban deer based on a partnership approach with impacted municipalities.
- There is no simple solution to urban deer conflicts, but we are committed to continuing to work with municipalities to jointly develop approaches to mitigate their impacts.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The Provincial Urban Deer Advisory Committee (PUDAC) has representatives from local governments, the Union of B.C. Municipalities, the Province, and the SPCA; PUDAC reviews applications for funding and makes recommendations to the Province.
- The Province has previously offered $100,000/year to partner in locally led urban deer management projects. This funding:
  - Partners with communities to develop socially acceptable urban deer management solutions,
  - Increases access to practical solutions, and
  - Reduces costs borne by local governments.

Key Facts:

- Detection of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in close vicinity to Cranbrook has necessitated targeted removal for CWD testing and density reduction in Cranbrook and Kimberley – those operations are currently ongoing. WLRS is leading with municipalities, First Nations and Conservation Officer Service supporting.

- As urban deer in these locations represent a heightened risk of CWD transmission, resourcing is prioritized to this work.
- In 2017-19, East Kootenay communities completed an urban deer translocation trial. Translocation is no longer a supported management option due in part to the propensity of animals to make large movements, which could facilitate the spread of CWD from neighboring jurisdictions.
- One experimental method of controlling urban deer is by injecting them with immuno-contraception (birth control). This method is relatively expensive and is not a tool to reduce urban deer; however, it can be used to stall population increase once a population has been reduced.
- Since 2017, Oak Bay has been trialing immuno-contraception, with the support of PUDOC. This trial is ongoing and final results are pending. There are no plans to expand immuno-contraception to other communities pending these results.
- Many municipalities have also passed bylaws in relation to wildlife, including deer.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 12, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Jennifer Psyllakis Phone: 250-812-7797

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Holger Bohm Phone: 250-420-6340

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL GCPE-WLRS ISSUE NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: March 19, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Sidney Island Deer**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- Parks Canada was leading ecological restoration on Sidney Island with the support of local First Nations, the Province of B.C., Islands Trust Conservancy, and Sidney Island residents.
- Parks Canada has terminated the project and has indicated there are no plans to resume operations.
- B.C. provides liberal hunting opportunities to help manage invasive fallow deer, including those on Sidney Island.

<u>If questioned about permits under the *Wildlife Act*:</u>

- The Province issued permits under the *Wildlife Act* for the fallow deer eradication work to proceed on Sidney Island.
- With Parks Canada no longer supporting eradication, activities under those permits are no longer proceeding.
- Consideration in review of the permit applications was given to several factors including animal welfare, as well as the expected effectiveness and

benefits to the sensitive ecosystems.

Background:

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

Parks Canada (Gulf Islands National Park Reserve) and Sallas Forest Strata Corporation (Sallas) are the landowners on Sidney Island, with Islands Trust Conservancy (ITC) managing conservation covenants on Sallas strata land. There is no Provincial Crown Land on Sidney Island. Under their mandate to eliminate invasive species where practical, Parks Canada was leading a project to restore the 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 300-900 fallow deer on the island, but these numbers were not scientifically derived and are difficult to verify. The plan was holistic, however, and the intended outcome of full eradication would not have been prevented by the variability of the population estimate.

The Province has been in discussions with Parks Canada on restoration of Sidney Island, including options to eradicate fallow deer for over 5 years. This includes participation in the project Steering Committee and Deer Working group. Parks Canada's eradication plan aligns with our Provincial direction of prevention of further expansion and reducing the overall extent of fallow deer.

Parks Canada initiated the Sidney Island Ecological Restoration Project and had been working with project partners since 2018 to plan the long-term restoration of the forest ecosystem on Sidney Island. This project was co-developed with representatives from W̱SÁNEĆ 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 included 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 was to be conducted in an ethical manner by experts following an animal care protocol supported by wildlife veterinarians of the Province and Parks Canada. Parks Canada funded the project.

Parks Canada applied *Wildlife Act* permits from the Province for the eradication activities in two phases. Permits were approved in accordance with the statutory framework.

Phase 1 of eradication occurred in December 2023 and included helicopter-based removal of deer using eradication experts and recovery of carcasses to provide meat to Indigenous

communities.

Parks Canada applied for *Wildlife Act* permits for Phase 2 of fallow deer eradication which were issued in fall 2024 for work planned from late fall 2024 to spring 2025. Phase 2 eradication efforts included fencing off zones on Sidney Island and ground-based removal of deer using eradication experts and trained indicator dogs. Parks Canada no longer supports fallow deer eradication work and as such, no work under the issued *Wildlife Act* permits has occurred. Parks Canada is continuing with First Nations harvesting of fallow deer within Gulf Islands National Parks Reserve on Sidney Island. Licensed hunting continues on the Sallas property.

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

- Ensuring humane removal techniques (reviewed by the 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 fish and wildlife section head for Region 1).
- 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 stages.

Communications Contact:	Katie Norris	250 896-7365
Program Area Contact:	Sean Pendergast	250 739-8376
	Logan Wenham	778 698-9221
File Created:	November 17, 2023	
File Updated:	March 19, 2025	

last updated 6Feb2025

Key Messages – Urban Deer and Response to Positive Cases
Date: February 6, 2025

Key Messages

Urban deer:

- Urban deer populations are high risk for CWD given the proximity of known cases, as well as deer migration patterns and interactions with wild populations.
- Provincial, First Nation and local governments are working collaboratively to address the risk of CWD in the urban deer populations in Cranbrook and Kimberley.
- Selective sampling and removal of urban deer took place in these two communities in early 2025 to understand the extent of CWD in these populations. Out of 126 deer removed – 100 in Cranbrook and 26 in Kimberley – one CWD case was confirmed.
- The response to CWD detections in urban deer will be guided by expert recommendations and determined in partnership with Ktunaxa Nation and municipalities, with input from the CWD committees.
- Response to CWD in urban deer will likely include additional removals. Data from collared urban deer will be used to inform the management decision, including the number of deer that may be sampled. Timing for further removals has not been determined.
- Ongoing monitoring is important to assess the effectiveness of deer removal efforts in controlling CWD. The primary goal will be to limit environmental contamination, prevent spread and maintain the lowest possible prevalence by reducing deer density.

Response to positive cases (outside of urban deer):

- The circumstances around each identified CWD case will be evaluated based on animal density, potential transmission to surrounding populations and confidence in surveillance data, achieved by reaching sampling targets.
- Targeted removals may be considered if the risk factors warrant a reduction in animal density in the immediate area (5-10km radius).

Ongoing response effort:

- Targeted sampling is a tool to determine the occurrence of disease in high-risk areas, when surveillance targets are not met. Targeted removal is a tool to remove potentially infected animals from the landscape to limit environmental contamination and spread, when CWD cases are identified in an area. Both targeted sampling and targeted removals can be achieved through a special hunt or contractor removals.

- Ongoing vigilance, preventative measures and enhanced surveillance are crucial to managing chronic wasting disease and protecting cervid populations and the communities that rely on them. We thank First Nations partners, as well as hunters and trappers for their efforts so far, and encourage all hunters to keep submitting deer, elk and moose samples to provide information during the ongoing response.
- Everyone should take note that restrictions remain in place for the transport, testing and disposal of deer, elk and moose carcasses, as parts of the animal can spread disease to new regions.
- Expanded CWD testing capacity in 2024 enabled an expedited turnaround time for results at the beginning of the hunting season. An evaluation of the current system has identified areas to increase efficiency and grow capacity.

Partner contributions:

- Hunter effort is a critical tool in managing CWD. Hunters are actively managing CWD in the affected areas by maintaining healthy animal densities and removing infected animals from the landscape.
- During the 2024-25 hunting season, licenced and First Nation hunters sustainably harvested over 3000 cervids (primarily deer, some elk) from CWD Management Zone and submitted those samples for testing. Achieving this sampling effort and efficiency, while maintaining hunter opportunities, could not be achieved without the partnership and support from the hunting community.
- As the hunting season has ended, accessing samples from other sources is critical to ongoing monitoring. Trappers, Conservation Officers, and others that handle cervids in the CWD Management Zone are encouraged to submit samples to support monitoring and inform management.

FAQ – Urban Deer Management Activities

Context:

- Provincial, First Nation and local governments are working together to mitigate the risks of CWD and address the risk of CWD in the urban deer populations in Cranbrook and Kimberley.
- Urban deer populations are at high risk for CWD due to high density and high site frequency which drives higher rates of disease transmission and environmental contamination.
- Urban deer management activities have been conducted collaboratively with “ʔaq’am and local government. This included targeted sampling and removal of urban deer in

these two communities in February 2025 to understand the extent of CWD in these populations.

- BC's CWD response aims to limit disease spread and manage for the lowest possible disease prevalence in affected populations.

- Addressing CWD risk in urban deer is one part of a broader management plan that includes expanded monitoring, research, carcass transport and disposal requirements and mandatory CWD testing.

Why the focus on urban deer in Cranbrook and Kimberly?

- Urban deer are more likely to spread CWD because they live close together, stay in one area, and don't have many natural predators.

- Risk associated with urban deer is identified in the CWD Surveillance and Response Plan (2023).

- Reducing the number of deer helps lower the risk of spreading disease, as deer can pass CWD to each other through grooming, body fluids, and shared spaces.

- CWD management in BC is currently focused in areas of identified risk which include Cranbrook and Kimberley due to their proximity to positive CWD cases.

- We are not pursuing a widespread deer removal, nor does data support that action.

- Prior to the detection of CWD, the municipalities of Cranbrook and Kimberly have been struggling with urban deer management and conflict associated with increasing population densities in the city core (i.e., aggression, destruction of property, and vehicle collisions).

- The municipalities have requested support from the Province to address deer populations, which have exceeded their management threshold, and support removal of animals to reduce the risk of CWD.

- Provincial, First Nation and local governments have worked together to develop and implement the project plan to mitigate CWD risk, with input and support from partners.

What measures will be taken to ensure targeted sampling and removal is done humanely?

- Population reduction is carried out in a measured and phased approach that is based on shared objectives informed by science and local Indigenous Knowledge.
- Animal handling and targeted removals are undertaken by trained and licensed professionals following strict guidelines to ensure it is humane.

- The removal of deer follows strict rules and requires special permits to make sure everything is done properly and humanely.

Why aren't non-lethal approaches being considered, such as translocation or immuno-contraception?

- Moving deer to another area could spread the disease, so we need to focus on stopping the disease where it is.

- High density deer populations in the area are the concern and letting these populations persist (such as through immuno-contraception) will not address that risk.

What happens to the deer after they are removed?

- All deer are tested for CWD.

- Whenever possible, meat from harvested deer that test negative for CWD and are safe for human consumption will be provided to Ktunaxa First Nation communities as well as food banks.
- Deer that are removed through darting and euthanasia cannot be consumed due to the presence of the immobilization drugs in their system. For logistical reasons, deer removed in the recent test and removal activities in Kimberley and Cranbrook had to be removed in this way.

How are Local Governments involved in CWD Management? Are Municipalities supportive of urban deer removal?

- Yes, both Cranbrook and Kimberley are represented on the CWD advisory tables.

- Yes, both municipalities support the reduction of deer populations, and we are working together in planning to ensure community and staff safety.

How are First Nations involved in CWD Management?

- BC is working in full partnership with local First Nations in CWD surveillance, outreach and management planning, including urban deer management in the winter of 2024/25.

How are hunters and other interested parties involved in this effort and CWD Management?

- Hunters play a vital role in CWD management by providing samples for testing and ensuring high risk material is not transported out of the area.
- Hunting organizations are contributing support and input through advisory committees and helping to educate and disseminate information through their networks.
- Hunters will not be involved in targeted sampling and removal of urban deer.

Why plan for winter to undertake the targeted sampling and removal in Cranbrook and Kimberly? Why didn't you remove them sooner?

- Fall focused on hunter samples from the surrounding area and any opportunistic samples from roadkill in town to better understand the extent of the outbreak. Winter is a safe and effective time to humanely remove urban deer because animals are still congregated in areas of the city and are more easily tracked.
- Effective removal of urban deer during the summer and early fall is not as feasible because the deer are much more dispersed.
- Targeted removals in the immediate vicinity of positive cases were the priority to better understanding the extent of the outbreak in those areas.
- Results from samples will continue to inform the management approach.

What about other communities with urban deer populations? Will those also be targeted?

- At present BC is focused on high density urban deer populations nearest to where we know CWD to be located.
- Future management decisions will be based on surveillance data, research and Indigenous Knowledge with input from advisory committees.

When did targeted sampling and removals take place?

- Removal took place between February 18 and 28, 2025. The timing of activities was based on operational requirements, and in coordination with our municipal and First Nations partners.

How many deer were killed?

- A target of 100 deer in each of Cranbrook and Kimberley was set. In the end, the full 100 deer were taken in Cranbrook, while 26 were removed in Kimberley due to a tight schedule and some public interference. The number of deer removed was based on how many deer are in the area and, based on recommendations from experienced epidemiologists, how many samples are needed to determine the health of the population.

Will deer not showing symptoms be killed?

- Yes, most infected animals will have no symptoms. Deer can have CWD for up to 18 months without showing signs, but they can still spread the disease during this time.

- If any deer appear unhealthy, they will be killed and tested.

- CWD testing requires examining tissues from the head (tonsils, lymph nodes and brain stem), collected post-mortem (from dead animals).

Issue: Chronic Wasting Disease

Recommend Response:

- The first cases of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) a fatal disease affecting members of the deer family, in B.C. were confirmed in the Cranbrook area in Fall and Winter 2024. A total of five cases have been confirmed so far through surveillance efforts.
- Proactive CWD surveillance, education and preventative measures have been led by the B.C. Wildlife Health Program with partner support and collaborations for over 20 years.
- This includes deer import restrictions dating back to 2010, mandatory testing starting in 2019 in high risk areas for the disease to cross over into B.C. The first identified cases were in these mandatory testing zones.
- The result of this diligence suggests we have identified the outbreak early, which means we have a better ability to manage the prevalence and spread.
- Despite early identification, it is unlikely that CWD will be eradicated from B.C., and ongoing action and resourcing will be needed to keep prevalence and spread low and protect cervid populations.
- WLRS is leading response management in accordance with the *Surveillance and Response Plan for CWD in B.C. (2023),* in partnership with First Nations, local government and a broad range of stakeholders, hunting groups, CWD experts and others.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Response activities include the establishment of a CWD Management Zone (including 14 wildlife management units in the Kootenay Region) carcass transport restrictions and

disposal requirements, and mandatory testing of all harvested and road killed deer, elk and moose in this Zone.

- In partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Animal Health Centre in Abbotsford B.C. established B.C.'s first CWD testing facility in 2024 (only three facilities in Canada).
- WLRS, Ktunaxa First Nation and municipal partners are working together to address the high risk of CWD spread and establishment in urban deer populations.
- In collaboration with Academic partners, research and monitoring has expanded in the region to better understand the dynamics of disease spread and its impacts on populations and communities.

Key Facts:

- FY24-25 funding of $716K from WLRS, plus $214K from various external partners, has supported a response and prevention program that delivered outbreak management, expanded disease surveillance, sampling, and testing, and First Nations capacity building.
- Enhanced monitoring efforts indicate low (<1%) CWD prevalence in the affected deer populations in B.C. which is evidence that the disease has been detected early thanks to early proactive measures.
- Neighbouring jurisdictions, such as Montana and Alberta are reporting CWD prevalence rates of 6% and 30% respectively, where management efforts are far more costly and less effective at those levels.
- The detection of CWD in B.C. has elevated the need for dedicated resources and personnel to manage the disease effectively with coordination across ministries and program areas and improve transparency, communication and reporting.
- It is expected that future budget requirements for continued management are approximately $1.6M on an annual basis.
- WLRS does not currently have room in its base budget for this amount.

- If the CWD establishes in populations and the environment, it will lead to irreversible impacts to wildlife, including deer, elk, moose, and at-risk caribou.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 12, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
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Issue: Controlled Alien Species

Recommend Response:

- The Province is committed to protecting the public, wildlife and the welfare of controlled alien species (CAS) through the strong CAS regulations and policies of the *Wildlife Act*.
- B.C.'s CAS Regulation (CASR) is robust. More than 1,200 species of animals are listed as illegal to possess, breed, ship or transport in B.C. without a permit.
- The Wildlife Branch lead the CAS program for the Province.
- Wildlife Branch staff review the CASR to determine if additional species should be prohibited to ensure emerging issues or potential threats posed by unregulated species of concern are addressed.
- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Consultation and engagement will occur before any decisions are made.

Key Facts:

- CASR was enacted in 2009 to control possession, breeding, shipping, and releasing of exotic animals and aquatic invasive species that pose a risk to the health or safety of people, property, wildlife or wildlife habitat.
- Non-prohibited exotic species continue to be kept as pets.
- Advocacy groups, municipal governments, and animal welfare organizations including the BC SPCA, have called for amendments to CASR to further restrict species that can be owned as pets by replacing the list of prohibited species with a "positive pets list" of permitted species.
- Advice/Recommendations

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

- Advice/Recommendations
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Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: Jennifer Psyllakis	Phone: 250-387-5657
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Rayyann Khudabux / Sandra Marshall	Phone: 778-698-5976 / Government Financial Information

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: 2 April 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Controlled Alien Species in B.C.**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **The Province is committed to protecting the public, wildlife and the welfare of exotic animals through the Controlled Alien Species Regulation (CASR) and additional policies under the *Wildlife Act*.**

- **B.C.'s CASR, 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.**

- **Ministry staff regularly review the regulations to determine if additional species should be prohibited.**

- **Following consultation, an internal process is currently underway to evaluate proposals regarding additions to the CASR list, and the Ministry plans to bring any proposals forward to stakeholder groups for comment and review should they emerge as a result of this process.**

- **The animals prioritized to be added to the Controlled Alien Species (CAS) regulation list are those most likely to pose a potential threat to people, property, wildlife and wildlife habitat.**

- **Animal care guidelines and public safety plans are central aspects of the permitting process.**

- **Permits for CAS are only ever granted for 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.

- **Individuals who kept CAS in B.C. prior to March 2009 were allowed to obtain permits for personal use to keep the CAS as pets.**

KEY FACTS:

The *Wildlife Act*'s Controlled Alien Species Regulation (CASR), 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. There are currently 47 active personal use CAS permits (encompassing 135 CAS individuals).

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 permits issued by the Director of Wildlife 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 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. Servals 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. These incidents resulted in media interest and stakeholder calls for prohibition of all felids (including servals) apart from domestic cats. Two more recent events brought the issue back to the forefront and resulted in media coverage and renewed calls for prohibition. In December 2024 another serval escaped on Vancouver Island and is suspected of killing a family pet, and in February 2025, an Edmonton woman was fined $15,000 for illegally possessing a serval, which was imported from BC.

Advice/Recommendations

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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File created	17 January 2024	
File updated	2 April 2025	

Issue: Conservation Lands Program and Strategic Plan

Recommend Response:

- The Conservation Lands Program uses multiple legal tools under the *Wildlife Act* and the *Land Act* to steward high priority fish and wildlife habitats.
- The Conservation Lands Program Strategic Plan, released in March 2025, was completed in partial response to the 2021 Office of the Auditor General (OAG) report on the Management of the Conservation Lands Program.
- The Strategic Plan addresses several recommendations from the OAG audit, and:
  - Provides clear direction for the program.
  - Establishes strong direction and guidance towards new relationships with First Nations.
  - Creates a foundation for collaborative work with partners (e.g., Nature Trust of B.C., Ducks Unlimited Canada, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF), and Nature Conservancy of Canada).
- The Strategic Plan positions the Conservation Lands Program to advance conservation measures as part of the responsible, sustainable development of our natural resources.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The main designation in the Conservation Lands Program is the Wildlife Management Area (WMA) under the *Wildlife Act*. WMAs promote conservation across all sectors while accommodating compatible natural resource activities.
- Revenue collected from compatible activities are dedicated to the Habitat Conservation Trust, as per the *Wildlife Act*, and are reinvested into stewardship activities within the designation in partnership with the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation and others.

- WMAs count towards the Provincial commitment to protect 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030.

Key Facts:

- The Conservation Lands Program includes ~275,000 hectares of administered conservation lands including WMAs (*Wildlife Act*); ~620,000 hectares of designations under the *Land Act* (reserves and withdrawals from disposition).
- Non-Government Organization (NGO) partners conserve an additional ~120,000 hectares of high-quality private land.
- The strategic plan was built with input from several advisory bodies including Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council, First Nations BC Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum, and NGO partners.
- The strategic plan directly supports the WLRS mandate by promoting collaborative work to protect critical ecosystems alongside First Nations, communities, industry, organizations and the public.
- The strategic plan supports multiple provincial initiatives including Action 11 in the Together for Wildlife (T4W) Strategy to "make investments to manage existing conservation lands and acquire new priority lands for wildlife stewardship"; the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework; Land Use Planning; Coastal Marine Strategy; and commitment to protect 30 percent of B.C.'s Land Base by 2030. This work is an integral part of the Province's commitment to the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation.
- Success of the strategic plan will be measured against 17 indicators and 13 targets under three overarching goals. Reporting on progress will occur every two years, commencing in 2028 (2025/26 will be used to form a baseline).
- From fiscal years 2021-24, over $1M was allocated to conservation lands under the T4W Strategy, including securing new conservation lands under Goal 1 and improving management of existing lands under Goal 3 of the strategic plan.
- Long term annual management funding of $617,995 (2024/25) is provided by HCTF's Conservation Lands Operations and Management Funding Program primarily derived from endowment funds provided by the Province to HCTF. Revenue from compatible activities authorized within WMAs is about $100,000 annually.
- The Conservation Lands Program will continue to work with partners and other levels of government, including BC Parks Foundation - BC Conservation Fund and Environment and Climate Change Canada and their Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund, to leverage opportunities and funding.
- In July 2024, the Tŝilhqox Qay Naguten WMA was designated. This work was a result of significant collaboration with the Tŝilhqot'in Nation and demonstrates implementation of Goals 1 and 2 of the Strategic Plan. The area will provide important consideration for spawning salmon, dense grizzly bear populations while feeding on salmon and associated commercial bear viewing.

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Appendix 1: Strategic Plan Vision, Mission, Goals Indicators and Targets.

Date Revised: March 25, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
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Attachment 1: Conservation Lands Program Goals, Objectives, Indicators and Targets

Goal 1: Expand and grow the footprint of the Conservation Lands Program as a key part of the solution for protecting B.C.'s rich biodiversity with a focus on fish and wildlife habitat.

Objective 1-1: To increase hectares of administered conservation lands to support B.C.'s commitment to Together for Wildlife and protecting 30 percent of B.C.'s land base by 2030.

- **Indicator 1.1:** Hectares of administered conservation lands, including Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) or other alternative legal mechanism.
- **Indicator 1.2:** Number of new administered conservation lands, including WMAs or other alternative legal mechanism.
- **Indicator 1.3:** Level of funding towards land acquisition and/or securement targets.

- **Target 1.1:** By 2030, increase hectares of administered conservation lands to 1,000,000 hectares, legally defined as WMAs or alternative legal mechanism.
- **Target 1.2:** By 2025, propose recommendations to be included in the next steps of the *Wildlife Act* Review how the *Wildlife Act* can be amended to develop new legal tools and/or improve existing tools for conservation lands designation and stewardship.
- **Target 1.3:** By 2026, complete a land securement plan including prioritization, resourcing for both securing the lands and ongoing stewardship, and building and maintaining new and existing partnerships.

Goal 2: Increase collaboration with First Nations to identify and steward conservation lands for fish and wildlife habitat and biodiversity

Objective #2-1: Partner with First Nations to identify and determine management direction for all current and future administered conservation lands.

- **Indicator 2.1:** Number of collaborative initiatives or projects with or inclusive of First Nations.
- **Indicator 2.2:** Number of administered conservation lands that have management plans or management direction statements in place.
- **Indicator 2.3:** Number of administered conservation lands that have management plans or management direction statements in place, built collaboratively with First Nations and inclusive of local partners.

- **Target 2.1:** By 2030, 50 percent of all administered conservation lands include collaborative initiatives, in partnership with First Nations and inclusive of local partners.
- **Target 2.2:** By 2026, a priority list of potential future administered conservation lands is in place for each region, built collaboratively with First Nations and inclusive of other partners.
- **Target 2.3:** By 2030, 50 percent of all administered conservation lands have a management direction statement in place, built collaboratively with First Nations and inclusive of local partners.

Attachment 1: Conservation Lands Program Goals, Objectives, Indicators and Targets

Goal 3: Restore, enhance and maintain fish and wildlife habitat and biodiversity within administered conservation lands

Objective #3.1: The quality of habitat in all administered conservation lands remains high or improves over time in degraded habitat.
Objective #3-2: Strategically draw on available resources to better steward administered conservation lands.

- **Indicator 3.1:** Total hectares restored or enhanced.
- **Indicator 3.2:** Number of restoration or enhancement projects.
- **Indicator 3.3:** Total area infested by priority invasive plant species.
- **Indicator 3.4:** Total area treated to control invasive plant species.
- **Indicator 3.5:** Total dollars invested in stewardship and management of administered conservation lands, by funding source.
- **Indicator 3.6:** Amount leveraged by the Province from other funding sources.

- **Target 3.1:** By 2030, at least double the total hectares restored or enhanced over 2025/26 levels.
- **Target 3.2:** By 2030, at least double the total hectares treated for invasive plants relative to 2025/26.
- **Target 3.3:** By 2026, develop a plan for monitoring administered conservation lands.

Goal 4: Increase public accountability and confidence in the role of conservation lands in contributing to collaboration, stewardship and biodiversity

Objective #4-1: Provide public reporting on progress and status towards the goals and objectives in this strategic plan.
Objective #4-2: Minimize unauthorized uses on administered conservation lands.
Objective #4-3: Fully implement all 11 provincial commitments to the B.C. Auditor General and publicly report out on progress.

- **Indicator 4.1:** Number of administered conservation lands, by region and by general habitat type.
- **Indicator 4.2:** Number of hectares of administered conservation lands, by region and by general habitat type.
- **Indicator 4.3:** Number of unauthorized uses reported.
- **Indicator 4.4:** Percentage of reported unauthorized uses actioned (e.g. inspection, enforcement action).
- **Indicator 4.5:** Number of provincial commitments to Auditor General of B.C. report addressed.

- **Target 4.1:** Annually, 50 percent of reported unauthorized uses actioned (e.g. Inspection, enforcement action).
- **Target 4.2:** By 2030, unauthorized use of administered conservation lands reduced by 50 percent over 2025-26 levels.

- **Target 4.3:** By 2030, 100 percent of the recommendations from the Auditor General report addressed and reported to the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts.
- **Target 4.4:** At least every two years, report out on progress towards implementation of the Conservation Land Program Strategic Plan, including a report of the number and total hectares of administered conservation lands, by region and general habitat type that demonstrate progress towards achieving Target 1.1.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: March 27, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Conservation Lands Program and Strategic Plan**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **British Columbia has the greatest diversity of wildlife, ecosystems, and habitats of any province or territory in Canada.**

- **The Conservation Lands Program is responsible for the stewardship of some of these crucial natural areas, working alongside First Nations, non-governmental organizations, local communities, industry, individuals, and other partners on shared interests.**

- **Conserving nature is one of the most important things we can do to help mitigate the effects of climate change, while also supporting more resilient communities and creating a healthier future for everyone in B.C.**

- **The Conservation Lands Program is a long-standing program that uses multiple legal tools under the *Wildlife Act* and the *Land Act* to enhance the stewardship of high-priority fish and wildlife habitats.**

- **The Conservation Lands Program's *Strategic Plan* was posted online on March 28, 2025, partly in response to a 2021 report by the Office of the Auditor General recommending that the Province prepare such a plan to help guide current and future management of the program.**

- **The plan is available online at: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/wildlife-habitats/conservation-lands**

- **The strategic plan addresses key recommendations of the Auditor General's report by:**
  - **providing clear direction for the Conservation Lands Program**
  - **establishing strong direction and guidance for forging new relationships with First Nations**

  - **creating a stronger foundation for collaborative work with other partners such as the Nature Trust of B.C., Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and the BC Parks Foundation.**

- **The Conservation Lands Program Strategic Plan is also responsive to advice from the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council. The plan had targeted input from existing partners and the First Nations-B.C. Wildlife Stewardship and Habitat Conservation Forum, among others.**

- **About 900,000 hectares of high-quality wildlife habitat are within Conservation Lands Program designations, including:**
  - **275,000 hectares that are in Wildlife Management Areas and other lands administered by the Province under the *Wildlife Act***
  - **620,000 hectares of land that have been designated by the Province under the *Land Act***

- **An additional 120,000 hectares of private land is held by land trust partners, such as the Nature Trust of B.C., Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, and the Nature Conservancy of Canada.**

- **One of the strategic plan's goals is to increase the hectares of critical ecosystems protected within the Conservation Lands Program to one million hectares. This will support the Together for Wildlife strategy and the Province's commitment to protect 30% of B.C.'s landbase by 2030.**

- **The Conservation Lands Program is ideally positioned to advance the Province's commitment to reconciliation with First Nations while achieving provincial, national, and international targets to protect and enhance B.C.'s rich biodiversity.**

- **Conservation lands contribute to the resilience of B.C.'s rich culture and biodiversity by ensuring that these lands and waters, and the fish and wildlife associated with them, continue to thrive now and for generations to come.**

Additional response points (if needed)

ADVICE TO MINISTER

- **The new strategic plan better positions the Conservation Lands Program to implement conservation measures as part of the responsible and sustainable development of B.C.'s natural resources.**

- **The Conservation Lands Program includes sites that are administered for fish and wildlife management under the *Wildlife Act*, including sites designated as Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs).**

- **The establishment of new WMAs under the *Wildlife Act* is the main designation tool used by the Conservation Lands Program. WMAs promote conservation across all sectors while also accommodating compatible natural resource activities within them, such as wilderness recreation.**

- **Revenue collected from any resource use activities are provided to the Habitat Conservation Trust under the *Wildlife Act* and are reinvested into stewardship activities within designated conservation lands, in partnership with the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation and others.**

- **Wildlife Management Areas are often used to protect B.C.'s best fish and wildlife habitats, allowing long-term conservation of these very important biodiverse areas.**

- **Wildlife Management Areas count towards the Province's commitment to protect 30% of land and waters in B.C. by 2030.**

- **The Conservation Lands Program also includes lands for which a recorded "interest" has been secured for fish and wildlife under the *Land Act*, but are not actively managed by the Province.**

Four key goals of the strategic plan:

- **The Conservation Lands Program Strategic Plan includes 13 targets grouped into four overarching goals:**

    - **Goal 1: "Expand and grow the footprint the Conservation Lands Program as a key part of the solution for protecting B.C.'s rich biodiversity with a focus on fish and wildlife habitat."**

- **Goal 2: "Increase collaboration with First Nations to identify and steward conservation lands for fish and wildlife habitat and biodiversity."**

- **Goal 3: "Restore, enhance, and maintain fish and wildlife habitat and biodiversity within administered conservation lands."**

- **Goal 4: "Increase public accountability and confidence in the role of conservation lands in contributing to collaboration, stewardship and biodiversity."**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

BACKGROUND:

In 2021, prior to the formation of what is now the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) completed an audit of the Conservation Lands Program.

The OAG report made 11 recommendations, all of which were accepted by the ministry. One of those recommendations was to develop a strategic plan to help guide the program's management and development.

The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship was required to report on the progress being made to address the OAG's recommendations (including the strategic plan) **by April 1, 2025**.

The development of the Conservation Lands Program Strategic Plan began in March 2022 with the support of a consultant-led team, including two Indigenous technical advisors. This team developed a draft plan through significant engagement and interviews with members of the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council, the First Nations-B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum, and the program's NGO partners.

The new strategic plan provides direction to provincial government staff and outlines goals, objectives, indicators and targets to support the delivery of the ministry's mandate, including the protection of 30% of B.C.s land base by 2030 ("30x30").

Other goals of the plan include:

- increase the total amount of "administered" conservation lands (see definition below) to 1,000,000 hectares (This will support the Together for Wildlife strategy and the Province's commitment to protect 30% of B.C.'s land base by 2030.)
- increase collaboration with First Nations in all aspects of the Conservation Lands Program
- have management direction statements in place for all administered conservation lands (to be developed collaboratively with First Nations)
- improve stewardship of conservation lands, including habitat restoration and/or habitat enhancement, and invasive species treatments within the designated areas
- improve compliance and enforcement efforts to reduce instances of unauthorized activities on conservation lands

Another key focus of the strategic plan is to provide clear direction on the co-management of conservation lands with First Nations.

"Administered" conservation lands vs. "non-administered" conservation lands

Administered Conservation Lands
These are lands over which legal administration and management authority under the *Wildlife Act* has been secured by way of:

a. Wildlife Management Area (WMA) designation under Section 4 of the Wildlife Act. Learn more about Wildlife Management Areas

b. Acquisition of fee simple private land through direct purchase, land exchange, or donation of the private land.
c. Securement of privately owned land that is leased to the Province, usually for a long-term duration (e.g., 99 years).
d. Crown Transfer of Administration under Section 106 of the Land Act, or a similar legal mechanism.

Non-administered Conservation Lands

These are lands over which a recorded “interest” has been secured in consideration of fish and wildlife values but are not actively managed by the Province. Most of these lands have been obtained through *Land Act* mechanisms that either preclude or constrain the issuance of Land Act tenures on those lands for a specified period of time (typically five to 30 years). The holder of that interest must be contacted regarding any proposed changes in land use for those lands.

Communications contact	Thomas Winterhoff, Sr. PAO, GCPE WLRS	778 679-5541
Program contacts	Christina Waddle, Conservation Lands Specialist, WLRS Kim Richardson, Director, Terrestrial Habitat Section, WLRS	236 478-3040 778 698-4380
File created	March 27, 2025	
File updated	Date	

Issue: WildSafeBC and the Grizzly Bear Foundation

Recommend Response:

If asked about the WildSafeBC Program:

- The B.C. Conservation Foundation's (BCCF) WildSafeBC program educates British Columbians to co-exist and reduce conflicts with wildlife with the goal of changing public behaviour.
- WildSafeBC is a great example of a program that successfully leverages partnerships to achieve stewardship goals.
- The Province will continue to explore opportunities to support the long-term stability of the WildSafeBC program.

If asked about the partnership between WLRS, the Conservation Officer Service, and the Grizzly Bear Foundation (GBF):

- The Province is pleased to partner with the GBF on initiatives that support bear welfare, research and stewardship.
- We are currently working with the GBF and the Conservation Officer Service (COS) to promote best practices when responding to bear conflict, and to reduce the number of bear deaths caused by human conflict.
- As part of this work, we will create an expert panel that will provide policy advice to government to improve public understanding and confidence in the policies and procedures the COS follow, and their roles and responsibilities to prevent and respond to bear encounters.
- This work is separate from, and complementary to, the work of WildSafeBC.

If asked about the Grizzly Bear Stewardship Framework and GBF:

- We have completed broad public engagement on the Provincial Grizzly Bear Stewardship Framework.

- We are partnering with the GBF to provide an additional Indigenous-led process to help finalize the Framework and Bear Viewing Strategy.
- This work is separate – but complementary – to our formal consultation work undertaken directly with First Nations.

Key Facts:

WildSafeBC

- The goal of the BCCF's WildSafeBC program is "keeping wildlife wild and communities safe", and it works to prevent conflicts with wildlife through collaboration, education, and community-based solutions.
- In 2024, WildSafeBC hired 27 staff supporting 25 communities across B.C.
- WildSafeBC relies on core funding from the Province to operate, in addition to funds provided by local governments, Indigenous governments, businesses and residents. In 2024/25, WLRS provided $275,000 in funding, with an additional $683,500 coming from the Columbian Basin Trust, the BCCF, and communities.
- WildSafeBC is seeking consistent and increased core funding to support and ultimately expand the program.
- WildSafeBC has requested $275,000 from the Province for 2025/26, and a muti-year contract moving forward. The Resource Stewardship Division has committed $135,000 for 2025/26 and is reviewing WildSafeBC's funding request in the context of other commitments, requests, and current fiscal directives.

Grizzly Bear Foundation

- The GBF is a charitable organization dedicated to the welfare of grizzly bear across North America and works collaboratively to support grizzly bear conservation through research, public education, and advocacy.
- In September 2024, the Resource Stewardship Division entered into two memorandums of understanding with the GBF to:
  1. engage First Nations, stakeholders and experts in a discussion on "A New Approach to Bear Encounters for Conservation Officers in B.C." to improve the policies, procedures and skills for the COS when preventing and responding to conflicts with large carnivores.
  2. advance an innovative Indigenous-led process with the Indigenous Roundtable on Grizzly Bear Conservation and Bear Viewing Ecotourism ("the Roundtable") to support the finalization of the Grizzly Bear Stewardship Framework and Bear Viewing Strategy. The Roundtable is an Indigenous-led engagement process, with the GBF acting as facilitator.
- $50,000 was provided to the GBF by WLRS in 2024 to enable the GBF to engage with the Roundtable and support the provincial formal consultation

process on the Grizzly Bear Stewardship Framework and the Commercial Bear Viewing Strategy.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 21, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: Jennifer Psyllakis, A/ADM	Phone: 250-387-5657
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Logan Wenham, Executive Director	Phone: 778-698-9221

Issue: **Human-elk conflicts near highway corridors and agricultural land**

Recommend Response:

- The Province recognizes that human-elk conflicts can arise when highways and agricultural areas overlap with elk habitats.
- Multiple Ministries and First Nation governments are working together to mitigate conflicts in highway corridors and on agricultural land, guided by regional Elk Management Plans and best practices.
- The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship implements proactive strategies, like restoring and enhancing habitat away from agricultural lands, that can reduce impacts.
- First Nations and licensed hunting opportunities may be used as a management option, where conservation and public safety are not concerns.
- The B.C. Government implemented the Agriculture Wildlife Program, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, to support implementation of best practices, and compensate farmers who are following best practices but still suffer unforeseeable crop loss and depredation caused by wildlife.

Key Facts:

- Both Roosevelt and Rocky Mountain elk are indigenous to B.C. and are stewarded under the *Wildlife Act*.
- Elk are large, gregarious animals with high caloric needs that prefer habitats with abundant food, water and security from predators, such as wide valley bottoms and riparian areas. These areas are also often prime areas for highways and agriculture.
- Elk-vehicle conflicts on highways pose a risk to public safety and insurance costs. Recognition of wildlife corridors and mitigation of wildlife collisions is a shared priority between WLRS and the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT).
- The MOTT uses speed limits, signage and exclusion fencing to reduce this risk.

- BC has signed the BC - Canada Agreement on Stewardship of Ecological Corridors which provides a federal contribution of $5.335M ending in 2025/26 to address wildlife movement issues and reduce animal-vehicle collisions in different areas of the province.
- Examples of specific projects WLRS and MOTT are working on together include assessment of elk use in the Highway 18 corridor to help inform mitigation options and wildlife mitigation improvements in the Highway 3 corridor between the Alberta border and Sparwood.
- In agricultural areas, elk often become a nuisance where crops or feed storage have not been secured resulting in a reward of easy access to high yields of food. Elk are known to return to these areas even after action to secure feed storage has been taken.
- To reduce conflict in agricultural areas, ecosystem restoration efforts are being prioritized to enhance elk habitat and minimize private land conflicts. This approach also helps to maintain migratory behaviours, which further reduces conflicts.
- Where conflicts with elk are reported (e.g., damage to crops, fields, and fences), the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and WLRS biologists work together with farmers to develop mitigation strategies such as exclusion, electric fencing and hazing.
- When conservation is not a concern, increased hunter effort may be an option where it is deemed appropriate; however, several factors need to be considered including municipal firearm bylaws.
- Translocation may reduce human-elk conflicts; however, translocation decisions need to consider Indigenous knowledge and values, suitable habitats with low likelihood of conflict, and high scientific likelihood of success.
- Intentional feeding by people in towns can increase human-wildlife conflicts and WLRS staff are evaluating new regulations to prevent the intentional feeding of wildlife.

Date Prepared/Revised: April 1, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Jennifer Psyllakis — Phone: 250 387-5657

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Julia Mackenzie (West Coast Region) — Phone: Government Financial Information

Name: Eva Schindler (Kootenay Region) — Phone: Government Financial Information

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: March 28, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Agriculture- Elk Conflicts**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **Both Roosevelt elk and Rocky Mountain elk are iconic species, indigenous to BC and are stewarded under the Wildlife Act.**

- **We are aware that, unfortunately, some farmers and ranchers have been dealing with the impacts of elk foraging on their farms and ranches.**

- **Multiple ministries and First Nation governments are working together to mitigate these conflicts, guided by the Roosevelt Elk Management Plan and the Rocky Mountain Elk Management Plan.**

- **Ministry staff continue to work with the affected residents to provide tips on reducing conflicts.**

- **Elk are large, gregarious animals with high caloric needs that prefer habitats with abundant food, water and thermal cover, as well as safety from predators.**

- **Elk prefer wide valley bottoms and riparian areas. These areas are also often prime areas for agriculture, and as generalist browser-grazers, a variety of commercial agricultural crops can be attractive to elk.**

- **Farmers report conflicts with elk including damage to crops, fields, and fences from elk, and the Ministry of Agriculture and WLRS biologists work with farmers on mitigation strategies such as exclusion or electric fencing and hazing techniques such as:**

    - **Chasing elk on foot while waving hockey sticks with flagging tape**
    - **Using bear spray or an air horn**
    - **Adding a top line of fladry (brightly colored flags), mylar tape, or electric wire to existing fences**

    - **Positioning motion-activated lights and speakers at particular points of entry (e.g., a driveway) or sensitivity (e.g., a farmstand)**

- **When conservation is not a concern and elk are healthy, increasing hunting effort or translocating elk may be options, depending on several factors including municipal firearm bylaws in the case of hunting.**

- **Ongoing translocation efforts can reduce human-elk conflicts; however, translocation decisions need to consider Indigenous knowledge and values, suitable habitats with low likelihood of conflict, and high scientific likelihood of success, among other things.**

(BELOW BULLETS FROM AGRICULTURE AND FOOD)

- **We know it can be challenging working and farming among local wildlife especially in rural areas.**

- **This is why the Ministry has a program that offers compensation specifically for damage caused by wildlife.**

- **The Agriculture Wildlife Program helps producers who suffer unforeseeable losses to their crops caused by animals like elk, deer, mountain sheep or waterfowl.**

- **Farmers who purchase crop insurance are automatically enrolled.**

- **We are here to support farmers who are following best practices to prevent crop loss but still get hit by unforeseen events, whether that's a hungry elk or impacts from a changing climate.**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

BACKGROUND:

Some residents of Vancouver Island, particularly the owners of a farming operation in Yellow Point (https://bcfarmsandfood.com/farms/ladybugs-mew-in-yellow-point/) and Cowichan Valley area ,have been publicly complaining and writing letters to various government officials, including Minister Popham, about large herds of Roosevelt elk coming onto their properties and damaging crops and infrastructure.

WLRS staff have been in contact with the affected residents and offered tips for preventing access and/or deterring elk from their property.

However, efforts tried by residents have not been entirely successful to date and the affected residents are expressing frustration with what they see as a lack of government support. That said, it's not clear that any residents have tried all the options without success.

WLRS and AF are exploring options to work together on more proactive strategies that will reduce conflict and the need for mitigation.

Of note, this issue resulted in a complaint filed with the Office of the Ombudsperson in early 2024. Ministry staff responded, and the Office found the government's response was reasonable and closed the file without further investigation.

Communications contact	Sean Leslie	250 893-4403
Program contact	Julia Mackenzie	Government Financial Information
File created	March 28, 2025	
File updated	Date	

Issue: Watershed Security Strategy and Fund

Recommend Response:

- The Watershed Security Strategy (Strategy) is a long-term water-centric vision for achieving key government priorities like growing the economy, clean energy, growing communities and affordable housing, access to water for agriculture, and preparing and adapting to climate change. It also supports our commitment to reconciliation with First Nations.
- In June 2024, a decision was made by government to pause the release of the Strategy to enable time to develop implementation and resourcing plans. In the meantime, work to implement priority actions in the Strategy with existing resources is underway.
- Watershed security requires the ability for all British Columbians to work together. To do this, we must strengthen collaborative local governance and planning at the watershed level.
- On March 6, 2023, Government invested $100M, via a grant to the Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC), to establish a permanent Watershed Security Fund (Fund) to support work needed to improve watersheds. The first grant intake Fund supported 26 projects across the Province.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Healthy watersheds are foundational to our communities and industries. Water is essential for a strong economy, vibrant and healthy people, agriculture security, to generate clean electricity, and sustain diverse ecosystems.
- We will work with sectors and all orders of government, to explore next steps for securing our water and strengthening our local watershed governance systems.

    - Sectors and local governments can expect to engage with Government through regional watershed round tables or through existing forums.
- The Fund is co-managed by The Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC) and the First Nations Water Caucus (Water Caucus) with the First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC). The Province has an advisory role only.
- The Fund had two grant intakes for 2024/25, up to $10M will be granted. The first grant intake 26 projects were approved for just under $5M. The second grant intake will be announced in the Spring 2025.

Key Facts:

- The Strategy was a mandate commitment beginning in 2020. The *Declaration Act* Action Plan, Action 2.7, also committed WLRS to co-developing the Strategy with First Nations. Development of the Strategy was ongoing through 2021 to 2024.
- WLRS leads the development of the Strategy through the Watershed Stewardship and Security Branch.
- The Strategy is based on the following five interconnected goals:
    - Recognize and affirm First Nations rights to enable the full expression of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
    - Reform watershed governance in BC to strengthen watershed stewardship and decision-making at the local and provincial scales.
    - Amend, create and apply policy and law to improve watershed protection and recovery.
    - Map and monitor watersheds to identify cumulative effects, ecosystem services and opportunities for restoration and protection.
    - Undertake broad education and outreach to encourage everyone to act in ways that respect watersheds.
- Background on 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.
    - Investment yields from the Fund are expected to amount to $5-7M per year depending on interest rates.
    - The Fund must grow to meet the scale of water challenges facing B.C. Fund partners are seeking additional funding to reach their long-term goal of $1B.

- Funding priorities have been co-developed and include watershed collaboration, planning and governance; watershed ecosystems and restoration; nature-based infrastructure; watersheds and food systems; monitoring and assessment; and Land and water-based learning, intergeneration knowledge.

Date Prepared/Revised: Feb 14, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Ted Zimmerman Phone: 250-312-7405

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Lana Miller Phone: 778-349-0426

Issue: BC Watershed Risk

Recommend Response:

- Hydrologists use many different methods and models to forecast watershed risk from flood and drought, each with their own strengths and limitations suited to their intended use.
- River Forecast Centre (RFC) modelling accounts for changes in watershed conditions, such as wildfire, forestry practices, and climate change through regular recalibration for each watershed.
- In alignment with the BC Flood Strategy released last year, RFC staff continue to work closely with researchers and qualified professionals to identify and implement best practices in modeling, forecasting and communications.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- RFC Hydrologists continuously recalibrate models by comparing measured river discharges with model outputs, for a range of conditions.
- Since the 2021 atmospheric river event, RFC increased the number of hydrologists focusing on flood and drought hazards (from six to seven).
- RFC has increased the number of watersheds for which it prepares daily models and forecasts from 311 to 419 in the last three years.

Key Facts:

- BC news articles in the last year highlighted different approaches to modelling hydrology (probabilistic versus deterministic) and potential impacts of forestry practices on flows.
- The RFC's primary flood forecast models, CLEVER and COFFEE, account for watershed conditions such as wildfire or logging through ongoing calibration between expected and actual flows.

- Model errors are assessed on a regular basis. Based on those assessments, the greatest source of error in RFC modelling comes from uncertainty 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 and incorporate peer-reviewed research findings in our operational approach, where feasible and appropriate.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 13, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James Mack Phone: 778-698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Andrew Giles Phone: Government Financial Information

Issue: *Water Sustainability Act*

Recommend Response:

- The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) is responsible for British Columbia's (B.C.) water policy.
- The *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA) is B.C.'s principal law for managing water diversion, use, and changes in and about streams.
- The *Water Protection Act* (WPA) complements WSA by reconfirming the Province's management of water, clearly defining limits for bulk water removal, and prohibiting the large-scale diversion of water between major provincial watersheds and to locations outside of the B.C.

Regarding water users:

- WSA establishes that all surface and groundwater in B.C. is the responsibility of the Province to manage as a resource for the benefit of all British Columbians.
- WSA provides more tools than previous B.C. water laws to help provincial decision-makers better balance ecosystem protection, economic values and upholding First Nations rights, while building community resilience to climate change.
- The diversion and use of water requires authorization.
- Some water uses are authorized within WSA or regulation, while other water uses require a formal, site-specific authorization to be issued before water can be used.
- The Province collects water rentals, usually based on the quantity and use purpose specified in the water authorization, with some exceptions specified in legislation.

Key Facts:

- WSA took effect on February 29, 2016, and modernized how B.C. manages water to meet the needs of B.C. residents and ecosystems.
- WSA enables watershed planning tools including Watershed Security Plans, Water Objectives, and other area-based regulations to address specific issues.
- WSA authorization decisions are informed by environmental flow needs, and decision-makers have tools to protect aquatic ecosystems and fish populations during times of drought and water scarcity.
- Most WSA statutory decision-makers are WLRS employees. A small number of staff in the Ministry of Transportation and Transit and the BC Energy Regulator have also been designated as statutory decision-makers under WSA to support sector-specific water decision making.
- The export of water is subject to both federal and provincial law. B.C.'s WPA specifies container size allowances and limitations to bulk water export.

Regarding water users:

- The use of water is authorized in three different ways under WSA: 1) a person is not prohibited from diverting water for specified uses and under specific circumstances (e.g. WSA s.6 states that one is not prohibited from using unrecorded water for domestic use), 2) a person is allowed to use water (e.g., WSA s.6 allows domestic use of groundwater without needing to apply for a written authorization), and 3) a person is required to obtain a written authorization (WSA s.7) before using the water.
- Water licence holders pay rentals specified in the Water Sustainability Fees, Rentals and Charges Tariff Regulation.

Regarding changes to water policy:

- The WSA Administrative Penalties Regulation (APR) took effect January 2024 to enable financial penalties to be issued for violations of WSA.
- APR 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 offences, following investigations by Compliance and Enforcement staff.
- The Watershed Stewardship and Security Branch (WSSB) is working with the Permitting Solutions Division to change the WSA to improve permitting efficiency and lower administrative burden while protecting water resources.

Regarding drought and the WSA:

- WSA drought response tools include the authority to 1) regulate surface water and groundwater use during low flow conditions, 2) issue orders to protect the rights of water licensees and the needs of aquatic ecosystems and fish

populations, 3) undertake compliance and enforcement measures, and 4) incorporate drought resilience measures when drafting WSA water objectives and/or Water Sustainability Plans.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 18, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: James Mack, ADM	Phone: 778 698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Ted Zimmerman, ED	Phone: 778 257-2578

Issue: Water Sustainability Planning and Governance

Recommend Response:

- Our government is committed to working with communities affected by drought and water shortages and will support community-based priority setting among industrial, agricultural, residential, and environmental uses for water.
- Water sustainability planning supports healthy sustainable watersheds by addressing water use conflicts and considering aquatic ecosystem health. It can also be used to dedicate available water for agriculture.
- Water sustainability plans are co-developed with First Nations and are a collaborative process that engages other orders of government, watershed interests and communities.
- Only the Koksilah watershed has been designated for a water sustainability planning to date.

Key Facts:

- The Ministry has a growing number of requests for support in the use of planning and governance tools but does not have dedicated funding to support new projects. With current resources, we support five watershed projects in collaboration and First Nations (Koksilah, Nicola, Hullcar, Liard, Burrard Inlet).

Water Sustainability Planning & WSA Objectives

- Water sustainability plans (WSP) 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.
- 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 water licences, dedicate water for agriculture, or require other planning processes to consider a WSP.
- Other tools in the WSA can support water sustainability planning, such as water objectives. Water Objectives are enabled by Section 43 of WSA and the

Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations under this section. They are an area-based planning tool to sustain water quality, water quantity, and aquatic ecosystems.

Koksilah WSP

- Temporary protection orders were issued in the watershed in 2019, 2021, and 2023 due to extreme low flows threatening salmon populations.
- The watershed was designated for a WSP in 2022 and in 2023 Cowichan Tribes and the Province signed a Government-to-Government Agreement committing to work together on a watershed plan for the Xwulqw'selu (Koksilah) watershed.
- The Minister designated Cowichan Tribes as the person responsible for developing the Plan in December 2023.
- In 2025, WLRS requested $200K in IFP funds to support Cowichan Tribe's role as the responsible person for delivering the WSP to the Province. Cowichan Tribes has also applied externally for $400K from the Watershed Security Fund, with a decision expected in spring 2025.
- Two community advisory tables have been established to support the Koksilah WSP – the Cowichan Tribes Xwulqw'selu Community Guidance Table and the Collaborative Community Advisory Table.
- In 2025, water planning and governance options will be developed, and engagement will be undertaken with the watershed community to understand implications. The WSP is expected to be submitted to the Minister in 2026.

Nicola Watershed Governance Partnership

- A partnership with Coldwater, Lower Nicola, Nooaitch, Shackan and Upper Nicola Bands that focuses on water planning and governance.
- Between 2019 – 2024, $5.874M was received, with an additional $1M allocated in 2025 from the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework.
- The NWGP has established a robust governance process and structure and has demonstrated readiness to move forward with the development of a WSP Advice/Recommendations

Advice/Recommendations

- The next step is to designate a Responsible Person (RP), Section 66 of the WSA; the NWGP Core Council are considering various options for this.

Other Areas interested in WSA Planning tools and shared governance

- WLRS has received Expressions of Interest (50 total) from First Nations, local governments, and other provincial agencies for support with water sustainability planning and watershed governance. Notable examples include:
  - **Yaqan Nukiy and the Regional District of Central Kootenay** – Interest in a WSP to address water shortages in the Creston Valley area.
  - **Saik'uz First Nation (Omineca)** – Interest in a WSP for the Noohlkai-Tacheck and Sinket watersheds to address low flows and water quality.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2025

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: Ted Zimmerman, Executive Director	Phone: 778-257-2578
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Lana Miller, Director Water Sustainability	Phone: 778-349-0426

Issue: Groundwater Licensing Policy

Recommend Response:

- Licensing groundwater gives government a more complete picture of groundwater usage and helps us better manage this important resource. This information is especially needed when managing for drought.
- Since January 2024, a dedicated, centralized team of WLRS staff has been processing existing use groundwater applications, which has significantly reduced 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):

- I encourage those already using or planning to use groundwater for domestic use to register your well, or for non-domestic use, to apply for a water licence.
- The information you share through your application informs our water management decisions, especially during drought.
- Existing non-domestic groundwater users had six years (February 29, 2016 - March 1, 2022) to apply to have their date of first use recognized as the licence seniority date. An existing non-domestic groundwater user is someone who was using groundwater before February 29, 2016.
- Existing groundwater users who applied by March 1, 2022, are permitted to continue accessing groundwater while awaiting a decision on their water license.
- Existing groundwater users who missed the deadline can still apply but must now do so as new applicants.

Key Facts:

- WLRS is the lead agency on provincial water policy, including the *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA).
- Specifically, WLRS, the BC Energy Regulator (BCER) and the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (TT) staff are designated as decision-makers under WSA and are responsible for the operational implementation of the Act.
- 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.
- Those using groundwater for non-domestic purposes prior to February 29, 2016, are considered transitioning groundwater users. They needed to apply for an existing use groundwater (EUGW) licence prior to March 1, 2022. EUGW applicants receive recognition of their date of first use (DOFU) and are permitted to continue using water until a decision is made on their application.
- Those who missed the March 1, 2022, deadline are no longer considered to be transitioning groundwater users. They must cease diverting water, apply for a new water licence that will not benefit from DOFU considerations, and must not begin taking water again under a decision is made on their application.
- 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.
- A dedicated government team formed in February 2024 to process the existing use backlog has made 846 decisions on applications
- 238 decisions have been made on new user groundwater applications since January 2022 through regions, with 53 abandoned by the client.
- 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.
- DOFU or priority date is significant in times of water scarcity because those with earliest priority dates gets first access to water.
- 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.

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Date Prepared/Revised: February 26, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James Mack, ADM — Phone: 778-698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Ted Zimmerman, ED — Phone: 778-257-2578

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL GCPE LWRS - ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: Nov. 18, 2024 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Groundwater licensing**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **We are in the midst of a climate crisis, and the unprecedented drought of 2023 has demonstrated that the Province needs to adapt our drought planning to protect BC's precious water resources.**

- **It's more important than ever that we understand how groundwater is being used so we can protect streams, aquifers, and the rights of people who depend on them.**

- **That's why provincial water management has been transferred to the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship from the Ministry of Forests. The change will allow WLRS to take a greater role in drought management by assuming full responsibility over water management.**

- **Consolidating authorities in one ministry will allow government to better focus on the strategic work already underway with water management efforts on the ground.**

- **One of our key tools to help us better protect our water sources is the *Water Sustainability Act*, which since 2016 requires non-domestic users of groundwater to apply for a water licence.**

- **The information gathered through water licensing informs government's water management decisions and helps reduce potential conflicts between water users, especially as demand for water increases and during periods of drought and water scarcity. Water licences are publicly available through a searchable online database.**

- **Existing non-domestic groundwater users had a deadline of March 1, 2022 to register for a water license. Existing non-domestic groundwater users who missed this deadline 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.**

If asked about domestic users of groundwater:

- **A water licence is not required for domestic use of groundwater, which includes water for household purposes such drinking, food preparation, sanitation, fire prevention, watering animals kept as pets or for household use, and irrigating small gardens.**

- **However, domestic groundwater users are strongly encouraged to register their wells (for free) so that their needs can be considered when nearby wells are being licensed.**

- **Our understanding of the number of wells that should be licensed is becoming clearer as we review groundwater applications that have been received, domestic well registrations and conduct more studies of aquifers.**

If asked about the status of commercial groundwater licence applications:

- **Licence applications for 7,953 groundwater authorizations (from wells or dugouts) were received by the March 1, 2022 deadline. Applicants may continue to use groundwater while their application is processed.**

- **Our government is committed to supporting individuals with the submission of new groundwater licence applications.**

- **The Province continues to work with unauthorized users to bring them into compliance.**

- **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.**

BACKGROUND:

The *Water Sustainability Act* took effect February 29, 2016 and launched the regulation of groundwater use for the first time in B.C. Anyone who started using groundwater for a non-domestic purpose after that date is considered a "new user" and must acquire a licence before they can use groundwater. For those using groundwater before March 1, 2016 for non-domestic purposes, such as irrigation, commercial or industrial use, March 1, 2022 (6 year transition) was the deadline to apply for a licence. It's important to note that a water licence is not required for domestic use of groundwater, which includes water for drinking, food preparation, sanitation, fire prevention, watering animals which are

pets or for domestic use, and irrigating small gardens. Domestic users of groundwater are encouraged to register their wells (for free).

Historically the public used groundwater wells to avoid surface water restrictions. The regulation of groundwater significantly improves our response to drought conditions anticipated again this year. In 2014/2015 government reviewed the thousands of well records voluntarily registered into the provincial well registry and estimated that about 20,000 existing groundwater users would need to be licensed for non-domestic groundwater use. As of February 28, 2024, 2,360 groundwater licences have been issued (446 for new use and 1914 for existing use). 6039 existing use applications remain to be processed, however those applicants can continue to use groundwater under specific WSA-transition related provisions. An estimated 12,000 existing use non-domestic groundwater users have not yet applied and if/when they do, they will be considered as new groundwater use applicants under the WSA.

As B.C. anticipates the continuation of drought conditions from 2023 in to 2024, steps are being taken to reduce the backlog in applications and increase our drought resilience. A new existing-use groundwater task force has been assigned to clearing the application backlog. Budget 2024 provided funding for some water storage and conservation investment. As regional water authorization and compliance and enforcement staff come across unauthorized groundwater use, effort will be made to encourage the well owners to apply for their groundwater licences.

Existing users who did not apply by March 1 are considered unauthorized and non-compliant with the WSA. Under current legislation, those users are prohibited from using groundwater until a licence is obtained. However, it is recognized that this prohibition against groundwater use will likely discourage non-compliant existing groundwater users from applying. Subject to decision maker discretion, site-specific circumstances and WSA temporary protection order provisions, decision makers will seek to provide reasonable opportunity for non-compliant existing groundwater users to apply for a water licence before taking compliance actions to stop their unauthorized groundwater use.

The application deadline was widely communicated and should not have come as a surprise to most existing groundwater users. There have been numerous public notifications over the past two years, including a $200,000 advertising campaign and the distribution of 180,000 pamphlets encouraging groundwater users to apply for a licence before the deadline.

Key pieces of information that are required when making an online application include: information about the applicant; information about the property; the well(s)' location, depth and construction; and other information about the proposed water use and associated works. Further details are available online at: https://portal.nrs.gov.bc.ca/web/client/-/water-licence-application

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File Created:	March 24, 2022, Nov. 24, 2023	
File Updated:	March 8, 2024	

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.
- My ministry is responsible for providing strategic leadership on source and drinking water protection and leading the agency collaboration critical to achieving improvements.
- This year, we will continue work to collect and map critical information on drinking water sources to support the resilience of community water systems.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The Province recognizes that access to safe drinking water is a top priority for Indigenous communities in B.C. Engaging with Indigenous peoples and aligning drinking water work with the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* is a priority for advancing drinking water protection.
- We are exploring options for modernizing B.C.'s action plan for drinking water protection, from source to tap, and are gathering information about water supplies directly from water suppliers during the drought season.
- WLRS is also developing innovative tools for water supply operators to characterize hazards and communicate the current state of drinking water sources.
- We are working across agencies to coordinate work 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.

Key Facts:

- WLRS is responsible for protecting B.C.'s water and watersheds by supporting ongoing cross-government water stewardship efforts in partnership with First Nations.
- Delivery of the Province's drinking water program is shared primarily by the ministries of WLRS and the Ministry of Health (HLTH). HLTH sets out the requirements for drinking water safety in the *Drinking Water Protection Act* (DWPA) to protect the health of the public. The Office of the Provincial Health Officer (OPHO) monitors and reports on the status of drinking water and provides independent and informed advice on how B.C. can improve its protection of public health and drinking water.
- Other ministries also have roles, for example the ministries of Emergency Management and Climate Resilience (emergency management, disaster and climate risk and resilience assessments) and Housing and Municipal Affairs (funding for local government water supply systems).
- The DWPA is the primary legislation to protect drinking water quality in B.C. The WLRS Minister became responsible (through OIC) for sections 4.1, 4.2 and Part 5 of the DWPA on October 19, 2023.
- The PHO report entitled 'Clean, Safe, and Reliable Drinking Water: An Update on Drinking Water Protection in B.C., 2017/18 to 2021/22', released February 2024, contains 20 recommendations to improve the protection of drinking water in B.C. See Appendix A for high level descriptions of these recommendations.
- In 2019, the OAG released an audit of the protection of drinking water in B.C. that made eight recommendations to address the identified cross-agency gaps to protect drinking water.
- WLRS has the responsibility to report on progress being made on the OAG recommendations on behalf of government until they are completed. The annual report is due to the OAG March 31, 2025 and summarized in Appendix B.
- Three examples of drinking water projects underway include:
  1) WLRS is leading implementation of a Source Water Risk Assessment Framework which provides transparent and accessible information to support source water protection.
  2) HLTH is developing a Public Health Operations and Compliance IT system, with a drinking water module to support drinking water risk identification, assessment, and management at the provincial level.
  3) WLRS is leading implementation of a $10M agreement for the North Salt Spring Water District to enable them to raise the weir on St. Mary Lake[1] and improve water supply and security for their community.

[1] BC Gov News. (2024, February 22). *Budget 2024: Taking action for people, families in B.C.* [Press release]. https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024FIN0009-000241

Date Prepared/Revised: February 24, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James Mack Phone: 778-698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Ted Zimmerman Phone: 778 257-2578

Appendix A: PHO Report Recommendations (2017/18 - 2021/22)

The recommendations in the table below are at different stages of progress. The OPHO assesses progress when drafting their comprehensive multi-year reports.

*Blue highlight indicates WLRS led recommendations

PHO Recommendation	Lead Agency	Collaborating Agencies
1. Action Plan and Memorandum of Understanding	WLRS	HLTH
2. Roles and Responsibilities for Drinking Water on Federal Land	HLTH	WLRS
3. Legislative Review of the Drinking Water Protection Act	HLTH	WLRS
4. Drinking Water Protection Plans	WLRS	HLTH, PHO, HAs
5. Climate Resiliency and Emergency Response	WLRS	EMCR, HLTH, HMA
6. Climate Change Resiliency and Adaptation	HLTH	WLRS, Comptroller of Water Rights, ENV, HMA, Regional HAs
7. Regulatory Conflict Pertaining to the Authorization of Joint Works and Water Users' Communities	WLRS	HLTH, Comptroller of Water Rights
8. Public Assent Processes and the Community Charter	HMA	None
9. Implementation of Drinking Water Indicators for Annual Reporting	Regional HAs	None
10. Provincial IM/IT Strategy	HLTH	WLRS, HAs, HMA
11. Water Quality Data Sharing	ENV	WLRS
12. Small Water System Strategy	WLRS	HLTH, Comptroller of Water Rights, HMA, TT
13. Operator Training for Small Water Systems and Bulk Water Haulers	HLTH	Regional HAs
14. Access to Approved Laboratories	BC CDC	HLTH, HAs
15. Drinking Water Program Resources and Training Requirements	HLTH, HAs	OPHO, WLRS
16. Source Water Risk Assessment Framework	WLRS	HLTH

17. Distribution System Integrity and Maintenance	HLTH	Regional HAs
18. Asset Management and Financial Planning	HMA	HLTH, Regional HAs
19. Bulk Water Haulers	HLTH	Regional HAs
20. Investigating Threats to Drinking Water	HLTH	WLRS, Regional HAs

Appendix B: BC OAG 2019 Audit Report Recommendations and Status

The following status update is from a more detailed annual status report to be submitted to the OAG by March 31, 2025. This submission has yet to be reviewed and accepted by the OAG.

OAG Recommendation		Status
1	We recommend that the Ministry of Health: 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: 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; and e) controls to ensure that small water systems provide safe drinking water, and that the creation of unsustainable small water systems is limited.	Complete (HLTH, PHO, and WLRS)
2	We recommend that the Ministry of Health: 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.	Complete (WLRS)
3	We recommend that the Ministry of Health: 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.	In progress (HLTH and WLRS) Expected completion: 2026
4	We recommend that the Ministry of Health: Undertake the following actions: a) identify where and what type of risks exist in relation to source protection, drinking water treatment, distribution and small water systems;	4a) In progress. (HLTH and WLRS)

	b) coordinate with ministries and agencies to develop actions to mitigate identified risks; and c) develop a process for the evaluation and adjustment of health's guidelines to ensure they are effective.	Expected completion: 2026 4b) and c) Complete (HLTH)
5	We recommend that the Provincial Health Officer: Take action to improve the oversight of drinking water, including the development of: a) policy and procedures for reporting significant impediments to the Minister of Health; b) guidance for drinking water officers on how and when to report situations to the Provincial Health Officer that significantly impact drinking water; c) a process for evaluating and tracking significant impediments; d) a process for monitoring drinking water officers' compliance with guidelines and directives.	Complete (PHO)
6	We recommend that the Provincial Health Officer: 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.	Complete (PHO)
7	We recommend that the Ministry of Health: Report out to the public on the progress it is making in improving the protection of drinking water for all British Columbians.	Complete (HLTH and PHO)
8	We recommend that the Provincial Health Officer: 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.	Complete (PHO)

Issue: Drought Readiness 2025

Recommend Response:

- Drought threatens key priorities including drinking water supplies, power production, business opportunities, food security and the health of fish and aquatic ecosystems. We recognize that the risk of drought this summer will again be top of mind for people.
- We are encouraging everyone across B.C. to be aware and prepared for the possibility of very dry conditions again by sharing information on early snow conditions, sending tips and advice to water users on drought mitigation and preparation actions, and enhancing our web content, including the Drought Information Portal, to build better situational awareness on conditions and available resources.
- We are working with First Nations and federal government partners to develop solutions to reduce the risk of drought impacts on salmon and other at-risk fish populations.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Although much will depend on snow and rain conditions now through spring and summer, early snowpack conditions show early concerns for drought conditions to occur again this year.
- Data collection, monitoring and analysis of drought-prone watersheds and high-risk fish populations is ongoing to support any regulatory action needed and to identify early opportunities for conservation and planning.
- Communications with licensees will encourage working together to identify and prioritize water needs through voluntary water conservation actions.
- *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA) regulatory action may be needed as a last resort to protect fish and critical habitat

from long-lasting harm. These decisions are based on supporting science and socio-economic analysis that considers all water users and multiple ecosystem values.

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).
- 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 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 from WSA orders to curtail water use.
- The B.C. Energy Regulator (BCER) also holds regulatory authority under WSA to curtail water use to protect stream flows and they have initiated early communications with the oil and gas sector to compel water conservation.
- Budget 2024 announced funding for infrastructure projects and programs to strengthen drought readiness which continues into 2025, including:
    - $83M to expand the Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program to help farmers and ranchers manage water better.
    - $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:
    - $513M over three years (ends FY2024/25) for the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy, including programs to improve drought monitoring and forecasting and to build local government and agriculture resilience.
    - $250M over seven years for the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund to support mitigation and study of climate change impacts to wild salmon.
    - $15M for Pacific Salmon Foundation and First Nations Fisheries Council to work on emergency interventions for salmon.
    - $369M since 2017 for 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: February 26, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
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Alternate Contact for Issue:	
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ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: Oct. 16, 2024 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Drought**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **People across B.C. are experiencing the escalating impacts of climate change – such as the record low snowpack this year – and our government is taking action to keep people safe and safeguard the health of our natural habitats and respective wildlife that thrive within.**

- **That's why we continue to take a strengthened approach to drought preparedness: getting started earlier; working with our partners and investing in solutions to help British Columbians manage in times of water scarcity.**

- **In spring 2024, we updated our Drought and Water Scarcity Response Plan and set up regional tables so that communities, local sectors and water suppliers can use their local knowledge to develop local solutions.**

- **We have boosted community emergency response grants, agriculture water infrastructure grants and investments in fisheries protection, and committed to a $100 million watershed security fund. Budget 2024 provides additional funding for infrastructure projects and programs to build drought resiliency.**

- **Every drop counts. That's why we call on everyone in B.C. in times of drought to conserve water where possible and respect any water restrictions put in place by their local government or First Nations.**

- **We know that farmers and ranchers are among those who face the toughest challenges from drought.**

- **This year, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food hosted 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.**

- **Communications are sent out to water licensees in drought prone watersheds to encourage voluntary water conservation and preparedness for drought.**

- **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 B.C. have pushed the government to review its water management policies and implement new approaches to tackling province-wide drought.

BACKGROUND:

In recent years, many water basins across the province have reached and sustained Level 4 or Level 5 Drought through the summer and fall.

The BC Drought and Water Scarcity Response Plan was updated in spring 2024 to address ongoing drought throughout the province.

In 2023, fish population protections orders were issued for the Salmon River, Bessette Creek, Tsolum River and Koksilah River watersheds under s. 88 of the *Water Sustainability Act* to protect salmon and trout. Under these orders, water for forage crops, which include grass for hay, alfalfa and forage corn, and water use for industrial purposes were restricted.

In September 2024, the Minister considered a recommendation for a fish population protection order for the Salmon River watershed (Thompson Okanagan region) but ultimately did not issue an order.

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

Communications contact	Katie Norris, Senior Public Affairs Officer	250-896-7365
Program contact	Doris Leong, a/Director, Drought Operations	778 698-7323
File created	Feb. 7, 2024	
File updated	Oct. 15, 2024	

Issue: Water for Agriculture

Recommend Response:

- Water is vital to sustain the production of high-quality food and to support food security for British Columbians.
- B.C. agriculture sector faces significant water-related challenges. WLRS is working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF) to address these challenges through improved inter-agency collaboration and increased engagement with agricultural producers.
- The Province protects water for all values including agriculture. WLRS is engaging with First Nations, partner ministries, local communities and agricultural producers to develop new strategies and governance models.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- B.C.'s agriculture sector water-related challenges include crop and animal vulnerability to climate extremes, sector concerns regarding water licensing requirements, and in some areas, water supply limitations to expanding agricultural sector production.
- The Province has allocated $100M to B.C.'s Agricultural Water Infrastructure Program[1], which provides cost-share funding for water infrastructure planning and implementation.

Key Facts:

- WLRS is responsible for provincial water management and policy, including water allocation policy, planning, and administration under the *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA). AF works closely with WLRS to advocate for agriculture water security in policy discussions, drought preparedness and response, and watershed planning.

[1] https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024EMCR0031-000950

- Agricultural water users who divert water from surface and groundwater sources need to hold a WSA authorization. Those who get their water from providers such as utilities and municipalities do not hold WSA authorizations.

Regarding groundwater licensing:

- WSA was brought into force in 2016 and introduced a requirement for all existing non-domestic groundwater users to obtain an authorization before March 1, 2022. An estimated 12,000 users, many of whom are agricultural users, did not apply before the deadline and are using water without lawful authority.
- 60-70 percent of received groundwater applications were associated with agricultural purposes such as irrigation and livestock watering.

Regarding water scarcity:

- Over the last decade, declining streamflows have resulted in the increased need for drought response actions. Actions include ordering unauthorized users to cease water use, requesting voluntary reductions, and, as a last resort, issuing temporary protection orders to curtail licensed water use.
- In recent years, the issuance of Fish Population Protection Orders (FPPOs) under WSA has resulted in temporary water use curtailments for forage irrigators in watersheds on Vancouver Island and in the Thompson-Okanagan.
- The potential impacts of water use curtailment orders for agricultural irrigation vary, but can include crop loss, damage to future crops, loss of fire protection, and feed replacement challenges for livestock producers.
- Water scarcity and resulting curtailment orders have heightened tensions in affected communities, underscoring the need for collaborative community-led solutions at the watershed scale to address critical water supply challenges.
- To address these challenges, WLRS works with AF on cross-ministry working groups, advisory tables, technical committees and community groups.
- This approach recognizes regional distinctions and promotes collaborative emergency communications.
- The B.C. Agriculture Council is publicly campaigning to encourage the Province to secure access to water through a provincial “agriculture water reserve”.

Regarding livestock watering:

- Many ranchers using extensive rangelands (private and Crown) lack authorization under WSA to divert and use water needed for their livestock.
- Some livestock producers are opposed to government requirements to obtain livestock watering licences and have advocated for exemptions under WSA.
- In 2020, the Province developed a policy proposal that aimed to secure water for livestock on Crown and private grazing lands, while protecting water quality and riparian habitat. This proposal would have acknowledged historical use, and brought industry, including ranchers, into compliance with WSA.
- Advice/Recommendations

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Advice/Recommendations

Date Prepared/Revised: Feb 18, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
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Issue: The B.C. Flood Strategy

Recommend Response:

- WLRS, supported by the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, (EMCR), released 'From Flood Risk to Resilience: a B.C. Flood Strategy to 2035' (the Strategy) in March 2024.
- The Strategy provides a foundational 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.
- WLRS is currently advancing priority actions in alignment with other strategic objectives and existing funding, including updating floodplain mapping and provincial flood guidance.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The Strategy was developed with First Nations, local governments, and stakeholders, and 'shared the pen' with eight First Nations partners from B.C.'s major watersheds.
- WLRS supports cross-ministry coordination with EMCR to enhance BC's resilience, such as our work the BC Flood Strategy, and seeking more support from the Federal Government.
- 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 Province has approved approximately $514.9M total, and $375.3M, provincially, for over 556 flood risk reduction projects throughout B.C.

Key Facts:

- The Strategy provides a strategic framework with a vision and principles, four pathways based on the UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, with 25 actions that support progress toward a more flood resilient future for British Columbia.
- The actions are proposed to be implemented in a phased approach through a Flood Resilience (Implementation) Plan.
- The Strategy supports greater emphasis and investment in disaster risk reduction, which has been shown to save disaster response and recovery costs in multipliers of 1:7 or more.
- 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.
- Development of 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: February 8, 2024

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
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Dam Safety Estimate Note Appendix 1

Dam Failure Consequence Classification

Regulated dams are characterized by their failure consequence classification. The higher the consequence classification, the higher the expected standard of care. Under the Regulation, a dam failure consequence classification is given to all dams based on the potential for loss of life, the deterioration of environmental and cultural values, and the losses to infrastructure and the economy should the dam fail. B.C. has adopted a five–tier classification system ranging from Low to Extreme.

The Regulation requires dam owners to determine the consequence classification, and consider, annually, any changes downstream to determine whether the classification is appropriate. The proposed consequence classification is provided to a Dam Safety Officer for acceptance.

Table 1 - Number of Dams in each Failure Consequence Classification

Consequence Classification	Number of Dams
Extreme	54
Very High	115
High	219
Significant	609
Low	883
Undetermined*	26*
Grand Total	**1906**

*Staff review and site visits required to resolve the unknown information

Risk Level

The DSP uses a risk-based system that combines the failure consequence classification and the probability of failure. The probability of failure is determined by a Dam Safety Officer, based on deficiencies identified through dam audits, owner inspections or dam safety reviews. These two factors, along with the dam owner's compliance record, are entered into a matrix to determine the risk level. This method of classification enables effective and efficient use of DSP resources, ensuring that dams are monitored according to the risk they pose to the public and the environment.

In B.C., the risk of dams is classified into the five levels (Risk Level Chart – Appendix A). Levels 1–Alert and 2–Caution, identify dams where a Dam Safety Officer should devote additional time and regulatory effort to address identified deficiencies and/or non-compliant dam owners. Risk Level 2 is further defined by the following:

a) owner is not actively working on correcting the deficiency, or
b) owner is actively working on an approved project to correct the deficiency.

Section 25 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) requires public bodies to proactively disclose information: 1) About a risk of significant harm, or, 2) That is clearly in the public interest. This applies to dams with risk level 1 and in some cases to dams in risk level 2.

Table 2 - Number of Dams in each Risk Level

Risk Level	Number of Dams
1 - Alert	7
2a - Caution	21
2b - Caution	82
3 - Stable	295
4 – No concerns	640
5 - Effectual	727
Undetermined*	134*
Grand Total	**1906**

*Staff review and site visits required to resolve the unknown information

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Advice/Recommendations

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Advice/Recommendations

Issue: Dam Safety Audit by the Office of the Auditor General (OAG)

Recommend Response:

- In September 2020, the OAG undertook an audit of the provincial Dam Safety Program. The audit was made public in September 2021 and concluded that the "Ministry has not effectively overseen the safety of dams in B.C."
- The OAG audit report provided nine recommendations to improve the oversight of dam safety in BC and the ministry accepted all the recommendations.
- The ministry is in the process of preparing the year three update report to the OAG. This report will be provided to the OAG in March 2025 and will be made public in October 2025.

Additional Response points:

- The ministry is currently in year three of a five-year plan to implement the OAG recommendations and is committed to mitigating loss of life, damage to property and harm to the environment from dam breaches.
- The Dam Safety Program has successfully completed several improvements including: restructuring the program to be delivered centrally and strengthen staff accountability mechanisms, developed a process to better inform all dam owners of their regulatory responsibilities, and is continuing to make improvements to the dam registry.
- Major outstanding items include achieve appropriate staffing levels to administer the dam safety regulation and meet program oversight objectives, completing improvements to the dam registry, creating risk management tools, provide training of dam owners, and implementing a compliance and enforcement plan.

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Key Facts:

- Dam infrastructure offers benefits to all British Columbians including hydroelectricity, water supply, irrigation, flood control, industrial purposes, wildlife habitat and recreation.
- BC is seeing an increased requirement for water storage solutions, including dams, to mitigate flood and drought impacts and increase climate readiness.
- The Dam Safety Regulation and Program plays an important role in ensuring dams in BC are constructed, operated, and maintained with the objective of mitigating loss of life, damage to property, infrastructure, the environment, economy, and cultural values from a dam failure.
- The Dam Safety Program is based on four pillars 1) education 2) prevention 3) compliance and enforcement and 4) emergency preparedness and response.
- The Dam Safety Program has oversight of approximately 1,900 dams, of which 385 have a failure consequence classification of High, Very High, or Extreme.
- The recent OAG audit identified the need for improvement with prescriptive recommendations to be implemented.
- The implementation of the OAG recommendations continues to strengthen the well-respected BC Dam Safety program.
- The Dam Safety Program faces challenges through resourcing and staffing (currently has a vacancy rate of over 50 percent) to deliver the Programs' mandate and implement the OAG recommendations.
- It is anticipated that WLRS will not be able to address all the OAG recommendation within the five-year timeframe, given the current staffing restrictions.
- To be able to implement the OAG recommendations and meet the ministries' mandates, the Dam Safety Program will require both additional base staff and increased operating budget.
- Included in the OAG recommendations is a point related to the training of Dam owners, which forms one of the four pillars of the Dam Safety Program. To advance our training efforts, WLRS has established an MOU with the Ministry of Agriculture & Food (AF) to deliver training services to agricultural dam owners.
- WLRS is seeking exemption from the current hiring restrictions based on critical public service criteria. The delivery of services as committed to in the AF MOU have not been met due to staffing restrictions.
- Attached:
    - Appendix 1: Dam Failure Consequence Classification and Risk level
    - Appendix 2: OAG recommendations and progress to date

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James Mack Phone: 778 698 3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Connie Chapman Phone: 778 698 7332

Issue: Hydropower Rentals (BC Hydro Focus)

Recommend Response:

- Waterpower rental fees are determined by the capacity of each hydropower facility and the power generated, as outlined in the Water Sustainability Fees, Rentals and Charges Tariff Regulation under the *Water Sustainability Act*.
- Waterpower rental rates are adjusted annually according to the BC Consumer Price Index and are based on a client's capacity (maximum energy output at any given time) in the current year and the actual energy generated in the previous year.
- In 2024, BC Hydro was required to pay $335M for power generation water rentals before remissions were granted.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Waterpower rental revenue goes directly into general revenue.
- The Province returns $50M per year to BC Hydro through remissions associated with costs to implement Water Use Plans and compliance of their associated approvals.

Key Facts:

- BC Hydro's hydropower facilities fall under the "general" power purpose category and considered to be one system.
- The 2025 general power rates reflect a 2.6 percent increase in the 2024 BC Consumer Price Index and are $5.651 per kW for operating capacity, $0.564 per kW for construction capacity, $1.696 per MWh for the first 160,000 MWh of generation, and the tier two rate is $7.908 per MWh for all power generation above 160,000 MWh.
- BC Hydro's hydropower facilities account for approximately 80 percent of total waterpower rental revenue.
- Increases or freezes in BC Hydro consumer rates do not affect the waterpower rental rates paid by BC Hydro.

- BC Hydro also pays water rentals for other licensed purposes, such as water storage in reservoirs.
- Hydro power rental revenues impacted by climate conditions, such as drought, are delayed, due to billing based on previous year generation. Drought conditions are evident in revenue one to two years post climate event.
- Energy policy is led by the Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions and implemented and administered by WLRS under the *Water Sustainability Act*.
- Questions related to Electricity Purchase Agreements between BC Hydro and Independent Power Producers are related to the Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions.
- Total water rentals for all water licences in BC was roughly $422M in 2024.

Date Prepared/Revised:
February 14, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James Mack Phone: 778-698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Connie Chapman Phone: 778-698-7332

Issue: Chilcotin Landslide – Ministry Response and Recovery

Recommend Response:

- The Chilcotin landslide was a major event that posed a significant public safety risk as well as risks to salmon, the aquatic ecosystem and cultural sites.
- Quick cross agency response and strong communication supported the response and the ongoing recovery activities.
- As WLRS is the lead ministry for landslides, learnings are supporting how the province responds to these types of events.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The implementation of *Emergency Disaster Mitigation Act* (EDMA) has resulted in the need to redefine process and clarity as to roles and responsibilities for responding to natural hazard events.

Key Facts:

- On July 31, 2024, a significant landslide occurred, blocking the Chilcotin River.
- The Chilcotin landslide was approximately 28km upstream from the Chilcotin and Fraser River confluence, was roughly 80m deep, 600m wide and >800m in length, blocking water flow and salmon migration forming a roughly 11 km lake behind the landslide.
- The volume of water backing up created a serious downstream flood risk; the magnitude of impact depended on how quickly the water breached the site and resulting flood.
- On August 5, 2024, the water overtopped the blockage, resulting in impacts to fish migration, aquatic habitat, archaeological sites, and sending a significant volume of debris and sediment downstream.
- The implementation of *Emergency Disaster Mitigation A*ct (EDMA) has resulted in the need to redefine process and clarity as to roles and responsibilities for responding to natural hazard events.
- In 2024, WLRS was assigned responsibility for landslides without any additional resourcing. Under the EDMA, once emergency response is complete and public safety is no longer threatened, ENV is responsible to lead cross Ministry disaster recovery.

- Farwell bridge is a key access point and is managed by the Ministry of Forest. Tension cracks have been identified down stream of the bridge that present risk of failure which would result in a significant amount of rock in the river. The site continues to be monitored as there maybe impact to the bridge.
- Cariboo Regional District has undertaken an after action review of the event, in addition have expressed their concerns due to lack of communication during the event and roles and responsibilities.
- There is a debate whether emergency actions for salmon/fish fit under the definition of disaster recovery and can access resources. WLRS is working to improve the inclusion of salmon and fish values with other ministry-led response and recovery efforts.
- In past years, there have been significant cumulative impacts on Chilcotin River salmon/fish and their habitats, including unprecedented wildfires in the area, an Atmospheric River Event, the Big Bar Landslide, extreme drought, and now the Chilcotin River landslide.
- The response consisted of significant action which included daily regional briefings with potentially impacted communities, daily (sometimes twice a day) briefings with directly impacted communities, media briefings daily, briefings with WLRS and EMCR Ministers, written status updates daily posted publicly, Chilcotin landslide portal being developed and shared with the public of all visual imagining that was captured including live camera stream, multiple times a day drone and helicopter visual inspections, cameras set up capturing time series, a water survey of Canada gauge installed within days of the event, multiple collections of lidar data during and post event, Ministry of Forest Compliance and Enforcement staff at site for visual inspections around the clock, the use of the broadcast intrusive alert issued for the safety of everyone near the Chilcotin and Fraser River, flood observers placed in communities near the Fraser to address debris and flooding concerns.
- Consultants developed a breach forecast model within 36 hours of the event, which data was shared publicly highlighting worst case scenario and helping to narrow down the window as to when failure may occur.
- Worked directly with nations and developed a letter of understanding to support the recovery and address the impacts to fish, fish passage and fish habitat.

Date Prepared/Revised: «add date»

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James Mack Phone: 778 698 3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Connie Chapman Phone: 778 698 7332

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: Feb. 25, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Tsilhqot'in National Government "calls to action" re. 2024 Tŝilhqox (Chilcotin River) landslide**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **The Tsilhqot'in Nation Government was a valuable partner in responding to the massive landslide that occurred along the Chilcotin River in the summer of 2024.**

- **The Tsilhqot'in community as well as other First Nations were affected by this landslide and other potential downstream risks at the time, such as high water flows and debris in the water.**

- **Along with many government specialists, engineers, hydrologists, and others who worked diligently to assess and respond to the situation, our First Nations partners and communities shared their knowledge of the river and contributed greatly to response and recovery efforts.**

- **We brought together traditional knowledge and modern technology to understand what was going on every step of the way.**

- **The Province recognizes the enormous value that the salmon fishery has to the Tsilhqot'in Nation Government, and we appreciate its thoughtful report.**

- **During last year's response to the slide, we worked side by side with local First Nations, the Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance, the Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance, the First Nations Fisheries Council, and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to ensure that their expertise was connected directly into the emergency operations teams.**

- **The Province is thankful for the invaluable and ongoing contributions of the Tsilhqot'in Nation Government and the many organizations who provided steadfast leadership during a very challenging time.**

- **Our government will take some time to study the Tsilhqot'in Nation Government's calls to action.**

- **Of course, we will take every opportunity to learn from last summer's experiences to improve future responses to emergency situations such as the Chilcotin River landslide.**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

KEY FACTS:

In February 2025, the Tsilhqot'in National Government released a four-page document entitled "Tŝilhqox Landslide: A Series of Learnings for Tŝilhqot'in Governance". The document includes four "calls to action" related to the 2024 landslide on the Chilcotin River, and its impacts on the river valley and fish passage over the slide site.

The document is available online:
https://tsilhqotin.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Calls-to-Action_Feb_2025.pdf

BACKGROUND:

On July 30, 2024, a large landslide occurred on the Chilcotin River about 30 kilometres upstream of its confluence with the Fraser River. Additional smaller landslides occurred in subsequent days, originating from the top of the primary landslide failure.

The landslide blockage measured about 1,000 metres along the channel and about 600 metres wide, completely stopping the flow of water. This caused the river to back up over 20 kilometres upstream and prevent the passage of any fish.

On Aug. 5, 2024, water overflowed the earth dam created by the landslide and began cutting a new channel through the debris, allowing the lake formed by the landslide to drain into the original river channel, into the Fraser River and down to the Pacific Ocean by Aug. 9.

The Tsilhqot'in National Government's document includes four specific calls to action and states: "These new calls to action outline the significant work that needs to be done to uphold Tŝilhqot'in laws and jurisdiction across Tŝilhqot'in territory."

Four calls to action:

1: Establishing core funding for a Tŝilhqot'in "Emergency Reserve Fund" (as originally called for in the Fires Awakened Us) and a Tŝilhqot'in "Nen Restoration Fund" to enable the Nation to implement urgent emergency response and recovery actions with less financial risk. – EMCR

2: We call on British Columbia and Canada to: Prioritize reforms to their fisheries management regimes that ensure the survival and rehabilitation of ʔElhdaqox (Fraser River) ts'eman, jaŝ, and other lhuy, to uphold the inherent and constitutional rights of the Tŝilhqot'in and other First Nations to fish, and to support Indigenous jurisdiction over fisheries in policy and in practice. – WLRS AND DFO?

3: In order to sustain and strengthen this success, we call on British Columbia and Canada to: Build on the success of the Emergency Salmon Task Force by transitioning the task force into a long-term arrangement for harnessing strong technical expertise in support of the exercise of Tŝilhqot'in jurisdiction, and by aligning relevant areas of provincial and federal regulation with Task Force work. – WLRS AND DFO?

4: We call on British Columbia and Canada to: Integrate consultation, cooperation and consent[1]based protocols across all government departments to ensure Indigenous jurisdiction

is respected even in urgent emergency response and regardless of which government entities are enlisted in response. and Support long-term integrated Tŝilhqot'in cumulative impacts recovery through planning, agreements and funding that advance holistically Tŝilhqot'in jurisdiction- WLRS/EMCR/MIRR?

Effects of the slide on Chilko salmon in the Chilcotin River:

The expected return of Chilko sockeye salmon to their Chilcotin River spawning grounds (as of November 2024) was the lowest pre-season forecast in history, at about 170,000 fish.

With the impacts of the landslide and other stressors, it's estimated that 49,000 Chilko sockeye managed to return and spawn in this watershed.

Communications contact	Thomas Winterhoff, Sr. PAO, GCPE WLRS	778 679-5541
Program contacts	Connie Chapman, A/Executive Director, Water Management, WLRS Steve Hextall, Policy Analyst, Water, Fisheries and Coast Division, WLRS	250 893-1731 778 405-1951
File created	Feb. 25, 2025	
File updated		

Issue: Battani Creek Landslide

Recommend Response:

- Investigations are still underway and to date, the cause of the landslide is still unknown.
- The Village of Lions Bay is undertaking geotechnical assessments funded through EMCR.
- WLRS staff are exploring options under the *Water Sustainability Act* to ensure compliance with the legislation.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The implementation of *Emergency Disaster Mitigation Act* (EDMA) has resulted in the need to redefine process and clarity as to roles and responsibilities for responding to natural hazard events.
- In 2024, WLRS was assigned responsibility for landslides and is required to develop a risk assessment as per EDMA.

Key Facts:

- Battani Creek landslide occurred on December 14, 2024, in the Village of Lions Bay, resulting in the loss of two lives.
- Advice/Recommendations; Personal Information; Security Concern
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Advice/Recommendations; Legal Information; Security Concern

- The Village of Lions Bay is currently undertaking geotechnical assessments funded through the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR).
- The RCMP also initiated an investigation.
- The geotechnical assessments will help inform the Village of Lions Bay and provincial staff as to next steps.
- Staff are currently exploring options under the *Water Sustainability Act* to ensure compliance with the legislation
- A cross-agency team comprised of WLRS, FOR and EMCR are working together on a coordinated approach for short- and long-term next steps.
- To date, the cause of the landslide is still unknown.

Date Prepared/Revised: «add date»	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: James Mack	Phone: 778 698 3290
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Connie Chapman	Phone: 778 698 7332

Issue: Merritt Dikes/Permitting

Recommend Response:

- WLRS authorizations staff have been working closely with the City of Merritt, Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and First Nations to address technical and regulatory issues as they arise with these flood recovery projects.
- Construction challenges have arisen due to project planning and implementation of mitigation measures to protect salmon habitat.
- The City of Merritt is encouraged to meet with the Ministry of Emergency Management & Climate Readiness (EMCR) and WLRS to discuss a collaborative path forward, including discussing if any other funding sources maybe available.

Key Facts:

- Following the November 2021 atmospheric river event, the City of Merritt was supported by EMCR and other agencies to secure disaster relief funding. Direct funding, for both flood response and recovery activities, has been provided by EMCR.
- Two of these projects were authorized and completed in 2024 and included the replacement of the Voght Street bridge ((*Water Sustainability Act* (WSA) Change Approvals)) and construction of the North Public Works Dike (WSA Change Approval and *Dike Maintenance Act* (DMA) approval).
- Challenges during the construction of the dike were generally related to project planning and implementing mitigation measures to protect salmon habitat required by DFO (Harmful Alteration, Disruption and Destruction) and WLRS (WSA Change Approvals).
- The City of Merritt is planning to complete three more flood recovery projects within the Coldwater River in 2025, including: Claybanks Dike (WSA Change Approval, DMA and Land Act approvals), Fir Avenue bank stabilization (WSA

Change Approval and *Land Act)*, and Channel re-alignment (WSA Change Approval). Applications are currently under review by WLRS.

Date Prepared/Revised: 2025/02/14	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: James, Mack, ADM	Phone: 778 698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Yannic Brugman	Phone: 236 455-1721

Issue: Floodplain Mapping

Recommend Response:

- Our 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.
- Through leveraging the federal government's Flood Hazard Identification and Mapping Program (FHIMP), the Provincial and federal governments are investing over $24.6M to produce floodplain maps in higher risk areas in B.C.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Draft floodplain maps have been shared with all 81 communities in the first seven (7) 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
  - Kettle and Granby Rivers (near Grand Forks)
  - 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 throughout 2025.

Key Facts:

- Funding is made up of:
  - $10.9M through the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy (CPAS);
  - $11.9M through federal cost sharing under the Flood Hazard Identification and Mapping Program (FHIMP); and

    - $1.8M from an initial investment from EMCR.
- Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) administers the FHIMP, which aims to complete regulatory quality floodplain maps for higher risk areas and make information accessible.
- $6.66M of federal funding has already been accessed to March 2025.
- The Province works with the Fraser Basin Council to coordinate the current provincial floodplain mapping work.
- In addition to the seven floodplain mapping studies, four scoping studies have been completed to inform priorities for future floodplain mapping projects. These studies covered the North, South, Coastal and Lower Mainland areas.
- Procurement and early community engagement to confirm interest in the next round of mapping are underway. These new projects will be initiated in 2025 and completed prior to March 2027.
- A province-wide screening level flood hazard layer is also being developed to provide planning tools for communities and equitable understanding of hazards.
- First Nations are engaged prior to mapping initiation to confirm interest and then to review and comment on draft and final mapping products.
- 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.
- 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, supported by B.C.'s guidelines for floodplain mapping.
- First Nations, local governments and organizations such as the B.C. Real Estate Association have called for updated floodplain mapping in B.C. for many years.
- Engagement toward the B.C. 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.
- Action 1.1 of the B.C. Flood Strategy outlines the need to "Develop a provincially-coordinated floodplain mapping program" 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 (CEPF).
- The District of Vanderhoof has expressed concerns around the potential for changes to the floodplain maps if Rio Tinto operations with the dam were to change impacting flows down the Nechako.
- The floodplain mapping program has worked closely with Rio Tinto to understand the operations, though it is acknowledged that with climate change and other potential agreements and infrastructure changes, operations may change and updates to the floodplain maps would need to occur.

- As Rio Tinto operational changes that are in discussion would take years to implement, it has been determined that the floodplain maps should be released with the acknowledgment that it is based on current operations and that updates would need to occur if infrastructure and operations were to change at Rio Tinto dam.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 13, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: James Mack	Phone: 778-698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Andrew Giles	Phone: Government Financial Information

Issue: Freshet Readiness – Spring 2025

Recommend Response:

- WLRS is taking action to reduce flood impacts across the province this spring, and throughout the year.
- Current season trends in snowpack indicate below normal conditions; however, precipitation and temperature patterns through the spring months can increase seasonal flood hazard.
- 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.

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 and response to flood hazard.
- 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, a Flood Assessment Unit (FAU) is set up for each region, as necessary, with FAU lead, 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.

- The Water Management Branch 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 access to subject matter experts, 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 13, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James Mack Phone: 778-698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Andrew Giles Phone: Government Financial Information

Issue: Transboundary Flood Initiative (formerly known as "Nooksack")

Recommend Response:

- Following the Atmospheric River Events of 2021, the Province signed agreements to participate in two tables to develop flood mitigation measures to reduce impacts from future flood events.
    - In April 2003, the Province entered into the Sumas River Watershed Flood Mitigation Collaborative Framework (SWRFMP) with the Semá:th, Máthxwi, and Leq'á:mel First Nations and the Cities of Abbotsford and Chilliwack to pursue actions for flood risk reduction and ecosystem restoration in the Sumas Prairie.
    - Signed October 2023, the Transboundary Flood Initiative (TFI) framework is informed by the SRWFMP. The TFI brings together the Province and the State of Washington (WA) and local and First Nation governments from both sides of the border to develop solutions to address flood risk and ecosystem restoration in the Sumas and Nooksack watersheds.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The Province has invested over $500K into the SRWFMP to develop a hydraulic model of the Sumas Watershed, incorporating Nooksack Watershed data shared through the TFI, which has resulted in the first cross-border model between Canada and the US.
- To date, the Province has contributed $7.2M to advance the SRWFMP. This has resulted in research, modelling and a roadmap report.
- The report provides flood risk reduction options for the SRWFMP that are supported by directly affected parties, next steps, and areas for additional investigation. Engagement on this report is planned for summer 2025.

Key Facts:

- In November 2021, an extreme weather event and overflow of the Nooksack River from Whatcom County, Washington, caused catastrophic flooding in Abbotsford and the Sumas Prairie. This event prompted the collaborative frameworks of both TFI and SRWFMP.
- The Transboundary Flood Initiative (TFI), formally signed in October 2023, brings together the Province, Washington State, local and First Nation governments to develop solutions to addressing flood risks and ecosystem restoration in the Sumas and Nooksack River watersheds.
- Collaboration alongside First Nations and Local Governments at the SRWFMP and TFI aligns with modern integrated flood hazard management guidance as noted within the B.C. Flood Strategy, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and upholds provincial commitments to First Nations under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.*
- The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) and the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) have been leading coordination on the SRWFMP and TFI, with the Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT) and Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF) playing a significant role due to their interests in the region. Although the Federal government has been invited to both SRWFMP and TFI, there is limited participation.
- The SRWFMP parties have drafted a technical progress report consisting of the results of assessing collaboratively identified flood mitigation and habitat restoration options for the Sumas Prairie. Next steps include ongoing collaboration, further studies, and expert analysis of mitigative and restoration options.
- The Sumas Prairie is a complex watershed. It is of extreme cultural significance for First Nations, crossed by critical transportation corridors including Hwy 1 and two railways, Oil and Gas pipelines, key hydro-electric infrastructure, provincially important fiber optics cables, and is home to the most valuable agricultural production land in Canada.
- A recent milestone meeting (March 7, 2025) with elected leadership from the SRWFMP parties took place to discuss progress and next steps. The Province confirmed its investment in the process through ongoing financial contributions of staff, provincial grants, cost-sharing agreements and capacity funding, as well as support for municipal and federal grant applications.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 10, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James Mack, ADM Phone: 778 698-7332

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Andrew Hill Phone: Government

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 the dikes were constructed, often 50-80 years ago.
- B.C. continues to work with local diking authorities and others partners to support the safe management and operations of dikes.

Additional Response points:

- B.C. supports local diking authorities with dike guidelines, training and access to funding programs as part of our comprehensive approach to flood protection.
- 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 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 infrastructures in B.C.
- DMA provides the Inspector of Dikes (and Deputies) with the authority to establish flood infrastructure standards, monitor management of works, approve changes to dikes and the construction of new dikes, and issue orders respecting flood hazard planning.
- The Province is working to repeal the outdated *Drainage, Ditch and Dike Act* (DDDA), predecessor to the DMA, and the date for dissolution was just extended to December 2030.
- There are currently only four diking districts remaining under the DDDA: Fortune Creek Diking District (Township of Spallumcheen); Surrey Diking District (City of

Surrey); Barnston Island Diking District (Metro Vancouver Regional District); and Coquitlam Diking District (City of Coquitlam).

- A recent misconception in the media is that B.C. downloaded responsibility for dikes to local governments in 2003, which is not the case. In 2003, legislative changes (*Flood Hazard Statute Amendment Act*) gave the responsibility of approving subdivisions, bylaws and variances on floodplains to local governments, but did not change long-established diking authorities.
- Costs for construction and operations of dikes continue to increase, making management of infrastructure for diking authorities more challenging. For example, Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information
Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information Most of the high consequence dikes are located in the Lower Mainland.
- The Province provides funding for disaster risk reduction activities (such as flood mitigation) to First Nations and Local Governments. For example, the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF), has invested $369M for approximately 2,170 disaster risk reduction projects since 2017.
- 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 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 2025 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: 2025/02/26

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James Mack Phone: 778 698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Yannic Brugman Phone: 236 455-1721

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: Feb. 8, 2024 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**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.**

<u>If asked about orphan dikes:</u>

- **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.**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

- **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

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.

Communications contact	Octavian Lacatusu, Public Affairs Officer	250-889-1684
Program contact	Andrew Giles, Manager, River Forecast & Flood Safety	778-974-4535
File created	Date: Feb. 8, 2024	
File updated	Date	

Issue: Orphan Dikes

Recommend Response:

- During emergencies and throughout the year, staff with 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.
- The province 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 in flood preparedness, response and mitigation activities.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The B.C. Flood Strategy identified specific actions to coordinate stakeholders and partners and identify potential funding to address orphan dikes.
- 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 through an Expense Authorization Form to EMCR.
- The province also continues to invest in flood planning and mitigation work through various provincial funding programs.

Key Facts:

- Orphan dikes are flood protection structures with no identified 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 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 FOR's 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: 2025/02/14

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James, Mack, ADM — Phone: 778 698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Yannic Brugman — Phone: 236 455-1721

Issue: Coastal Marine Strategy Implementation.

Recommend Response:

- Released in July 2025, BC's first ever Coastal Marine Strategy (Strategy) is the overarching policy framework for the province's coastal marine environment.
- The Strategy outlines a phased approach for government to further develop our blue economy, conserve natural environment, foster community resilience, adapt to climate change, and contribute substantively to reconciliation with First Nations.
- Over the next 12 months, Ministry staff will work with First Nations' partners to co-develop a draft implementation approach that aligns with our shared priorities, and that delivers on key actions that can be implemented with existing resources.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The strategy was co-developed with many coastal First Nations and included substantial input from local government, stakeholders, and the public.
- Support from these groups is high, with expectations that it will help address longstanding coastal issues under provincial and federal jurisdiction.
- Several Strategy actions are already underway through:
    - contributing $60M to support Indigenous capacity and stewardship programming in the Great Bear Sea;
    - implementation of the Marine Protected Area Network in the Great Bear Sea;
    - developing a province-wide marine plant aquaculture policy; and
    - exploring tidal tenure policy reform and coastal marine legislation has commenced.

- Engaging with coastal First Nations on Strategy priority actions
- Staff will continue to leverage existing programs and resourcing to advance several Strategy actions while Ministry budgeting decisions are made.

Key Facts:

Background and Context:

- Public, stakeholder, and First Nations' feedback on the Strategy showed substantial alignment and broad support for the vision and policy direction.
- First Nations and external partners are eager to maintain momentum and begin implementation on key priorities that were highlighted during public engagement such as: addressing marine pollution; protection and restoration of coastal ecosystems; resilience to climate change; advancing Indigenous self-determination; enforcing meaningful legislation; and supporting a thriving ocean economy.

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 includes letters, webinars, interviews, direct meetings and work with existing governance tables to foster participation.
- Sixty-five coastal Nations contributed to the Strategy development phase which included an Indigenous Youth and Young Professionals Summit in March 2023.
- The Strategy implementation phase with First Nations is following a similar approach as the development phase.

Local government, stakeholder, and Government engagement:

- The federal government is engaged through formal bilateral governance structures. Work is underway to convene a meeting of these committees this spring; however, a federal election may preclude this.
- WLRS staff continue to engage other Ministries to clarify where interests overlap; this includes the Ministries of Forests; Agriculture and Food; Environment and Parks; and Jobs, Economic Development, and Innovation, among others.
- Over 50 stakeholder groups and 11 of 17 Coastal Regional Districts participated contributed to the Strategy development phase. The current fiscal climate may constrain broad engagement of these groups moving forward. The Ministry will look for creative ways to engage on the strategy and communicate progress.

Fiscal Implications:

There is currently no operating or capital budget specifically allocated to support implementation of the strategy; many of the actions and goals that the public, stakeholders, Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

- Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

- Ministry staff will continue to leverage exisitng programs and resourcing to advance Strategy actions.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: James Mack, Assistant Deputy Minister	Phone: (778) 698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Charlie Short, Executive Director	Phone: (778) 974-5841

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. B.C. 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 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 percent protection by 2025 and 30 percent by 2030.
- B.C. is 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.
- Intergovernmental Communications

    - 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 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	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: James Mack	Phone: 778-698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Charles Short	Phone: 250-812-6236

Issue: Provincial Investments in the Great Bear Sea and Project Financing for Permanence

Recommend Response:

- In December 2023, the Province announced a $60M 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 $109M in 439 conservation, sustainable energy, and economic development projects that have created over 1,250 jobs since 2008.

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 several 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; Government Financial Information; 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

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James Mack Phone: 778-698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Charles Short Phone: 250-812-6236

Issue: Federal Salmon Aquaculture Transition Plan

Recommend Response:

- British Columbia (B.C.) has long requested that the federal government take a whole of government approach and work with First Nations, coastal communities, workers and the aquaculture sector to ensure a proper and funded Transition Plan.
- The Province has also repeatedly called for appropriate timelines and supports to allow a viable and successful transition for First Nations, communities and operators.
- My Ministry and the Ministry of Jobs Economic Development and Innovation are engaging with the new federal lead (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada) as they develop a final transition plan.
- We want to play a role in supporting the 2029 Transition Plan because we have repeatedly called for concrete measures, and we hold Canada to account for their delivery.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Since the original 2019 federal mandate commitment that launched this initiative, the Province has consistently engaged with DFO to provide B.C.'s priorities, with input provided regularly through officials and via two previous Premier's letters. The themes of this input include:
    - That any transition plan must put people first, so assurances are required that the plan will ensure workers and communities are treated fairly and provided a future economic vision.
    - That First Nations be fully engaged, acknowledging both those who object to farming in their territory and the many who have developed their own risk

assessment, their own industry partnerships, and their own vision for the future of their territory.
- That time is needed for businesses to adjust investment decisions, and supports are needed for a range of technology solutions that may provide new economic opportunities.

Key Facts:

- On September 20, 2024, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) publicly released their Draft Open-Net Pen Transition Plan which will ultimately result in a ban on open-net pen salmon farming by June 30, 2029.
- The federal policy will completely transform B.C.'s salmon farming industry, impacting the province's economy, workers, communities and First Nations. Farmed salmon was recently a $700M B.C. export commodity (2022) but has been reduced to $436M (2023) resulting from recent federal, provincial and First Nations decisions.[1]
- Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED) Canada is now the lead federal agency and is coordinating engagement, development and implementation of a final plan.
- Federal consultation and engagement on the Transition Plan is now led by an interdepartmental task force under ISED Parliamentary Secretary (Ryan Turnbull). This task force will serve as a Government of Canada secretariat, under the leadership of Sony Perron, Deputy Minister of Economic Development Canada.
- Since the original 2019 federal mandate commitment that launched this initiative, the Province has consistently engaged with DFO to provide B.C.'s priorities, with input provided regularly through officials and via two previous Premier's letters. The themes of this input include:
  - That any transition plan must put people first, so assurances are required that the plan will ensure workers and communities are treated fairly and provided a future economic vision.
  - That First Nations be fully engaged, acknowledging both those who object to farming in their territory and the many who have developed their own risk assessment, their own industry partnerships, and their own vision for the future of their territory.
  - That time is needed for businesses to adjust investment decisions, and supports are needed for a range of technology solutions that may provide new economic opportunities.

1. [1] Stats from Ministry of Agriculture and Food: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/statistics/agriculture-and-seafood-statistics-publications

- Since June 2022, the Province has adhered to its policy for the issuance of salmon aquaculture tenures, which requires operators to:
    - Meet all federal (DFO) aquaculture license conditions that assures protection of the health of wild salmon;
    - Demonstrate support from First Nation(s) in whose territory they propose to operate via industry-First Nations written agreements; and,
    - Meet all provincial *Land Act* policies related to the siting of finfish aquaculture sites.
- WLRS, as the strategic policy lead for aquaculture and fisheries, has responded and coordinated the provincial response. Given the increasing focus on economic development and community/worker supports, B.C.'s Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation is increasingly involved in these discussions.
- Investment interest is present amongst offshore companies who desire to establish various closed-containment operations. There is a general understanding that closed-containment systems will not immediately replace production capacities, nor will it occur in the same communities or with the same First Nations that benefit from proximity and partnerships with the current sector.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: James Mack	Phone: (778) 698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: David Travia	Phone: (778) 974-3764

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: Nov. 18, 2024 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Aquaculture in B.C**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **Wild Pacific 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 Coastal Marine Strategies, which include protection, restoration and enhancement of wild salmon populations and their habitats.**

- **While we remain committed to engaging with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada in the implementation of their 2029 Net-Pen Transition plan with these values in mind, we are concerned about the broader economic pressures facing First Nation and coastal communities.**

- **We recognize that the decision to ban open net-pen salmon aquaculture in British Columbia coastal waters by June 30, 2029, will impact thousands of workers, and will require significant investment to incentivize innovation and the adoption of new technologies.**

- **British Columbia has long requested that the federal government work with coastal communities, First Nations, workers and the aquaculture sector to ensure a proper and funded Transition Plan.**

- **The decision amplifies the urgency of action needed from the Government of Canada to take a comprehensive approach to support this challenging transition for communities, workers and industries.**

BACKGROUND:
On June 19, 2024, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)—the deciding authority on finfish aquaculture in the province—announced that they will ban open net-pen salmon aquaculture in British Columbia coastal waters by June 30, 2029.

The Province's role in finfish aquaculture is to issue tenures under the *Lands Act.* Statutory decision makers (SDMs) base their decisions on these tenures in accordance with the provincial Salmon Aquaculture Policy. This policy requires proponents to have secured federal licensing from DFO and agreements with First Nations in whose territory they intend to operate.

Over the coming months, DFO will engage with those directly and indirectly affected by this transition in British Columbia to discuss how best to support them. To facilitate a successful transition, DFO will renew salmon aquaculture licences for *five years*. Effective July 1, 2024, these licences come with stricter conditions to ensure improved management of sea lice on farmed fish, robust reporting requirements for industry and additional monitoring of marine wildlife interactions. These conditions will strengthen protections for wild species and the marine environment, while ensuring aquaculture facilities can operate safely during this transition period.

After July 1, 2024, only closed-containment systems will be considered for salmon aquaculture licences in coastal British Columbia. The Government of Canada recognizes that such systems are likely to come with increased investment costs. To provide greater predictability, DFO will issue nine-year licences to successful closed-containment production applicants.

The Province, through the Ministry of Agriculture, published a report on April 2022 on the realities of adopting land-based aquaculture in British Columbia. The report brought several key conclusions to the forefront. For example, significant investments will be required to adopt land-based technology, and thus the Province needs technology transition supports from the federal government. The changes are not likely to occur in the same locations and communities where current operations are situated, and thus federal support will be essential for community and worker supports. There will be challenges associated with access to adequate water and electricity, at a time when those resources are under increasing pressure.

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. These include transition supports for technology—in adoption, R&D and incentivizing investments.

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Program Area Contact:	Mike Turner, Director of Policy (Fisheries, Aquaculture and Wild Salmon Branch: Water, Fisheries and Coastal Policy and Planning Division)	250 778-3129
File Created:	23 March 2022	
File Updated:	18 July 2024	

Issue: Wild Salmon Strategy in Action

Recommend Response:

- WLRS is committed to continuing our work to restore estuaries, inter-tidal zones, and critical salmon spawning habitats.
- BC continues to advance the protection of wild salmon and steelhead through the implementation of provincial initiatives such as the Coastal Marine Strategy, the BC Flood Strategy, the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF), and the ongoing development of the Watershed Security Strategy.
- 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 is working with the First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC) on a Trilateral Salmon Accord that is a collaboration between DFO, BC and First Nations.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Since 2019, BC has been committed to addressing wild salmon restoration by enhancing partnerships, funding research and restoration projects, addressing the impacts of climate change, and by building wild salmon and steelhead priorities into provincial initiatives and strategies.
- We have invested $85.7M[1] in BCSRIF, making it the largest provincial financial commitment to protect wild salmon and steelhead in the past 20 years.
- In 2024, WLRS signed the Trilateral Salmon Accord that is a collaboration between DFO, BC and the First Nations Fisheries Council.

1. https://news.gov.bc.ca/stories/the-government-of-canada-and-the-province-of-british-columbia-team-up-to-protect-salmon-populations
2. https://healthywatersheds.ca/faq/
3. https://psf.ca/news-media/province-builds-on-unprecedented-investment-in-wild-salmon-recovery/
4. https://watershedsecurityfund.ca/

Key Facts:

- The Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship has a mandate to continue our work to restore estuaries, inter-tidal zones, and critical salmon spawning habitats.
- BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) has been the main avenue for WLRS, in partnership with DFO.
- A timeline of BC's actions on wild salmon can be found in Appendix 2.
- BCSRIF funding has been fully allocated, and the funded projects will all be completed by March 2026.
- In July 2024, BC, DFO and the First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC) signed the Trilateral Salmon Accord that established a collaborative process to align and coordinate work on shared wild Pacific salmon priorities. Jointly developed priority areas of focus include climate adaptation, ecosystem monitoring, habitat restoration, recovery plans and watershed security.
- 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. BC does not manage the stock status estimates for salmon, except for steelhead.
- The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada currently lists three 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 Pacific 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 2025 will be generally poor and like 2024, 2023, and 2022, which were among the lowest on record. There are some mixed signals for 2025 returns; however, some stocks are showing more positive returns. This year will be a Fraser River pink salmon year with anticipated harvestable abundance.
- Salmon returns in 2025 will be highly variable, with an overall continued trend of reduced productivity, especially for southern salmon populations and chinook in most areas.
- The Coastal Marine Strategy addresses 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, BC has been working with the FNFC to develop a Trilateral Salmon Accord between DFO, BC and FNFC.

Appendix 1: Timeline of BC Provincial Salmon Actions

1. https://news.gov.bc.ca/stories/the-government-of-canada-and-the-province-of-british-columbia-team-up-to-protect-salmon-populations
2. https://healthywatersheds.ca/faq/
3. https://psf.ca/news-media/province-builds-on-unprecedented-investment-in-wild-salmon-recovery/
4. https://watershedsecurityfund.ca/

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Date Prepared/Revised: «add date»	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: James Mack	Phone: 778-698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: David Travia	Phone: 778-974-3764

Appendix 1: Timeline of BC Provincial Salmon Actions

- 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).[1]
  - 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.[3]
  - Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the FNFC.
- 2020:
  - Released an update on the progress implementing WSAC strategies.
  - Appointed a Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Aquaculture.
  - Announced Healthy Watersheds Initiative $27M fund.[2]
- 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.[1]
  - 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.[3]
  - 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 Ac*t Action Plan 2.9 through Trilateral Approach with First Nations and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

1. https://news.gov.bc.ca/stories/the-government-of-canada-and-the-province-of-british-columbia-team-up-to-protect-salmon-populations
2. https://healthywatersheds.ca/faq/
3. https://psf.ca/news-media/province-builds-on-unprecedented-investment-in-wild-salmon-recovery/
4. https://watershedsecurityfund.ca/

- Provided a grant of $100M to the Real Estate Foundation of BC to create the Watershed Security Fund with the BC First Nations Water Table that will continue to improve BC's watersheds.[4]

- 2024
  - Released the co-developed Coastal Marine Strategy and Flood Strategy that includes a goal and actions to support abundant wild salmon.
  - Released the co-developed Flood Strategy, which considers protecting and enhancing fish habitat.
  - Signed the Trilateral Salmon Accord with DFO and FNFC.

1. https://news.gov.bc.ca/stories/the-government-of-canada-and-the-province-of-british-columbia-team-up-to-protect-salmon-populations
2. https://healthywatersheds.ca/faq/
3. https://psf.ca/news-media/province-builds-on-unprecedented-investment-in-wild-salmon-recovery/
4. https://watershedsecurityfund.ca/

Information found at public facing website BC Salmon Restoration Fund project overviews

Project Name	Recipient	Project Description	Fund Allocated
Thompson-Shuswap salmon habitat assessment, monitoring and restoration program	Shuswap Nation Tribal Council Society	This project, being led by the Secwepemc Fisheries Commission (on behalf of the Thompson-Shuswap Salmon Collaborative), 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	$1,306,000
Skeena River fish trap project	Lax Kw'alaams Business Development Ltd.	This project is being conducted by Lax Kw'alaams Fisheries in collaboration with Skeena Fisheries Commission and the Wild Fish Conservancy to assess the viability of an impoundment net fish trap in the lower Skeena River.	$2,272,760
Watershed restoration prioritization tool/solutions for Gold River steelhead	Nootka Sound Watershed Society	The Watershed Restoration Prioritization Tool/ Solutions for Gold River Steelhead Project supports long-term management and recovery of priority salmon stocks in the Nootka Sound region of West Coast Vancouver Island, with a particular focus on threatened Chinook salmon and steelhead stocks in the Gold River watershed.	$1,165,470
Post flood support for fish and fish habitat	Scw'exmx Tribal Council	This project will support strategic	$5,309,810

recovery in the Nicola Watershed		post 2021 flood recovery actions in the Nicola Watershed. These include the remediation of several site specific areas where critical habitat has been degraded by the extreme flood event; support for a watershed assessment and rapid deployment team to address fish stranding and passage issues as they occur and support watershed rehabilitation planning work; and the continuation of a juvenile standing stock project to track Chinook and steelhead juvenile recruitment in response to flood.	

Issue: Wild Steelhead

Recommend Response:

- Steelhead populations in BC have been declining for many years; conserving and recovering wild steelhead is a priority.
- Primary mortality factors are low ocean survival, predation, and bycatch in fisheries. Climate-based disasters (e.g., drought) are also a risk to steelhead habitat.
- BC is working across governments and partners to build coordinated actions to address the threats.
- Resourcing for steelhead management is integrated into base budgets with additional project-specific funds, including the Indigenous Funding Program (IFP) and BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF).

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Increases in Skeena and Thompson populations: Fall 2024 test-fishing catches showed an increase in returns for the Skeena River, and a slight increase for the Thompson River. It is still too early to determine if this is a reversal in the long-term declining trend.
- Steelhead hatcheries: There are currently hatcheries operating on eight rivers to supplement recreational fisheries (only where they don't put wild steelhead at risk). The use of hatcheries for conservation is historically unsuccessful.
- 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.

Key Facts:

- There are an estimated 427 wild steelhead populations in BC.
  - 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) – 10-30 percent of historic.
  - "Extreme Conservation Zone" (ECC) - <10 percent of historic.
  - "Special Concern" (SC) - not well documented but believed to be low.
- The Skeena and Interior Fraser River populations traditionally supported significant recreational fisheries.
  - Skeena has been in CC or ECC zone since 2019, but appear to have returned to the RMZ in 2024 – this is likely due to better ocean conditions.
  - The Interior Fraser group includes Thompson and Chilcotin populations, both of which are assessed as 'Endagered' and have been in the ECC zone since 2016, although Thompson is forecast to potentially improve into the CC zone in 2025 (based on 2024 test fishing).
- A large landslide on the Chilcotin River blocked migration in 2024, but luckily the blockage cleared relatively early in the migration period.
- Wild Steelhead are resilient with high recovery potential. They carry many eggs, and some can spawn more than once.
- 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".
- 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, fishing regulations, conservation, and recovery planning. We also lead cross-government collaborations with First Nations and Canada.

- The Federal Government, through DFO, is responsible to protect steelhead in federally authorized salmon fisheries.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: James Mack	Phone: (778) 698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Mike Ramsay	Phone: 250-267-4304

Issue: BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund

Recommend Response:

- The protection of wild Pacific salmon through the restoration of estuaries, inter-tidal zones, and critical salmon spawning habitats, continues to be a priority for British Columbia (BC). This ongoing work is vital to BC's culture, economy, history and environment, and key to us achieving our Provincial commitment to protect 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030.
- BC's continuing investment of $85.7M into the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) and the total investment, with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, now means that $285.7M has been committed to restoring abundant wild salmon populations.[1]
- Since 2019, 170 projects have received BCSRIF funding, representing an investment of more than $257M in the rebuilding of wild Pacific salmon stocks and supporting the BC fish and seafood sector (Appendix A).[2]

Additional Response points (if needed):

- All 97 of the Phase 1 BCSRIF projects were completed by March 31, 2024.
- BCSRIF is currently funding 73 Phase 2 projects that are ongoing with completion dates up until March 31, 2026.
- The $3M in remaining funding has now been provided to five high value, priority projects with the capacity to spend additional funds.

[1] The Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia team up to protect salmon populations and the fisheries they support - Canada.ca
[2] Government of Canada and Province of British Columbia join forces to protect Pacific salmon and the vital fisheries they support - Canada.ca

- Indigenous leadership is a key principle of BCSRIF with 68 (40 percent) of the 170 projects led by Indigenous groups, with over $98M committed to these projects.[3]
- BCSRIF projects provide provincial coverage, with each region hosting projects. The South Coast and Vancouver Island is home to the highest number of projects, at 36 percent (Appendix B).[4]
- BCSRIF projects employed 2,773 people through funded projects between 2019 and 2024.[5]
- 2,469 people have received training as part of the project activities; 40 percent of those people identify as Indigenous.
- The 97 Phase 1 projects have restored, or improved access to, a cumulative total of 16,000 square kilometers of fish habitat.

Key Facts:

- In 2019, the BC 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 BC and protect our wild Pacific salmon species.
- The projects focus on salmon, with 84 percent projects focused on salmon and salmon habitat.
- BC's initial $42.85M investment was the largest provincial financial contribution to protect wild salmon in the past 20 years. BC 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 BC. DFO is working to match BC's timeline.
- Continuing WLRS work restoring estuaries, inter-tidal zones, and critical salmon spawning habitats, is core to BCSRIF and identified as a priority in Minister Neill's Mandate Letter. 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 the 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.

[3] BC and DFO have some statistics that are internally derived, these were provided by DFO.
[4] Please refer to the "placemat", Appendix B, in this Estimate.
[5] The next three bullets have been provided by DFO.

- WLRS's role in BCSRIF is focused on strategic oversight of the initiative; cross-Ministry collaboration; sector and industry engagement; and collaboration with DFO.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 10th, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: James Mack	Phone: 778-698-3290
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Name: David Travia	Phone: 778-974-3764
Name: Michael Turner	Phone: 778-698-3129
Name: Stephen Hextall	Phone: 778-405-1951

Appendix A - Phase 1 and Phase 2 BCSRIF Projects to date

Project Title	Recipient	Funding
BCSRIF Projects		
Elaho River Chinook Salmon Restoration	Squamish River Watershed Society	$ 522,486
Electronic Application for Enhanced Selective Fishing and Bycatch Avoidance	Canadian Groundfish Research and Conservation Society	$ 600,000
Jack Brooks Hatchery/Creation of Salmon Conservation Facility	Juan de Fuca Salmon Restoration Society	$ 216,349
Enhancing rockfish recovery through citizen science, outreach & field experiments	University of Victoria, School of Environmental Studies	$ 758,780
Innovative Habitat Restoration Demonstration	British Columbia Conservation Federation (BCCF)	$ 4,952,373
National Indigenous Fisheries Institute ENGAGEMENT	National Indigenous Fisheries Institute	$ 355,095
Rehabilitation of Critical Infrastructure to Improve Survival of Thompson Steelhead & Chinook	Nicola Tribal Association	$ 1,314,027
Determination of Bottlenecks Limiting Wild and Enhanced Juvenile Salmon and Steelhead Production in BC using PIT tags	Pacific Salmon Foundation	$ 4,619,877
Enhancing Estuary Resiliency: An Innovative Approach to Sustaining Fish and Fish Habitat in a Changing Climate	The Nature Trust of BC	$ 8,552,415
Innovation for community-run terminal fisheries	Pacific Salmon Foundation	$ 410,300
Enhancing Sustainability of capture & release marine recreational fisheries	UBC	$ 1,938,002
Improving Sustainability of British Columbia's Commercial Spot Prawn Fishery and Prawn Stocks	Pacific Prawn Fishermen's Association	$ 117,996
Elephant Hill Fire Riparian Restoration Project	Secwepemcul'ecw Restoration and Stewardship Society	$ 2,629,833
Plateau Fire Recovery - Riparian Plant Collection and Planting	Baker Creek Enhancement Society with Nazko First Nations	$ 750,000
Place-based Risk of Climate Change to Sustainability of BC Salmon	Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium	$ 1,025,000
Upper Fraser Chinook Strategic Enhancement Project	Spruce City Wildlife Association	$ 240,362
Inkaneep Creek Restoration	Osoyoos Indian Band	$ 360,283
Optimizing RAS for Sustainable Salmon Production	The University of British Columbia	$ 1,829,490
Drivers of Inter-annual variability in Zooplankton Feeding in the Strait of Georgia	University of British Columbia (UBC)	$ 165,000
Seymour Watershed Restoration Project	Seymour Salmonid Society	$ 618,844
Upper Adams Salmon Restoration Program	Adams Lake Indian Band (ALIB)	$ 2,521,181
Broughton wild salmon restoration project	Namgis First Nation	$ 4,220,529
Phase 1: Independent First Nations' Genomic Lab for BC	Namgis First Nation	$ 50,560
Phase 2: Independent First Nations' Genomic Lab for BC	Namgis First Nation	$ 1,977,828

Project Title	Recipient	Funding
BCSRIF Projects		
Broughton First Nations Indigenous Monitoring and Inspection Plan	Namgis First Nation	$ 7,349,000
Percy Walkus Hatchery Upgrade	Pacific Salmon Foundation	$ 336,895
Field application and testing of tools for identifying, mapping, and quantifying forage fish populations and habitats	Comox Valley Project Watershed Society	$ 321,779
Lower Fraser Coho PIT Barge and Tagging Project	Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance Society	$ 679,690
Resilient Waters: Phase 1	MakeWay Charitable Society	$ 598,755
Millstream Fishway Project	Peninsula Streams Society	$ 300,000
Partnership for a novel framework for assessing and managing Pacific Herring fisheries on WCVI	Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council	$ 390,500
Cowichan River Salmon Restoration program	Cowichan Valley Regional District	$ 2,999,218
Salish Sea Salmon Action Plan	Pacific Salmon Foundation	$ 1,083,498
BC Fish Passage Joint Venture	Canadian Wildlife Federation	$ 3,999,721
Kitwanga River Sockeye Salmon Recovery Plan Implementation	Gitanyow Fisheries Authority	$ 867,020
Bear River Autonomous Salmon Enumeration	Skeena Fisheries Commission	$ 402,439
Promotion of Habitat Restoration and Stewardship on Agricultural Lands	British Columbia Cattlemen's Association	$ 550,000
IYS: International Pan-Pacific Salmon Expedition (2021)	North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission	$ 3,305,457
BC Fishing App	SFI of BC	$ 910,500
Vision 2021	SFI of BC	$ 700,879
Winter Salmon Survey in the Gulf of Alaska	Pacific Salmon Foundation	$ 650,000
The Fermentative production of Microalgae as food for juvenile bivalves in BC	Seed Science Ltd	$ 475,493
Shellfish aquaculture strategic renewal program	BC Shellfish Growers Association	$ 3,500,000
Evaluation of coastal kelp farms as novel habitat for migrating salmonids and their prey	Cascadia Seaweed Corp	$ 1,886,046
Kingfisher intake restoration	Kingfisher Interpretive Centre Society	$ 43,396
Chapman Creek Hatchery upgrades	Sunshine Coast Salmonid Society	$ 70,000
Seymour Hatchery Infrastructure Renewal	Seymour Salmonid Society	$ 80,410
Modernizing catch reporting in Canada's Pacific Region Salmon Fisheries	Archipelago Marine Research	$ 317,557
A-Tlegay Kelp Production and Restoration	A-Tlegay Fisheries Society	$ 171,713
Mitigating impacts of the European Green Crab invasion on Haida Gwaii	Council of the Haida Nation	$ 2,796,887
Chemainus-Koksilah twinned Watershed Sustainability Project	Cowichan Tribes	$ 1,192,090

Project Title	Recipient	Funding
BCSRIF Projects		
Developing a cumulative effects modelling framework for the recovery of salmon populations	University of British Columbia (UBC)	$ 253,610
UAV Habitat Mapping to Inform wild Salmon Stewardship	First Nations Fisheries Legacy Fund Society	$ 2,478,221
Skeena Estuary Habitat Manag. and Protection Planning	NCSFNSS	$ 2,334,024
Ecosystem Management of kelp forest	North Pacific Kelp Wild Foods	$ 99,999
South Coast European Green Crab Control	Coastal Restoration Society	$ 3,534,340
Supporting West Coast Oyster Industry	Nova Harvest	$ 210,000
Selective Fishing Using a Salmon Trap	Tsawwassen First Nation	$ 875,325
Highway 16 corridor fish stranding	Kitsumkalum Indian Band	$ 213,032
Babine Lake Creel Survey	Lake Babine Nation Fisheries	$ 372,951
Development and establishment of Vancouver Island Chinook Committee	Island Marine Aquatic Working Group	$ 397,540
Landslide impact on the flow dynamics, fish migration and genetics of Fraser River Salmon	SFU	$ 3,566,728
Assessment methods, Gulf of Alaska March 2022	Pacific Salmon Foundation	$ 308,000
Causes and consequences of vateritic otoliths in hatchery-reared Coho salmon	University of Victoria	$ 512,458
Climate Action Priorities for Salmon	Pacific Salmon Foundation	$ 3,270,151
Clayoquot Wild Chinook Salmon Initiative	Redd Fish Restoration Society	$ 500,000
First Nations-led Freshwater Salmon Habitat Assessment & Restoration Planning in the Central Coast	Central Coast Indigenous Resource Alliance	$ 2,747,628
Kleanza Creek Salmon Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Project	Kitselas First Nation	$ 561,335
Penticton Creek Restoration Initiative: Restoration and Innovation Reach	Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC	$ -
Applying innovation and collaboration to improve performance of oyster farms	Huu-ay-aht Fisheries LP	$ 558,015
Gwabalis Aquaculture Opportunity & Sustainability Survey	Gwabalis Fisheries Society	$ 107,167
Exploring Spatial Management for Rockfish using Indigenous Knowledge and Subtidal Surveys	Ha'oom Fisheries Society	$ 202,500
Understanding FRIM in the BC Public Fishery	SFI of BC	$ 205,916
Modernizing Recreational Catch Monitoring, Data Collection, Communication	Sport Fishing Institute of BC	$ 343,750
Recreational Release Mortality Studies and FRIM	SFI of BC	$ 833,250
Fraser Salmon Management Program	Fraser Salmon Management Council	$ 400,000
FRESH Restoration Projects	Ducks Unlimited Canada	$ 4,781,409
Conservation Fishing - A First Nations Demonstration Selective Fishing in the Lower Fraser River	Harrison Salmon Producers LP	$ 789,200

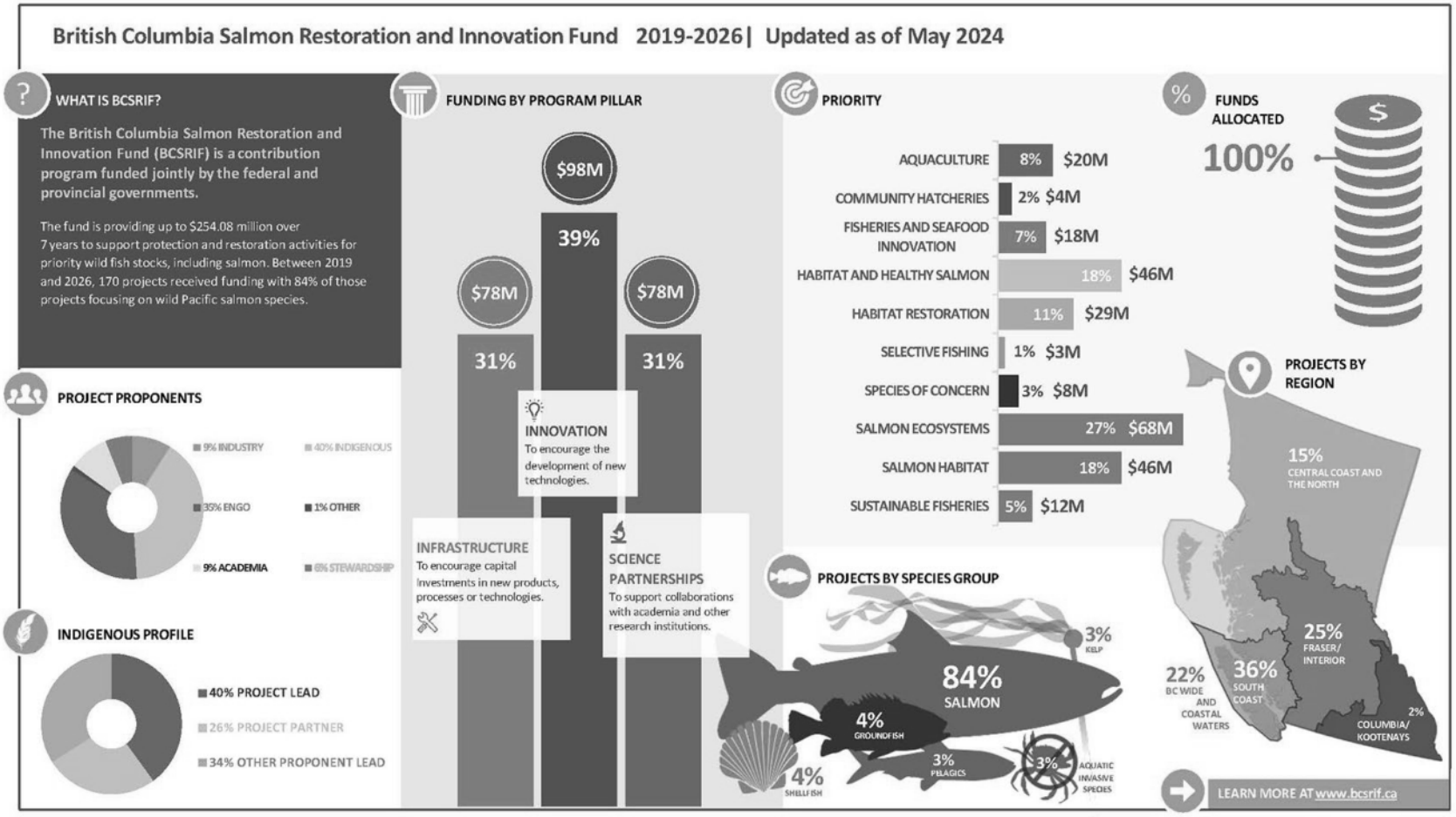
Project Title	Recipient	Funding
BCSRIF Projects		
SFAB Vision - Phased Implementation	SFI of BC	$ 453,324
Salmon River Collaborative Salmonid Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Initiative	Yucwmenlucwu (Caretakers of the Land) 2007 LLP	$ 208,289
MakeWay - Resilient Waters Lower Fraser Valley Rehabilitation	MakeWay Charitable Society - Resilient Waters	$ 2,686,478
Wuikinuxv Assessment and Restoration of Rivers Inlet Salmon	Wuikinuxv Nation	$ 543,374
Supporting the Ongoing Use and Development of the Pacific Salmon Explorer	Pacific Salmon Foundation	$ 3,776,300
Selective Fishing Using a Salmon Trap in the Lower Fraser River	Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance Society	$ 1,293,613
Technology for more sustainable fisheries in BC	T Buck Suzuki Environmental Foundation	$ 320,700
First Nations-led catch monitoring to inform sustainable mixed-stock fisheries management on the Central Coast	Central Coast Indigenous Resource Alliance	$ 1,533,176
Collaborative Freshwater Research and Restoration Initiative in the Thompson Watershed	Secwepemc Fisheries Commission	$ 789,102
Nanaimo Hatchery Upgrades	Nanaimo River Stewardship Society	$ 1,030,431
Coastal First Nations Salmon Enhancement and Restoration Initiative	Great Bear Initiative Society	$ 2,826,811
Watershed Restoration Prioritization Tool/Solutions for Gold River Steelhead	Nootka Sound Watershed Society	$ 324,953
Kitwanga River Sockeye Salmon Enhancement Project	Simon Fraser University (SFU)	$ 950,000
Finfish Environmental Assessment - Sablefish Aquaculture	We Wai Kai First Nation (Cape Mudge)	$ 144,200
The application of nanopore technology for the rapid detection and characterization of pathogens in enhancement hatcheries	BCCAHS	$ 306,000
Monitoring lipid content of Fraser-bound Chinook at Albion	University of British Columbia (UBC)	$ 36,869
Deadman River Hatchery Upgrades	Skeetchestn Indian Band	$ 385,000
Rebuilding Wet'suwet'en Sockeye Salmon Abundance and Diversity	Office of the Wet'suwet'en	$ 848,160
Kus Kus Sum	K'ómoks First Nation (KFN)	$ 1,712,652
Phase 2 projects		
Fishing BC App	SFI of BC	$ 714,445
Squamish Estuary Chinook Salmon Habitat Restoration Project	Squamish River Watershed Society	$ 1,089,720
San Juan and Gordon Rivers – Salmon Estuarine Habitat Restoration	Pacheedaht First Nation	$ 3,255,606
Aeromonas salmonicida Genome Sequencing	Kwantlen Polytechnic University	$ 278,272
South Coast European Green Crab Control – Phase 2	Coastal Restoration Society	$ 1,866,605
Salmon Recovery - advancing planning and action	Pacific Salmon Foundation	$ 4,513,980
Meziadin River Up-looking Hydroacoustic Sockeye Smolt Enumeration	Gitanyow Huwilp Society	$ 749,585

Project Title	Recipient	Funding
BCSRIF Projects		
Bute Inlet Salmon Viability Strategy	Xwemalhkwu (Homalco) First Nation	$ 775,225
Research in support of Sarita Chinook as an Ecological Indicator	Huu-ay-aht First Nations	$ 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	$ 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	$976,813
NEWSS-Salmon Habitat Recovery Projects	Nechako Environment and Water Stewardship Society	$ 1,500,000
ʔaayaaqa (Herring) Herring Spawn Dynamics	Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council	$ 575,960
British Columbia Kelp-Encrusting Bryozoan (BC KEB)	University of Victoria	$ 948,794
Digital Imaging of Wild Coho Returns to the Lillooet River Conservation Unit	Lil'wat First Nation	$ 694,491
Genetic monitoring of kokanee-sockeye salmon hybrid fitness and long term	University of British Columbia Okanagan	$ 218,350
Selective Fishing Using a Salmon Trap in the Campbell River Estuary	A-Tlegay Fisheries Society	$ 1,143,114
Chemainus-Koksilah Twinned Watershed Salmon Sustainability Project- Phase 2	Halalt First Nation	$ 1,217,814
Clayoquot Pacific Salmon Recovery Initiative	Redd Fish Restoration Society	$ 3,610,000
Estimating aggregate Coho salmon escapement to the Lower Fraser M.U.	Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance Society	$ 543,840
Campbell River estuary salt marsh and eelgrass restoration	Discovery Coast Greenways Land Trust	$ 1,932,064
TFN Fish Trap – Capacity Building, Communications and Operations 2023-26	Tsawwassen First Nation	$ 810,062
Determining the mechanisms of impacts of a changing climate on zooplankton in the Salish Sea	University of British Columbia Vancouver	$ 253,963
Basin-scale Events to Coastal Impacts (BECI)	North Pacific Marine Science Organization	$ 1,154,750
Identifying and mitigating hot spots of salmon exposure to toxic road runoff	University of British Columbia Vancouver	$ 1,747,809
Watershed Futures Initiative	Simon Fraser University,	$ 1,254,022
Restoration of salmon habitat at Cultus Lake	SCBC Stewardship Centre	$ 531,674
Thompson-Shuswap Salmon Habitat Assessment, Monitoring & Restoration	Shuswap Nation Tribal Council Society	$ 1,306,000
10,000 Wetlands Project	The BC Wildlife Federation	$ 1,538,703
Skeena River Fish Trap Project	Lax Kw'alaams Business Development Ltd.	$ 2,272,760
Management strategy evaluation for bottom contact fisheries with assessments of sensitive benthic habitats	Wild Canadian Sablefish, Ltd.	$ 257,400

Project Title	Recipient	Funding
BCSRIF Projects		
Resilient Waters Phase 3	MakeWay Charitable Society	$ 3,613,173
Farmland Advantage	Investment Agriculture Foundation British Columbia	$ 3,000,000
Lower Adams Habitat Restoration Initiative (LAHRI)	Little Shuswap Lake Band	$ 1,884,334
Strait of Georgia Herring: Restoring the Salmon Food Web	Pacific Salmon Foundation	$ 3,722,499
Restoring Fraser River Estuary Salmon Habitat (ReFRESH)	Ducks Unlimited Canada	
Development of High-resolution Climate Change Freshwater Hazard Data	Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium (PCIC)	$ 558,355
Protection and Rehabilitation of the Deadman Watershed and Critical Salmon Habitat	Skeetchestn Natural Resources Corporation	$ 4,000,000
Charting a Path for Coastal First Nations' Community Salmon Enhancement Initiatives	Great Bear Initiative Society	$ 1,959,302
Mitigating Inputs of Tire Wear Toxins to Protect Salmonid Habitat on V.I.	British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF)	$ 2,293,016
Mapping, monitoring, and restoring important forage fish habitats in BC to support salmon conservation efforts.	Comox Valley Project Watershed Society	$ 1,402,754
Evaluating climate change scenarios for the Quesnel Watershed	University of Northern British Columbia	$ 5,000,000
Supporting and connecting community-based monitoring for climate-resilient salmon ecosystems	Pacific Salmon Foundation	$ 3,997,861
The Sablefish Solution.	University of Victoria, Department of Biology	$ 378,070
Oolichan From Estuary to Offshore	Ecofish Research Ltd.	$ 1,213,354
Watershed Restoration Prioritization Tool/Solutions for Gold River Steelhead	Nootka Sound Watershed Society	$ 1,165,470
Portage Creek Chinook Salmon Recovery Program	St'át'imc Government Services (SGS)	$ 810,602
Establishing a long-term strategy for understanding and mitigating the impacts of the European Green Crab invasion on Haida Gwaii	Secretariat of the Haida Nation	$ 3,016,571
Post Flood Support for Fish and Fish Habitat Recovery in the Nicola Watershed	Scw'exmx Tribal Council	$ 5,309,810
Columbia River Salmon Reintroduction Initiative (CRSRI): Bringing the Salmon Home	Okanagan Nation Alliance	$ 5,273,138
Restoring freshwater connectivity for Pacific salmon	Canadian Wildlife Federation	$ 2,288,035
Mitigating the Effects of the Invasive European Green Crab on the Central Coast	Heiltsuk Tribal Council	$ 1,423,750
Empirically resolving interspecific competition experienced by N. Pacific salmon	University of British Columbia	$ 186,450
Investigation of water acidification and habitat on imprinting and homing in Pacific salmon	University of British Columbia	$ 541,750

Project Title	Recipient	Funding
BCSRIF Projects		
Skeena Watershed Salmon Habitat Restoration Prioritization, Feasibility and Evaluation Protocol Development	Skeena Fisheries Commission	$ 677,300
Resilient Estuaries in the Salish Sea: Phase Two (Baseline Assessments and Ground-truthing)	SeaChange Marine Conservation Society	$ 1,160,085
Shellfish Aquaculture Sustainability Enhancement Program	British Columbia Shellfish Growers Association	$ 1,000,000
Towards food security: restoring salmon and their habitat	Wet'suwet'en Treaty Office Society	$ 565,000
Headwaters to Deepwaters:	Peninsula Streams Society	$ 250,000
Establishing baselines, risks, and mechanisms of thiamine deficiency in BC Chinook salmon	University of British Columbia Vancouver,	$ 545,151
Highway 16 and CN Corridor Stranding Remediation/Willow Creek Arch Culvert/Mid-Scully Creek Spawning Gravel Addition.	Kitsumkalum Band, Fish & Wildlife	$ 888,261
Nanwakolas 50 Watersheds Project	Nanwakolas Council Society	$ 2,875,000
Identifying factors that influence early marine survival of WCVI Chinook salmon	Pacific Salmon Foundation	$ 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	$ 3,493,975
Supporting BC's Kelp Industry and Enabling Coastal Restoration & Research by Increasing Hatchery Seed Supply	West Coast Kelp Ltd.	$ 92,434
Xá:y Syí:ts'emílep: Gill Bar Restoration and Management Plan	Stó:lo Service Agency	$ 1,513,649
Chilako River and Tributary Stream Corridor Restoration Demonstration	Lheidli T'enneh First Nation	$ 3,250,000
Analysis of forestry effects on Pacific salmon in Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw territory.	Salmon Coast Field Station Society	$ 1,519,522
Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda-xw Fully-Integrated Salmon Habitat Restoration Project	Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw Nations	$ 873,215
Boundary Bay Chinook salmon restoration in the TA'TALU watershed	A Rocha Canada	$ 535,388
Establishing a Test Fishery for Chinook Salmon in key areas of the BC Coast	Sport Fishing Institute of BC	$ 1,573,653
FRIM – Short term mortality holding and respirometry studies	Sport Fishing Institute of BC	$ 1,724,644
Informed Approaches to Determine Bottlenecks to Survival for Chinook and Coho Salmon and Steelhead	Pacific Salmon Foundation	$ 5,096,359

Appendix B – BCSRIF Funding Summary



Issue: International Fisheries Treaties

Recommend Response:

- BC supports Canada's participation in international fisheries agreements as a mechanism for conservation and effective management of highly migratory fisheries stocks including Pacific salmon, hake, albacore tuna, and halibut.
- International fisheries treaties and agreements ensure that rules and access for international fisheries in the North Pacific reflect and protect BC's interests.
- International fisheries management cooperation is critical to achieving our shared interests regarding conservation, the environment, sustainable economic and community wellbeing, and climate change.

Additional Response points (for each active treaty):

- Salmon: The current agreements under the Canada-US Pacific Salmon Treaty reached in 2018, will expire in 2028. Plans are underway to develop strategic approaches for renegotiations to improve those arrangements to better conserve and share salmon and steelhead with direct input from BC.
- Halibut: While the 2025 halibut fishery took a large decrease in catch which will be difficult for BC fisheries, this is a necessary precaution that BC and Canada support for the long-term health of the stock and related economic activity.
- Hake: BC is working through the Pacific Hake Treaty to prioritize conservation and fair fishery access to ensure the return of migratory hake stocks to BC waters.
- Tuna: The Pacific Albacore Tuna Treaty (PATT) is unique in providing for reciprocal access to ports for albacore landings and vessel supplies, and to allow access to Exclusive

1. Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Seafood Sector Tables 2013-2023 https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/statistics/data-tables/2f_seafood_-_commercial_and_aquaculture_2013-2023.xlsx

Economic Zones (EEZ) for albacore fishing. The Parties are currently seeking to reach agreement on new arrangements for the 2025 season.

Key Facts:

- International fisheries treaties and agreements protect possible fishing opportunities for British Columbians and Canadian stocks that migrate outside Canada's Exclusive Economic Zone and advance protective measures for vulnerable marine ecosystems, consistent with BC's interests.
- WLRS is the lead provincial agency for international fisheries discussions, however, other Provincial fisheries agencies and the Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat (IGRS) are engaged.
- The Province's direct engagement in international treaty negotiations, as a subnational state, has been noted as helpful in reaching successful conclusions, by both the federal government and industry.
- Consultations with First Nations regarding international agreements are the responsibility of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). BC First Nations have a long history of involvement in commercial fisheries and processing.
- Canada – US relations on international fisheries arrangements are often strained. A key factor facing these treaties and implementation will be the current political climate and uncertainties with relations with the US.
- The 2023 wholesale values for the four major treaty fisheries are: wild salmon - $244.1M, halibut - $61.7M, hake - $34.9M, and tuna - $34.5[1].

Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST):

- Canadian reviews indicate that some of the PST arrangements have been ineffective in conserving salmon and steelhead and thus need adjustment.
- Current arrangements expire in 2028, and both Parties are now planning for renegotiations, with official start in January 2026.
- BC priorities include the reduction of by-catch in Alaskan salmon, halibut, and trawl fisheries, and in building plans with Canada for its renegotiation strategy for 2028, including steelhead, and southern transboundary stock provisions.
- BC has had a Commissioner. representing its interests since 2001; Dr, Brian Riddell was recently appointed to that position.

Pacific Halibut Treaty:

- The International Pacific Halibut Commission leads the negotiations between US and Canada. The 2025 negotiations took place Jan 27-31, 2025. The commissioners were able to reach an agreement where BC maintained its 18.3 percent share of the coastwide total catch.
- US and Canada agreed to take a significant 15.76 percent decrease in coastwide total catch due to significant concerns for the stock with a 35-year low in

1. Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Seafood Sector Tables 2013-2023 https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/statistics/data-tables/2f_seafood_-_commercial_and_aquaculture_2013-2023.xlsx

spawning biomass and surveys showing poor recruitment of juvenile fish into the stock.

Pacific Hake/Whiting Treaty:

- Under the Treaty, a Joint Management Committee with four representatives from each country negotiates the annual total allowable coastwide catch for this fishery, where the US has a 73.88 percent share and Canada has a 26.12 percent share.
- Without strong recruitment years the US targets more young fish (age 1-3) and hake only migrate north into Canadian waters at age 4 and older. Without older fish coming into Canada, BC has seen record low hake catches in the past 3 years with 2024 being the lowest on record in decades.
- The Treaty terms were successfully negotiated for the 25/26 season in March 2025.

Treaty on Pacific Coast Albacore Tuna Vessels and Port Privileges: (PATT)

- PATT was signed in 1981, after changes in ocean temperatures caused many Pacific albacore stocks to shift northward into Canadian waters. In some years, ocean conditions cause most of the albacore stocks to shift to US waters.
- Renewal of these fishing arrangements is often challenging. The fishing arrangement was suspended by the US in 2012, and in 2023 again there was no agreement. As a result, the landed volume of albacore caught by BC vessels was drastically reduced with significant losses to the harvesters and BC economy.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 20, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: James Mack	Phone: 778-698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Kevin Romanin & Larry Neilson	Phone: 778-974-4884 & 778-974-3833

1. Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Seafood Sector Tables 2013-2023 https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/statistics/data-tables/2f_seafood_-_commercial_and_aquaculture_2013-2023.xlsx

Issue: Provincial White Sturgeon

Recommend Response:

- White sturgeon are only found in North America; all six Canadian populations reside in BC, four are listed as endangered under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA).
- BC is the lead government responsible for sustainable management and recovery of white sturgeon; the federal government and First Nations governments also hold important authorities.
- WLRS leads cross-government collaborative recovery and management planning across the province.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Hatcheries: Hatcheries are used as part of recovery efforts 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 white sturgeon.
- Sturgeon recovery and management funding comes from:
    - Operational budgets and project-specific funding,
    - Research funds from Fisheries and Oceans Canada,
    - The BC Conservation Surcharge on sturgeon fishing licences, which flows to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF) for allocation,
    - Substantial budget and implementation secured through partners including BC Hydro, the Nechako Environmental Enhancement Fund, Bonneville Power
- WLRS is currently expected to fund Nechako hatchery recovery objectives estimated to be approximately $350,000,

annually, in partnership with the Nechako Environmental Enhancement Fund.

Key Facts:

- White sturgeon often live up to 100 years old. Juvenile recruitment into spawning adults is a recovery priority for all populations. For the three populations undergoing decades long recruitment collapse, recovery measures include protecting and remediating spawning habitats as well the use of hatchery supplementation as a stopgap.
- Key threats to white sturgeon populations include habitat degradation, dams, incidental bycatch in net fisheries, and poaching.
- Recovery programs are in place to address populations that are endangered due to past hydroelectric development. Current population estimates:

White Sturgeon Population	At Risk?	Wild Population (approx.)	Hatchery?
Columbia River	Yes	1100	(US and BC)
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: close to historic)	No
Fraser Watershed – Nechako R.	Yes	553	Yes (BC)
Fraser Watershed – Upper Fraser R.	Yes	800 (Note: close to historic)	No

FIRST NATIONS:

- First Nations have deep cultural connections to sturgeon, as well as legally affirmed Rights. For example, in 2022 Thomas and Saik'uz First Nation v. Rio Tinto Alcan Inc, BC and Canada affirmed an Aboriginal right to fish in the Nechako watershed, including salmon and sturgeon.
- The *BC Fraser River White Sturgeon Plan* process is guided by BC and First Nations, with input from Fisheries and Oceans Canada and local interest groups. This process is a significant step towards collaborative management and governance.
- First Nations participate in the regional recovery working groups (Nechako, Kootenay, Columbia) and the National Recovery Team.

ROLES:

- WLRS is responsible to:
  - ensure a multi-government management strategy is in place in the Fraser,
  - lead science and policy in support of recovery actions across the province,
  - oversee hatchery production of juvenile white sturgeon, and
  - manage recreational fisheries (Mid and Lower Fraser populations only).
- Ministry of Environment and Parks enforces fisheries regulations.

- Fisheries and Oceans Canada evaluates and reports on recovery actions.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 28, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: James Mack	Phone: (778) 698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Manjit Kerr-Upal	Phone: (250) 896-2231

Issue: B.C.'s Freshwater Recreational Fishery

Recommend Response:

- WLRS plays a lead role in ensuring the sustainable management for all fish in freshwater.
- B.C.'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.
- Freshwater fisheries are allowed only after conservation and First Nations food and ceremonial needs are met. This limits the risk on wild fish populations.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- WLRS authorizes freshwater fisheries in British Columbia (B.C.) under the *Wildlife Act* and through delegated authority specified in the federal *Fisheries Act*.
- Fish are integral to First Nations' culture and traditions. B.C. is committed to collaborative management and ensuring this important resource is available for current and future generations.
- The Freshwater Fisheries Society of B.C. (FFSBC) contributes to recreational fishing by stocking approximately 700 lakes across B.C. with six million trout, kokanee and char annually.
- Sport fishing is the highest performing component of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector in revenue and jobs.
- During emergency responses to drought and other natural disasters, sport fisheries may be closed for conservation.

Minimizing business impacts is an important factor in those decisions.

Key Facts:

Sources of Information

- An annual DFO-B.C.(WLRS) socio-economic survey was initiated in 2023. The survey is the first to focus specifically on freshwater fishing since 2015.
- The province's 2022 Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector report evaluates both individual and combined sector size and economic impact relative to other industries and identifies emerging trends.
- Additional statistics on B.C.'s freshwater sport fishing come from trusted work of the FFSBC.

British Columbia freshwater recreational fishing survey, 2022

- Recreational freshwater fishing supports over 3700 jobs and contributes $172M to household incomes.
- British Columbians and visitors spend nearly 4M days angling each year.
- Every region in B.C. benefits socially and economically from freshwater fishing.

2022 Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Report

- Total Value of all four fisheries components is $3.4B in revenue.
    - An estimated 10,000 British Columbians are employed in commercial fishing, aquaculture, seafood processing and recreational fishing.
    - Total wages and salaries were estimated at $560M.
- The Sport Fishing subset is $1.1B in revenue. Marine and Freshwater:
    - Accounts for almost half of sector employment: 4886 jobs
    - Wages and salaries are $240M (out of $465M)

First Nations

- B.C. 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 B.C.'s Interior 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.

- B.C. freshwater fisheries are considered as destination places, with a large contingent of the fishers coming from urban centers.

Date Prepared/Revised: 02-11-25	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: James Mack	Phone: 250-415-1762
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Mike Ramsay	Phone: 250-267-4304

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 conservation 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 four 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.
- The Ministry continues to support FFSBC with annual payments. The 30-year contract (expires in 2033) outlines the province is responsible to contribute to the society conservation services ($825,000) and infrastructure and capital investments (approximately $650,000 but may increase in coming years) annually.
- Over the past several years, FFSBC has completed numerous cost-savings improvements to their operations.
    - FFSBC reduced energy usage by 50 percent at facilities through efficiency measures.
    - In 2024-25, the Ministry initiated a fish stocking program review with FFSBC to complete 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 2024, FFSBC stocked approximately 668 lakes with 6.14 million trout, char, and kokanee to support recreational fishing.
    - In 2024, 993 Learn to Fish sessions were held, reaching 31,435 participants. The Learn to Fish Program has now reached over 407,000 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) (million)	**Total FFSBC (Fees and Grant) (million)**
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**
2023/24	100	$11.237	$3.981	**$15.218**	$0.825	**$12.062**

2024/25 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Date Prepared/Revised: February 8, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James Mack Phone: (778) 698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Mike Ramsay Phone: (250) 267-4304

Issue: Climate Disasters and Fish (Flood, Drought, Wildfire)

Recommend Response:

- Over the last decade, 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.
- Since the 2021 Atmospheric River Event, WLRS has been actively collaborating across ministries to ensure preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery actions put a higher priority on fish (including salmon) and functioning aquatic ecosystems.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- In response to the 2021 Atmospheric River Event, WLRS set up the first BC-First Nations–Federal (3G) oversight team that guided, supported, and coordinated fish and habitat recovery actions.
- WLRS is responsible to implement freshwater fisheries closures to protect fish, and people, during disaster events.
- In 2023, 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 2024 drought included:
    - 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.

Key Facts:

- Aboriginal Rights to fish continue to be asserted and affirmed through case law. Collective impacts, on salmon, are leading to declines that are risking rights-based access to food, social and ceremonial uses.
- In past years, BC has experienced unprecedented wildfire seasons, an Atmospheric River event, extreme drought and river blocking landslides. These have had significant impacts on fish, their habitats, and their watershed-level water quality needs.
- Taking action to support fish health during disasters is not only an ecological and food security goal, but the actions also help to preserve heathy watersheds. *Water Sustainability Act* water restrictions can be used to protect additional minimal fish flow requirements.
- BC is working with First Nations in areas impacted by flood, drought, fire and landslides. The goal is to help guide, support, and coordinate fish and aquatic species persistence, recovery and restore aquatic habitat.
    - 3G teams have been set up in the Fraser Valley, and the 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 for 2024 for provincial capacity. Intergovernmental Communications
- 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. This program is continuing through 2025.
- WLRS is also working across ministries on various provincial natural hazard response initiatives. Including:
    - Integrating fish habitat 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, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: James Mack	Phone: (778) 698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Lora Nield	Phone: (778) 622-6831

Issue: Wild Fish and Indigenous Food and Culture Security

Recommend Response:

- Fish are foundational to First Nations' communities, food security, culture, health, well-being, identity, and way of life.
- Many freshwater and marine fish species in British Columbia are harvested in First Nations' food, social, and ceremonial fisheries. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) also licenses First Nations Commercial and Economic fisheries on federally managed species, with licences issued under the federal *Fisheries Act*.
- Declines in wild salmon have led to increased concerns for food security in many First Nation communities.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The 2023-2024 drought and the recent Chilcotin landslide highlighted increased concerns for water management, fish and fish habitat, and food security.
    - WLRS partnered with First Nations, DFO and the Pacific Salmon Foundation on actions to mitigate drought effects on fish and fish habitat.
    - This partnership strengthened emergency policies and programs to profile fish as a foundation in wild food security.
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Food is leading cross-government work with Indigenous communities to improve emergency preparedness, climate resilience, and identify opportunities for expansion of food security initiatives.
- WLRS is working in collaboration with DFO and First Nations to conserve and recover wild salmon and freshwater fish species in decline (e.g. Interior Faser steelhead).

Key Facts:

Indigenous Connections.

- First Nations have an Aboriginal right, as defined in the Constitution under section 35.1, to fish for food, social and ceremonial purposes.
- Lack of wild salmon and other fish is an important Indigenous food security issue.
- Lack of salmon and other fish also impacts Indigenous goals for cultural revival.

Traditional Consumption

- Fishing is an important part of First Nation culture and traditional food harvesting.
- Many fish species, such as salmon, herring, eulachon, halibut, trout, char, and sturgeon are harvested in fisheries for food, social and ceremonial purposes.
- Eulachon have long been prized for fish oil and historically there were numerous 'grease trails' connecting coastal and interior communities.

Salmon

- Wild salmon provide a critical food source to First Nation communities.
- When salmon are scarce, Nations work hard to obtain salmon for ceremonial and subsistence needs.
- In June 2024, WLRS, DFO and the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC signed a Tripartite Accord to address the Decline of Wild Pacific Salmon.
- WLRS' 2025 Ministerial mandate letter includes prioritizing continued work to restore estuaries, inter-tidal zones, and critical salmon spawning habitats.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: James Mack, ADM	Phone: (778) 698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Mike Ramsay, Acting ED	Phone: (250) 267-4304

Issue: Riparian Area 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 550 RAPR assessment reports in 2024/2025.
- 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.
- In 2023, WLRS invested over $500K in additional resources for RAPR. As a result, then-Minister Cullen's commitments made during the April 2023 Estimates Debate were successfully met:
    - The RAPR permit backlog was eliminated by June 2023.
    - 90 percent of new RAPR permits were processed within 30 days.

Advice/Recommendations

-

- 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.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- 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.

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.
- The 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.
- Intergovernmental Communications

- 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

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Date Prepared/Revised: February 11, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James Mack Phone: 778 698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Lora Nield Phone: 778 622-6831

Issue: Riparian Area Protection Regulation – 2023 Wildfire Recovery

Recommend Response:

- BC committed to supporting people after the 2023 wildfires. These commitments were aimed at expediting the rebuilding of houses impacted by the fires.
- The Riparian Areas Protection Regulation *(*RAPR) was historically developed to manage riparian habitat during normal process of building or rebuilding of homes. RAPR was not developed to consider the rebuilding of multiple homes impacted by large scale disasters such as wildfire.
- The **Riparian Recovery - *2023 Wildfire Rebuilding Direction (the Direction)*** was a new tool developed to expediate rebuilding for large scale events such as wildfire by: streamlining permitting processes, reducing administrative burden, and providing technical and financial means to help rebuild and support riparian recovery.
- The Direction is in place and available to homeowners impacted by 2023 wildfires until December 2025.
- A total of **279** properties in three local government areas were eligible for the Wildfire Rebuilding Direction.
    - Of these, **177** are in the Intergovernmental Communications Intergovernmental Communications which opted out of the program given Intergovernmental Communications floodplain restrictions Intergovernmental Communications bylaws exceed RAPR standards, therefore no applications through RAPR were required.
    - The remaining **102** wildfire impacted properties remain eligible for rebuilding and restoration support under the Direction are within the Intergovernmental Communications Intergovernmental Communications and the Intergovernmental Communications
    - Of those **102** WLRS has received **33** registrants under the program as of March 27, 2025. Of these, **33** have

been approved and passed to the local governments for the issuance of building permits.
  - Four properties have opted to follow the traditional RAPR pathway. Three of which have been approved, and one remains in progress.
  - As of March 27, 2025, **63** of the **102** eligible wildfire impacted properties have neither registered for the Direction nor the regular RAPR pathway.

- In 2024/2025, WLRS allocated $400K out of base budget to *The Direction.* Funds supported contracted riparian assessments, landowner reimbursements, allocation of staff to support the program, and procurement of restoration materials.

Additional Response points:

- BC has entered a Contribution Agreement with Natural Resources Canada (NRCan)'s 2 Billion Trees program. These funds will offset and augment financial support for riparian restoration undertaken by property owners.

Key Facts:

- The 2023 wildfires damaged 279 waterfront and streamside properties within RAPR regulated local government areas.
  - An estimated 177 wildfire damaged waterfront properties in the Intergovernmental Communications have a restrictive floodplain setback requirement that preclude landowners from building within the riparian setback. Even though these properties remain outside of the program, they are still eligible for riparian restoration technical and financial support.
  - WLRS has been working directly with the Intergovernmental Communications and Intergovernmental Communications where there is potential for 102 wildfire damaged properties to become formal registrants in the Wildfire Rebuilding Direction and are eligible for rebuilding support.
- Without the use of the 2023 Wildfire Direction, many of the homes would not be able to be reconstructed as they were built prior to current RAPR regulation.
  - Homes previously within 30 meters of the waterbody would need to be moved.
  - Many homes would need to be redesigned.

- RAPR's 'undue hardship' provisions would often result in a developable area much smaller than was lost. For small properties, this can result in a footprint so small that rebuilding is not viable.
- Anything other than rebuilding on the same footprint and to standard is not covered by most insurance policies.

- Under the traditional RAPR process, landowners would need to seek authorization from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) for the development permits to be issued by the applicable local government. The *Federal Fisheries Act* does not require permitting for impacts that have already occurred to fish habitat (fire).
- Consequently, a partnership between DFO and BC to align the application of the *Fisheries Act* with RAPR is the recommended path forward: The Direction.
- Riparian areas include both the land area dominated by continuous high moisture content **and** the adjacent upland vegetation that exerts an influence on it.
- Riparian restoration provides benefits to individual property owners and all British Columbians through:
  - Educational opportunities – through hands-on experience during restoration and an understanding of how riparian areas influence ecosystems.
  - Community advocacy – homeowners become stewards of their own properties, becoming advocates for riparian areas.
  - Property value enhancement – studies have shown properties with intact riparian areas have higher value.
  - Environmental and ecological functions - water quality, habitat provision, and erosion control, flood and drought mitigation.
  - Climate resilience - inclusion of climate-resilient species in the restoration enhances adaptability of the riparian areas.
- Riparian areas and ecosystems are central to many historic and current First Nations' cultural practices, providing traditional sources of food and medicine.
- Healthy and resilient riparian ecosystems are foundational to BC's Biodiversity Objectives, Watershed Security Strategy, Wild Salmon Recovery Goals, in addition to Flood, Drought and Drinking Water strategies.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 18, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: James Mack, ADM	Phone: (778) 698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Lora Nield	Phone: (778) 622-6831

Issue: Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP)

Recommend Response:

- The province's IMDP will continue to monitor threats from aquatic invasive species (AIS) as we collaborate with jurisdictions across western Canada and the United States (US) to ensure BC's prevention and response efforts are coordinated as part of a larger perimeter defence approach.
- IMDP is delivered by WLRS in partnership with the Conservation Officer Service, program funding partners, and neighbouring jurisdictions across Canada and the US.
    - IMDP budget fluctuates annually. Funding largely comes from Columbia Basin Trust, Columbia Power, BC Hydro, Fortis BC and the Province. In 2024, the Province welcomed a one-time contribution from the BC Wildlife Federation, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, and the Pacific Salmon Foundation.
- While AIS are provincially and federally regulated, the Canada–United States (US) border is federal jurisdiction. That is why we continue to request the federal government to resume funding our work at federal ports of entry and support our response preparedness should invasive mussels be detected in B.C. waters.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- For the 2025 season, we are increasing the budget to $3.6M to maintain IMDP operations at existing levels (50 inspectors). We understand the importance of providing a stable presence along our provincial borders.
- In October 2024, the golden mussel was detected in California, which represents the first detection in North America. They are similar in appearance, biology and

impacts to invasive mussels and poses a significant risk to BC's aquatic ecosystems and water infrastructure.

Key Facts:

- Zebra and quagga mussels are invasive to BC and pose a serious threat to the province's aquatic ecosystems and economy.
- 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[1].
- IMDP prevention activities are focused on: lake monitoring, watercraft inspection stations at key entry points into BC and outreach and education.
- In 2024, 50 inspectors operated six inspection stations. Two roving crews completed 24,500 inspections, intercepting 12 mussel fouled watercraft.
- In May 2024, the Province's Chief Veterinarian issued a "Pull the Plug" Order under the *Animal Health Act*, making it illegal to transport watercraft in BC with the drain plug still in place.
- WLRS is proposing amendments to the *Wildlife Act* for "Pull the Plug" requirement and mandatory stops at open watercraft inspection stations and are targeted for the 2025 summer boating season. An additional amendment to enable mandatory inspection for watercrafts entering B.C. from another jurisdiction prior to launch in B.C. waters will take effect later.
- The 2025 season budget is $3.6M to maintain program operations. The year-over-year program budgets are shown below.
    - Columbia Power and Columbia Basin Trust have committed to a one time $100k increase to their IMDP contributions in 2025/26 ($350k each).

[1] Potential Economic Impact of Zebra and Quagga Mussels in B.C. (May 2023)

Funding Source	2022	2023	2024	2025
Program Partners				
BC Hydro	$500,000	$350,000	$900,000	$900,000
Fortis	$50,000	$50,000	$100,000	
Columbia Power	$250,000	$250,000	$250,000	$350,000
Columbia Basin Trust	$250,000	$250,000	$250,000	$350,000
DFO	$475,000	$0	$0	$0
BCWF, HCTF and PSF			$150,000	$0
BC Gov	**$1,250,000**	**$1,250,000**	**$1,250,000**	**$1,000,000**
Ministry Risk Managed		$775,000	$400,000	**$1,000,000**
IMDP operational savings		$375,000		
Total Program Budget	**$2,775,000**	**$3,300,000**	**$3,300,000**	**$3,600,000**

Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

Date Prepared/Revised: February 25, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: James Mack Phone: 778 698-3290

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Manjit Kerr-Upal Phone: 250 896-2231

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: 5 February 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Keeping B.C. waterways free of Invasive Mussels**

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 through investments like the Invasive Mussel Defence Program.**
- **Our government carries out a variety of initiatives to mitigate the risk of invasive mussels coming to B.C., including setting up mandatory roadside watercraft inspection stations, lake monitoring and outreach to raise awareness about Clean, Drain, Dry.**
- **Last May, the Province's chief veterinarian issued a "Pull the Plug" order making it illegal to transport watercraft in B.C. with the drain plug still in place. The order is an essential part of the "Clean, Drain, Dry" practice to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.**
- **The Province's Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP) will continue to monitor threats from 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 larger perimeter defence approach.**
- **Full implementation of the IMDP relies on an annual provincial budget along with substantial funding partnerships. We would like to acknowledge the program's founding partners; Columbia Basin Trust, Columbia Power, BC Hydro and Fortis BC.**
    - **For the 2024 season, the Province welcomed a combined contribution of $150,000 from the BC Wildlife Federation,**

Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, and the Pacific Salmon Foundation.

- **While aquatic invasive species are provincially and federally regulated, the Canada–United States (US) border is federal jurisdiction. That is why we continue to request the federal government to resume funding our work at all federal ports of entry into B.C.**

Only if needed – Funding in 2025

- **Staffing levels in this fight against invasives remain the same for the 2025 season.**

- **The program is delivered by WLRS in close collaboration with ENV's Conservation Officer Service with financial support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.**

Only if needed – Golden mussel detection in California

- **In October 2024 the golden mussel (*Limnoperna fortunei*) was detected in California which represents the first detection of this species in North America.**

- **This species poses a significant risk to BC's aquatic ecosystems and water infrastructure.**

- **The golden mussel is a freshwater-brackish water mussel that can establish in waters with considerably lower calcium levels than required by quagga and zebra mussels.**

- **The golden mussel is native to China and southeast Asia. It is similar in appearance, biology and impacts to zebra and quagga mussels including the ability to attach to solid and semi-solid surfaces.**

- **The Province is working closely with western provinces and states to assess the risks posed by the golden mussel.**

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 WLRS 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 cost ranging from $64–$129 million. Costs are largely tied to mitigation and repair of water-related infrastructure; including hydro infrastructure.

The Province has been implementing the Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP) since 2015 in partnership with the Conservation Officer Service (COS), 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.

Since the IMDP was launched in 2015, over 280,000 watercraft inspections were conducted of which over 6,600 were identified as high risk and 170 mussels fouled boats were intercepted.

In May 2024, BC's Chief Veterinarian announced a new "Pull the Plug" order making it illegal to transport watercraft in B.C. with the drain plug still in place. The order is an essential part of the "Clean, Drain, Dry" practice to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species and part of governments ongoing actions to keep invasive mussels out of B.C.

Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

Aquatic invasive species inspectors are trained in watercraft inspection and decontamination following the standard protocol that is used across the Pacific Northwest. Inspectors will be checking watercraft for compliance with the new Pull the Plug order**.** In addition, Conservation Officers throughout BC will be inspecting watercraft on highways to ensure compliance with the order when able. Failure to comply with the order could result in a fine of $403.

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. In 2024 the fine associated with failing to stop at a watercraft inspection station increased from $345 to $690.

In 2017 the IMDP 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 2024 season, 50 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 24,500 inspections and interacted with about 45,400 people to promote Clean, Drain, Dry practices—199 watercraft were identified as high risk, 63 decontamination orders were issued, and 37 watercraft were given quarantine periods to meet the required drying time. Twelve watercraft were confirmed to have invasive mussels.

In June 2024, the Program team (WLRS and BC COS) hosted a rapid response tabletop training exercise with our U.S. counterparts in the Columbia River Basin. The exercise was focused on response actions if invasive mussels were to be detected in a shared waterbody between B.C. and Montana. The lessons learned from the exercise have been summarized in the after-action report which has been published on the WesternAIS.org website.

Invasive mussels are also a western Canada priority that has been raised repeatedly at Canadian Council of Federal Aquaculture and Fisheries Ministers meetings, numerous individual bilateral meetings, and other forums.

Financial Summary

IMDP funding relies on funding partners, and it fluctuates annually. Funding largely comes from Columbia Basin Trust, Columbia Power, BC Hydro, Fortis BC 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, $3.3–3.6 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 2024 season, the total budget was $3.3 million, which includes $400,000 in B.C. risk managed funds.
- For the upcoming 2025 season, a decision on program operations and hiring will need to be made by early February. If a $3.3 million budget is retained for 2025 it will require reductions in program operations to account for increased program costs (e.g. salaries and inflation).

While aquatic invasive species are provincially and federally regulated, the Canada-United States (US) border is federal jurisdiction. Despite the border being federal jurisdiction, BC has provided IMDP services by working with the Canadian Border

ADVICE TO MINISTER

Services Agency to respond to notifications of watercraft entering Canada. BC has pulled funding from other BC stewardship priorities to offset these costs.

Canada provided one-time funding to the IMDP. While Canada has provided limited funding for monitoring through the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, B.C. has ongoing requests of the federal government to resume funding IMDP prevention actions at the federal border. Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

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	5 February 2025	

Issue: Whirling Disease

Recommend Response:

- To minimize further spread of whirling disease, the Province's primary focus is on increased outreach to all water users to "Clean, Drain, Dry" all boats and equipment when leaving a waterbody.
    - In the Columbia watershed, government employees and our contractors must decontaminate their gear when leaving waterbodies in Columbia watershed; the public is requested to do the same.
    - As of May 2024, everyone is required to "Pull the Plug" in all watercrafts travelling overland in B.C.
- The 2024 whirling disease surveillance program detected the parasite responsible for whirling disease in tributaries entering the southern entry point to Kootenay Lake.
    - It is not known if these new detections imply that this is a new location affected by the parasite, or if it is a pre-existing condition.
    - It's also unknown if there is any relation to the 2023 detection of whirling disease in Yoho National Park.
- The Province will continue to work closely with First Nations, the Government of Canada and other partners to prioritize actions for this coming year.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- There are no health concerns for people or pets swimming in, or drinking water, that contains whirling disease.
- Whirling disease is spread by the movement of infected fish, water and mud. There is no treatment for whirling disease, therefore, containment and prevention are the best response.

- 2024 sampling resulted in three positive detections of the parasite responsible for whirling disease in three southern tributaries of Kootenay Lake (Boulder Creek, Goat River and Duck Creek).
    - The impact of these detections is difficult to predict due to various interacting factors between habitat and environmental conditions.
    - In some locations where the parasite was found outside of B.C., there was no evidence of fish exhibiting whirling disease symptoms. In other locations, there have been localized population declines of more than 90 percent.
    - While the prevention of whirling disease is a government priority, the presence of whirling disease has not necessarily led to large scale fish population die offs or led to fisheries closures.

Key Facts:

- Whirling disease is caused by the parasite *Myxobolus cerebralis*. To complete its lifecycle, the parasite requires two hosts: a common aquatic worm (Tubifex tubifex) and a susceptible fish.
- Whirling disease affects finfish, but not all populations of fish are affected the same. It can be lethal to juvenile salmonids like trout, salmon and whitefish.
- Whirling disease can result in skeletal deformities, black discoloration on the tail, behavioural changes (swirling swimming pattern) and juvenile mortality.
- The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is the responsible agency for preventing the introduction or spread of aquatic animal diseases of fish. Whirling disease is a federally reportable disease of fish.
- B.C. had its first detection of whirling disease in Yoho National Park in 2023. Whirling disease has been detected in neighbouring provinces and states (Alberta, Idaho, Montana and Washington).
- In response, the Province implemented several response actions in 2024 to help prevent further spread, including:
    - Pull the Plug regulatory requirement for boaters,
    - increased public education and resources (including a website: www.gov.bc.ca/whirlingdisease), and
    - Government employees and contractors decontaminate their gear when leaving waterbodies in Columbia watershed; the public is requested to do the same.

- Amendments to the *Wildlife Act* are being actively considered to immediately enable "Pull the Plug" requirement and mandatory stops at open watercraft inspection stations are targeted for the 2025 summer boating season. An additional amendment to enable mandatory inspection for watercrafts entering B.C. from another jurisdiction prior to launch in B.C. waters is also under active consideration for implementation in the future.
    - In 2024, a "Pull the Plug" General Order under the Animal Health Act was a temporary solution to an urgent problem, the permanent solution is now in place.
- A targeted surveillance plan for the Columbia River watershed was a 2024 priority, due to the high risk of spread from the detections in Yoho National Park.
    - Locations were prioritized by working closely with WLRS regional fisheries biologists, First Nations, Parks Canada and CFIA.
    - The results from the 2024 surveillance will inform 2025 priorities.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 13, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: James Mack	Phone: (778) 698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Manjit Kerr-Upal	Phone: (250) 896-2231

Issue: Okanagan Salmon Reintroduction

Recommend Response:

- Wild salmon recovery is a priority for BC.
- Restoration of Okanagan salmon populations to their historical range is a top fisheries priority; it supports reconciliation and the constitutional rights of indigenous people.
- Salmon are of cultural importance to local Okanagan *Syilx* people; their ability to access salmon has been severely impacted over the past century, due to fish passage barriers & stock declines.
- Salmon introductions need to be thoroughly monitored and assessed as they can negatively impact native fishery species through interbreeding and competition.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Since 1997, the Province, in conjunction with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has been collaboratively working with Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) to facilitate salmon reintroduction and fish passage to the Okanagan Basin.
- By end of 2025, fish passage remediation on the Okanagan River will enable salmon to migrate from the Pacific Ocean to Lake Okanagan.
- Salmon Reintroduction in the Okanagan offers economic, social, environmental, cultural, and recreational benefits.
- While management of recreational steelhead and freshwater fisheries has been delegated to BC, DFO retains authority for freshwater salmon fisheries.
- Osoyoos Lake currently supports the only recreational salmon fishery in the Okanagan; openings are unpredictable

due variable returns and insufficient data to support reliable forecasting.

- Okanagan summer Chinook are considered endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.

Key Facts:

- **Background on the Okanagan Salmon Restoration Program:** By the late 1990s, returning Sockeye spawners were reduced to a few thousand fish upstream of Osoyoos Lake, and Chinook were almost extinct. In 1997, ONA expressed grave concerns about the potential extinction of culturally important Okanagan salmon stocks.
- Since reintroduction programs began in 2003 (Sockeye) and 2017 (Chinook), approximately 126M Sockeye and 100K Chinook have been reared and released into the Okanagan Basin.
- **Constitution Section. 35 Salmon/Fish, Reconciliation and UNDRIP:** Fish are a constitutionally recognized Section 35 right and BC's indigenous peoples are among the oldest fishing cultures in the world. First Nations hold their own authorities for fisheries (e.g., Food Social and Ceremonial) and many have well developed fish management and fisheries programs, including Okanagan Nation Alliance and the *Syilx* people.
- **BC's Wild Salmon Commitments:** The Province has made significant public commitments to improving the management of wild salmon
- **Economic, Cultural and Environmental Benefits:** There are few resource sectors where we can enhance ecological outcomes through sustainable management, while also increasing the economic benefits and cultural benefits. Sport fisheries managed by the Province are fully renewable and contribute approximately $1.1B to the economy annually, largely to rural areas.

Date Prepared/Revised: Feb 11, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: James Mack	Phone: 778-698-3290
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Mike Ramsay	Phone: 250-398-4530

Issue: Conservation Financing

Recommend Response:

- The Province's efforts towards Conservation Financing are being implemented through a unique partnership approach with the BC Parks Foundation and the recently established BC Conservation Fund (BCCF).
- The BCCF will be used for sustained, reliable long-term financing to support the designation, restoration and stewardship of newly protected, biodiverse areas in British Columbia (BC).
- The financial contribution of $150M made by the Province in 2023 and matched by a commitment to raise $150M by the BC Parks Foundation, will support BC in its goals to protect 30 percent of land and marine areas by 2030 (30x30).

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The BCCF is the first sustained, province-wide conservation financing program in Canada and was developed to be consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- The BCCF launched in July 2024, with its first stream of funding focussed on area-based conservation initiatives.
- Conservation financing is an important tool that addresses some of the economic realities of conservation, including supporting economic transition and funding remediation or restoration initiatives.

Key Facts:

- The BC Parks Foundation administers the BCCF independently from government. The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) has an ex-officio role on BCCF's Oversight Committee.

- An Expression of Interest (EOI) was issued by BCCF in July 2024 for Stream One projects, Area-based Conservation Initiatives. EOIs were accepted until September 30, 2024, and will continue to be received on a rolling basis.
- Area-based conservation initiatives must align with government to government (G2G) agreements (between the BC and First Nation governments) related to land use, including land use plans, forest landscape plans, water sustainability plans, or as identified in other G2G agreements.
- BCPF have shared that eligible projects from the EOI phase are now advancing to the next stage of the application process. Funding decisions for successful projects are expected to be released in late April 2025.
- The total funding to be released by the BC Conservation Fund will include matching funds secured by BC Parks Foundation from other conservation and funding partners. These amounts will also consider a full range of criteria including 'return on investment' reasonableness of costs and contribution to 30x30.
- It is estimated that approximately $57M of combined provincial and matched funding will be released, covering an estimated 1,578,846 ha of land for conservation designation and/or stewardship.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 13, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: ADM Colin Ward Phone: 778-974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: ED Melissa Grimes Phone: Government Financial Information

Issue: First Nations Guardians

Recommend Response:

- Since time immemorial, First Nations have been stewards of the water, land and wildlife in BC.
- Guardians participate in managing lands, water, and resources through a range of activities such as environmental monitoring, restoration, emergency response, and compliance activities.
- Guardians' collaborative efforts with provincial staff have greatly contributed to shared resource stewardship goals and decisions, and are a critical to helping BC and First Nations balance economic growth with conservation and stewardhip.
- BC supports Guardians programs through a range of agreements, partnership initiatives and programs.
- In 2023, BC committed $8.9M over three years to co-develop and deliver the Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative for First Nations Guardians.
    - To date, over $4M has been provided to First Nations for Guardians training under this initiative
- The Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (CISF), provided $14.15M in 2024/25 to support 13 regional stewardship forums that include approximately 150 Nations. It is estimated that 1/3 of the funding goes to Guardians for delivery of regional stewardship activities.
- Some First Nations Guardians are partnering with BC agencies including Natural Resource Officers, Park Rangers, and Conservation Officers on compliance related activities.
- BC understands that some First Nations are seeking greater authorities for Guardians and is exploring the legal and policy conditions and training and accountability requirements and discussing interests on a case by case basis.

Key Facts:

- BC supports Guardians through a range of initiatives, partnerships and agreements (Appendix 1).
- The Aboriginal Liaison Program, Conservation Officer Service, and Natural Resource Officers partner with Guardians in compliance related activities (Appendix 2).
- In addition to support from BC, First Nations often use their own funding, funding from Canada and other sources to support Guardians programs.
- BC recognizes that as we face emerging economic development pressures, and climate change, which brings about more droughts, flooding and wildfires, Guardians are needed more than ever.
- Guardians take on many different roles in communities, reflecting the interests and priorities of First Nations.
- BC established a techncial working group with First Nations to provide expert advice and co-develop the Guardians and Stewardship Training Initaitive and explore future pathways to support Guardians.
- In 2023/24, WLRS launched a three-year program for Guardians training. The Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative is administered by the New Relationship Trust. WLRS allocated $1.3M in 2023/24 and $3.81 in 2024/25 to the GSTI. A further $3.81M is forecasted in 2025/26 (Appendix 3).
    - 2023/24 - $1.1M for 7 First Nation Guardians training pilot projects
    - 24/25 – over $3M to 19 First Nations and 2 First Nation organizations
- Many First Nations Guardians programs partner with B.C. on compliance related activites and training – most often in “observe, record, report” or accompanied inspection models.
    - Agencies leading these partnerships include Ministry of Forests (Natural Resource Officers), Environment and Parks (Conservation Officers and Parks Rangers), and Mines (Accompanied Mines Inspections).
    - B.C. is exploring models to share authority with First Nations Guardians where legislation allows, through pilot initiatives such as the BC Parks Shared Compliance and Enforcement Pilot with the Kitasoo Xai'xais and Nuxalk Nations which runs through to March 2026.
    - A first step is to support the necessary training. Since 2022, BC Parks has supported Guardian participation in the annual BC Park Ranger Training Program; in 2024 89 Guardians were trained.
    - Special Conservation Officer (SCO) appointments are considered for First Nations seeking to have their Land Guardians enforce certain provincial natural resource laws found incidental to carrying out their Nation’s mandate under First Nation laws in treaty and title lands. The COS considers such requests on a case-by-case basis with guidance from policy and criteria on SCO designations.

Appendix 1 – B.C.Initiatives that Support or Link to First Nations Guardians Programs
Appendix 2 – B.C.-Guardians Partnerships in Compliance and Enforcement
Appendix 3 – Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative

Date Prepared/Revised: April 28, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: ADM Colin Ward	Phone: 778 974-2150
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Alanya Smith	Phone: Intergovernmental Communications

Appendix 1 – B.C. Initiatives that Support or Link to First Nations Guardians Programs

Key Messages: BC's Approach to Supporting Guardians

- Unlike Canada, B.C. does not have a dedicated Guardians funding program.
- B.C. supports Guardians and Guardians- like programs through a range of partnership initiatives, programs and agreements with multiple ministries.
- Some of these initiatives provide funding for Guardians' salaries, equipment, and training.
- Funding to support Guardians is generally included within a broader agreement, often focused on collaborative stewardship activities.
- First Nations manage their funding for guardians and stewardship from B.C., Canada, and other sources and so B.C. does not always have a complete view to the total funding each First Nation allocates to Guardians.
- In 2024/25, it is conservatively estimated that over $10.2M was provided by BC to First Nations through a number of initiatives. This does not include some agreements and initiatives where an exact funding breakdown is not available. (See table at end for list of what is included)
- WLRS and staff in the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation are currently analyzing initiatives that fund Guardians to gain a better understanding this funding to inform future planning.

Programs and Initiatives that Support Funding or Partnerships with First Nations Guardians Programs

1. *NRS Agencies that Partner with Guardians on a range of activities (generally not providing funding but will offer specific 'staff' training etc):*

- Natural Resource Officer Service (Forests)
- Conservation Officer Service, Park Rangers, Environmental Protection Officers (Environment)
- BC Wildfire Service (Forests)
- Mining and Critical Minerals Accompanied Inspection Program
- Environmental Assessment Office Indigenous Liaison Program
- Forest Landscape Planning (Forests)

See Appendix 2 for more details on compliance and enforcement related partnerships.

2. *Initiatives that Partner with Guardians and Provide Funding:*

- **Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (WLRS)** - Currently 13 Forums in CISF and 150 participating First Nations. Nations often choose to deliver their regional stewardship work through Guardians. CISF total planned funding for FY2025/26 is $14.65 million (includes matching funds from Environment and Climate Change Canada), about one third of this funding is estimated to go to Guardians to deliver stewardship work. CISF provided $14.15M in 2024/25 to support 13 regional stewardship Forums that include approximately 150 Nations. One regional Forum supports a direct partnership between the COS and participating Nations; that is the 3Nations partnership in northwest BC.
- **Marine Planning Partnership and Marine Protected Area Network (WLRS)** - funds 8 guardians in the Central Coast ($385 K/ year) and supports guardians in North Vancouver Island (not in the same way). In Dec 2023, $60 M BC funding to Great Bear Sea Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) along with federal and philanthropic funds to provide long term resourcing, which will likely include Guardian activities.
- **Great Bear Rainforest Initiative (WLRS)** – Coastal First Nations Guardians are one of oldest/ most

established Guardian programs in BC. Funding is available for stewardship and conservation efforts (including Guardians) through Coast Funds (endowment created in 2007) for Coastal First Nations.

- Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information

Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications

- **Aboriginal Liaison Program (BCER/ WLRS):**

Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications

- **Forest and Range Evaluation Program (Forests)** Supports First Nations, including Guardians to monitoring and evaluate the condition of 11 resource values under the Forest & Range Practices Act. Total funding $150,000/ year, equates to approximately $5,000 per First Nation.
- **Community Emergency Preparedness Fund & emergency management reimbursements (EMCR)** – Can fund Nations to build emergency management capacity and reimburse First Nations communities for eligible emergency management-related costs as predetermined through their Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centre.

3. *Funding Programs that First Nations access to support Training*:
   - Indigenous Skills Training and Education Program (Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills)
   - Indigenous Food Security and Sovereignty (IFS) Grant (New Relationship Trust/Agriculture and Food)
   - Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative; $8.9M over 3 years (WLRS)

Table 1: Estimated Funding to Guardians/ Guardian-like Programs 2024/25

Initiative	**Amount ($M)**
Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (assuming 1/3 total funding)	4.9
Marine Planning Partnership and Marine Protected Area Network	0.4
Great Bear Rainforest Initiative (Coast Funds)	unknown
Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences; Government Financial Information	
Aboriginal Liaison	1.4
Forest and Range Evaluation Program	0.2
Community Emergency Preparedness Fund & emergency management reimbursements	Unknown
Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative	3.0
Indigenous Skills Training and Education Program	Unknown
Indigenous Food Security and Sovereignty (IFS) Grant	Unknown
Total	$10.2

*Not including specific G2G Agreements that include funding for Guardians programs.

- Natural Resource Sector agency programs that partner with First Nation Guardians/ similar programs on compliance related activities include:
    - BC Energy Regulator Aboriginal Liaison Program (ALP);
    - Ministry of Mining and Critical Mineral (MCM) Accompanied Inspection Program;
    - Environmental Assessment Office Indigenous Liaison Program;
    - Accompanied inspections coordinated by Compliance and Environmental Enforcement Branch, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change;
    - Joint work between First Nations Guardians Programs and the Conservation Officer Service (Ministry of Environment), Natural Resource Officer Service (Ministry of Forests) and BC Park Rangers (Ministry of Environment).
- Currently, most B.C.-First Nation partnerships involve compliance monitoring, joint patrols and accompanied inspections, including training and promoting First Nations to observe, record and report infractions (see figure 1). An increasing number of First Nations are interested in exploring taking on greater authorities for their Guardians.
- Shared powers and authorities or formal recognition of Indigenous jurisdiction are being explored within a small number of pilot projects where First Nations take on Compliance and Enforcement authorities under provincial legislation (e.g. B.C. Parks- Kitasoo Xai'xais and Nuxalk Guardians Compliance Pilot) or as part of major agreements and Treaties (e.g., Collaborative Enforcement Agreements with Maa-nulth First Nations, Haida Title Land Agreement, Nenqay Deni Accord with Tsilqot'in National Government, Coastal First Nations Reconciliation Protocol).
- BC Parks and COS:
    - Since 2022, BC Parks has supported Guardian participation in the annual BC Park Ranger Training Program which provides opportunities for Guardian teams to gain an understanding of BC Parks compliance and enforcement procedures, share knowledge of their work, and build relationships with parks staff.
    - In 2024, the COS trained 89 guardians with the delivery of seven training sessions.
    - Training sessions were held across BC and included the following communities: Salmon Arm (Skwlāx te Secwepemcu'lecw), Merritt (Citxw Nlaka'pamux Assem-bly), Quesnel (Nazko Lhtako and Kluskus nations), Ad-ams Lake (Adams Lake Indian Band), Deroche (Leq'a:mel First Nation), McLeod Lake (McLeod Lake Indian Band), and Haida Gwaii (Council of the Haida Nation).
    - Special Conservation Officer (SCO) appointments are considered for First Nations seeking to have their Land Guardians enforce certain provincial natural resource laws found incidental to carrying out their Nation's mandate under First Nation laws in treaty and title lands.
    - The COS considers such requests on a case-by-case basis. Determinations are made with guidance from policy and criteria on SCO designations.
    - Consistent with all law enforcement positions, the COS criteria are comprehensive, and include enhanced security screening, associated training, operational support and a legal review.
    - A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the COS and the applicant agency is a requirement for designation.
    - A MOU may include provisions which address the specific purpose of the designation, training, operational guidelines, information management (privacy protection), supervision and complaints, liability and costs, auditing and reporting.
    - SCO appointments do not result in armed peace officers. That is a separate process through the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.

- Fulfilling all necessary requirements can be a lengthy and potentially multi-year process. For example, Interested Nations must develop a level of support and oversight that is appropriate for the scope of the designation, ensuring minimum standards of training, professionalism and accountability are in place prior to qualified applicants applying for SCO appointments.

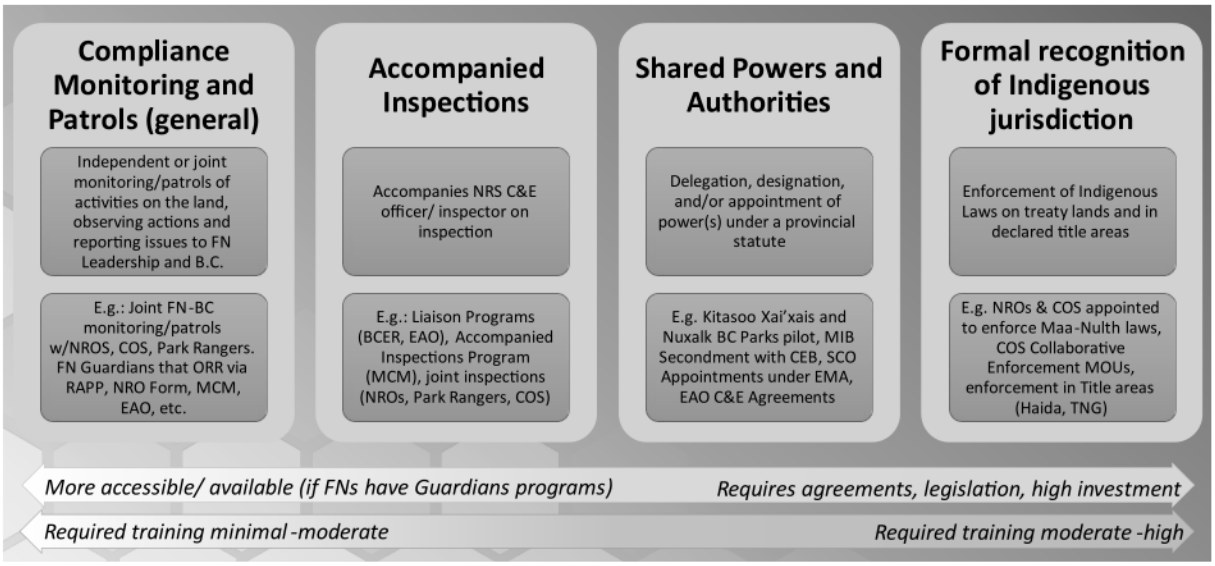


Figure 1: Conceptualization of Different Types of B.C.- First Nation Partnerships in Compliance and Enforcement. The majority of existing arrangements fit within the first two types.

Appendix 3 - Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative – Outcomes and Funding Recipients

The First Nations Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative (GSTI) offers grants to First Nation communities to support Guardians initiatives with funding for training, education, knowledge, and skills development to enhance local Guardians with capacity to manage, monitor, protect, conserve, respond, restore, improve the stewardship of lands, waters, wildlife and other natural resources of their ancestral lands, often in partnership with the Province of British Columbia.

Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications

Appendix 3 - Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative – Outcomes and Funding Recipients

Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications

Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications

Table 3: Performance measures

Performance Targets		Details
1	Number of guardians trained	Approx. 68 (conservative estimate) While final reports have not yet been received, the estimated number of participants trained in the pilot projects and being trained by the GSTI 24/25 funding varied depending on the project: some were focused on only a few individuals (2-3), while others included an entire cohort (e.g. 15-20). Based on the proposals and follow up conversations with participants, we estimate an average of 3-4 individuals trained for each project. It is anticipated that this is a low estimate and will increase when we receive final results.
2	Number of First Nations receiving funding for training	21 First Nations & 6 First Nation Organizations (acting on behalf of 39 First Nation members) Yr 1 – 7 Pilot Projects Supported 7 pilot projects with 3 First Nations and 4 First Nation organizations. In total 1.1M funding from Future Ready Action Plan (additional funding was leveraged from the Indigenous Funding Program and the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Initiative). Year 2 - GSTI The GSTI Program received 24 Expressions of Interest. Of these, 21 First Nations were deemed eligible and have submitted all required documentation. In total, NRT administered over $3M for grants to 19 First Nations and 2 First Nation organizations to support delivering

		training programs to build the capacity of First Nations Guardians, helping to fill in-demand positions within First Nations communities. In total, the funding will enhance Guardians' capacity and support meeting labour market demands in 39 First Nations across BC.
3	Number of grant recipients who accessed guardians training within their territory/ community	All of the First Nations' grant recipients provided training programs for guardians within community. Training in community was a key objective of the GSTI to support First Nations interests lower barriers to access, to remain close to community ties and supports for learners, reduce overall costs from travel, to strengthen community capacity and situate training within local context and traditional knowledge.
4.	Number of grant recipients that identified the transmission of cultural knowledge as a core component of their training programs.	All recipients delivered training programs that intentionally integrated the transmission of cultural knowledge. This culturally grounded approach is both unique and responsive, reflecting the distinct values, traditions, and priorities of each individual First Nation. Guardians peer mentorship was one unique approach to learning supported by the GSTI. This model enhanced intergenerational knowledge transfer by integrating traditional teachings with fieldwork. Outcomes included stronger inter-Nation collaboration through mentorship and shared learning experiences.
5.	Training actively reduced barriers to employment for Guardians by building relevant skills, increasing certifications, and creating clear pathways to long-term, meaningful work within their communities.	Training programs funded through GSTI incorporated a broad range of foundational knowledge and skill sets essential for successful employment as a Guardian, ensuring participants are well-prepared for both entry-level roles and long-term career growth as a Guardian. For example, this included: • Guardian safety and keeping teams safe in remote locations • Stewardship, Conservation, Monitoring and Assessment • Emergency Management and Public Safety

		• Restoration Activities • Data collection and Information Gathering to Support Decision-Making • Compliance and Enforcement • Knowledge of Indigenous governance, Law and Decision Making (Self-Determination) Outcomes included: • Balanced integration of traditional and scientific knowledge for effective land and resource stewardship. • Expanded opportunities for Nation-Province collaboration in natural resource stewardship and emergency management through locally grounded training and shared decision-making frameworks. • Enhanced understanding of governance and decision making

Issue: Battani Creek Landslide – Authorizations Focus

Recommend Response:

- WLRS continues to work closely with other ministries and with the Village of Lions Bay following the tragic landslide on Battani Creek that happened in December 2024.
- A geotechnical study focused on public safety is currently underway, which may make recommendations for actions to be taken in the affected watershed.
- The province will review any recommendations from the study and consider appropriate action.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The Village of Lions Bay is conducting the geotechnical study, funded through the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Response (EMCR). The scope is under development and a costed proposal is not yet available as of February 13, 2025.
- If the geotechnical study recommends that remediation actions are necessary in the interest of public safety, the province may decide to take action using *Land Act* or *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA) powers.

If asked about the RCMP investigation:

- Due to the ongoing investigation into the cause of the Lions Bay landslide, I am unable to speak to the details of an active investigation.
- I want to make sure that investigation is protected and able to proceed. I know people want answers.
- We are working with the community, the water licence holders and the RCMP to help get those answers.
- We will continue to work with Lions Bay to support mitigation efforts as needed to ensure safety of people and communities.

Key Facts:

- The Battani Creek landslide occurred on December 14, 2024, on the northern edge of the Village of Lions Bay and resulted in the loss of two lives when a home was destroyed by the landslide.
- Advice/Recommendations; Personal Information; Personal Security
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Date Prepared/Revised: February 13th, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: ADM Colin Ward	Phone: 778-974-2150
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Tammy Hillyer	Phone: (778) 572-2172

Issue: Pacific Place

Recommend Response:

- In 1988, the Province signed various agreements to facilitate the sale and development of the Former EXPO 86' Lands.
- The Province, through the Crown Contaminated Sites Program (CCSP) continues to manage the remediation obligations associated with these Lands.
- Currently, the City of Vancouver is developing three parcels of the lands and CCSP will lead the associated remediation activities.

Key Facts:

- To provide an appropriate location for EXPO 86', the Province purchased former industrial lands and railyards on the north shore of False Creek in Vancouver. In 1988, the Province sold the land to allow for redevelopment of the Site. The Province selected a single developer (Concord).
- Due to concerns over historic contamination from the past industrial uses of the Site (i.e. coal gasification) the Province agreed to pay for remediation of any contamination required to make the Site fit for future development uses.
- The regulatory framework for Contaminated Sites that exists today was not established at the time of sale. In part, the remediation of the Pacific Place lands led to development of the Contaminated Sites Regulation, policies, protocols and procedures for managing contaminated sites across British Columbia.
- The Province indemnified Concord, in perpetuity, for any third-party claims and expenses associated with historic, pre-purchase contamination. The Province retained risks associated with contamination and the developer assumed development risks. Following the sale of the Site, Vancouver established official development plans for False Creek North in 1990.
- The remediation of the former Expo Lands is very complex and was anticipated to take decades to complete, due to building out of the area based upon market conditions. The Province does not have control over the development construction schedule and does not direct the construction activity beyond ensuring that works are completed safely and to an acceptable standard.
- Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

- Recently, Concord sold three parcels of land to the City of Vancouver for the purposes of non-market housing and as such, CCSP is actively coordinating the management of the remediation of the land.
- Once construction is complete for the entire Site, several activities will continue in perpetuity, such as environmental monitoring of engineered structures, management of a permanent groundwater treatment facility and managing various legal agreements with the City of Vancouver.

Date Prepared/Revised: «add date»	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: Colin Ward	Phone: 778 974-2150
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Lyle Knight	Phone: 778-943-6973

Issue: Crown Contaminated Sites Program

Recommend Response:

- The Crown Contaminated Sites Program (CCSP) formed in 2003 in response to a 2002 Auditor General's Report: *Managing Contaminated Sites on Provincial Land.*
- CCSP leads the stewardship and remediation of high-risk historically contaminated provincial lands, and the work aligns with the BC government's commitment to reconciliation, engaging with local First Nations and other collaborative partnerships contributing to community well-being.
- Annual program financial audits and internally developed processes and tools ensure accountability, efficiency and focusing of public resources on the highest priority contaminated sites.

Key Facts:

- The BC government is responsible for the remediation of numerous contaminated sites in the province that are no longer in productive economic use.
- Typical sites addressed by CCSP include high risk, remote, unpermitted (pre-dating environmental legislation) historic polymetallic mine sites. CCSP uses a customized science-based, internationally recognized, risk-ranking methodology to confirm and prioritize sites based on the risk posed to human health and the environment.
- CCSP sites include contaminated sites where responsibility has defaulted to the Crown because the persons or companies responsible for the contamination cannot be found or no longer exist.
- The BC government may also initiate remediation on Crown land where responsibility is unclear, but where site conditions pose an immediate and unacceptable high risk to human health, or the environment based on regulatory standards and guidance. Responsible persons, if identified, may be pursued for cost recovery.
- Site status updates are publicly shared through CCSP Biennial Reports. The current 2024 Biennial Report submission will be a web-based StoryMap version.
- The inter-ministerial Provincial Contaminated Sites Secretariat, chaired by CCSP, provides a coordinating function to help foster information sharing, promotes best practices in the management of contaminated and potentially

contaminated sites and ensure that ministries are aware of issues relating to regulatory compliance, government policy and standards.

- The Site Remediation Group with the Ministry of Environment and Parks (EP) has oversight for the Contaminated Sites Regulation under the *Environmental Management Act*. EP regulates contaminated sites on both private lands and Provincial Crown lands throughout the province.
- Other WLRS business areas, other ministries and Crown corporations with responsibilities for permitting and management of land and resources on Crown land (e.g., mining, transportation a0nd infrastructure, real property, electricity, oil and gas) also have oversight and management roles related to contaminated sites.
- The provision for future clean-up costs has been accrued based upon site investigations, or estimations for those sites where an assessment has not been conducted. The accrued liability across sites and ministries: $531M in 2024 and $513M in 2023.
- To date, CCSP has investigated 87 Priority Sites, of which 39 have ranked as High Priority, 26 as Lower Priority and 19 that have been remediated. A few sites have come into the Program through legal agreements, including the long-term Britannia Mine and the Pacific Place remediation projects, both predating CCSP.
- The CCSP FY24 ending liability balance is $385.5M for the above sites and other potentially contaminated sites under assessment.
- Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

Date Prepared/Revised: February 11, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Colin Ward, ADM Reconciliation and Natural Resource Sector Policy Division
Phone: 778-974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Lyle Knight Phone: 778-943-6973

Issue: Consultation Policy - US Tribes

Recommend Response:

- *R. v. Desautel* is a Supreme Court of Canada decision from 2021. The decision affirms the Crown's consultation obligations with some US Tribes. The Province takes its legal obligations seriously and will address any obligation owed to a US Tribe.
- The Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship will be leading the development of a policy to clarify consultation obligations with US Tribes. This will take time and we want to get it right.
- While the policy is being developed, ministries making decisions that may impact rights will consult US Tribes, where appropriate, to ensure we meet our legal obligations.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- In the *Desautel* decision, the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that the Lakes Tribe in Washington State are a successor of the Sinixt and are an Aboriginal people of Canada who have an Aboriginal right to hunt in BC.
- Advice/Recommendations; Legal Information

- The Province will engage with BC First Nations in the development of the policy, along with federal government officials and other interested parties, such as proponents and industry associations.
- BC First Nations have indicated a strong interest to be involved in the development of policy regarding consultation with Aboriginal groups located outside of Canada.
- The Province welcomes the federal government's participation in this matter.

- This is a complex topic. The relationships, distinct rights and governance systems of different First Nations in BC and those outside of Canada can take many different forms.

Key Facts:

- Pursuant to the *Desautel* decision, the Crown has a constitutional duty to consult Lakes Tribe regarding their established right to hunt and asserted rights.
- Following that decision, other US Tribes have asserted aboriginal rights in BC. Credible assertions have been received from the Lummi Nation (Washington State) and seven Alaskan tribes triggering a duty to consult.
- A duty to consult a US Tribe does not undermine a BC First Nation's claim as the requirement to consult does not mean that any rights have been established or disproven. Overlapping claims between US Tribes and BC First Nations may exist.
- The duty to consult is a Crown responsibility. The Province does not expect or recommend proponents to engage with US Tribes. Proponents are encouraged to contact the appropriate decision-making ministry about where to focus their engagement efforts.
- For good neighbour reasons, provincial ministries will continue to engage US Tribes and other US governments as stakeholders to discuss any transboundary issues.

Date Prepared/Revised: 14 February 2025»

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Colin Ward Phone: 778-974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Emmy Beaton Phone: Government Financial Information

Issue: Adventure Tourism

Recommend Response:

- The adventure tourism sector is an important contributor to the provincial economy, particularly the rural economy.
- Our ministry has recently established a cross-ministry task force with the Adventure Tourism Coalition.
- The goal of this Task Force is to collaborate to ensure an efficient and effective regulatory environment for AT sector in BC, which includes protections for environmental values and support for reconciliation with First Nations.

Key Facts:

Adventure Tourism Task Force

- The adventure tourism (AT) sector is an important contributor to the provincial economy and provides world-class visitor experiences on Crown land. The Adventure Tourism Coalition website alleges that the adventure tourism sector contributes over $3 billion in annual visitor spending.
- The sector is represented by the Adventure Tourism Industry Coalition (ATC) with 18 associations representing rafting, hiking, mountain biking, heli-skiing, snowmobiling as well as recreational hunting and fishing.
- ATC's goal is to have strong alignment and collaboration among adventure tourism organizations, to support Indigenous reconciliation, and promote environmental stewardship for nature-based commercial recreation activities.
- In December 2024, WLRS, along with Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport (TACS) and Ministry of Environment and Parks (EP) established an ATC Task Force (Task Force) with this industry to undertake work related to policy, including planning and legislation, training and communication to ensure an effective and efficient process for all stakeholders. The AT Task Force is chaired by WLRS with support from TACS and EP (Recreation Strategy and Service Transformation and BC Parks Recreation, Sites and Trails).
- In terms of recommended changes to *Land Act* policy for AT tenures and considerations for delegated decision-makers, the following have been consistent requests from ATC in recent years:
  - A level playing field for the shared use of Crown land via parity with other resource industry sectors related to tenure rights, policies and decisions.
  - Provide the sector with greater business certainty and investor confidence via longer tenure terms, full compensation for any tenure taking and ensuring consistent decisions across the province.

- A supportive one-stop government structure – such as one accountable body for the adventure tourism sector like TACS Mountain Resorts Branch.
- Additional specific issues raised at the recent ATC Taskforce meetings include the need for a better understanding of the economic contributions of the AT sector, particularly in rural communities, and that the ATC view themselves as a "green" and sustainable industry, meeting other government objectives.

- In early February 2025, WLRS staff with Resource Stewardship Division began engagement with the Task Force on draft Modernized Wildlife Recreation Guidelines, which includes the request for flight data for helicopters used for guiding. These wildlife guidelines are intended to address ATC sector concerns around certainty, predictability, and tenure duration while ensuring provincial accountability for responsible management of wildlife, including caribou.
- On March 21, 2025, the Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC), who is an active member of the AT Industry Coalition, released their 2024 Advocacy Report Card which highlights the AT Task Force and the industry's lobbying aspirations.

Land Act Rent

- Base rent for *Land Act* tenures with improvements (i.e. lodges) is generally a percentage of BC Assessment Authority's land value and is recalculated annually.
- Minimum annual rent for *Land Act* tenures is now $850 per year, regardless of the tenure size. The largest tenure is about two million hectares for non-exclusive heli-skiing.
- Rent with 'client days' for adventure guiding is based on the previous year's use of Crown land and is paid only if they use Crown land; rent for guide services is $1 to $6 per 'client day'.
- Within the Crown Land Registry, there are 877 commercial recreation tenures in fiscal year 2024/25. Note: this number excludes tenures under TACS All-Season Resort Policy as well as WLRS General Commercial Policy if recreation was not included as a tenure purpose/sub-purpose.
- Estimated annual revenue for these commercial recreation tenures is $3.104M which includes $1.629M rent for intensive use sites such as lodges and $1.475M client day rent for adventure guiding on Crown land.
- Deferred rent payment plans for Land Act tenure holders experiencing hardship is available on a case-by-case basis. (This authority is subject to the ministry's Revenue Authority Matrix since payment plans are a form of credit).

Date Prepared/Revised: March 24, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: ADM Colin Ward Phone: 778 974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Michelle Porter, Executive Director, Land Programs Phone: Government Financial Information

Issue: Compensation for *Land Act* Tenures

Recommend Response:

- The *Land Act* provides for the issuance of tenures in the form of licence, leases and rights of way which provide access to Crown land for numerous activities on the land base from agriculture to aggregates, oil and gas and communication towers to utility lines.
- The *Land Act* tenures provide the tenure holders with varying levels of rights and use of the land in return for annual rent and include requirements for security and insurance and may require other conditions.
- Consideration for the provision of *Land Act* tenures is in the context of 'in the public interest' and may be approved, disallowed, cancelled, abandoned, amended and replaced.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- *Land Act* tenures are based on contractual language agreed to by the tenure holder and the Crown which provides for the use of Crown land.
- The language in the *Land Act* contract would be the basis for claims of compensation between a client and the Province.

Key Facts:

- Under the *Land Act*, Crown land may be allocated to individuals and corporations through a fee simple disposition (sale), or through a variety of dispositions in the form of a sale, lease, right-of-way or easement, and licence of occupation for long to short term occupation.
- The *Land Act* enables the Minister to impose any terms, covenants, stipulations and reservations as considered advisable, including rent.
- Management, administration, and disposition of Crown lands are conducted by following a set of policies and procedures, with the objective of consistent delivery of Crown land programs. As a result, the allotment of Crown land is intended to reflect the following three objectives:
    - Ensuring highest and best use by considering social and economic needs
    - Recognizing the limited supply of suitable land for particular uses

    - Ensuring the equitable and fair treatment of all applicants through consistent policy application
- The rental methodology for most of the tenures is based on a percentage of BC Assessment land value, but the three other methodologies include the use of revenue sharing (i.e. alpine skiing, adventure tourism, marinas) royalties (i.e. aggregates) and fixed (i.e. airports, communication sites).
- The *Land Act* licence contains a provision stating that the contract can be cancelled in the public interest. Leases and rights of way contract language; however, will provide greater rights to the tenure holder due to the nature of the contract.
- Compensation schemes can be considered through legislation/regulation or contract language, but common law through court decisions may also be a method that tenure holders seek to recover compensation where they perceive that they have been unfairly treated.
- In exceptional circumstances, the Province can consider proactively buying out tenure holders. If buyouts were to be a tool to be implemented by the Province, a set scheme should be developed to ensure consistency for the tenure holders and the taxpayers and developed in the context of other natural resource authorization schemes.
- To date, decisions to cancel *Land Act* tenures has been infrequent as have any court challenges but recently, the increase in the number of tenures affected by First Nation agreements is becoming more prevalent and, as a result, a scheme may need to be developed.

Date Prepared/Revised: «add date»

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Colin Ward Phone: 778-974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Michelle Porter Phone: Government Financial Information

Issue: General Policy for Dock (Private Moorage) Management

Recommend Response:

- Private moorage facilities in BC are generally authorized through a Permission to use Crown land. Permissions are non-exclusive and do not provide an interest in the land or create a disposition. There is no annual rent associated with Permissions, and they may be limited or rescinded at any time.
- In certain circumstances, private moorage owners may apply for a standard form of tenure under the *Land Act*. These tenures provide the right to use or occupy the land for a specific purpose and a defined term, subject to various conditions and are subject to an annual rent.
- The *Land Act* operational policy for private moorage sets out the requirements for Permissions and includes best management practices.

Key Facts:

- Private moorage facilities include docks, boat ways/ramps or boat lifts that are used for private residential use.
- Private moorages are an important part of coastal or lakeside living and while moorages exist on Crown land separate from the upland parcels, they generally add value to the upland residence.
- The placement and use of private moorage facilities on Crown land require adherence to provincial, federal and local government laws and include First Nation consultation and public notice and comments, all with the intention of ensuring that impacts to the environment and to First Nation rights and title are considered. *Land Act* authorization can be provided by way of a Permission, a non-exclusive use that does not convey rights, or through granting of a tenure.
- A Permission is granted without the need for an application and is limited to docks that meet specific requirements in size, configuration and location.
- An owner of a dock or moorage facility located where permissions are prohibited, as well as where a dock does not adhere to any one of the requirements of the Permission, where investments are substantial or where it is important to know the exact location of the tenure boundary to avoid interference with other authorized users in the area must apply for authorization through a tenure.

- *Land Act* tenures are a disposition of land and require fair return to the Crown in the form of rent (in accordance with the *Financial Administration Act*, the Province's Financial core Policy and Procedures Manual and the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles).

Date Prepared/Revised: February 12th, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: Colin Ward, ADM	Phone: 778-974-2150
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Michelle Porter, ED	Phone: 778-974-5845

Issue: Metro Van Water Treatment Plant – Kwikwitlem

Recommend Response:

- The Greater Vancouver Water District is proposing to construct a new water treatment plant in Coquitlam. The ~$2.3B project is intended to meet the drinking water needs of Metro Vancouver for the next 50 to 100 years.
- LaFarge is in process of completing reclamation obligations for a *Land Act* quarrying lease within the footprint of the proposed plant before lease expiry and is expected to fulfil its obligations by or before October 1, 2027.
- The Province will continue to work with the Greater Vancouver Water District, local First Nations and key stakeholders on this important infrastructure project.

Key Facts:

- Government Financial Information; Intergovernmental Communications
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Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Colin Ward, ADM Reconciliation and Natural Resource Sector Policy Division
Phone: 778-974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Lyle Knight Phone: 778-943-6973

Issue: *Declaration Act* Action Plan Items

Recommend Response:

- This year, in addition to public reporting on Actions 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, and 2.9, WLRS will begin reporting on Action 2.8. related to conservation, biodiversity and protection of species at risk.
- Beyond the Action Plan, ministries continue with a full range of obligations and commitments to advance reconciliation with First Nations, including alignment of laws under Section 3 of the *Declaration Act*.

Additional Response points (if needed):

Action Item	***Progress on Action Item***
Action 2.4 *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)).*	• Led by Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, we are advancing agreements that share statutory decision-making with First Nations. • There are two *Declaration Act* decision-making agreements in place between the Province and Tahltan Central Government (Eskay Creek and Red Chris mining projects). • Cabinet Confidences

Action 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. ((WLRS, MIRR, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Ministry of Forests, Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation, BC Energy Regulator)*	• Action 2.6 is a muti-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.
Action 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)*	• The Watershed Security Strategy (Strategy) was a mandate commitment for WLRS beginning in 2020. The *Declaration Act* Action Plan, Action 2.7, also committed WLRS to co-developing the Strategy with First Nations. Development of the Strategy was ongoing through 2021 to 2024. • Cabinet Confidences; Intergovernmental Communications
Action 2.8 *Collaborate with Indigenous partners on issues related to conservation and biodiversity in B.C., including the protection of species at risk. (WLRS)*	• Collaboratively developed a draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework with First Nations (October 2023). Conducted consultation and engagement on draft Framework January 2024. *Wildlife Act* Bill 14 amendments completed and received Royal

	Assent (Indigenous knowledge and Sheltering/Protocol Hunting). • Developed and distributed a Discussion Paper for comprehensive review of the *Wildlife Act i*n Fall 2023. • The Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation is in place with the support of $1B in matched provincial and federal funding.
Action 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)*	• Trilateral Accord was signed in June 2024. Discussions continue on how to proceed with governance and the action plan with the partners First Nations Fishery Council and Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Key Facts:

- The 2022-2023 Annual Report was the first public annual report since the Action Plan was published in June 2023.
- 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.
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Date Prepared/Revised: Feb. 14, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: ADM Colin Ward — Phone: 778-974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Emmy Beaton — Phone: Government Financial Information
Name: Kristy Wilson (Actions 2.4, 2.7, 2.8, and 2.9) — Phone: Government Financial Information
Name: Tiffany Storry (Action 2.6) — Phone: Government Financial Information

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.
- 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.
- To date, the families have not renewed litigation and are working with the Province.
- At present, the Province continues to engage with the families and TFN to confirm site specific direction for the various properties. The properties are being considered in different phases with targeted approaches depending on the specifics of the land.

- The Province advised TFN, the families and MLA Paton that it is exploring a long-term strategy for Brunswick Point that balances all stakeholder values and interests.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 6, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Colin Ward, ADM Reconciliation and Natural Resource Sector Policy Division
Phone: 778-974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Lyle Knight Phone: 778-943-6973

Issue: Residential Tenure Pricing

Recommend Response:

- Effective May 1, 2024, the Province implemented a change to the pricing for *Land Act* residential leases and licences on Crown land. This change provides pricing stability for *permanent* residential tenure holders.
- Under the new pricing structure, annual rental increases for permanent residential tenures will be capped in alignment with the *Residential Tenancy Act*.
- The adjustment was made in response to significant annual increases in land values in recent years, which led to corresponding increases in *Land Act* residential rental rates.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- *Seasonal* tenure holders in high land value areas are expressing dissatisfaction over not being included in the pricing relief. The new pricing structure stipulates that rent subsidies are not available to *seasonal* tenure holders.
- A rental freeze was implemented for all residential tenure holders for a two-year period to allow for policy research, which ended on April 30, 2024.
- During the two years of the rental freeze, land values assessed by BC Assessment increased in some areas, which could lead to significant rent increases once the rental freeze was lifted.
- *Seasonal* tenure holders did not experience these increases in their past invoices due to the rental freeze.

Key Facts:

- The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship completed a pricing review to determine fair market value of *Land Act* residential leases and licences (tenures) on Crown land. Advice/Recommendations; Cabinet Confidences

- During the pricing review, a rent freeze was applied to the residential tenures. There are currently 1,563 tenures used for residential purposes in BC. Most of the tenures (1,298) are used for seasonal purposes, and 265 are used as permanent residences.
- 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 *Residential Tenancy Act* nor the *Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act* and the associated limitations to rental increases, but *Land Act permanent* residential tenure rent increases will reflect the limits of the *Residential Tenancy Act*.
- Impacts to provincial revenue from the 2024 change to residential pricing for the 2024-25 fiscal year are an estimated loss of $420,000.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 11, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: ADM Colin Ward Phone: 778 974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Michelle Porter, Executive Director Phone: 778 974-5845

Issue: *Land Title Act* – Discriminating Covenants

Recommend Response:

- Discriminating covenants on Land Titles are not enforceable, and the Land Title and Survey Authority of BC (LTSA) has made ongoing efforts to update their records over the years.
- If a landowner has questions about discriminating covenants or wishes to initiate the process of endorsing an existing land title record to indicate that the covenant is void and has no effect, they should contact the Registrar of the LTSA.
- Upon contact from a landowner, the Registrar will endorse the covenant to confirm it has been cancelled per Section 222 of the *Land Title Act*. This amendment is provided at no cost.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Section 222 of the *Land Title Act* nullifies any registered covenant that has a discriminatory effect, regardless of when it was registered or how it was created. As a result, such discriminating covenants are considered void and have no legal effect.
- To maintain the integrity of the official Land Title records, the Registrar is prohibited under the *Land Title Act* from erasing or rendering illegible the original words on a record. Instead, the discriminating language is struck through making it clear that it is void.

Key Facts:

- Discriminating covenants are clauses that restrict the sale, ownership, occupation or use of land based on sex, race, creed, colour, nationality, ancestry or place of origin or 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).

- These covenants are not enforceable. Enacted in 1978, Section 222 of the *Land Title Act* nullifies any registered covenant that has a discriminatory effect, regardless of when it was registered or how it was created. In short, discriminating covenants are void and have no legal effect.
- The LTSA receives a small number (usually less than five) of requests, annually, to strike discriminating covenants from land title documents.
- The LTSA continues to work with Simon Fraser University to explore tools, including electronic ones, which may assist in identifying occurrences of such covenants. Once identified, discriminating covenants will be struck through by the Registrar.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 10, 2025

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

Issue: *Land Act* Amendments to Support Declaration Act Section 6/7

Recommend Response:

- On February 21, 2024, the Province announced that it would not proceed with proposed amendments to the *Land Act,* citing that further engagement is required to move forward together.
- The proposed *Land Act* amendments aimed to continue the implementation of the *Declaration Act* to enable joint and consent decision-making for *Land Act* decisions.
- 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*.
- 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):

- 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 clarity our proposal.
- Through engagement, we heard more time is needed to demonstrate the benefits of shared decision-making.
- As such, it was not the right time for the amendments and the right decision was to pause our work on the *Land Act.*
- We will continue to engage with people and businesses to show how working together, First Nations and non-First Nation communities, can help bring stability and predictability, and move us all forward.

Key Facts:

- First Nations supported the proposed amendments to the *Land Act*. Since the postponement, the Nations continue to seek involvement in decision-making. Related to the *Land Act.*
- The Minister and the WLRS team hosted discussions on these proposed amendments, engaging over 650 representatives from various stakeholder groups. These groups represent tens of thousands of British Columbians from industries such as mining, forestry, and oil and gas, clean energy, cattle ranching, as well as adventure tourism operators, snowmobilers, hunters and anglers, among others.
- During these discussions, participants raised questions about tenure replacements and the involvement of third parties in proposed agreements. Most respondents expressed their desire to be partners in the Province's reconciliation efforts and emphasized the importance of an effective process.
- Some public submissions received through EngageBC included harmful sentiments toward Indigenous peoples, along with inquiries regarding continued access to lands, the status of existing tenures, and the operational aspects of the agreements. Through engagement efforts, many people were surprised to learn that some claims made about the proposed legislation were false and that there would be no impacts on tenures, renewals, private properties or access to Crown land.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 10, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Colin Ward, Assistant Deputy Minister Phone: 778 974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Michelle Porter, ED Lands Programs Branch Phone: (778) 974-5845

Land Act Engagement Summary

Engagement Sessions with the Minister

Group	Date	Participants	Average Attendance Time	Themes
CAPP	February 6th	17	52m 48s	Advice/Recommendations
BC Cattleman's Association	February 6th	24	1h 17m 42s	Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Average Attendance Time	Themes
				Advice/Recommendations
Adventure Tourism Coalition Part 1	February 6th	165	1h 29m 17s	Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Average Attendance Time	Themes
				Advice/Recommendations
COFI	February 6th	34	58m 32s	Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Average Attendance Time	Themes
				Advice/Recommendations
Adventure Tourism Coalition Part 2	February 7th	193	1h 43m 38s	Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Average Attendance Time	Themes
				Advice/Recommendations
Outdoor Recreation Council	February 8th	61	1h 11m 32s	Advice/Recommendations
Business Council of BC	February 9th	56*		Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Average Attendance Time	Themes
				Advice/Recommendations
MABC	February 13th	51	1h 12m	Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Average Attendance Time	Themes
				Advice/Recommendations
Clean Energy BC	February 13th	52	1h 2m 47s	Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Average Attendance Time	Themes
				Advice/Recommendations

* This number does not include the participants in the room and does not accurately capture the extent of online participation. BCBC was the meeting organizer, so I was unable to pull a meeting report at the close of the session. The number reflects the high point of participation during the call.

Engagement Sessions without the Minister

Group	Date	Participants	Themes
Wilderness Tourism	February 13th	Personal Information	Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Themes
			Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Themes
Canadian Bar Association Canadian Bankers Association	February 8th	CBABC Personal Information CBA Personal Information	Advice/Recommendations
Tourism Stakeholders	February 2nd	Tourism Industry Association of BC – Personal Information Personal Information Destination BC – Personal Information Personal Information Northern BC Tourism Association Personal Information Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association Personal Information Personal Information	Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Themes
		Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association Personal Information Personal Information 4VI Personal Information Canada West Ski Areas Association – Personal Information Personal Information Indigenous Tourism BC – Personal Information	Advice/Recommendations
Adventure Tourism Coalition	January 30th	Adventure Tourism Association, Personal Information Personal Information	Advice/Recommendations
COFI	January 30th	CEO and VP	Advice/Recommendations
Interfor	January 29th	Interfor	
BC Shellfish Growers	January 26th	Personal Information Executive Director	Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Themes
CAPP / EPAC	January 22nd	CAPP Personal Information EPAC ARC Resource Ltd, Personal Information Personal Information Canadian Natural Resources Ltd, Personal Information Personal Information Pacific Cambriam Energy, Personal Information	Advice/Recommendations
BC Salmon Farmers Association	January 22nd	Representatives from BC Salmon Farmers; Creative Seafood; Personal Information	Advice/Recommendations
UBCM	January 22nd	Personal Information Executive Director Personal Information	Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Themes
Outdoor Recreation Council of BC	January 22nd	Outdoor Recreation Council of BC	Advice/Recommendations
Boating BC	January 18th	Personal Information Board Personal Information Board Personal Information Board Personal Information Executive Director	Advice/Recommendations
General Session	January 16th	BC Hydro Senior Manager, Real Estate Services Personal Information Transmission and Facilities Representatives (9 Participants) Association of BC Land Surveyors Personal Information	Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Themes
General Session	January 15th	BC Cattleman's Association	Advice/Recommendations
General Session	January 11th	GOABC Personal Information BC Cattleman's Association (Attended this session as well.) Guide Outfitters Association of BC.	Advice/Recommendations
Land Title and Survey Authority	January 2nd and January 9th	Land Title and Survey Authority Personal Information	Advice/Recommendations

Group	Date	Participants	Themes
			Advice/Recommendations

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: November 18, 2024 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Land Act Amendments**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **As the Premier has made clear, we will not be going ahead with the proposed changes to the Land Act.**

- **We recognize the proposed changes created concern and anxiety in the business community and rural communities and unfortunately caused a backlash against Indigenous communities.**

- **Government recognizes we need to take the time to further engage with people and demonstrate the real benefits of shared decision-making in action.**

- **First Nations remain critically important partners in governance and we're going to continue to work with them on their priorities and the priorities of British Columbians.**

- **We know that when we deliver agreements and partnerships with a First Nations community the entire region benefits through additional employment, economic activity and diversity and interest in culture.**

- **We know we've got work to do. We will continue to engage with people and businesses and do the work to show how working together, First Nations and non-First Nations, can help bring stability and predictability and move us all forward.**

BACKGROUND:

Advice/Recommendations; Intergovernmental Communications

During the discussion sessions, the Province received feedback that insufficient efforts were made to inform the public, stakeholders and other partners about the proposed amendments.

On Feb. 21st, 2024, former Minister of WLRS Nathan Cullen issued a statement announcing the Land Act amendments would not proceed.

Following the postponement, the Province considered lessons learned, and at present, there are no plans for further work.

Media Interest: Significant media coverage of the proposed amendments began in the weeks following the launch of engagement and continued for several months until the Feb. 21st announcement. There was some coverage of political comments in re: the Land Act during the 2024 provincial election.

Communications contact	Sean Leslie	250 893-4403
Program contact	Name	Number
File created	Date	
File updated	Date	

ADVICE TO MINISTER

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, as 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. We have taken steps to make that happen in partnership with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR).
- WLRS has been successful in expediting implementation of land agreements as partner to MIRR and First Nations, with a ten-fold increase in land transfers.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- As WLRS holds legislation used to establish First Nation ownership of former provincial Crown lands and land return staff, since a 2023 natural resource ministry re-structure.
- As a result, implementation of land-based reconciliation is now led by the ministry through the First Nation Land Transfers branch.

Key Facts:

- Over 95 percent of land in BC is provincial Crown land, the majority of which is subject to inherent Aboriginal rights and title.
- Negotiated approaches to title (e.g. Treaty or Comprehensive Reconciliation Agreements) are less costly and provide more certainty than court declarations or threat of litigation. The negotiation of land-based reconciliation agreements are led by MIRR with the implementation actioned by WLRS.

- Given the importance of land in reconciliation, land transfer commitments have increased significantly over the past several years, with a nearly 500% increase in committed lands for transfer between 2021 and 2023.
- Since December 2023, efficiencies have been realized by the natural resource restructure and the centralization of land return resources, including expedited ministerial order timelines in WLRS resulting in an increase of land transfers.
- These changes, along with partnership approaches with First Nations have resulted in a 1000 percent, or ten-fold increase in completed land transfers.
- Land returns to 16 First Nations have been concluded in fee simple, and three First Nations are working with Canada to add lands transferred from BC to their reserves.
- Agreements with large land quantums in implementation include the Lake Babine Foundation Agreement, Cheslatta Settlement Agreement, and Treaty Land Entitlement.
- Budget 2025 transferred $400K to WLRS from MIRR for First Nation Land Transfers operations, although funding for land-based reconciliation agreements is generally funded through MIRR-managed funding sources.
- Timely access to implementation funding is crucial to meeting land transfer targets for committed agreements.
- Government Financial Information

Date Prepared/Revised: «add date»	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Colin Ward	Phone: (778) 974-2150
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Ashlyn Schwaiger	Phone: (250) 380-8372

Issue: Consultation Information Systems

Recommend Response:

- The consultation information systems are a suite of digital tools that support over 1,300 staff in the natural resource ministries in addressing the Province's constitutional duty to consult First Nations. They are managed by the Strategic Consultation Initiatives team in the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS).
- One of the ministry's priorities is to improve the timing and transparency of permitting processes - consulting First Nations about permits is a key component of that work.
- The team is continually working to improve the Province's consultation information systems required to support the modernization of consultation practices.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The high volume of proposed government activities that trigger consultation, and the requirement to share and coordinate information across decision-making agencies, necessitates the use of efficient digital tools. The tools contribute to timely and durable land use decisions.
- Resourcing the maintenance and ongoing improvements to the suite of tools are crucial to improving uptake, efficacy, durability and integration of decisions, and facilitating government-to-government digital connections with First Nations – all contributing to efficient decision timelines.

Key Facts:

- The Province has a constitutional legal obligation to consult First Nations on proposed authorizations that may impact First Nations asserted or established Aboriginal and Treaty rights (section 35 rights) of the *Constitution Act*, 1982.

- The Province makes over 20,000 permitting decisions annually. Prior to reaching a decision, most applications will require consultation with multiple First Nations to protect against negative impacts to First Nations interests.
- The duty to consult is complex. The complexity is compounded with commitments in various agreements, requirements to coordinate across ministries to ensure consistent, complete and accurate materials, and consideration of cumulative impacts. Additionally, there is often confusion regarding the commitments in the *Declaration Act.*
- The Strategic Consultation Initiatives team is responsible for providing provincial guidance respecting the duty to consult and is responsible for 12 enterprise applications and datasets, including the First Nation Consultation System (FNCS).
- FNCS and the associated systems were built to simplify and coordinate consultation and accommodation practices. FNCS saves about 13 steps and 6.5 hours of effort for 'normal' processes, while adding elements that support coordination and more durable and transparent decisions.
- FNCS was launched in October 2022 and now has over 1,300 users. There are over 5,000 permits in the system in various stages of consultation. Each permit requires consultations with multiple First Nations.
- FNCS is currently under-resourced and requires critical upgrades to maintain and improve the user experience and further improve the efficacy, timeliness and durability of consultations. Starting FY 25-26, funding of $4.4M over three years is being sought through shared governance with natural resource ministries and the natural resource ministries' capital allocation.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 18, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Colin Ward — Phone: 778-974-2150

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Krista Gunnarsen — Phone: 778-974-2107

Issue: Lidar Status Update

Recommend Response:

- Government is entering into the third year of a six-year, $38.5M program to collect and process high-quality lidar elevation data to enhance BC's resilience to natural events due to climate change, meet the demands of modern resource management initiatives, and to keep British Columbians safe, productive and economically competitive.
- Years 1 and 2 of the program have delivered lidar data for 258,875 km^2 (over 27 percent of the province is now covered), collected in the Northeast, Omineca, Tsilhqot'in Territory, North Coast, Central Coast and Vancouver Island. A portion of the data was published in December 2024, and additional data will be released quarterly as it is produced, with the next publication scheduled for March 2025.
- Year 3 of the program will follow a dedicated acquisition plan, targeting between 300,000 km^2 and 350,000 km^2 in BC's northern areas (Northeast, Omineca, North and Central Coast). This acquisition season is expected to last for seven months beginning in April 2025.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Lidar (light detection and ranging) is a 3D mapping technology that collects detailed spatial data valuable to governments, First Nations, communities and industries.
- Government's investment in lidar demonstrates its commitment to improve BC's 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 km^2).

- Lidar data for 11 percent of the province (approximately 105,000 km^2) is freely available under the Open Government License.
- Previously collected lidar focuses on key forestry areas and critical flood zones and will be used in conjunction with the data collected through LidarBC to accurately monitor changes and prepare models for future forecasting.

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 in 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 and forest structures (e.g. tree canopy and understory).
    - **FOR BIODIVERSITY / LAND USE PLANNING**: Lidar creates maps to measure disturbance and assess vegetation regrowth. Land use planners and First Nations use these for biodiversity conservation and resource management. As an example, WLRS is developing a Water Sustainability Plan (WSP) with Cowichan Tribes for the Koksilah River Watershed, using lidar data for hydrological modeling, wetland mapping and geotechnical assessments. 1000km^2 of lidar data was delivered to support the Koksilah WSP.
    - **FOR NATURAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND MANAGEMENT**: Lidar data offers powerful tools 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 fire or flooding). As an example, data collected several weeks before the Chilcotin River landslide provided a pre-slide model of the area,

and post-slide response data was used to model terrain change and enable predictive modelling.

Date Prepared/Revised: Updated February 12, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: Andrew Calarco	Phone: 778-698-8399
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Nancy Liesch	Phone: 778-974-3641

Issue: NextGen911

Recommend Response:

- The functionality of Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) relies upon accurate, reliable geospatial datasets (e.g., addresses, roads, boundaries) and Geographic Information System (GIS) business processes.
- The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (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 with road and address data that satisfy BC's current 911 dispatch needs.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- PSSG is leading a multi-Ministry engagement process to develop a framework to modernize BC's 9-1-1 services.
- The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is responsible for regulating Canada's telecommunications service providers. The CRTC has mandated all telecommunication providers to upgrade their systems to deliver NG911. In the absence of a provincial NG911 GIS data authority formally designated through legislation, the CRTC has confirmed that BC's network provider (TELUS) would acquire the responsibility by default.
- The role of the DRA to support GIS data services for NG911 implementation will largely be determined by PSSG's framework and any legislation and agreements with third parties (e.g., TELUS, local governments).

Key Facts:

- The existing 9-1-1 emergency calling system is decades old. It is technologically obsolete and can no longer adapt to new telephony systems to meet public expectations.
- 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 accompanied by highly reliable geospatial datasets are used to locate callers, route calls and dispatch emergency responders. Datasets must be current, seamless, and accurate to support NG911 functionality.
- A GIS Data Aggregator is an entity that combines GIS data provided from multiple sources to assemble a seamless dataset of one or more layers for a larger geographic area. The aggregation process verifies compliance with NG9-1-1 GIS data specifications.
- Currently 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.
- Individual First Nations, local governments, and Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) are required to maintain authoritative geospatial datasets for NG911 and submit these to TELUS.
- As the largest primary PSAP in Canada, Emergency Communications for British Columbia Incorporated (E-Comm 9-1-1) handles 99% of BC's initial 9-1-1 call volumes and heavily relies upon geospatial data provided aggregated through the DRA program of WLRS.
- 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:
Name: Andrew Calarco Phone: 778-698-8399

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Nancy Liesch Phone: 778-974-3641

Issue: Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Natural Resource Sector (NRS)

Recommend Response:

- The province's corporate AI strategy and tools are provided by the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)
- The NRS has identified a range of opportunities where AI may create efficiencies and support staff in providing improved service delivery to British Columbians
- The NRS is taking a measured approach to adoption, piloting AI in lower risk areas to ensure we mitigate any ethical and technical challenges.

Additional Response points:

- The NRS strongly believes in the 'human in the loop' principle where AI activities and products are overseen directly by employees.

Key Facts:

There are many opportunities to use AI to improve the NRS' services including:

- Data Support: Focuses on enhancing data management, integration, and quality for better decision-making.
- Client Support: Aims to improve the client experience and streamline external interactions through interactive support and guidance.
- Staff/Program Support: Streamlines internal processes, improves staff productivity, and supports resource allocation through automation and workload management.
- Analytic and Decision Support: Leverages advanced analytics to uncover trends, patterns, and insights.
- Compliance & Enforcement Support: Enhances compliance monitoring, enforcement, and regulatory processes through automation and supports.
- Public Engagement & Transparency: Improves public access to information and fosters transparency in government activities through consultation and feedback.
- Performance Measurement & Reporting: Automates the tracking, analysis, and reporting of performance metrics to improve accountability.

The NRS is currently focussed on establishing a clear governance structure that can determine priorities, manage risks, and oversee the results of AI initiatives for lessons learned.

Focus on fiscal aspects of issue:

- The costs associated with implementing AI solutions are not yet clear. The NRS is working with the OCIO to better understand and forecast the costs of individual pilots and projects.
- A key part of beginning any AI pilot will be to create a specific evaluation framework that focusses on quantifying savings realized from any efficiency gains.
- Responsibility for implementing AI solutions will be a partnership between the OCIO, NRS program areas, and the Natural Resources Information and Digital Services Division.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 14, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Andy Calarco, ADM	Phone: 778-698-8399
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Fraser Marshall, Sr. Executive Director	Phone: 778-698-7191

Issue: Funding and resourcing across Natural Resource Permitting Solutions.

Recommend Response:

- In 2022, Treasury Board approved Advice/Recommendations Government Financial in funding for FY 22/23 to FY25/26 to advance permitting solutions work across Natural Resource Ministries directed by the Deputy Minister's Solutions Project Board and led by WLRS.
- Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information

- Since funding allocations, ministries have demonstrated success across strategic permitting initiatives, priority projects and data and analytics integration.
- The successful approach is taking a project-by-project focus – scaling solutions that were most impactful, and driving systemic changes across process, policy, people and statutory reform initiatives.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Ministries funded by the 2022 TB Submission include; Energy and Climate Solutions EMLI, ENV, FOR, IRR, MCM, EMLI, WLRS, TACS, and MOTI.
- Priority projects include housing and connectivity, with new priorities such as mining and renewable energy and restoration being heightened.

Key Facts:

The 2022 Treasury Board Submission was a first in time effort to bring forward a wholistic approach to a resource request focused on NRM permitting solutions across multiple sectors and ministries.

- WLRS led both the Treasury Board Submission as well as the permitting solutions efforts.
- Ministries hired 250 positions to focus on permitting solutions work

- Ministries were funded for 203 positions directly from the 2022 TB Submission, with permitting vacancies also being filled through the Permitting Recruitment program reaching 250 FTEs in total.

- Government Financial Information

-

- Funding was dispersed across ministries to fill key positions in permitting – these disbursements were made prior to ministry rebalancing between WLRS and FOR:
  - EMLI – 6 positions
  - ENV – 27 positions
  - FOR – 5 positions
  - IRR – 1 position
  - MOTI – 20 positions
  - WLRS – 189 positions
  - TACS – 2 positions

Date Prepared/Revised: March 3, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: Jennifer Anthony	Phone: 250-889-1315
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Karen Spence	Phone: 778-698-3289

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: Feb 11, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Permitting and Strengthening Economy**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- **Government is transforming permitting and authorization systems across government, to provide for a faster, more efficient process to serve people better and grow our economy, while maintaining high environmental standards.**

- **This includes getting homes and internet built faster through a single window approach for natural resource permits that speeds up homebuilding approvals, connecting all households in B.C. to high-speed internet by 2027.**

- **We've had steady success in bringing down permit backlogs for housing and connectivity projects which provides key lessons for permit processes across government – including other natural resource projects.**

- **And while we are delivering streamlined permitting, we continue to advance reconciliation with First Nations.**

If asked about how the permitting strategy is speeding up permits needed to strengthen the economy…

- **Through the efforts of the Ministry of Mining and Critical Minerals, there's been a 52% reduction in the backlog of regional mine permit applications since 2022 – these improvements are getting explorers working on their projects more quickly.**

- **37% reduction for Major Mine application review timelines have been reduced from an average of 259 to 164 business days since 2019.**

- **Through rendering two permitting decisions, we secured $800 million in investment for light industrial land development in the Lower**

Mainland while protecting and improving wetlands that help prevent flooding.

- **Cleared 100% of the provincial housing backlog and reduced the average number of days to process a housing application from 257 days to 108 (58% reduction).**

- **Ministry of Transportation and Transit have reduced average turnaround time on subdivision and zoning decisions from 60 days to 9 (85% reduction).**

- **51% reduction in the Connectivity application turnaround times, bringing e-commerce opportunities to rural communities.**

- **Reduced water licences for transportation projects from 12-24months to less than a month through delegation to the Ministry of Transportation and Transit.**

- **The Ministry of Forests Archaeology Branch has been refining a priority system for all aspects of the permitting process, to ensure that permit applications related to provincial priorities, including key natural resource applications, are given priority review and decision making.**
    - **Since 2023, the Branch has reduced general permitting time by 13% across all sectors and reduced the Heritage Conservation Act residential permitting timelines by 24%.**

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 renewable energy projects such as wind and solar power and high-voltage transmission lines. This expansion is expected to streamline and drive effectiveness for all parties – including First Nations, industry, communities, and regulators.**

- **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.**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

- **We're getting rid of duplicate permits for low risk/low impact activities, such as allowing sub-tenuring of existing BC Hydro poles to connect remote communities to high-speed internet.**

BACKGROUND:

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 permitting will result in time savings and process efficiencies. This work is imperative to reduce the overall caseload and transform permitting.

On Dec. 9, 2025, the Province announced new wind projects to boost B.C.'s affordable clean-energy supply

On Feb. 6, 2025 the Province announced plans to introduce legislation in spring 2025 to ensure rapid permitting of renewable energy projects.

Communications contact	Katie Norris	250 896-7365
Program contact	Jennifer Anthony	250 889-1315
File created	Jan. 14, 2023	
File updated	Feb. 11, 2025	

Issue: Housing Action Taskforce

Recommend Response:

- The Housing Action Taskforce (HAT) was established in January 2023 and is led by WLRS and includes the Ministries of Environment and Parks (ENV), Forests (FOR), and Transportation and Transit (MOTT).
- HAT provides dedicated and coordinated oversight and solutions for provincial natural resource housing authorizations. This includes streamlining decision processes and supporting a coordinated single window approach to housing-related permits and authorizations.
- HAT is prioritizing housing projects that are:
    - Indigenous led,
    - BC Housing projects,
    - Multiple Unit projects, and
    - Projects that provide affordable housing.
- Overall, the average processing time of natural resource housing-related applications is 134 days.
- A total of 3215 decisions on housing-related applications were made since March 2023, and 100 percent of 914 initially identified housing-related applications have been completed.
- The solutions we are implementing for Housing are scalable to other sectors and are being applied across other provincial priority initiatives.

Key Facts:

- Since establishing the Housing Action Taskforce (HAT) we are permitting more, and we are permitting faster:
    - Since March 2023, 79 percent of identified housing-related applications across the Natural Resource Ministries have reached decisions, with the potential to create approximately 332,138 new housing units.

- Advice/Recommendations
-

- Housing-related permits sit across several ministries (ENV; WLRS; FOR; MOTT) 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 areas assessments.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 24, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Jennifer Anthony, ADM Permitting Transformation Division	Phone: 250-889-1315
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Megan Williams	Phone: Government Financial Information

Issue: Regulation and Permitting of Renewable Energy

Recommend Response:

- Renewable energy projects, such as wind and solar, need a variety of permits during the investigative stage and the construction stage.
- WLRS has statutory authority for key permits involved in renewable energy projects including the *Land Act*, the *Water Sustainability Act* and the *Wildlife Act* and is leading the coordination of early permitting for the ten projects within the recent BC Hydro Call for Power.
- In addition, WLRS is leading the coordination of permitting in support of BC Hydro's Capital Plan to sustain and expand BC's electricity system. BC Hydro has identified over 250 permits across five Ministries and nine statutes that the Natural Resource Ministries are actively tracking and accelerating.
- WLRS is working closely with our partners in the Natural Resource Ministries, and with the Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions, the BC Energy Regulator and the Environmental Assessment Office to facilitate a smooth transition of permits, policy and processes for renewable energy projects and prescribed transmission lines in support of recent announcements.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- WLRS and the Natural Resource Ministries are committed to ensuring that renewable energy proponents are supported through the transition of work to the BC Energy Regulator through ongoing communication and prioritization of applications and policy development.

- The Province is committed to ensuring that First Nations' interests, and environmental mitigations are protected and maintained.

Key Facts:

- On December 9, 2024, the Province announced that BC Hydro had selected nine wind energy projects. The Province also announced its intention to remove all current and future land-based wind power projects from environmental assessment.
- On December 20, 2024, BC Hydro added a new solar-energy project to the projects selected to advance from its 2024 Call for Power. The solar project requires an environmental assessment.
- On February 6, 2025, Minister Dix, Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions, announced that legislation will be introduced in Spring 2025 that enables the BC Energy Regulator to be the primary regulatory authority for renewable energy projects.
- Under the *Clean Energy Act*, a renewable or clean resource means biomass, biogas, geothermal heat, hydro, solar, ocean, wind or any other prescribed resource.
- The initial focus will be prescribed transmission lines (including North Coast Transmission Line), wind and solar permitting.
- The ministries involved in permitting renewable projects include the Ministries of Agriculture (Agriculture Land Commission), Environment and Parks, Forests, Transportation and Transit, and Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, the Environmental Assessment Office and potentially, the Ministry of Critical Minerals.
- The development and construction of new clean-energy projects, in response to the call for power, will generate between $5B and $6B in private capital spending throughout the province (BC Gov News) .
- BC Hydro and WLRS developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to fund resources to accelerate electrification projects including renewable energy projects and capital projects. The MOU provided for approximately $4M in funding to the Natural Resource Ministries and the Environmental Assessment Office in annual funding for years 2025-2028. This equates to between 29-35 resources for this work.
- The electrification work has shifted for the Natural Resource Ministries and the Environmental Assessment Office to include supporting the development of legislation, regulation, policy and processes with the BC Energy Regulator and supporting the consultation and cooperation work with Nations as well as continuing to support renewable energy proponents with spring permitting necessary to be successful to move forward.

2025/26 Estimates Debate

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Date Prepared/Revised: February 23, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Jennifer Anthony, ADM, Permitting Transformation Division Phone: 250-889-1315

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Karen Spence, ED, Permitting Solutions Branch Phone: 778-698-3289

Issue: Wildfire-Impacted Structures Outside Municipal Boundaries

Recommend Response:

- Although rent relief is not an option available under the *Land Act,* payment plans can be established.
- Other than trapline cabins, 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.
- Other ministries may have support relief available.

Key Facts:

- Wildfires in 2024 damaged or destroyed infrastructure as well as forests.
- BC does not have good information on the magnitude of these losses.
- Some industrial infrastructure, railways and bridges, as well as smaller camps and cabins associated with trapping and guide outfitting, have been impacted.
- Trapline cabins are managed through a *Land Act* Notation of Interest which does not convey any rights to the trapline holder.
- 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 recover the cost of any required cleanup through the courts.

Date Prepared/Revised: 13 Feb 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Jennifer Anthony, ADM Permitting Transformation — Phone: 250-889-1315

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Angela Smith-Rockwell, Director Resource Authorizations — Phone: 250-645-9303

Issue: Lower Fraser River Dredging and Float Home Communities

Recommend Response:

- There is no party responsible for dredging the side channels or North Arm of the Lower Fraser River.
- The lack of a predictable dredging program in these areas is causing issues for river users, including float home communities.
- A predictable dredging program would require a funding source (or sources), and an organization to implement the works.
- The ministry regulates dredging activities under the *Water Sustainability Act.*
- The ministry authorizes river lot land licences and leases on Crown land under the *Land Act*, required by float home communities and individual float homes.

Key Facts:

LOWER FRASER RIVER DREDGING

- The Vancouver Fraser Port Authority conducts dredging activities only in areas it has jurisdiction in. Other areas, like side channels or smaller port authorities and harbours (e.g. Steveston), do not have a funding source to pursue regular maintenance dredging.
- Several municipalities along the river are interested to work with the Province on a solution. They expect the Province to pay most of the costs (e.g. 80 percent).
- The silt and sand build up is acute, causing issues for river users, including float home communities with boats and homes getting 'beached' at low tide which, in some cases, has led to debris on the riverbed puncturing the bottom or floats of floating homes, and these homes breaking away from connected services (e.g. sewer, water).
- River travel is becoming challenging especially in low tide conditions, where large commercial vessels are interfacing with small boats due to a restricted channel to travel in.
- The Province does not have firsthand knowledge of current rates to dredge the side channels and North Arm. Estimates from user groups have indicated about $2M-$3M per year (pg. 18 South Fraser River Enhancement Society, attached, and https://www.delta.ca/media/3551) is required for a predictable, sustainable dredging program.

- In January 2025, the South Fraser River Enhancement Society provided this estimate for dredging for Ladner: navigation channels branching off the South Arm of the Fraser River below the Massey Tunnel, serving the Ladner, Canoe Pass, and Westham Island areas, and reconnecting to the South Arm via the Sea Reach channel. This is a portion of the overall dredging needed throughout the Lower Fraser River. Costs were sourced by that Society from Fraser River Pile and Dredge (established dredging firm) and based on 2022 Coast Guard measurements of sediment build-up.
- 2027 is the year estimated for dredging, recognizing the time it would take to secure provincial and federal authorizations and scheduling equipment.

Channel	2027 – aggregate volume estimated (m^3)	Project Cost
Ladner Harbour & Channel to -3.6m depth below low water	161,715	$ 4.0M
Part of Canoe Pass -3.6m depth below low water	30,227	$ 0.7M
Ladner Feeder -3.6m depth below low water	63,553	$ 1.6M
Deas Slough -3.6m depth below low water	119,770	$ 3.0M
Ladner Reach -3.6m depth below low water	25,000	$ 0.6M
Sea Reach -4.5m depth below low water	51,591	$ 1.3M
Total Dredge material +/- 451,856 cubic metres	**451,856**	**$ 11.2M**

FLOATING HOME COMMUNITIES

- In addition to dredging concerns, float home communities in the Lower Fraser River are frustrated by the Province's decision not to issue long term leases for their river lot use.
- Prior to 2015, the river lots these communities used were sublet from the Province to what is the now the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority. The federal government issued long term leases, which enabled these homeowners to get lower cost home insurance and get financing for mortgages.
- In 2015, the Province regained the responsibility for these river lot leases and licences. Due to concerns from some First Nations, existing provincial land use policy in this area and ministry capacity constraints, the ministry has issued only short-term licences to these float home communities.
- These short-term licences have led to increased costs for insurance and mortgages, and reduced resale value and flexibility for floating home communities.
- The Floating Home Association of BC and the South Fraser River Enhancement Society are vocal advocates requesting change to make floating homes a more attractive and less expensive option for homeowners.

Attachment:

- Appendix A: Lower Fraser River Channel Dredging Proposal, Ladner Sediment Group, September 12, 2023, pg. 18.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 21, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Jennifer Anthony	Phone: 250-889-1315
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Morgan Kennah	Phone: 250-896-6268



Lower Fraser River Channel Dredging Proposal

September 12, 2023

Prepared by the Ladner Sediment Group
https://ladnersedimentgroup.ca

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This proposal was prepared by the Ladner Sediment Group September 2023

The Ladner Sediment Group is comprised of Industrial, Commercial, Residential and Recreational property owners on the Fraser River Secondary Navigation Channels.

Six navigation channels branch from the South Arm of the Fraser below the Massey Tunnel and service the Ladner, Canoe Pass and Westham Island areas then connect back to the South Arm of the Fraser River further downriver via the Sea Reach channel.

Navigability of these channels is monitored by Public Works Canada and the Coast Guard. Annual channel depths are measured using "soundings" and positioned using GPS.

The Coast Guard publishes the annual soundings to aid in real time marine navigation.

The channels have not been dredged since 2015 and silt deposited by the Fraser River has settled in the channels making them unfit for navigation. The sedimentation severely limits, access to the Ladner Federal Harbour, fish processing plants, marinas, boat moorage, float home communities and all other commerce relying on these segments of the Fraser River.

Based upon 2022 Coast Guard soundings, design channel widths and design channel depths the Ladner Sediment Group has estimated the quantity of material to be dredged from each of the six channels as follows:

The cost per cubic metre of $20 plus a $0.50 government disposal fee has been applied to the dredging quantities to determine the following costs.

Ladner Harbour & Channel	138,235 cubic metres to -3.6m depth below low water	$2.83M
Part of Canoe Pass	25,838 cubic metres to -3.6m depth below low water	$0.53M
Ladner Feeder	54,325 cubic metres to -3.6m depth below low water	$1.12M
Deas Slough	102,380 cubic metres to -3.6m depth below low water	$2.10M
Ladner Reach	21,370 cubic metres to -3.6m depth below low water	$0.44M
Sea Reach	44,100 cubic metres to -4.5m depth below low water	$0.91M

TOTAL QUANTITY +/- 387,000 cubic metres at a total estimated cost of $7.93 Million





Ladner Harbour Channel, Canoe Pass, Ladner Feeder Channel, and Deas Slough are in desperate need of dredging. It will take 4 years of concentrated dredging to bring these channels back to navigable depth.

Completing the dredging program over 4 years would require a budget of $2 Million per year. Maintenance dredging would continue on an as needed basis once the channel depths have been restored.

The Port of Vancouver currently manages dredging contracts for the South Arm of the Fraser River and is the agency most appropriate to manage restoration of the secondary channels. The Ladner Sediment Group is requesting the Federal Government to increase funding to the Port of Vancouver accordingly.

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1. Introduction

The objective of this report is to establish a dredging program by the Port of Vancouver for the navigation channels at Ladner BC. The dredging estimates in this report indicate 2 million dollars per year over a four-year period would restore the channels to a navigable state.

Periodic dredging would follow to maintain the channels as needed.



2. The Mighty Fraser River

The Fraser River is the largest river by discharge flowing into the Pacific seaboard of Canada. The river spans the province travelling 1,370 kms from headwaters in the Rocky Mountains to eventually fan out through the Fraser River Delta into the Salish Sea.

> **20 million tons of sediment flow down the Fraser River each year. Most of the sediment flows out of the main shipping channel between Delta (Ladner) and Richmond.**

To maximize flow in the main channel and reduce sedimentation, training walls have been installed to direct water away from the secondary channels and feeder sloughs have been capped. The river is a key transportation route for goods and services delivered to the region.

The Port of Vancouver have a continuous dredging program on the South Arm to keep the channel navigable.



MURAT YÜKSELIR/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

3. Ladner on the River



Ladner is situated on the south side of the South Arm of the Fraser River. It is one of the oldest communities in British Columbia established in 1868 by the Ladner brothers. Ladner quickly developed into a centre for fishing and farming. Port Guichon on the Ladner Channel was the terminus for the railway delivering BC lumber to schooners bound for England. In the 1800's the salmon fishery and canneries were a thriving industry on these channels situated between the South Arm of the Fraser River and the Strait of Georgia.

Today Ladner is a growing multicultural community established along the Lower Fraser River Estuary. Ladner is home to fishing fleets, fish processing plants, Ladner Federal Harbour, multiple Marinas, waterfront industries and approximately 150 Float homes.

Due to siltation the harbour, marinas, and navigation channels are crippled.
Float home communities, struggling with massive sediment accumulations are seeing homes grounded on the mud benches almost daily. Grounding of float homes leads to structural damage of the float homes, docks, wharves and infrastructure.

4. Cutting off Flow to Ladner Channels

The Ladner Ferry operated from 1913 to 1959 as the only South Arm crossing between Ladner and Richmond. Construction of the Ladner Ferry Landing blocked off a portion the channel feeding the top of Ladner Reach redirecting water flow.

To replace the ferry in 1956 the Deas Tunnel (George Massey Tunnel) was constructed under the South Arm of the Fraser River just upstream of the branches to Ladner. Tunnel installation resulted in the capping off Deas Channel and turned it into a slough eliminating all flow and supply to the top of Ladner Channels.

Dredge spoils from the tunnel excavation were dumped in the Ladner Channel immediately adjacent to Port Guichon. Between 1968 and 1980 dredge spoils from the creation of Ladner Harbour by the Department of Fisheries were added to the tunnel dredge spoils narrowing the channel significantly below the Harbour thereby constricting flow further.

The dredge spoil sites are now uninhabited islands with mature trees pictured in the background below and identified as habitat sites. These Islands have added to the diversion of water velocity and increased the sediment load in the water column.

The tunnel construction was accompanied by installation of "training" walls on the South Arm to direct river flow away from Ladner's Secondary Channels into the main channel. This further added to the loss of flow through Ladner's four main channels. Loss of flow increased the sediment load added to the channels. The result of reduced flow and compressed channel width by the dredge spoils has resulted in critical sedimentation of the four Ladner Channels and Harbour Entrance.



FISHERMAN TRYING TO DISLODGE BOAT GROUNDED DUE TO NEGLECTED CHANNEL MAINTENANCE
WATER DEPTH AT THE ENTRANCE TO LADNER FEDERAL HARBOUR IS NOW 0.7m AT LOW TIDE. CHANNEL DESIGN DEPTH IS 3.6m

4.1 Climate Change Compounding Sediment Accumulation

Sediment accumulation has been exacerbated in recent years by additional loads from forest fire denuding hillside vegetation bounding the Fraser River.

Recent floods and landslides of November 2022 when the Coquihalla Highway, the Highway 8 from Merritt to Spences Bridge, the flooding of the Bonaparte River at Cache creek and the landslide at Jackass Mountain resulted in major amounts of sediment into the Fraser River which greatly added to the sediment loads in Ladner's four channels.

Ladner's Channels were last maintained in 2015 and have since been neglected resulting is dangerous navigation for commercial and private vessels with low water depths of < 1m at low tide.

Boats are running aground daily causing damage to running gear and stranding those on board.

Float homes are grounding out potentially suffering structural damage to the floats, docks and supporting infrastructure.

Resultant economic impacts are compromising the community.

5. Economic Analysis

A 2012 report on the economic output from Ladner Harbour and its secondary channels was provided to the City of Delta[1]. The focus of the report was to determine the impact of leaving the channels to fill with sediment or re-instate a regular dredging maintenance program. The estimates in Table B are adjusted from 2012 estimates to align with a 25% cost of living increase between 2012 and 2022 derived from Statistics Canada.

[1] (Inc, 2012)

Table B: Estimated economic output from Ladner Harbour and Ladner Secondary Channels

Type of Impact	Employment (Jobs)	Employment (Full Time Equivalent)	Wages $ Millions	GDP $Millions	Economic Output ($ Millions)
Direct	356	294	10	18	64
Indirect	265	219	8	20	28
Induced	186	154	6	11	28
Total Contribution	808	666	24	49	120

It should be noted that Navigation Channels are Provincial and Federal Transportation corridors and maintenance programs are beyond Municipal Government capabilities.

To quote a well-known local:

“You wouldn’t ask the Town of Merritt to maintain the Coquihalla Highway.”

6. Environmental Impact

The 2012 InterVistas Report titled “Dredging Ladner Harbour & Related River Channels”, researched Dredging and the Economic and Environmental impacts is still relevant today.

‘There are environmental impacts to dredging and not dredging the lower Fraser River. Dredging can be perceived as an unnatural cause that will harm water and land habitats. However, strategic dredging for specific areas of the river channel or estuary can help restore water and land habitats. The Fraser River estuary is a rich wildlife habitat with over 300 species of bird, and 80 species of shellfish and fish. Most relevant to Ladner Harbour and its channels, the cessation of dredging activity increases the risk of two environmental concerns. The first environmental concern relates to flood risk because of increased sedimentation and a rise in sea level due to climate change. The second contributes to further loss of Fraser sockeye salmon habitat.’

6.1 Fish Habitat

The Strait of Georgia and the lower Fraser River are used by juvenile and adult salmon as key habitats and migratory corridors to and from the North Pacific. Various levels of human activity including changes in population, land use, development and waste disposal have affected the natural physical water characteristics and habitat for salmon and other fish species. A study completed by the Cohen Commission into the decline of sockeye salmon in 2011 revealed that management of waterways such as dredging is successful in reducing the effects and risks of loss to the sockeye salmon habitat in the Fraser River from human activity. Dredging is one solution that could mitigate loss of natural habitat for fish species such as salmon. As the Channels and water lots around Ladner choke with sediment, the seabed is no longer a suitable habitat.

6.2 Flood Risk

Delta is below sea level and relies on dikes, flood boxes and pump stations to mitigate against flooding. The stoppage of dredging activity has decreased the depth of the riverbed. Consequently, increasing the risk of flooding around Ladner Harbour and surrounding channels from high spring freshet river flow or storm surges during extreme high tides. In 1948, Delta experienced a flooding event which Environment Canada estimated cost $20 million in 1948 dollars. A similar flood event today would cost $1.8 billion to the Fraser Valley. More recently, a strong storm surge in 2006 recorded about a metre rise in sea level and waves close to six metres above the mean sea level.

7. Images

Dredge Spoils blocking flow to Ladner Channel



Silt at Ladner Harbour Entrance August 5, 2023



Silt Accumulation within Ladner Harbour



2 Acre Sandbar blocking shore access – Canoe Pass, Ladner



8. Sediment Measurements – Coast Guard 2022

Six secondary navigation channels branch from the South Arm of the Fraser below the Massey Tunnel and service the Ladner, Canoe Pass and Westham Island areas then connect back to the South Arm of the Fraser River further downriver via the Sea Reach channel.

Navigability of these channels is monitored by Public Works Canada and the Coast Guard.

The Ladner channels have not been dredged since 2015.

The coast guard publishes the results of the annual soundings to aid in real time marine navigation.

The latest soundings were published for 2022 and have been used by the Ladner Sediment Group to calculate dredge quantities and estimate the cost for channel restoration. Table A: Dredge Material and cost estimate

Channel	Quantity to be Dredged to reach. Design Channel Depth	Cost Estimate at $20.50 per cubic metre dredged
Ladner Harbour and Channel to Canoe Pass	138,235 cubic metres	$2.83M
Canoe Pass Channel Only does not reach shorelines	25,838 cubic metres	$0.53M
Ladner Feeder	54,325 cubic metres	$1.12M
Deas Slough	102,380 cubic metres	$2.10M
Ladner Reach	21,370 cubic metres	$0.44M
*Sea Reach	44,100 cubic metres to -4.5m depth	$0.91M

The Ladner Sediment Group contracted a Drone company in August 2023 to record aerial images of the sediment accumulations in the area.

Drone Images can be viewed on the website. https://ladnersedimentgroup.ca

9. Dredging Program Sequence

The Ladner Sediment Group respectfully proposes the following sequence to restore the Lower Fraser River channels to navigability.

Table B: Dredging Sequence

Year 1 and Part of Year 2	Ladner Harbour and Channel to Canoe Pass
Remainder of Year 2	Canoe Pass
Year 3	Ladner Feeder Channel – from Ladner Reach to Ladner Harbour Channel
Year 4	Deas Slough

The highest priority are the populated portions of the secondary channels.

Dredging should begin in the Ladner Federal Harbour and proceed down the Ladner Channel to the Canoe Pass Junction.

Second should be the first segment of the Canoe Pass Channel.

* Please note that the Canoe Pass channel does not touch either shoreline.

Connective dredging will have to be performed to reach the float home communities and marinas on shore.

The connective dredging program has not been included in this channel dredging proposal.

Sea Reach and Ladner Reach require relatively little dredging to meet design channel depths and can follow the above as maintenance dredging.



a. LADNER HARBOUR



b. LADNER CHANNEL



c. CANOE PASS CHANNEL



d. DEAS SLOUGH

10. Allocating Funds to Vancouver Port

From the Port of Vancouver website:

"Because of the high volume of sediment left in the river, the port authority must dredge the south arm of the river every year to carefully remove and dispose sediment that can clog the waterway, create navigation hazards, and impact marine-related trade."

To increase the main channel flow the Ladner secondary channels have been intentionally compromised.

On December 31, 2014, two Fraser River head leases held by the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority expired.

The Port abandoned dredging the secondary channels within a year of the leases expiring.

The dangerous levels of sediment accumulation since 2015 increase the risk of flooding, dwindling fish habitats, compromised navigation, vessel damage and the safety of those who live in Float Homes.

Based upon Public Works and Coast Guard measurements we have quantified the dredging and projected a budget of $2 Million per year for a period of 4 years to restore the channels with an as needed maintenance program to follow.

The Ladner Sediment Group respectfully request a Federally funded Channel Maintenance program to be implemented and managed by the Port of Vancouver.

The Ladner Sediment Group offers our full support to Delta Mayor George Harvie in his request for a Secondary Channel maintenance program, federally funded and managed by the Port of Vancouver.

Members of the sediment group have been in business on the channels well over 50 years, fishing families have lived on the river for over one hundred years. Group members have accumulated hundreds of reports relating to the river, the environment and potential global warming effects.

It has been a continuous constant struggle for decades to communicate with Government.

It is easy for the government to drop programs and extraordinarily difficult to restore that relationship. Please consider reinstating your maintenance program. Thank you,

11. Assisting Water Lease Holders

The Provincial Government through the Ministry of Forests, manage the allocation of Water Lot Leases for commercial and residential purposes. Due to neglect of the Secondary Channels by the Provincial Government, the adjoining water lots have accumulated significant amounts of sediment causing dangerous conditions, damaged homes, docks, and infrastructure. Leaseholders are left to cover the entire cost of environmental testing, permits and restoration dredging for sediment accumulation they cannot prevent.

The cost of restoration dredging an individual 15m wide water lot is estimated to be $50K to $75K.

The traditional method for flushing the sediment back into the channel is through “Propeller Washing” or “Wheel washing”.

The 1994 360-Page report by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Small Craft Harbours – Pacific Region stated that “Prop Washing” or “Wheel Washing” to maintain the depth of water in water lots was a cost effective, efficient, and environmentally safe method.

Despite this report Prop Washing has been deemed a criminal offence under the Fisheries Act.

To support restoration of the water lot depths the Ladner Sediment Group propose an exception to the Act to de-criminalization Propeller Washing and establish a simplified permit process through Fisheries and Oceans Canada.





Appendix A. Ladner Channel and Ladner Federal Harbour

Ladner Sediment Group — **9/20/2023**

Coast Guard Channel Soundings Aug 2022 — **WB**

Design Channel Depth 3.6m

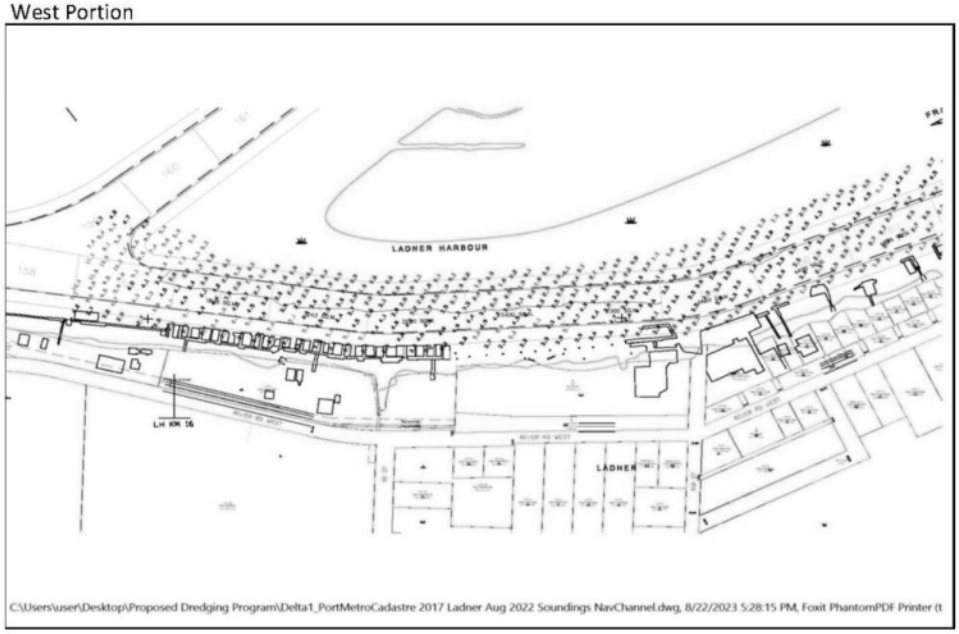
LADNER HARBOUR 2.5Km (100m Segments)	Cubic Metres of Dredging
Start at SM Products 3827 River Rd W.	
West Entrance Segment 159	0
160	1,634
161	1,797
162	1,615
163	1,750
164	816
165	1,334
166	3,572
167	5,175
168	3,982
169	2,019
170	4,083
171	2,980
172	3,050
173	4,960
174	9,100
175	12,589
176	9,776
177	6,083
178	4,844
179	5,640
180	3,412
181	4,793
182	6,995
183	10,060
Ends at 4955 River RD W Shorewalk Apts.	
TOTAL Ladner Harbour Channel	**112,059**
Additional 300m Channel to Ladner Yacht Club	26,175
TOTAL	138,235

Ladner Channel

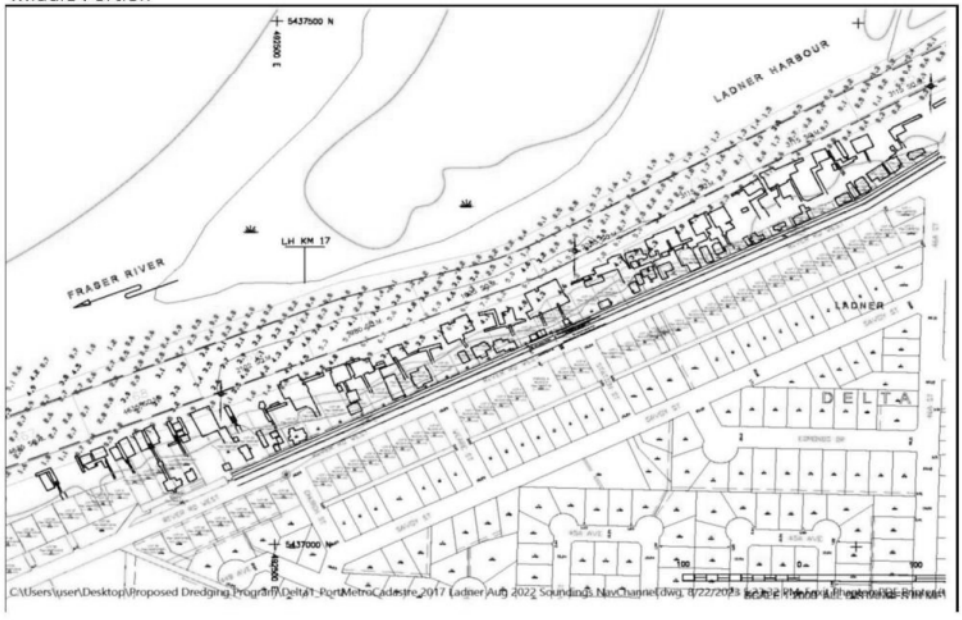
Ladner Sediment Group
Coast Guard Channel Soundings Aug 2022
Design Channel Depth 3.6m

9/20/2023
WB

West Portion



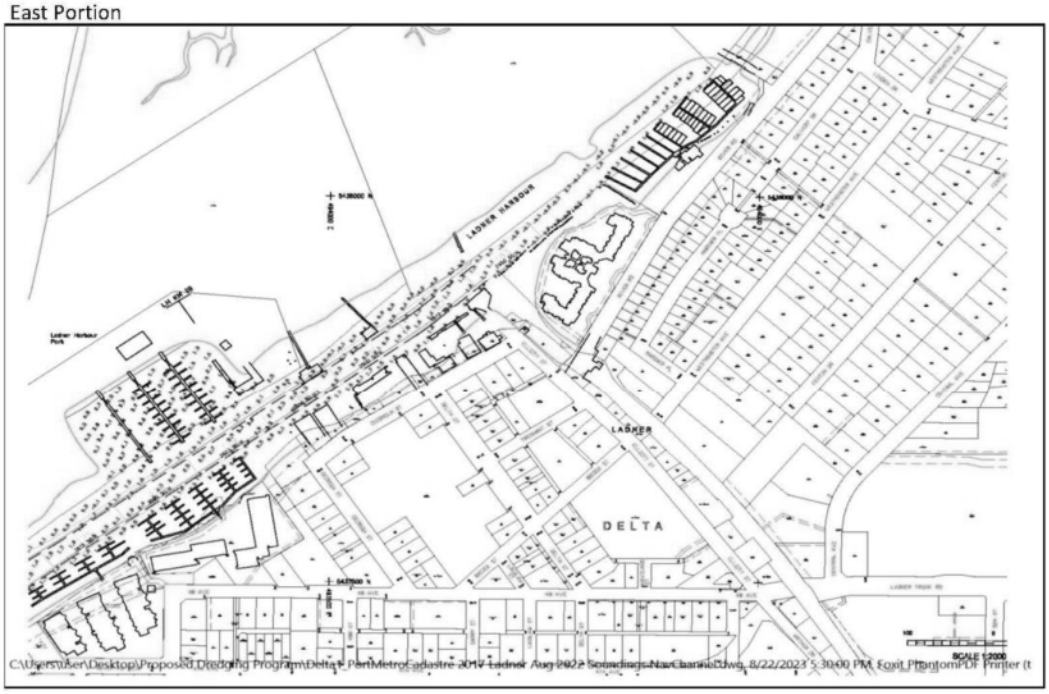
Middle Portion



Ladner Sediment Group
Coast Guard Channel Soundings Aug 2022
Design Channel Depth 3.6m

9/20/2023
WB

East Portion



Appendix B. Canoe Pass

Ladner Sediment Group

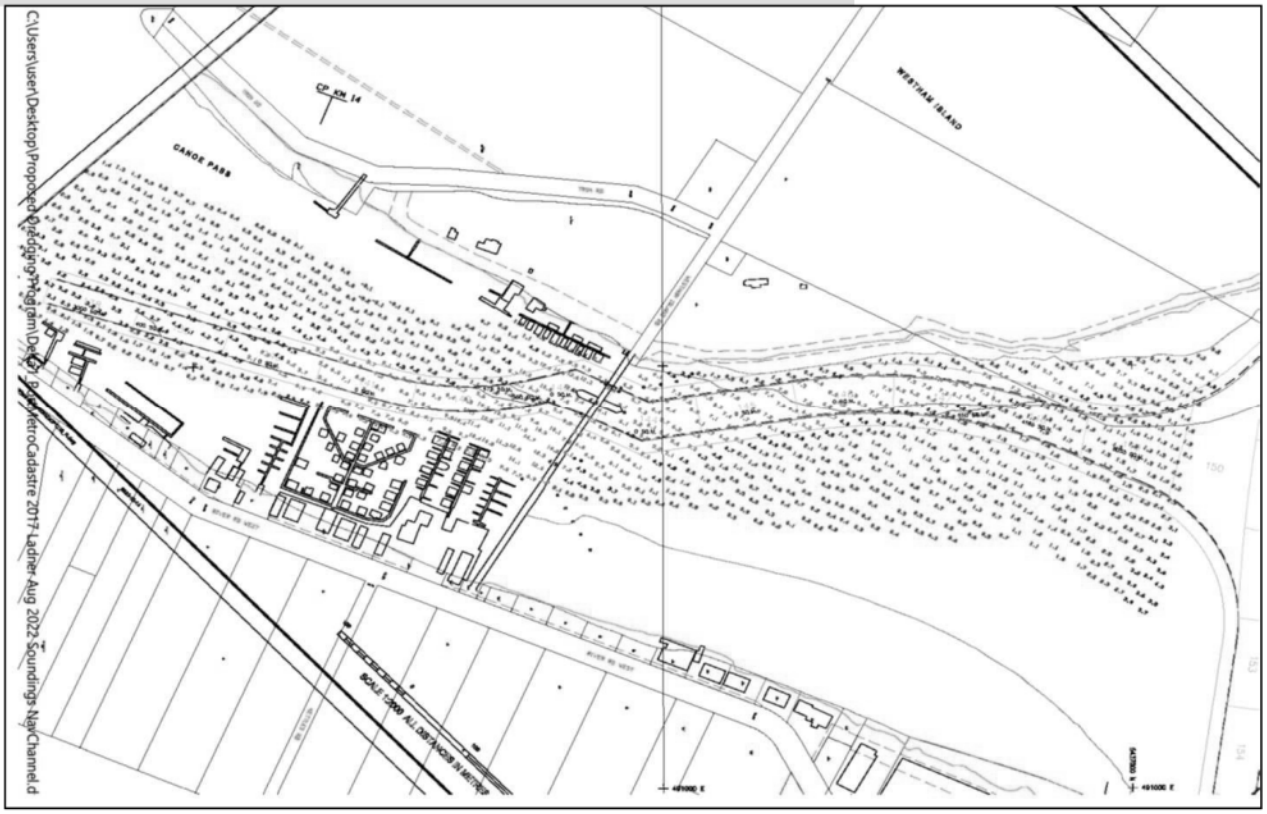
8/29/2023

WB

Coast Guard Channel Soundings Aug 2022

Design Channel Depth 3.6m

Canoe Pass Sheet 1of 3 (100m Segments)	Cubic Metres of Dredging
North Segment 149	16,788
148	6,665
147	450
146	0
145	0
144	0
Bridge 143	190
142	315
141	0
140	0
139	64
South Segment 138	1,366
TOTAL CANOE PASS	**25,838**



Appendix C. Ladner Feeder Soundings

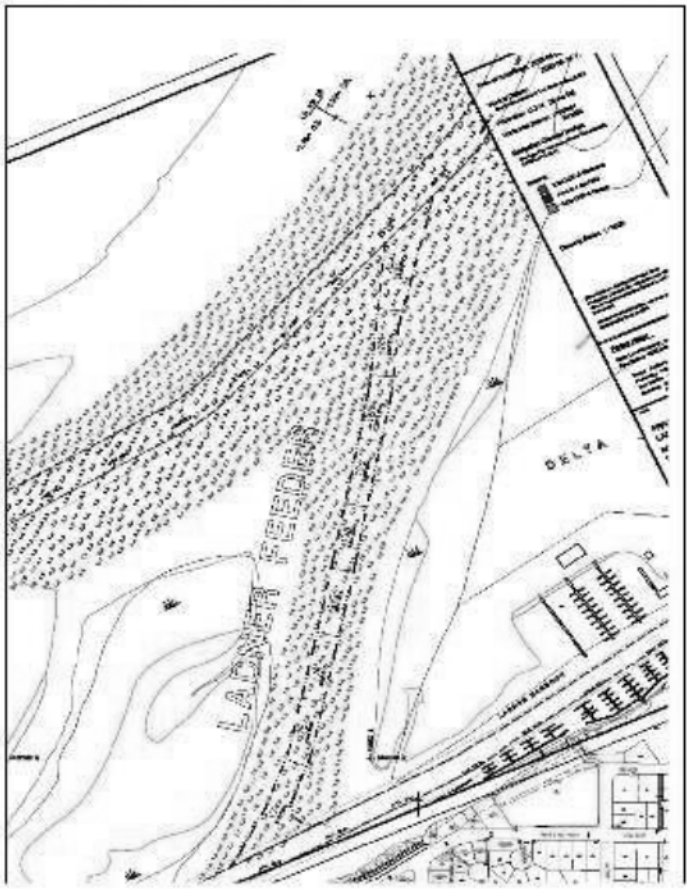
Ladner Sediment Group

Coast Guard Channel Soundings Aug 2022

Design Channel Depth 3.6m

9/3/2023
WB

Ladner Feeder 1 sheet (+/-100m Segments)	Cubic Metres of Dredging
Meet Ladner Harbour 174	12,125
Connecting north to Ladner Reach 175	6,185
176	6,460
177	6,310
178	6,195
179	6,250
180	4,510
181	3,090
182	3,200
TOTAL DREDGING ESTIMATE	54,325



Appendix D. Deas Slough

DEAS SLOUGH (100 m Segments)

Ladner Sediment Group

11/4/2023

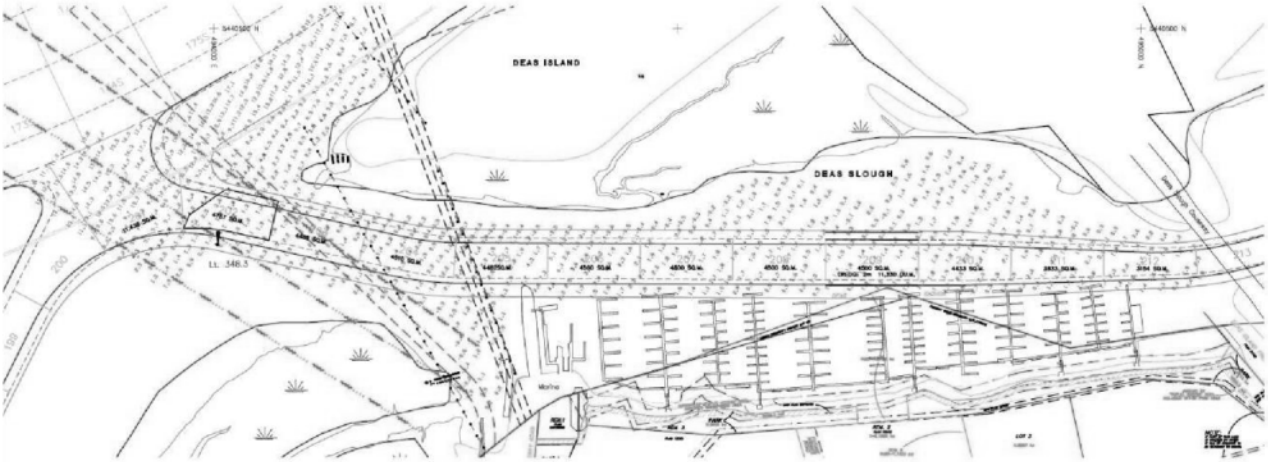
Coast Guard Channel Soundings Aug 2022 Design

WB

Channel Depth 3.6m

Cubic Metres of Dredging

West Entrance Segment	201	0
	202	6,448
	203	11,273
	204	11,874
	205	6,009
	206	10,990
	207	9,520
	208	10,045
	209	11,425
	210	9,786
	211	7,880
Ends at Tunnel Bridge	212	7,130
TOTAL DEAS SLOUGH		102,380



Appendix E. Sea Reach Soundings

Ladner Sediment Group 8/31/2023
Coast Guard Channel Soundings Aug 2022 WB
Design Channel Depth 3.6m

Sea Reach 5 sheets (+/-100m Segments)	Cubic Metres of Dredging
West Segment Fraser River South Arm 108	0
Travelling east to Wellington Point 109	0
110	540
111	6,400
112	5,917
113	4,702
114	3,248
115	1,866
116	2,712
117	611
118	1,415
119	1,388
120	1,266
121	1,163
122	2,707
123	1,081
124	115
125	539
126	50
127	20
128	0
129	0
130	0
131	0
132	0
133	0
134	0
135	0
136	0
137	0
138	76
139	76
140	0
141	0
142	0
143	200
144	53
145	0
146	0
147	0
148	0

Appendix F. Ladner Reach Soundings

Ladner Sediment Group — **8/31/2023**
Coast Guard Channel Soundings Aug 2022 — **WB**
Design Channel Depth 3.6m

Ladner Reach 4 sheets (100m Segments)		Cubic Metres of Dredging
South Segment (SM PRODUCTS)	157	0
Travelling north to Fraser Main Channel	158	0
	159	0
	160	0
	161	0
	162	0
	163	0
	164	0
	165	0
	166	0
	167	0
	168	0
	169	0
	170	0
	171	0
	172	0
	173	1,358
	174	2,677
	175	2,422
Branch Channel to Ladner Harbour	176	2,970
	177	3,568
	178	2,900
	179	2,377
	180	1,268
	181	0
	182	0
	183	0
	184	0
	185	0
	186	0
	187	0
	188	0
	189	450
	190	930
	191	450
	192	0
	193	0
	194	0
	195	0
	196	0
	197	0

Works Cited

Canada, DFO (1994). Propeller Washing Study Fraser River B.C.

InterVISTAS, I. C. (2012). Dredging Ladner Harbour & Related River Channels. Vancouver, B.C.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL ISSUES NOTE Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Date: March 12, 2025 Minister Responsible: Hon. Randene Neill	**Dredging and Cumulative Effects in the Lower Fraser River**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

Key Messages:

- **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.**

- **We apply a whole-of-river approach to steward the Lower Fraser River and maintain economic, cultural, social and ecological values.**

- **We understand the important and delicate balance of protecting the aquatic ecosystem that is home to fish species and cumulative effects when dredging the Lower Fraser River.**

- **We are also responsible for ensuring that dredging activities comply with the law and are consistent with First Nations interests and the protection of river values.**

- **In particular, the Lower Fraser River is critical floodplain habitat for white sturgeon and wild salmon, which may be impacted by industrial activities such as dredging.**

- **The Province is committed to support the emerging Lower Fraser šxʷkʷecxənəm** <*skwitch-honum*> **Partnership, a Tsawwassen First Nation and Musqueam Indian Band-led initiative that is tackling cumulative effects of development in the Lower Fraser.**

- **No single level of government or authority is presently responsible for the authorizations, costing, process or contracting of dredging in the river.**

Only if needed: Federal involvement

- **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.**

- **Transport Canada is responsible for marine navigational safety. The Province is the regulator responsible for ensuring that dredging activities are undertaken in a manner consistent with legislation, First Nations' interests and protection of river values.**

ADVICE TO MINISTER

KEY FACTS:

Vancouver Port Authority (VPA) does much of the dredging in main (stem) navigational channels of the Lower Fraser River (LFR). The side channels of the river also face the same issue of sediment infill.

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, together with side-channel dredging work.

BACKGROUND:

The Province is committed to support the emerging Lower Fraser šxʷkʷecxənəm (skwitch-honum) Partnership, a Tsawwassen First Nation and Musqueam Indian Band led initiative that is tackling cumulative effects of development in the Lower Fraser. This partnership is intended to improve co-stewardship of the lower Fraser River and, while dredging has not been discussed at the table so far, there may be opportunities to add conversations over time.

LFR and fisheries

The Province is working with First Nations and Indigenous-led organizations to monitor, assess and plan throughout the Lower Fraser River. WLRS signed an MOU with the Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance (LFFA) in June 2024 to collaborate on fish and fish habitat topics. LFFA represents 24 First Nations and has close relationships with 6 other First Nations along the lower Fraser River.

In 2021, B.C. initiated a planning process for Fraser River basin White Sturgeon focussing first on the LFR from Hells Gate to the estuary. The process is guided by a collaborative steering committee comprised of First Nations from three Fraser River areas, WLRS, and representatives from DFO's Species at Risk team.

Dredging in the LFR

Dredging in the lower Fraser has cascading impacts on side channels, as well as infrastructure and ecosystems upstream if not managed appropriately.

The Steveston Harbour Authority, in May 2022, 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. 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.

MOTT (formerly MOTI) issued a news release in April 2023 about a one-time B.C. government grant of $2.1 million Advice/Recommendations; Government Financial Information for a dredging project in the Fraser River system near Steveston (https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023MOTI0052-000536) to support the Steveston Harbour Authority's project. At the time, the Steveston Harbour Authority was seeking federal participation in that project.

A broader regional dredging program and long-term, sustainable channel maintenance program —including dredging—is needed to keep the mouth of the Lower Fraser River safely navigable and prevent accumulation of sediment.

The Province, through WLRS, licenses some dredging, primarily in the side channels, issued through permits under the Water Sustainability Act and the Lands Act. On average, the Province receives 10 applications per year to dredge in the Fraser River. The most common application is for the removal of 4,000 cubic metres of material. However, some larger projects in the past year increased the annual average to 4,800 cubic metres of material. Most of this excavated material is deposited at sea under permit by the federal government through Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC).

One company, Sanscorp, currently has authorization to dredge the Langley Bar Channel until April 5, 2026; and the *Land Act* File #2407844, which provides the authorization to occupy Crown Land. The land tenure has expired and is currently in month-to-month overholding. Advice/Recommendations

Advice/Recommendations

Advice/Recommendations . Sturgeon have low intrinsic population growth rates, which make them slow to recover from population declines.

Sanscorp sells sand and gravel for road construction, agriculture, sports fields, and its dredging is conducted primarily for commercial purposes; easing one navigation channel is a by-product.

Areas that get dredged regularly, like the areas under the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority's jurisdiction encounter operational issues like time windows and authorization turnaround times. A separate but related issue is with all the other areas in the Lower Fraser River that are not maintained, which cause navigational issues for river users.

Much earlier on in 2012, the federal government announced a 10-year, $10-million dredging program that benefitted secondary channels, with funds contributed by the VPA, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the B.C. government, and the municipalities of Delta and Richmond. The B.C. government provided $3 million to support that program.

Media Interest: Sustained public interest owing to the many actors with varied responsibilities related to dredging and the problems that local river users face.

Communications contact	Chitra Arcot	604-209-4043
Program contact	Matt Leroy	778-676-0784
File created	4 March 2025	
File updated	12 March 2025	

Issue: WSA Infraction Issues - Perry Ranch and Semlin Valley Road Ranch

Recommend Response:

- Anticipated question: “What will government do if the licenced structures are not brought into compliance with the *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA)?”
- Suggested response: “The Province is currently working with a representative for the licensees to address the diversion structures that have been damaged from flooding and are committed to cooperation and resolution”.
- The Province is committed to resolving concerns from the licensees, including potential extension of WSA Orders to allow time for the works to be successfully completed.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- It is the licensees’ responsibility to develop mitigation options with the support of a qualified professional. If the licensees require clarification on the requirements laid out in the Orders, they can contact the officer who issued the Order.

Key Facts:

- Over the past 12+ years, the licenced water diversion structures on Cache Creek, held by Perry Ranch Ltd and Semlin Valley Ranch Ltd., have repeatedly failed due to the stream's volatility during freshet.
- The diversion structures have been structurally damaged and unable to manage the appropriate licenced water flow.
- Last year, one of the structures was diverting 200 percent of their allocated water quantity.
- Water Authorizations staff has been in contact with the licence holders regarding the condition of their works repeatedly since 2016.
- *Water Sustainability Act* Orders have been issued to Perry Ranch Ltd. and Semlin Valley Ranch Ltd. requiring them, in part, to hire a professional to develop a design plan for a replacement diversion structure or design modification to the existing diversion structure and develop an Environmental Management Plan by 4:00 pm on April 1, 2025.

- The design plans must ensure that the structure is controllable, measurable, able to be completely shut off and screened for fish. No plans have been received.
- Failure to comply with the order is an offence under the *Water Sustainability Act*. Penalties of such an offence are described in the *Water Sustainability Act* - Division 4 – Offences – High Penalty Offences 107(1) A person who does any of the following commits an offence: (i) wilfully contravenes an order of the comptroller, a water manager or an engineer, whether given directly or through an officer or a water bailiff. (2) A person who commits an offence under this section is liable on conviction to the following: (a)in the case of an offence that is not a continuing offence, a fine of not more than $1 000 000 or imprisonment for not longer than one year, or both; (b)in the case of a continuing offence, a fine of not more than $1 000 000 for each day the offence is continued or imprisonment for not longer than one year, or both.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 25, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Jennifer Anthony, ADM, Permitting Transformation Phone: 250-889-1315

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Skye Thomson, Res. Mgr, Permitting Transformation Phone: 778-622-6907

Issue: Cascade Skyline Gondola Project (CSG)

Recommend Response:

- This proposed tourism/recreation project is in the initial stages of application review for land and water authorizations.
- A project team is in place to provide the proponent with advice and guidance, and to ensure a fair and transparent process.
- The ministry is committed to facilitating a robust review of the proposed project in an area of high First Nations and stakeholder interest, in a rapidly developing part of the Fraser Valley.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The ministry is ready to formally initiate First Nations consultation, and engagement and consultation with other interest holders, once the proponent submits the necessary application information.
- The ministry is creating a unique project webpage to ensure the project's position in the application review process is publicly available, due to concerns raised by the proponent, First Nations and others.
- The proposed project is in an area of high geohazard instability. Public safety will be paramount in application review.

Key Facts:

- The proponent has advised the project value is approximately $65-$70 million.
- The proponent has been slow to respond to ministry requests for the required application information.
- The proposed project is adjacent to a long-proposed all season mountain resort, called Bridal Veil Mountain Resort. There is a competitive climate between that

resort and the CSG team. The mountain resort proposal is adjudicated by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport.

- The area has complex First Nations territories and relationships within the Sto:lo Nation, which is organized in tribes.
- Cheam First Nation is an equity partner in the project and part of the Pilalt Tribe. Other communities within the Pilalt Tribe are supportive of the project.
- Other First Nations or tribes are either neutral or not supportive of the project, based on what they know about the project. Formal consultation may change First Nation perspectives, once all the required application information is shared for review.
- Capacity funding for consultation on the CSG project and adjacent mountain resort has been provided to Sto:lo communities for fiscal years 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 7, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Morgan Kennah Phone: Government Financial Information

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Tami Fur Phone: Government Financial Information

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'emlúpsemc te Secwépemc Nation ('ta-kum-loops te sheh-kwep-em') (SSN) in their territory.
- BC 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.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- 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 based on historic infringements on rights and title.
- Interests of an Indigenous People

- The SSN have requested that the EAO consider the project a reviewable project. The EAO decided 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 12, 2025
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Jennifer Anthony, ADM Permitting Transformation Phone: 250-889-1315
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Skye Thomson, Resource Manger, Authorizations Phone: 778-622-6907

Issue: Advancing Systemic Solutions on Permitting

Recommend Response:

- Across government, permitting and authorizations are being transformed to provide a faster, efficient process to strengthen and diversify our economy, while maintaining high environmental standards and advancing reconciliation with First Nations.
- New deemed authorizations are being prioritized under the *Land Act*, *Environmental Management Act* and *Transportation Act*, including opportunities for greater reliance on qualified professionals within approved parameters.
- Data integration is expanding into additional permitting areas creating an essential foundation for the future use of Artificial Intelligence in permitting and analytics.
- We are also surfacing critical permits for priority projects and enabling early identification of conditions necessary to support these projects moving to decision and investment.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- My ministry is leading work to transition process, permits and support the legislative work needed to shift renewable energy projects and transmission lines to the BC Energy Regulator's one-window. This expansion is expected to streamline and drive effectiveness for all parties, including First Nations, industry, and communities.
- We are looking at where processes can be simplified and accelerated for permit renewals compared to the process for brand new applications.
- We are also looking at setting approval time limits to increase stability and certainty in the process.

- And to ensure public trust and confidence in our land and resource management regime, we are placing greater focus on monitoring, compliance and enforcement of permits and authorizations.

Key Facts:

- The Permitting Transformation Division (PTD) within the Ministry of Water Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) is a key lead and convenor for permitting solutions mandate.

Systemic Changes

- Regulatory and legislative changes necessary to improve permitting timelines and outcomes have been identified. The first phase of legislative and policy changes is moving forward this spring with more work in Fall 2025.
- Opportunities to deem authorize lower risk and lower complexity permitting continue to be identified, including opportunities for greater reliance on qualified professionals within approved parameters.
- We are working to delegate authority to other ministries/agencies to expedite the necessary permitting requirements and increase decision-making capacity. Six new delegations are targeted for completion in summer 2025.

Accelerating Key Projects

- Line of sight is in place on critical permitting associated with 18 key projects, with efforts underway for early identification of necessary conditions and removal of barriers.
- Projects with First Nation's support are being fast-tracked
- Electrification: We are accelerating permitting for 250+ BC Hydro capital upgrade projects and ten clean energy projects selected under BC Hydro's Call for Power.

Priority Initiatives

- Housing: Cleared 100 percent of the provincial housing backlog and reduced the average number of days to process a housing application from 257 days to 108. Decisions made since March 2023 have potential to create ~332,000 new housing units.
- Connectivity: 89 percent of approved connectivity projects with provincial permitting requirements have permit applications submitted or completed. Over 500 new permit applications are expected by the end of 2026. Economic benefits are estimated at $2.5B to GDP and a total economic return of 8.6 x the initial provincial investment of $289.4M (2024 Rural B.C. Connectivity Benefits Study, Pg. 6).

Attachment:
Appendix A: 2024 Rural B.C. Connectivity Benefits Study.

- **Date Prepared/Revised: February 12, 2025**
- **Ministry Executive Sponsor**:
  Name: Jennifer Anthony, ADM Phone: 250-889-1315
- **Alternate Contact for Issue**:
  Name: Karen Spence, Executive Director Phone: 778-698-3289



RURAL B.C. CONNECTIVITY BENEFITS STUDY

PREPARED FOR MINISTRY OF CITIZENS' SERVICES
BY BC STATS

BRITISH COLUMBIA | BCStats

REPORT 5: SUMMER 2024

AUTHOR
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
Connectivity Division, Ministry of Citizens' Services.
Hannah Curran, BC Stats.

PUBLISH DATE
June 2024

Cover picture: Slocan Lake - site of an internet transport project bringing 125km of fibre to the Kootenay region. The project is partly funded by the Province and led by Columbia Basin Broadband Corporation.
Photo credit: Columbia Basin Broadband Trust

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Great Bear Rainforest

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2017, the B.C. government has invested $584 million into expanding high-speed internet and cellular services in the province. This funding has facilitated the expansion of high-speed internet services to rural areas in B.C., providing some communities with internet access for the first time.

The introduction of high-speed internet services can be transformational for rural communities. While qualitative impacts on connectivity benefits are well understood, there are limited academic studies available that look at the economic impacts of new services, specifically in rural areas.

To better understand this, BC Stats developed a model to estimate the short- and long-term economic impacts of high-speed internet[1] funding in rural British Columbia.

The Rural B.C. Connectivity Benefits Study is the final installment in a five-part series examining the economic impact of provincial funding for connectivity projects in rural areas. This study examines the economic impact of provincial spending on connectivity expansion in rural B.C. using the Statistics Canada definition of a rural area – an area with less than 1,000 people and a population density of less than 400 persons per square kilometre for the analysis.[2] Previous studies focused on defined regions of the province.

[1] Projects selected for the study are partly funded by the Province, occur in the defined rural area, and deliver speeds of a minimum 50 megabits per second download and 10 megabits per second upload (50/10 Mbps).

[2] Statistics Canada: https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=113331&CVD=113332&CLV=0&MLV=2&D=1&adm=0&dis=0

The results of this province-wide study align with those of previous reports focused on specific regions; funding to support the expansion of high-speed internet to under-served rural areas is expected to positively impact B.C.'s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the short- and long-term. A breakdown of the investment and economic benefits of high-speed internet expansion for the defined rural area of B.C. is as follows:

- The Province partly funded 132 connectivity projects in rural areas to deliver high-speed internet services to under-served communities in B.C. The Province's total investment for these projects was **$289.4 million,** which will benefit over **73,000**[3] **households** in rural British Columbia when projects are complete.
- The **$289.4 million** in provincial funding leveraged approximately **$808.5 million** from other sources, which equals **$1.1 billion** in total funding for broadband internet projects in rural B.C.
- Leveraged funding is from private sector internet service providers who build and operate the infrastructure, as well as public sector organizations, including the federal government. This equates to a ratio of **$1** of provincial funds, to **$3.79** of total private and public sector investment leveraged to support rural connectivity expansion.
- Short-term economic benefits (defined here as benefits accrued during the build phase of the infrastructure) are summarized as follows:
  - **$223.7 million** increase in GDP.
  - **1,820 jobs.**
  - **$66 million** in provincial tax revenue.
- Long-term impact (defined here as increased GDP attributed to enhanced productivity from improved access to high-speed internet services) is estimated at **$2.3 billion** in increased GDP, calculated to 2045.
- In total, it is estimated the initial provincial investment of **$289.4 million** in connectivity in rural B.C. will generate **$2.5 billion** in short- and long-term economic benefits to the province. This translates into:
  - **8.6 times** the initial provincial investment; and
  - a **$13,900 benefit per connected person** for newly subscribed households calculated to 2045.

[3] Estimated households benefitting is calculated as 95 per cent of households served by provincially funded high-speed internet projects in the study area. This reflects the estimated number that will subscribe to the new services.

FIGURE 1: SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR RURAL B.C.

The initial provincial investment of $289.4 million into connectivity projects in rural B.C. is generating/will generate significant short- and long-term economic benefits for rural areas and the province.

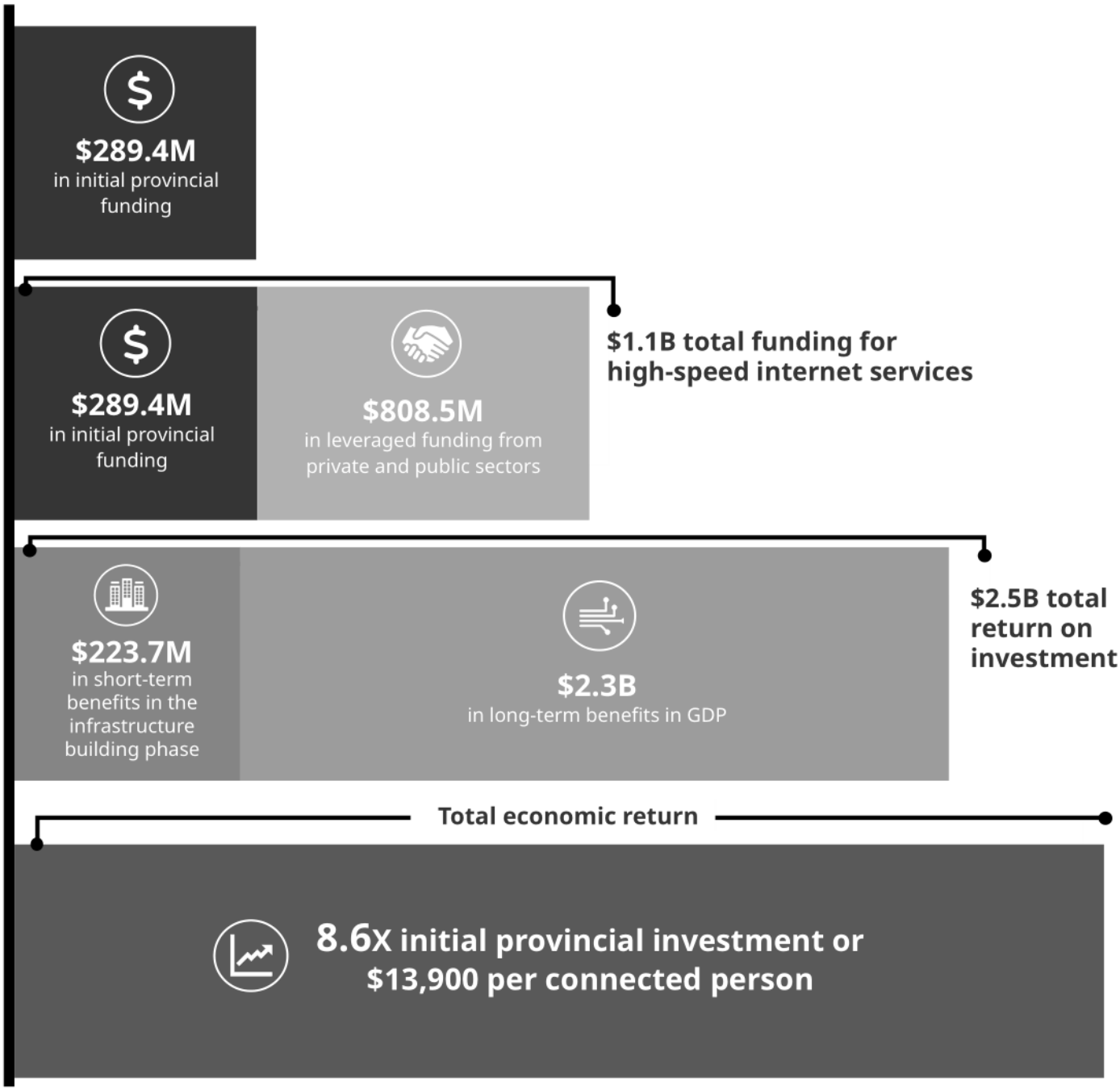
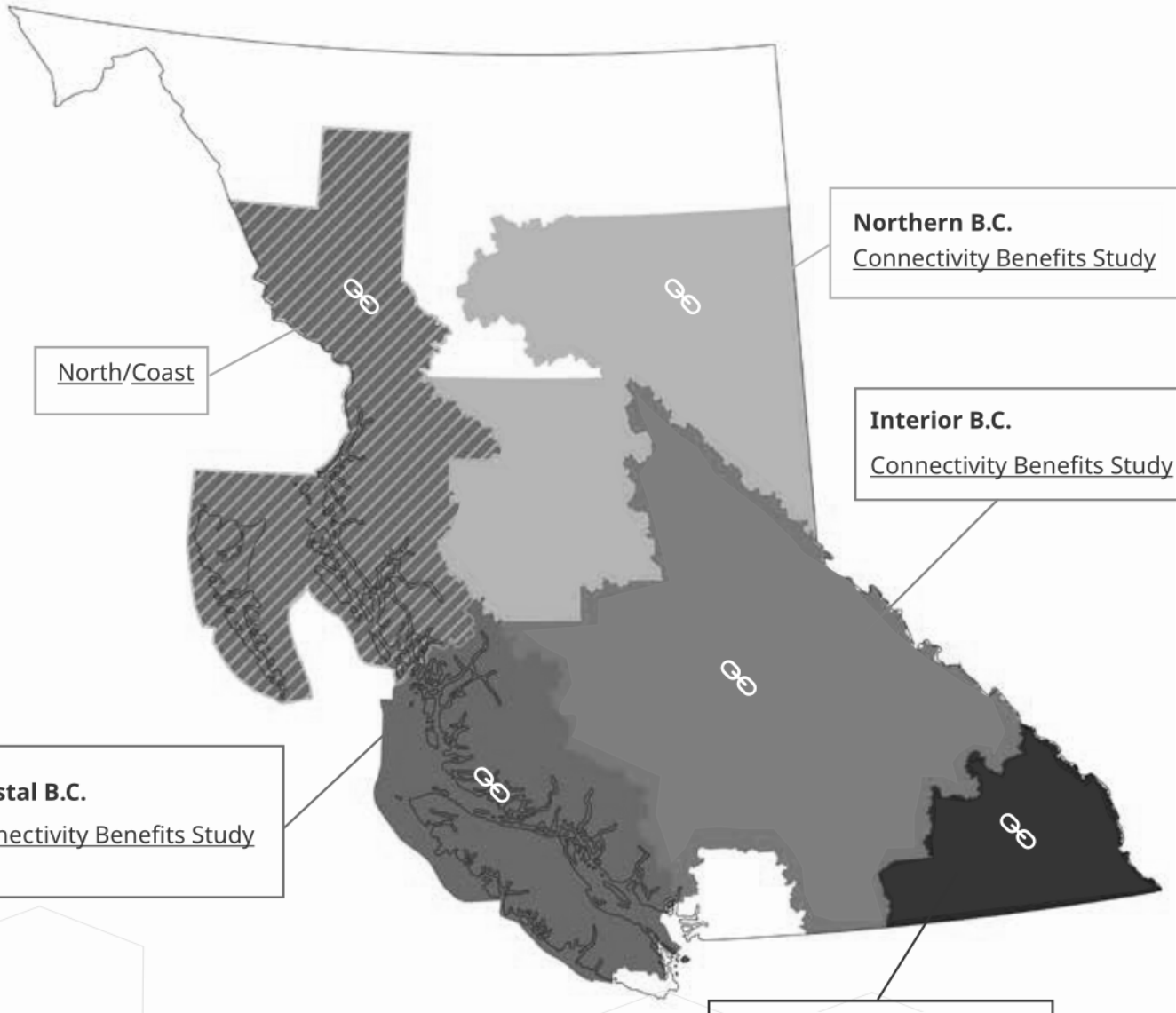


FIGURE 2: MAP OF PREVIOUS STUDY AREAS

This report is the fifth and final in a series of connectivity benefit studies for rural B.C. Previous studies examined the economic impact of connectivity investment in four regions of the province. Study areas are shown in the map below with links to the previous studies. Note: Northern and Coastal B.C. Connectivity Benefits Studies have an overlapping study area on the north coast.

Click on study areas or on the links below to view the reports





BACKGROUND

Access to high-speed internet is vital in today's modern world, especially for rural and remote communities. Connectivity plays a foundational role in shaping the economic well-being and resiliency of rural communities in British Columbia, supporting individuals to access services, seek employment opportunities and start businesses regardless of their geographic location.

High-speed internet services can be transformative for rural areas. Connectivity supports thriving communities and the development of diverse local economies, especially crucial for regions facing impacts of industry changes like mill closures or climate-related weather emergencies.

Since 2017, the B.C. government has invested $584 million into expanding high-speed internet and cellular services in the province. Combine this with federal funding and over $1 billion has been committed to expand connectivity. This funding supports connecting every household in the province to high-speed internet services by 2027 and expanding cellular service along major highways.

Government funding programs play an important role in expanding internet services to rural areas as they incentivize private sector providers to build in regions where population density alone does not create a business case.

This final report in the series examines the economic impact of provincial funding in rural areas by analyzing projects partly funded by the Province that deliver high-speed internet services within the defined area of study. High-speed internet projects are those that deliver internet speeds meeting or exceeding the federal universal service objective of 50 megabits per second download and 10 megabits per second upload.

The study is not a summary of previous reports, but rather an analysis of the total economic impact of connectivity investment in rural B.C. using current project information and a methodology that allows for a granular analysis of rural benefits.

The report also contains case studies from people talking about the benefits of connectivity in their community in their own words.



Sea to Sky Highway

National universal service objective

In Canada, telecommunications are federally regulated by the Canada Radio-television Commission (CRTC). In 2016, the CRTC established a universal service objective that Canadians in urban areas, as well as rural and remote areas, should have access to broadband internet services on both fixed and mobile wireless networks.

To measure the achievement of this objective, the CRTC established several criteria, including that Canadian residential and business fixed broadband internet service subscribers should be able to access speeds of at least 50 megabits per second download and 10 megabits per second upload (50/10 Mbps) and be able to subscribe to a service offering with an unlimited data allowance.

Government funding programs support the initial build cost for service providers to expand their services to hard-to-reach areas to meet this CRTC universal service objective. This report measures projects delivering the CRTC minimum speeds of 50/10 Mbps.

Source: CRTC website.

PROFILE OF RURAL BRITISH COLUMBIA

Rural B.C. encompasses expansive, diverse and vibrant regions of the province and is home to a variety of communities, from remote coastal areas, accessible only by plane or boat, to those in the far north. Nearly 18 per cent of British Columbians live in rural B.C., and these communities are a powerful economic driver in the province.[4]

There are over 200 First Nations[5] (including Modern Treaty Nations) in British Columbia and many reserves or Modern Treaty Nation lands are in rural and remote areas of the province. These Nations are an integral part of the rural B.C. economy.

Although urban areas experience nearly complete coverage of high-speed internet services, some rural areas remain under-served. At time of publication, 76.5 per cent of houses in rural B.C. have access to internet speeds of 50/10 Mbps or higher. When current projects partly funded by the Province are complete, that figure will increase to 91 per cent. Government funding will support connecting the remaining under-served homes to high-speed internet services by 2027.

Connections with broader national and global economies, as well as access to essential services and employment, support rural communities to diversify and flourish. High-speed internet services can make life easier and services more accessible in remote communities.

Rural communities are not a single homogenous group and some face specific challenges, such as severe weather conditions and climate-related weather changes.

It is anticipated rural areas will exhibit varied economic responses to the introduction of high-speed internet services. However, studies highlight a general trend that investing in connectivity infrastructure fosters growth and supports positive economic outcomes. It is anticipated therefore that communities with new or improved high-speed internet services will experience some boost in economic growth.

FIGURE 3: B.C. RURAL POPULATION AND INTERNET ACCESS	Totals
Rural population	634,232[4]
Number of primary residences	261,079[6]
Average number of people per primary residence	2.43[6]
Per cent of rural households with access to high-speed internet services (Jan. 2024)	76.5%[6]
Per cent of rural households with B.C. funded projects in progress (Jan. 2024)	14.5%[6]

[4] Statistics Canada https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-x/2021002/98-200-x2021002-eng.cfm

[5] Source BC Assembly of First Nations https://www.bcafn.ca/about-bcafn/vision-mission

[6] Analysis by the Connectivity Division, Ministry of Citizens' Services

CASE STUDY

CONNECTING CHAWATHIL FIRST NATION

East of Vancouver in the Fraser Valley along the Fraser River lies the territory of the Chawathil First Nation.

Despite two major highways and the province's largest urban centre just to the West, Chawathil First Nation was without high-speed internet access until recently. A TELUS fibre project, partly funded with $2.9 million by the Province, extended services in 2023 to 11 communities between Yale and Ruby Creek, including Chawathil First Nation.

Before internet connectivity, the Chawathil First Nation's geographic region and distance was seen as a challenge for community members to strengthen community ties and access resources.

With recent internet upgrades to their fibre optics, people can better access services and economic opportunities, including working from home.

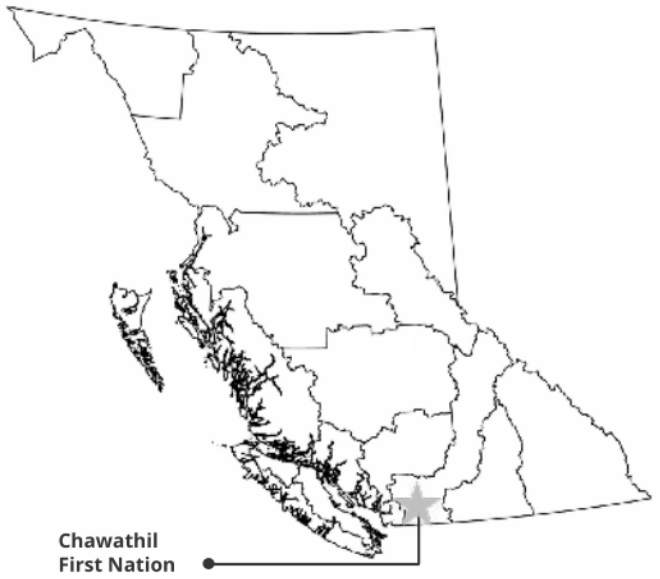
"*Now, I think with resources like this, having internet connectivity, there are no excuses to get something done,*" said Aaron Pete, Chawathil First Nation elected leader, podcaster, court worker. *"We're able to have faster voting, connect our members better, be more transparent with them, and make sure we're acting in their best interest. I'm so proud that Chawathil has access to this resource and that we're able to start to show who we are.*"

See Aaron Pete discuss connectivity in Connecting Chawathil First Nation on YouTube.



Chawathil First Nation Band Office
Picture credit: Kingtide Films

Connecting Chawathil First Nation
Scan the QR code to watch on YouTube



METHODOLOGY

This study examines the economic impact of high-speed internet projects partly funded by the Province in the defined area of study in rural British Columbia. The report's analysis is based on 132 projects that deliver, or will deliver, high-speed internet services in the defined rural area of study. These projects include both transport and last-mile internet projects,[7] designed to meet or exceed the universal service objective speeds of 50/10 Mbps speeds. This analysis excludes certain provincially funded projects implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic designed to give relief to communities by improving internet service, but potentially not delivering speeds meeting the CRTC's universal service objective of 50/10 Mbps. Additionally, the report does not include cellular or connectivity planning project funding.

The 132 projects were selected for provincial funding either through the Connecting British Columbia program, administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust, or the Connecting Communities BC program, administered by the Ministry of Citizens' Services. Most projects also receive funding from the federal government, as well as from other sources such as the private sector, community, First Nation, or local government investment.

Analysis of the projects by the Connectivity Division in the Ministry of Citizens' Services estimates the specific portion of the households benefitting in the rural area, as per the Statistics Canada definition. For example, in cases where a last-mile project was primarily in a rural area but extended into a more densely populated centre, only the households within the rural area were counted for the long-term impacts of the study. Project construction spending data was used to estimate economic impacts of the work in the short term during the years that projects are built.

Long-term impacts were estimated starting at project completion and extending to 2045. Projects in the study were scheduled to begin construction between 2018 and 2025, and complete by 2027. At time of report publication, 46 of these projects are complete, with the remainder in progress.

The analysis of economic impacts used project spending data, local economic data, and existing empirical relationships between spending and economic impact, to establish measurement frameworks and estimates of short-and long-term impacts.[8]

It is important to note both transport and last-mile projects are required to connect communities to high-speed internet services. Transport lines (usually fibre) bring high-speed internet capacity to an area, and last-mile projects connect that capacity to homes. In this analysis, both projects are measured in terms of investment and short-term impacts of the builds, but the long-term productivity impact is based on households connected from last-mile projects only and the estimated number that subscribe to new or upgraded internet services.

Transport projects bring fibre from major Internet Exchange Points in large cities, like Vancouver, and are essential to get new services to remote communities. These projects can be costly as they may be complex and cover large geographical areas. While not reflected in the long-term economic benefits in this report, transport projects create the internet network we rely on and investment in these services is necessary for resiliency and expanding services to rural communities. New transport projects also improve service to existing infrastructure, so the number of households benefitting from new services is likely higher than reflected in this study.

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[7] All projects in the analysis occurred in the study area. Transport (or backbone) infrastructure consists of high-capacity lines (generally fibre optic lines) that can transmit large amounts of data from Internet Exchange Points in major cities, such as Vancouver, Calgary or Seattle, to community points.
Last-mile infrastructure connects from the service provider's community point of presence to households. Last mile can be achieved using multiple technologies including both wired and wireless methods, such as fibre, digital subscriber lines (DSL), coaxial cable and fixed wireless.

[8] Project spending data includes the commodities and services that will be purchased to complete the project in each year of construction. Local economic data includes labour force, population, tax, immigration, business and other available data. Existing empirical relationships are derived from the BC Input Output Model (BCIOM) and the supply use tables from Statistics Canada.

Examples of last-mile and transport projects

In recent years, B.C. has made progress extending its backbone (transport) network through a combination of government funding programs and private investment. Examples of backbone projects partly funded by the Province include the Connected Coast project, which is under construction, Tahltan Nation Development Corporation's transport fibre project in the north, which is also under construction, and completed projects such as Columbia Basin Broadband Corporation's Slocan Valley Fibre project. All three projects are administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust. These transport projects provide pathways for high-speed internet from a central Internet Exchange Point to carrier networks, thereby expanding services to communities. Additionally, B.C. funding programs have supported many last-mile projects to bring internet to the home. For instance, projects led by Kaslo InfoNet Society will serve six communities around northern Kootenay Lake, and a TELUS project in the Sheridan Lake area, completed in May 2024, provides high-speed internet to more than 390 households. These projects are just a few of the 208 projects selected for provincial funding since 2017.

A map of announced projects funded by the Province can be found on the Connectivity in B.C. web pages.



Construction of the Connected Coast network
Photo credit: Connected Coast

CASE STUDY

CONNECTING GRANISLE

Granisle is a village in the northern interior of B.C. on the shores of Babine Lake. The community was incorporated in the 1970s and grew to house workers from the nearby copper mine and their families. When the mine closed in 1992, the population rapidly shrank from 2,500 to under 500 people. The village then went through a period of reinvention and economic diversification to help attract people back to the community. Today, fishing, boating, snowmobiling and hiking make tourism the village's biggest industry.

To support community members in 2015, the village sought funding from the Connecting British Columbia program to build some initial internet infrastructure.

Once internet connectivity was established, the village further enhanced the community's access to resources and medical care. The community could now support a virtual pharmacy, making it easier for community members to access prescriptions. "*I was struck by the fact that people here, who are mainly seniors, have to drive two hours to fill an amoxicillin prescription,*" said Shadi Al-Hawari, pharmacist and entrepreneur.

"*I thought it would it be a good idea to start up a tele-pharmacy. Now, the pharmacy is linked to a central pharmacy through a Cisco video-audio unit,*" adds Al-Hawari. "*Without connectivity, we can't operate. It's not just about filling prescriptions. It's actually about providing that care. Connectivity means more businesses, more taxes paid, and more growth and employment.*" The pharmacy has been operational since 2017.

"*It [connectivity] is not the piece that drives the economy but is a platform on which you build your economy,*" added Brenda Anderson, community member.

Now the Village of Granisle will soon install high-speed fibre optic cable to nearly 300 households which will deliver speeds of over 50/10 Mbps. This project is partly funded by the B.C and federal governments and will ensure the residents of Granisle have access to high-speed internet for many years to come. See the people in Granisle talk about their experiences with connectivity in Connecting Granisle on YouTube.





Village of Granisle
Photo credit: Village of Granisle

Connecting the Village of Granisle

Scan the QR code to watch on YouTube

ASSESSING SHORT-TERM IMPACTS

High-speed internet expansion projects, like any large infrastructure projects, stimulate the local economy in the short term by generating demand for products and services during the construction phase.

BC Stats collaborated with the Connectivity Division in the Ministry of Citizens' Services to identify 132 high-speed internet projects throughout rural B.C. to use for the analysis. The projects were selected based on criteria that they:

- receive provincial funding between 2017 and 2024;
- deliver, or support delivery, of high-speed internet services of a minimum of 50/10 Mbps; and
- take place in the defined rural area of the study.

BC Stats used the British Columbia Input-Output Model (BCIOM – see Appendix B) to estimate short-term impacts for rural economies and the province.

The BCIOM serves as a tool for generating regional economic impacts stemming from various projects and economic events. It is based on Statistics Canada supply use tables[9] and is a macroeconomic modeling tool that allows economists to estimate the impacts of increased industry spending on the economy in the region, and province in the short term. The BCIOM has been used over the years to assess the economic impact of both public and private investments, including a range of initiatives such as hydroelectric infrastructure, ports, transportation projects, and residential construction projects.

The model estimates these impacts at three levels: direct, indirect, and induced as detailed below:

- **Direct impacts** are related to the direct spending on the project. These impacts occur because of purchasing material inputs for the project and the payment of wages to employees building the infrastructure or doing the engineering design if directly employed by the company.

- **Indirect impacts** include money that is spent by contractors on wages and the goods they purchase. For example, this would include an external firm if contracted to design or build a piece of infrastructure.

- **Induced impacts** come from the spending of the employees building the project in the local economy. For example, if a construction employee takes a break and buys something from a local establishment, the money spent is an induced impact from the project.

The model also generates estimates of tax revenues associated with a change in demand for one or more commodities, or a change in the output of an industry. These tax revenue estimates include personal and corporate income taxes, as well as taxes on commodities.

[9] More information about Statistics Canada supply use tables: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/13-607-x/2016001/1067-eng.htm



ASSESSING LONG-TERM IMPACTS

New or improved high-speed internet services can foster long-term economic growth by opening up new opportunities for local businesses, workers and residents. This growth in productivity can continue for years beyond the completion of the construction phase and availability of internet services. To describe this impact, BC Stats developed a model based on empirical relationships established in literature to estimate the long-term economic impacts of the projects in scope of the study.

Four different academic studies were analyzed to inform the impact on GDP from increased high-speed internet availability (listed in Appendix A). GDP is expected to increase incrementally over time (see Figure 4) as increased connectivity leads to increased productivity.

The fundamental premise underlying this analysis is that increased access to high-speed internet supports individuals to boost productivity, thereby stimulating economic growth. This effect is particularly significant in areas where internet access was previously unavailable, but it can also be observed when internet speeds are increased.

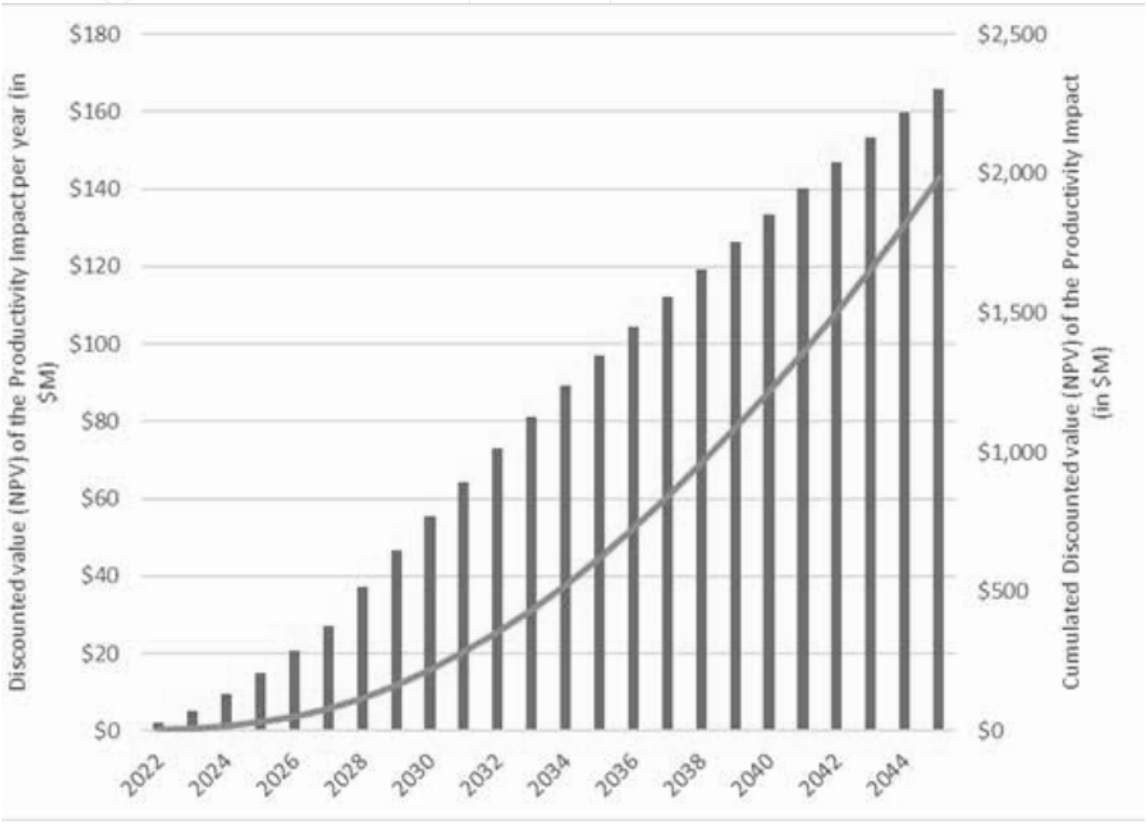
An increase in productivity can occur in multiple ways. It can result from reduced time commuting to work when telework is an option. Transitioning from dial-up to high-speed internet, for example, can enable professionals to work faster and more efficiently. High-speed internet can also pave the way for new business or employment opportunities with new access to national and global markets.

Based on the literature and available data, BC Stats estimates:

- An increase of 10 percentage points in the number of broadband subscriptions would contribute 1.23 per cent to GDP per capita growth.[10] This formula is then applied to the increase in households with access to high-speed internet, resulting from projects funded by the Province.

- The calculation is done in terms of net present value of resultant GDP Growth.[11] For this approach, a social discount rate[12] of three per cent was used based on Government of Canada data.[13] The social discount is used to adjust future costs and benefits to values in current terms.

FIGURE 4: PRODUCTIVITY IMPACT FROM THE INCREASE IN ACCESS TO HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SERVICES



The Ministry of Citizen Services' Connectivity Division estimates that, on average, 95 per cent of households benefitting from the projects would eventually subscribe to the new service once available. GDP data produced by Statistics Canada for sub-provincial geographies[14] was not detailed enough to use in this analysis, but suggests that GDP growth in B.C. is relatively in line with population share.

Figure 4 shows the anticipated productivity impact of high-speed internet services over a period from 2022 to 2045. This period of time allows for the calculation of impact after the completion of most projects.

In addition to heightened productivity, increased access to high-speed internet is expected to have social and environmental benefits. These benefits include increased access to healthcare and other services, ability to connect with loved ones, and improved safety and resiliency for communities. Environmental effects might include decreased emissions resulting from reduced travel due to the ability to work and conduct meetings from home. While these factors may indirectly impact productivity, they are not directly measured in this report.

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[10] This estimate is developed by BC Stats based on the studies listed in Appendix A.

[11] Net present value is a calculation of the value of future dollars in the current year. This is derived by applying a social discount rate to future productivity increases to reflect the value of those increases as a current value.

[12] A social discount rate is a mathematical calculation used to adjust future economic benefit for consumer preference for spending that produces outputs in the present rather than the future.

[13] Government of Canada. https://www.canada.ca/en/government/system/laws/developing-improving-federal-regulations/requirements-developing-managing-reviewing-regulations/guidelines-tools/cost-benefit-analysis-guide-regulatory-proposals.html

[14] Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3610046801



Kaslo. The Province has partly funded four projects led by Kaslo InfoNet Society to bring high-speed internet to Kaslo and the surrounding area



RESULTS

The study concludes that from an initial provincial investment of **$289.4 million**, a total economic benefit to GDP calculated to 2045 is estimated at **$2.5 billion**. This initial provincial investment is thus multiplied **8.6 times** in short- and long-term returns for the rural economy and for B.C.

A breakdown of the investment and economic benefits of high-speed internet expansion for the province is as follows:

- The **$289.4 million** in provincial funding leveraged approximately **$808.5 million** from other sources, which totals **$1.1 billion** for internet projects in rural B.C.
- This leveraged funding is from private sector internet service providers who build and operate the infrastructure, as well as public sector organizations, including the federal government. It equates to a funding ratio of **$1** of provincial funds, to **$3.79** of total private and public sector investment leveraged to support rural connectivity expansion.
- The province will experience **$223.7 million** in increased GDP in the short term from connectivity infrastructure construction between 2017 and 2027. This is from 132 connectivity projects which will benefit over 73,000 households when complete.
- Long-term impacts (defined as increased GDP attributed to enhanced productivity from access to high-speed internet services) are estimated at **$2.3 billion** in increased GDP, calculated to 2045.
- In total, it is estimated that the initial provincial investment of $289.4 million in connectivity in rural B.C. will generate **$2.5 billion** in short- and long-term economic benefits to rural areas and the province.

Short-term economic benefits

As a result of the construction phase of the projects, BC Stats estimates short-term impacts will increase GDP in the province by $223.7 million. These short-term impacts also increase income earned by workers (labour income), add jobs to the economy, and increase tax revenue both locally and provincially.

The economic impacts are estimated to be:

- **$223.7 million** increase in GDP
- **$138 million** increased labour income
- **1,820 new jobs**
- **$66 million** in provincial tax revenue
- **$10 million** in municipal and regional district tax revenue

A further breakdown of short-term economic impacts is in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5:
SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC IMPACTS[15]

	Estimated economic impact in B.C			
	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
Business expenditure	$674M	$149M	$80M	$902M
GDP	$118.2M	$67.7M	$37.8M	$223.7M
Labour income	$71.5M	$45.4M	21.1M	138M
Employment - Full Time Equivalent (FTEs)[16]	780	525	240	1,550
Employment - number of jobs	870	635	315	1,820
Gov't revenues - provincial taxes	$56.9M	$5.4M	$4.0M	$66.3
Gov't revenues - municipal and regional taxes	$6.7M	$1.3M	$1.6M	$9.6M

[15] Numbers in the table are rounded.
[16] Full time equivalent (FTE) is a translation of all part-time and seasonal jobs to a full-year, full-time job. The number of jobs above will be total roles that need to be filled, some of which will be part-time or seasonal.



Long-term economic benefits

Long-term economic impacts of new connectivity infrastructure for rural B.C. are estimated to 2045 using methodology outlined. Based on new high-speed internet services being available, BC Stats estimates productivity growth between project completion and 2045 will incrementally result in a **$2.3 billion** total increase in GDP.

This estimate describes the net present value of the impact on GDP growth in rural B.C. and the province combined. This is **7.86** times the return on initial provincial investment in the long term.

Overall economic benefits

This study shows the Province's initial connectivity investment will deliver substantial returns for rural regions and B.C.

Over the short- and long-term combined, this return is **$2.5 billion** – **8.6 times** the initial B.C. investment and a **$13,900 increase in provincial GDP per connected person** for newly connected households within the study time span.

Some key metrics from the study are outlined in Figure 6.

FIGURE 6: BREAKDOWN OF RESULTS

Type	Amount
BC investment ($million)	**289.4**
Total investment (including leveraged investment) ($billion)	**1.1**
Investment leveraged per dollar of provincial investment	**3.79**
Total multiplied return on initial investment	**8.6**
Total rural population (2021)	**634,232**
Total rural land area (km^2)	**945,650**
Rural population density (per km^2)	**0.67**
Rural private dwellings (per km^2)	**0.33**
Total increase in GDP short-term ($million)	**223.7**
Total increase in GDP long-term ($billion)	**2.27**
GDP as ratio of B.C. investment short-term	**0.77**
GDP as ratio of B.C investment long-term	**7.86**
Total economic benefit from initial investment ($billion)	**2.5**
Estimated households that subscribe to the new service	**73,000**
Economic benefit per newly connected person ($)	**13,900**

Assumptions and limitations to the study

The assumptions and limitations behind this analysis include the following:

- Some budget items such as GST are not included in the expenditure data used for the model.
- This analysis is based on an input-output methodology and therefore estimates "gross" contribution to the economy, which does not account for the opportunity cost of employing capital and labour in alternative ways. It is subject to the standard assumptions and limitations applicable to Statistics Canada's Input-Output multipliers and BC Stats Input-Output model (see Appendix B).
- Given that expenditures are for infrastructure deployment in rural B.C., direct economic contributions are considered to largely benefit the region in the short term. The input-output analysis then allocates indirect and induced impacts in the short term for the whole of the province.
- The number of households benefitting is calculated as 95 percent of estimated households served by new internet services.
- Some data availability limitations also exist, such as lack of GDP data at the sub-provincial level. Therefore, the GDP per capita and the GDP per capita growth rates for the coastal region is assumed to be the same as at the provincial level.



On the Sunshine Coast

CONCLUSION

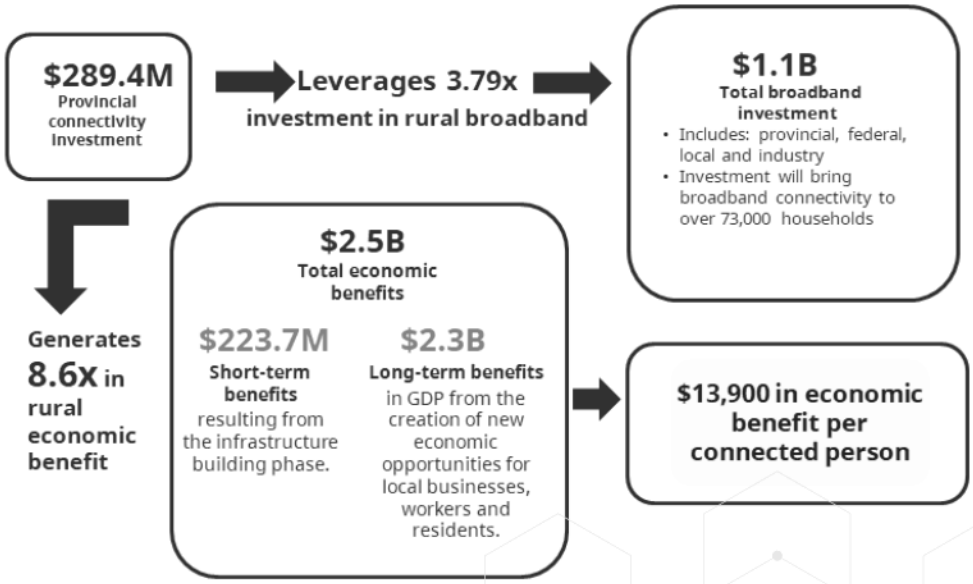
This study shows the Province's connectivity investment delivers substantial returns for rural areas and B.C. This return is **8.6 times** the initial provincial investment in the short- and long-term, creating significant economic impacts for local economies and provincial GDP.

The study also finds the return on provincial investment in rural B.C. is in line with results from other studies:

- **B.C.'s investment in high-speed internet leverages considerable federal, private and other investment** — The $289.4 million in provincial funding, leverages $808.5 million from other sources, which totals **$1.1 billion** for internet project expansion in rural B.C. This multiplies every provincial dollar by **3.79**, which generates value for B.C. investment.
- **Results are in line with other studies** — This analysis shows a return of **8.6 times** the initial provincial investment, which demonstrates connectivity investment in rural areas generates a considerable amount of economic return to the community and the province's GDP in the short and long term. Increased economic activity in the short term in the construction phase, plus increased productivity in the long term from the provision of internet services, shows investment in connectivity supports the growth of rural communities, helps diversify economies, and increases provincial GDP.
- **The power and value of high-speed transport projects** — Fibre transport networks are required to bring high-speed internet services to remote and rural communities across the province from Internet Exchange Points in major cities. Last-mile projects bring this service to homes. While economic modelling in the long term measures estimated benefits to households that receive new internet services from last-mile projects, transport fibre projects are important as they add resiliency to the network, bring fibre and capacity to communities, and improve internet speeds for existing infrastructure already in place. New households served by existing infrastructure, or private sector providers using provincially funded transport projects, would not be captured in this study.

It is worth noting there are many additional benefits to connectivity expansion, including the ability to access services, stay connected to community members and loved ones, and keep updated in an emergency, that are not measured in this study.

FIGURE 7: SUMMARY OF RESULTS



CASE STUDY

CONNECTING HAIDA GWAII

Haida Gwaii is an archipelago of islands situated off the north Pacific coast. It is the home of the Haida Nation.

The Province has invested over $5.5 million to support improved connectivity on Haida Gwaii. Last-mile projects will be powered by the new Connected Coast network that is bringing high-speed capacity to the islands from an Internet Exchange Point in Vancouver.

Bringing high-speed internet to Haida Gwaii creates more accessible opportunities for community members to pursue education and careers that were not typically possible in rural areas with slow-speed connectivity.

"With the internet, it's allowed me to start a multitude of businesses and hire local people to help build a new economy that wasn't possible with slow internet", says Nang K̲'uulas, Patrick Shannon, film director, photographer, and social entrepreneur.

With access to other First Nation communities and the larger Canadian population, the internet has opened doors for personal growth, relationships within and between Nations, and the economy.

"We're able to start moving forward in this modern world in a way that stays true to our values and our integrity, and don't have to compromise that," added Shannon.

See Patrick Shannon talk about connectivity in Haida Gwaii on YouTube.



Haida Gwaii

Connecting Haida Gwaii
Scan the QR code or watch on YouTube



APPENDIX A: ACADEMIC STUDIES

Ericsson, Arthur D. Little, Chalmers University of Technology. (2013). *Socioeconomic effects of broadband speed.* Retrieved from Arthur Little.

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Toader, E., Firtescu, B. N., Roman, A., & Anton, S. G. (2018). Impact of information and communication technology infrastructure on economic growth: an empirical Assessment for the EU countries. *Sustainability*, 1-22.




Northern B.C.

APPENDIX B: BC INPUT-OUTPUT MODEL

Overview of the B.C. Input-Output Model

BC Stats maintains an input-output (IO) model based on the structure employed by Statistics Canada. The IO model is updated annually by BC Stats using the most up-to-date data from Statistics Canada. Starting in 1996, Statistics Canada began releasing updated IO information on an annual basis. The most recent release in December of 2022 was incorporated into the BC Stats IO (BCIOM) in summer 2023. Each report in the series uses the most up to date BCIOM at time of study, which results in slight differences in the model calculations from report to report. The final connectivity benefits study will look again at all areas of the province using the same model and factors to end the series, which will allow for a like-for-like comparison between regions.

The 2019 BCIOM was the first to incorporate data sets with post pandemic data in them. As a result, estimates may be structurally different from previous model iterations. The final report in this series will use the same model base year for all regions to provide outputs that are more accurately comparable.

The BCIOM is a structural model of the B.C. economy. The core of the BCIOM is a set of three tables (supply, use, and final demand) that present the most detailed accounting of the provincial economy available. The tables together detail the supply and disposition of commodities, industries output delineated by commodity composition, and the complete costs of production of B.C. industries. The tables comprise of detailed information obtained from administrative data, and Statistics Canada's surveys of establishments and enterprises. In essence, the supply use tables (SUT) provide a snapshot of the complete economy and all its industrial interconnections at a specific point in time.

SUT are produced at various levels of aggregation: the least detailed set of tables are presented at the "summary level" of aggregation, representing 35 industry groupings and 74 commodity groupings. The most detailed aggregation represents 240 industries and 501 commodities. The detailed-level SUT information is shared with the BC Stats by Statistics Canada, and is the information used in the BCIOM.

Purpose and uses

The purpose of a BCIOM is to estimate the total economic impact of a project, or economic shock, by presenting estimates of direct, indirect, and induced impacts associated with the project or shock (meaning any change or departure from the status quo). Based on the observed inter-connection between industries in the economy, the multiplying of demand is traced through these industrial linkages to yield a set of aggregate impacts.

One of the most common uses of the IO model is to simulate the impact of a demand shock on the economy. Any increase in consumption of goods and services will generate direct, indirect, and induced economic production.

Limitations of the Input-Output Model

Although the BCIOM can be a very useful tool in the decision-making process, users should be aware of the limitations of input-output analysis. Some of the limitations that should be taken into consideration when using IO models are:

1. Technical coefficients are assumed to be fixed. That is, the amount of each input necessary to produce one unit of each output is constant. The amount of input purchased by a sector is determined solely by the level of output. No consideration is made to price effects, substitution, changing technology or economies of scale.
2. It is assumed that there are no constraints on resources — supply is infinite and perfectly elastic.
3. It is assumed that all local employment resources are efficiently used and at full capacity, there is no underemployment of resources.
4. IO models are flow models. Stocks are not explicitly represented, which implicitly assumes that goods can be produced without additions to capital stock.
5. The industrial structure and linkages of the represented economy are based on information that lags the current economy — typically a three to four-year time lag in Canada.

When estimating economic impacts, it is preferable to use economic multipliers to make relative, rather than absolute, comparisons. Economic multiplier analysis is more properly used to determine which of several activities would have the largest economic impact rather than to estimate the absolute level of economic impact for a single activity. Where economic multipliers are used to estimate the impacts of a single activity, the results should be treated as general estimates only, indicating the order of magnitude of the impacts rather than exact levels.



Orca off the coast of Quadra Island



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Back photo: Trees near Cathedral Grove

Issue: Deep Water Recovery (shipbreaking)

Recommend Response:

- My ministry has taken action to bring Deep Water Recovery's (DWR) foreshore lease into compliance.
- My ministry is committed to ensuring DWR abides by the conditions within their lease agreement Management Plan and collaborating with partner agencies to hold DWR accountable to manage risks and liabilities at the site.
- DWR's foreshore lease agreement provides a framework to hold DWR accountable and manage risks and liabilities at the site. Non-compliance by the proponent with the lease, may lead to cancellation.

Key Facts:

- DWR operates a ship-recycling facility south of Courtenay, BC on Baynes Sound. The upland property is privately owned while the foreshore is aquatic Crown land under tenure to DWR.
- DWR's *Land Act* tenure (File No. 0021050) is for the purposes of storage and haul out of vessels to the upland.
- DWR has been the subject of significant public and First Nations attention since 2021, when the tenure was amended from log handling purposes to its current purpose.
- There is no single agency responsible for shipbreaking in BC and multiple agencies have been engaged with respect to DWR, including federal departments of: Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Transport Canada, Canadian Coast Guard, and provincial: Ministry of Environment and Parks (ENV), Ministry of Attorney General, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and local government Comox Valley Regional District. K'omoks Nation and Tla'amin Nation are also actively engaged.
- WLRS has taken the lead role in coordinating monthly agency updates regarding activities at DWR to a public group known as the Concerned Citizens of Baynes Sound.
- WLRS is monitoring activities occurring within the foreshore and enforcing compliance with tenure terms.
- The vessel, *Miller Freeman,* was grounded in the foreshore for almost two years, in January 2025, it was removed.
- Advice/Recommendations; Legal Information

- DWR has provided a revised lease Management Plan that specifies the types of vessels and barges that can be safely hauled out at this location.
- Insurance requirements for the tenure have also been increased significantly in cooperation with the Risk Management Branch. Specifically, Commercial General Liability insurance and Environmental Impairment Liability were each raised from $2,000,0000 to $5,000,000 minimums. Marine Liability Insurance and Sudden and Accidental Pollution Liability requirements were added each at $5,000,000 minimum coverage. The proponent has not submitted confirmation of increased insurance coverage to date.
- In addition to actions taken by WLRS, ENV issued a Pollution Abatement Order (PAO) requiring DWR to submit water quality monitoring reports. ENV has also required that DWR install a water treatment system on the upland property.
- To date, DWR has been issued Administrative Monetary Penalties by ENV totalling over $46K for unauthorized discharge and failure to comply with requirements of the PAO. The proponent has appealed all penalties and is waiting to go through the appeal process for a determination.
- WLRS remains focussed on ensuring that DWR abides by the conditions of their *Land Act* tenure agreement and collaborating with partner agencies to hold DWR accountable to Provincial regulations and manage risks and liabilities at the site.

Date Prepared/Revised: April 9, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Jennifer Anthony, ADM Permitting Transformation Phone: 250-889-1315

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Adam Harding, A/Manager, Land Authorizations, West Coast Phone: 250-956-0114

ADVICE TO MINISTER

CONFIDENTIAL **GCPE ENV ISSUE NOTE** **Ministry of Environment and Parks** **Date: January 23, 2025** **Minister Responsible: Honourable Tamara Davidson**	**Union Bay ship breaking**

ADVICE AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSE:

- The health of our coastline, and the species that depend on a healthy environment, are extremely important to us.
- We continue to take strong action to address concerns at the Deep Water Recovery site in Union Bay to ensure the business is compliant and the environment is protected.
- In 2023, after reviewing water sample data, we issued a Pollution Abatement Order to the company to immediately stop discharging effluent above water quality guidelines and to provide an action plan on how they intend to do that.
- We have also fined the company over $45,000 for failing to comply with the order and for discharging waste without an authorization.
- Government Financial Information

- We are prepared to take further action if needed.

If asked about the large vessels at the site:

- The federal government retains jurisdiction of the vessels below the high-water mark, including any environmental impacts.
- Since the vessels can't be safely relocated, they need to be managed onsite.
- We will continue to work with our federal counterparts as we monitor the situation to ensure that any potential contamination is contained or diverted.

If asked about what the Province is doing about the other vessels?

- The Province, along with federal agencies, are aware of the presence of other vessels, which currently falls under federal jurisdiction while below the high-water mark.
- And we have ordered DWR to immediately remove a vessel which has been grounded along the shoreline and partially within the foreshore lease for over a year.
- DWR has demonstrated progress in preparing the vessel for hauling onto the upland area of the property.

If asked why the Province doesn't regulate the ship-breaking industry:

- Ship-breaking activities cover multiple jurisdictions:

- The federal government is responsible for shipping/activities in the marine environment, including the protection of marine habitat;
- Local governments set the use of private land through bylaws and official community plans;
- B.C.'s Ministry of Environment and Parks oversees waste discharges originating from provincial lands;
- B.C.'s Ministry of Water Land and Resource Stewardship manages crown lands, including foreshore leases; and
- There is currently no federal or provincial legislation on exclusive to ship-breaking.

If asked about the Comox Valley Regional District's civil claim:

- The Province has not been named in the civil claim and we are unable to comment on an ongoing civil claim involving the regional district.

Background

Media and residents in the Comox Valley continue to raise concerns about potential contamination of important coastal ecosystems at Deep Water Recovery's (DWR) ship-breaking operation in Union Bay. This area hosts a provincial shellfish reserve and is recognized by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) as an Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area.

DWR has authorization for the storage of vessels on the water and haul out of vessels to the upland under a provincial Crown foreshore lease. DWR also has a riparian right of access to the water to enable them to bring vessels ashore onto their private land from the water. A civil claim involving the Comox Valley Regional District is with the courts regarding the land use of the site.

For over a year, DWR has been unable to completely move the vessel the R/V Miller Freeman from the leased foreshore and onto the upland portion of the site due to the vessel's weight and hull construction and a lack of infrastructure at their facility. DWR is working to reduce the weight of the vessel to make it easier to move and has recently rigged the vessel for pulling onto the upland. Government Financial Information

Government Financial Information

Government Financial Information

On February 20, 2024, a joint letter from Minister Heyman and Minister Cullen was sent to the federal ministers of DFO, Environment and Climate Change Canada and Transport Canada, requesting direct and immediate engagement of the federal government as it relates to the protection of the marine environment and the transport of vessels to this site. A response has yet to be received.

During the week of Feb. 26, 2024, Concerned Citizens of Baynes Sound (CCOBS) wrote a letter to Minister Heyman and Minister Cullen addressing several specific inquiries the ministers raised in their correspondence to the federal government.

On October 11, 2024, a video was posted to the webpage 'All Things Union Bay,' in which a new vessel can be seen moored at the site. Federal agencies and WLRS are aware of its presence.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

On November 14, 2024, legal counsel for CCOBS wrote to the Province and Government of Canada to state their interpretation of the law as it relates to DWR. The letter does not threaten legal action towards the Province. WLRS, ENV and legal counsel for the Province are preparing a response.

ENV is monitoring the situation to ensure potential contamination is contained and/or diverted.

ENV compliance activities:

There have been numerous site visits by natural resource officers, conservation officers and environmental protection officers in response to concerns and complaints at the DWR site.

On Jan. 23, 2023, an information order was issued, requiring DWR to retain an independent Qualified Professional to sample, monitor and report monthly to the ENV. DWR received a $500 administrative penalty on October 11, 2023 for failing to submit their first monthly report by April 15. The penalty is currently under appeal with the Environmental Appeal Board. ENV issued a warning letter on Nov. 24, 2023, for late collection of water discharge samples.

On March 15, 2024, a pollution abatement order (PAO) was issued after reviewing several months of samples. In response, DWR submitted a Notice of Appeal and Stay Application to the Environmental Appeal Board (EAB) on the Order. The EAB denied DWR's Stay Application and the PAO remains in effect while the PAO is currently under appeal.

On September 10, 2024, two Notice of AMP were sent to DWR based on June 2024 Inspections. DWR made their opportunity to be heard submission on November 8, 2024, as part of the administrative fairness process and the Final Decisions on the AMPs are pending. Details on the two AMPs will be made public 7 days after DWR confirms receipt of those decisions.

ENV staff inspected the Site on November 5, 2024 assessing compliance with the waste discharges and the Order. The associated inspection report is in progress and will be posted to the Natural Resources Compliance and Enforcement Database by the end of November 2024.

On Nov 12, 2024 ENV staff issued DWR an Advisory for not reporting a spill at the site, where an unknown quantity of oil was observed in the marine environment.

On December 12, 2024, DWR received a $26,700 AMP for allowing waste to enter the environment without an authorization, and a $19,450 AMP for failing to comply with the requirements in their PAO. Both of these AMPs are currently under appeal with the Environmental Appeal Board.

ENV staff as part of the Interagency Working Group of federal and provincial agencies working on DWR continue to provide regular updates to the Union Bay community association. Also, ENV staff recently participated in 2 trilateral meetings with the local First Nations, federal and provincial government and have committed to remain engaged on this file.

ENV regulatory background:

Waste discharge from ship breaking is regulated by ENV as a commercial waste management or waste disposal industry and requires a permit under the *Environmental Management Act* if there is a discharge to the environment and those that are primarily engaged in this activity.

DWR has argued they are not prescribed under the Waste Discharge Regulation and/or don't discharge to the environment, and they are not primarily engaged in commercial waste management as they primarily do vessel repairs. Therefore, they do not need a permit from ENV.

On July 25, 2022, DWR applied for authorization to discharge effluent. ENV allowed DWR 11 months to submit their final application package, due Oct. 31, 2023. DWR requested an extension but after ENV repeatedly requested more information regarding progress on their application and received no response from DWR, ENV rejected their application for a permit. DWR has been reminded several times of the need to apply for a waste discharge authorization, but claims they have changed their business model and no longer need a permit from ENV.

Media attention: [High]

- January 3, 2025 – Vancouver is Awesome - Ship recycler fined $46K for polluting B.C. coast - Vancouver Is Awesome
- November 27, 2024 – the Discourse - Deep Water Recovery says operations aren't polluting Union Bay – The Discourse.
- September 8, 2024 – Chek News – Acute levels of effluent discharged into Baynes Sound by Union Bay shipbreaking operation (cheknews.ca)
- March 1, 2024 – Global News – https://globalnews.ca/news/10329699/union-bay-shipbreaking-controversy/
- Feb. 18, 2024 – CHEK News – Union Bay shipbreaking neighbours worry about asbestos getting airborne
- Nov. 9, 2023 – CHEK News – BC Ferries was in negotiations with controversial ship-breaking operation, email shows
- Oct. 26, 2023 – the Discourse – Activists rally against ship breaking operation in Union Bay
- Oct. 22, 2023 – CHEK News – Protesters call on governments to end shipbreaking by Baynes Sound
- Oct. 20, 2023 – My Comox Valley Now – Courtenay-Alberni MP seeking protection of Vancouver Island waters from shipbreaking
- Oct. 7, 2023 – The Skeena – Why Has BC Been So Slow to Act On Possible Toxic Shipbreaking in Union Bay?
- May 1, 2023 – Global News – Rally against shipbreaking operation on Vancouver Island
- May 1, 2023 – Vancouver Island Free Daily – Rally decries lack of federal regulation targeting Union Bay shipbreaking operations
- April 30, 2023 – Vancouver Sun – B.C. rally decries lack of federal regulation targeting ship-breaking operations
- April 29, 2023 – Global News – Concerns about shipbreaking operation on Vancouver Island
- April 27, 2023 – Comox Valley Record – Rally at Union Bay Sunday for those opposed to shipbreaking in Baynes Sound
- April 27, 2023 – Watershed Sentinel – Shipbreaking Persists in Baynes Sound
- April 20, 2023 – The Tyee – BC Greens Call for Provincial Ship Breaking Regulations

- Feb. 20, 2023 – The Tyee – BC's Slow Action Aids Ship Breaker's Case, Says Expert

B.C. Greens calls to action:

- Dec. 18, 2023 – Sonia Furstenau video tweet – lack of shipbreaking industry regulations
- Nov. 28, 2023 – Sonia Furstenau QP video tweet – Q2: regulating shipbreaking
- April 21, 2023 – Sonia Furstenau tweet – shipbreaking regulations protect workers
- April 18, 2023 – media release – B.C. Greens call for regulation of ship breaking industry
- April 18, 2023 – Adam Olsen – Will the BC NDP step up & regulate ship breaking — one of the most hazardous industries in the world?
- April 18, 2023 – Adam Olsen tweet – B.C. lacks clear shipbreaking laws

GCPE ENV Contact:	Sloane Zogas, public affairs officer	Government Financial Information
Environmental Protection Division Contacts:	Brady Nelless – ED, Compliance and ENV Enforcement Karen Moores – Director, Authorizations	Government Financial Information 250-302-3577

Issue: Turnaround times for FrontCounter BC (FCBC) on Land, Water and Fish & Wildlife applications - Service impacts

Recommend Response:

- FrontCounter BC (FCBC) is the application intake arm of the Natural Resource sector, providing service across eight ministries, and over 160 authorization types.
- Established in 2006, the program has traditionally served in a regional context; however, with increasing backlogs across certain regions, WLRS has shifted the service approach.
- Application backlogs are a reality for a small number of FCBC regional teams (three of eight).
- Cross-region work coordination is becoming a key strategy for reducing caseloads in the highest backlogged regions.
- Expedited processing of applications that relate to government priorities such as housing, connectivity, or electrification, increases the turn-around time of other non-priority applications.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- FCBC serves the intake function of the permitting process; backlogs at the FCBC application intake phase contribute to the overall application processing time.
- FCBC often holds a backlog to ensure that authorization and application review staff are not overwhelmed by the volume of applications.

Key Facts:

Current Performance

- FCBC performance is measured against a 30-day target turn-around time for intaking new land and water applications, and 15 days for Fish & Wildlife.
- Current 12-Month Average Processing Time (days):

	Region							
	CB	KB	NE	OM	SK	SC	TO	WC
Fish & Wildlife	18	41	32	20	12	15	14	13
Lands	39	123	40	23	46	227	308	80
Water	31	76	22	86	21	82	211	145

- FCBC maintains service standards to the public that ensures responsiveness to client enquiries, regardless of application backlogs.
- Any service impacts of backlogs at the FCBC intake phase contribute to the overall timeline of processing applications.
- Public-facing systems provide applicants with only a general status of their application in process, lacking an estimated processing time to decision.
- Overall client satisfaction, measured through regular BC Stats surveys, remains within an established norm at 75.2 percent (December 2024) and above the average for government services across Canada.

Factors that contribute to application backlogs:

- Applications awaiting more information from client and/or poor-quality applications.
- A relatively high FCBC staff turnover rate and time required to hire and train new staff.
- Outdated application forms, systems, and technology.
- Variation in regional policies and processes.

Background on FCBC

- On average, FCBC handles 70,000 enquiries from the public and processes 20,000 natural resource applications per year.
- FCBC currently manages a 20 percent staff vacancy level (124 of 156 positions filled).
- The FCBC application intake phase involves:
    - Assisting applicants with submission (quality and completeness of the application) and processing payment.
    - Conducting a pre-technical review and assessment of spatial conflicts and constraints on the land base.
    - Preparation of the application package for referrals, consultation, and technical review.

Date Prepared/Revised: Feb. 18, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Jennifer Anthony, ADM Permitting Transformation Phone: (250) 889-1315

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Nick Thomas, ED FrontCounter BC Branch Phone: (250) 877-3294

Issue: Docks

Recommend Response:

- Private moorage/dock facilities in BC are generally authorized through a Permission to use Crown land. Permissions are non-exclusive and do not provide an interest in the land or create a disposition. There is no annual rent associated with Permissions, and they may be limited or rescinded at any time.
- In certain circumstances, private moorage owners may apply for a standard form of tenure under the *Land Act*. These tenures provide the right to use or occupy the land for a specific purpose and a defined term, subject to various conditions and to an annual rent.
- The *Land Act* operational policy for private moorage sets out the requirements for Permissions and includes best management practices.
- On the Sunshine Coast, the province and shishalh Nation have been implementing a Dock Management Plan since 2018 to protect important environmental, archeological and cultural values. This work is an important part of our Government-to-Government work with shishalh Nation.
- Together, WLRS and shishalh Nation undertook public engagement on a series of proposed amendments in 2024 to the Dock Management Plan. Changes announced provide more flexibility for private moorage design and clarity for existing private moorage owners. These changes have been reaffirmed in the Foundation Agreement Renewal announced January 29, 2025.

Key Facts:

- WLRS Authorizations Branch is presently comprised of approximately 350 staff members with an additional 85 vacant positions.

- Private moorage facilities include docks, boat ways/ramps or boat lifts that are used for private residential use.
- The placement and use of private moorage facilities on Crown land requires adherence to provincial, federal and local government laws and includes First Nation and public consultation.
- *Land Act* authorization can be provided by way of two different instruments: a Permission or a Tenure.
- A Permission does not require a FrontCounterBC application and is available for docks that meet specific requirements in size, configuration and location.
- An owner of a dock or moorage facility located where permissions are prohibited, as well as where a dock does not adhere to any one of the requirements of the Permission, must apply for authorization through a tenure.
- *Land Act* tenures are a disposition of land and require fair return to the Crown in the form of rent (in accordance with the *Financial Administration Act*, the Province's Financial core Policy and Procedures Manual and the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles). A determination of rent for private moorage is not yet made and is a Treasury Board decision.
- The shishalh swiya Dock Management Plan (DMP) provides guidance to residents with constructed or proposed docks in the swiya. In August 2024, shishalh Nation and the Province jointly announced amendments to the DMP for existing docks, which applies to the 1500+ existing docks within the swiya.
- Commitments made include the completion of an inventory of all existing docks within the swiya, a three-year transition period where WLRS will work to provide existing tenured and untenured docks and boathouses with up to 20-year long-term renewable authorizations upon review, and the establishment of a self-registration system to provide interim authorizations to support the transition period.
- The inventory of existing docks was completed in December 2024, jointly with shishalh and community volunteers; the self-registration system was released in September 2024 and has 413 docks self-registered; six offers for 20-year Licences of Occupation were offered in January 2025. Planning for the rapid issuance of a much larger, next round of Licenses is underway.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 28, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Jennifer Anthony, ADM Permitting Transformation Phone: 250-889-1315

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Tammy Hillyer, Director, Resource Authorizations (South Coast) Phone: 778 572-2172

Issue: Types of Transformation Permitting Transformation Division Put into Play

Recommend Response:

- Permitting plays a critical role in land and resource management to support a thriving economy, environmental stewardship and reconciliation objectives.
- Changes to policy and legislation will support British Columbians in the face of devasting natural disasters, such as flooding and wildfires – with significant successes already demonstrated under the Riparian Areas Protection program.
- Through delegations and designations of authority, we are increasing the capacity of permitting teams, leading to faster, robust decision making on permitting applications without requiring an influx of new staff.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- Targeted and timely decisions are being supported through government initiatives designed to expedite projects that will benefit the province's economy across energy, natural gas and mining sectors.
- Ministry of Transportation and Transit's (TT) new Water Authorizations team is tightly linked into the broader provincial Water Program.
    - This "Water Community" approach ensures consistency in decision-making and provides line of sight on water use across the province - especially critical to flood and drought response.
- The focus of delegations for NR permitting will be expanding existing authorities of the BC Energy Regulator for Renewable Energy projects and prescribed transmission lines in a staged approach.

- Delegations under the *Land Act, Water Sustainability Act, Mines Act, Forest Act, Wildlife Act* and *Heritage Conservation Act* will be required to have an expedited interim "one-window" approach under BCER until enabling legislation and regulation amendments are completed to provide the long-term framework for permitting.

Key Facts:

- Total caseload for the Natural Resource Ministries (NRM) (February 29) is 12,586; a 72-permit reduction from the previous month. This includes water, lands, Parks, riparian, archaeology, contaminated sites (housing) and transportation (housing and connectivity) applications.
- Permitting supports economic development and opportunity, restoration and post-catastrophic recovery.
- The approach to success involves taking a project-by-project focus while driving systemic change including:
  - Permit less & faster while maintaining environmental standards
  - Accelerate key projects to FID and Construction
  - Fast track projects with First Nations' support
  - Early identification of conditions necessary for key project implementation
  - Dashboard reporting on key projects and regulatory efficiencies
  - Remove bottlenecks: *Environmental Assessment Act, Water Sustainability Act,* Agricultural Land Reserve*, Heritage Conservation Act*
  - Systemic change: Increasing reliance on Qualified Professionals, Establishing approval time limits on permits, Fast Tracking renewals of permits, Accelerating Brownfield development, Fast-tracking First Nation Partnerships, Reducing the number of permits requiring a decision to simply a deemed authorization. Establishing one-window approach NCTL, transmission lines and renewable energy projects through the BC Energy Regulator.

Restoration and Renewables

- In June 2023, BCER was delegated authority under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA), the *Forest Act*, and the *Land Act* to streamline decision making for restoration projects in Northeast B.C.

Impacts to Infrastructure

- In February 2024, WLRS designated authority to TT staff for decision-making for water use and change approvals under the *Water Sustainability Act*.

- TT has since adjudicated 200 applications, reducing the average turnaround time by 250 days.
- Change in authority will help the Province respond more quickly to environmental disasters, such as flooding, that impact Crown infrastructure.

Protection of Riparian Areas and Wildfire Recovery

- The Riparian Area Protection Regulation (RAPR) integrates fish habitat protection through riparian management into local government permitting for development (residential, commercial, and industrial).
- WLRS is leading important change in RAPR through:
    - The Riparian Recovery – 2023 Wildfire Rebuilding Direction: Streamlining permitting processes, reducing administrative burden; and providing technical and financial support to help rebuild and support riparian recovery.
    - Backlog reduction: In June 2023, the existing backlog of applications was cleared and a new service standard of 90 percent processed within 30 days has been put in place.
    - Future legislative reform: WLRS is currently working on proposed regulation changes to provide clarity and streamline submissions while ensuring riparian protection.

Attachment(s): Natural Resource Permitting – Active Applications Table Updated

Date Prepared/Revised: February 28, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Jennifer Anthony, Assistant Deputy Minister	Phone: 250-889-1315
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Karen Spence, Executive Director	Phone: 778-698-3289

NRM Active Applications

October 2022 – February 2025

(Client Driven Applications Awaiting Decision)

	Caseload			Avg Processing Days		
	October 2022	February 2025	Change	October 2022	February 2025	Change
Land	1863	1778	-85	324	378	+54
Water	9070	7783	-1287	328	344	+16
Fish & Wildlife	570	675	+105	39	31	-8
Parks	405	549	+144	283	319	+36
Archaeology	373	448	+75	210	237	+27
Riparian	508	50	-458	165	160	-5
Regional Mines	557	484	-73	251	249	-2
Contaminated Sites	444	345	-99	116	158	42
MOTT	2667	3690	+1023	68	53	-15

Notes:

- Forests cutting permits have not been included due to data integrity issues

Breakdown of Water Application Caseload

Application Type	Oct 2022	Feb 2025	Change
Existing Use Ground Water	5829	4697	-1132
Section 11 (Changes in and about a stream)*	678	500	-178
New Ground Water	43	33	-10
Section 10 (use approval)*	105	130	+25
Water License*	2184	2045	-139
Abandonments	231	209	-22
Total	9070	7614	-1456

*Includes new applications and amendments

Issue: Backlogged Land and Water Permits

Recommend Response:

- The overall caseload for land and water permitting applications remains at over 13,000, including expired land tenures awaiting replacement.
- Positive movement has been made through prioritization of key sectors such as housing, meaning that homes can be built faster, and through the establishment of an existing use groundwater taskforce.
- WLRS is advancing the Statutory Reform for Permitting project, which seeks to reduce the volume of low-risk applications by enabling authorized uses under the *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA).

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The ability to eliminate the caseload and absorb additional applications is strained under the current resourcing and regulatory framework and WLRS is prioritizing impactful legislative and policy changes to enable the necessary improvements.

Key Facts:

- The caseload has grown year-over-year as new applications are received at a rate that exceeds provincial capacity to move them to decision [274/month incoming versus 205/month decisions over the last five years].
- The pace at which an application can be moved from receipt to decision depends on a variety of factors, including:
    - the complexity of the proposed land or water use,
    - the quality and breadth of information provided by the applicant,
    - the existence of landscape or watershed-level plans which provide guidance as to the balance of interests in the application area,
    - the complexity of First Nations relations in the application area (number of Nations with overlapping territory, existence of Treaties or Reconciliation Agreements, etc.),
    - the degree to which the land or watershed has been impacted by cumulative effects,
    - the tools available to accommodate impacts to First Nations rights or title, and
    - the existence of clear provincial policies or frameworks providing guidance to the Statutory Decision Maker (SDM).

- The Province has a legal duty to consult and, where required, accommodate, First Nations on land and water decisions that could impact claimed or established rights and title, or treaty rights (First Nations Interests). The Province may not issue authorizations until the duty has been fully discharged. In some cases, circumstances may require that the Province seek or obtain the consent of the First Nation to make a decision about a potential authorization.
- The effectiveness with which BC works with First Nations to review applications in a timely manner varies. It is generally dependent upon the strength of the government-to-government relationship, the strength of local regional relationships, the capacity of the Nation to commit resources to review, the effectiveness and clarity of any Treaty provisions or protocol agreements that may be in place, and the tools available to accommodate impacts to rights or title. Options for accommodation are generally limited to concessions made by the applicant regarding their intended use and/or permit terms and conditions.
- *Land Act* applications are generally assigned to staff for review dependent on their meeting a hierarchy of provincial criteria. Applications supportive of provincial priorities such as housing, electrification, connectivity, critical minerals, and major infrastructure are moved to the front of the queue. The result is that applications not related to these priorities may sit for years before being assigned for review and decision.
- WSA is premised on the First in Time, First In Right (FITFR) principle and basis. This means water use rights are blind to concepts of “highest and best use” and decisions are made permit by permit based on date of application. This limits the degree of prioritization across water decisions, as well as the ability to consider the best use of the resource in the context of today’s complex landscape.
- When WSA was brought into force in 2016, existing groundwater users were required to obtain licenses by March 2022 to comply with the new law. Despite outreach efforts to encourage early application, many users did not apply until the deadline. This has resulted in an influx of over 2,300 applications in early 2022 for existing use groundwater (EUGW) licenses and a total EUGW caseload of approximately 6,500 applications.
- Prior to February 2024, EUGW applications were processed by each region where EUGW files were processed at a rate of approximately 160 files per year. A centralized taskforce of nine resources was established in February 2024 to prioritize this caseload. Of the 5240 applications that have been assigned to the taskforce, 867 files have been processed since then (as of April 9, 2025) – or approximately 825 files per year (five times faster than before).

Date Prepared/Revised: April 9, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Jen Anthony ADM, Permitting Transformation Phone: 250-889-1315

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Ross McElroy ED, Authorizations Phone: 250-739-8452

Issue: Southeast Initiatives Secretariat (SEIS) Overview

Recommend Response:

- SEIS is a two-year pilot created to address the complex challenges that exist in the Elk Valley in southeast BC, where metallurgical coal mines provide a significant contribution to both the regional and provincial economies and supports 3,848 direct and an estimated 5,143 indirect jobs as well as local businesses.
- SEIS leads strategies and initiatives to support continued responsible mining while healing the land and advancing reconciliation with the Ktunaxa Nation First Nations.
- The Secretariat is a single point of contact for all levels of government (including First Nations), proponents, stakeholders, and an integrated Team BC approach across multiple ministries that advance the priorities in this area of BC.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- SEIS includes five core ministries: WLRS, FOR, ENV (Environment & Parks), IRR (Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation) and MCM (Mining & Critical Minerals).
- Since being formed in July 2024, SEIS has made significant progress in strengthening relationships with the Ktunaxa governments, local governments and other stakeholders, and developing a strategy to ensure the Elk Valley economy continues to thrive with the support of those parties.

Key Facts:

- Southeast (SE) BC metallurgical coal deposits are a high-quality, strategic resource held by BC, critical to the provincial economy. In 2023, the four operating Elk Valley Resources Ltd. (EVR) mines in the SE accounted for 83 percent of total steelmaking coal production and 81 percent ($663.5M) of all

mineral tax collected from coal and metal mines in BC, as well as providing 12,820 direct, indirect and induced jobs in BC and 30,490 across Canada.

- Mining and other natural resource extraction in the Elk Valley have resulted in substantial adverse environmental impacts on water quality and aquatic ecosystems from elevated levels of selenium and other contaminants. There are also significant impacts on the land including rare ecosystems (i.e., high elevation grasslands) and bighorn sheep. Indigenous rights held by the Ktunaxa First Nation (KFN) are adversely impacted by the current condition of the land and water.
- Elk Valley Resources (EVR) plans to submit a revised Detailed Project Description (DPD) to the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) for the Fording River Extension Project (FRX) in early 2025 which, if approved, may enable sustained production for several decades. Other expansions/projects also need to move forward to avoid reductions in staffing as early as 2025.
- A primary goal of SEIS is to address concerns and opportunities which help establish conditions in the SE that could enable continued responsible mining supported by key stakeholders and First Nations. If these conditions do not form, mining operations may ramp down resulting in substantial impacts to BC and local economies and communities.
- The Elk Valley is part of the transboundary Kootenay watershed with water flowing through Koocanusa Reservoir and into Montana and is in the core of Ktunaxa territory. This region is now the focus of an International Joint Commission (IJC) Reference on water pollution.
- A ministerial order for amendments to the Elk Valley Area Based Management Plan, originally established in 2013, is underway. The amendment process is a collaborative one between BC, KFN and proponents and requires considerable resources from all parties.
- Recent outreach initiated by Canada has re-opened discussions regarding transfer of the Dominion Coal Blocks and trilateral meetings with BC, Canada and KFN governments are underway. Options are being considered and related costs are currently unknown.
- The SEIS ADMO is jointly funded by MCM, ENV, IRR, FOR and WLRS and reports directly to the Major Projects Implementation Board (MPIB). As SEIS was created in July 2024, there is no Estimates budget at this time and is being considered via the Budget 2025 process for the first time.
- A working budget of $614,856 for the 2025 Fiscal Year End includes salary and operating expenses. Travel of the ADM to SE BC is essential for establishing and maintaining relationships with First Nations and key partners.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 11, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Laurel Nash Phone: 250-508-1670

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Katie von Gaza Phone: 250-420-6367

Issue: Dominion Coal Blocks

Recommend Response:

- The Dominion Coal Blocks, near Sparwood and Fernie in the Kootenays, are Federal lands held for more than a century by Canada, which is now considering options for their future.

- That's why we are working with First Nations and Ottawa to define how more than 20,000 hectares of land can be used to the benefit of First Nations and all British Columbians.

- We are engaged in discussions with the Ktunaxa Nation and the Federal government to identify options for the Dominion Coal Blocks, including conservation opportunities.

- We look forward to continuing these discussions after the conclusion of the 2025 Federal election.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- The DCB parcels may provide additional options for conservation or coal development for all parties to consider.

Key Facts:

- In October 2023, Yaq̓it ʔa·knuqƛiʻit (Tobacco Plains Indian Band) wrote to various BC ministers, stating that they assert Title over their ancestral lands, which include the DCBs, and indicated a strong interest to discuss options including conservation for the DCBs. Other Ktunaxa First Nations (ʔaq̓am) have also written BC and Federal Ministers indicating that any discussions around the DCB must include all Ktunaxa First Nations and the Ktunaxa Nation Council Society (KNC).
- BC has committed to join Canada in tripartite engagement with Ktunaxa First Nations regarding potential DCB options. Canada has also engaged with 17 plus other Indigenous organizations in parallel with KNC engagement. BC and Canada hold differing views on the approach to engagement with this broader list of Indigenous Organizations.

Intergovernmental Communications

- It is not known whether the Ktunaxa First Nations would prefer an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) designation over the DCB parcels rather than other possible designations.
- A MOU between Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Forest Service, Ktunaxa and the province allows Ktunaxa to have timber rights over the DCBs. The timber harvesting rights are enabled and administered by the province through a Community Forest Agreement (CFA) tenure issued to KNC.
- Any transfer to BC or Ktunaxa may require tenure compensation and other possible liabilities related to tenures and access. Addressing these issues may require access to Conservation Funding Mechanism and/or the federal government.
- In addition to the CFA issued to KNC, other provincial tenures that overlap the DCBs include two Guide Outfitter tenures, eight Trapline tenures, one Range tenure, two Commercial Recreation tenures, 12 forest road tenures and 22 petroleum tenures.
- Southeast Initiatives Secretariat (SEIS) has been the primary lead for BC in the process.

Date Prepared/Revised: April 2, 2025ruary 20, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Laurel Nash Phone: 250-508-1670

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Wayne Giles Phone: 250-420-6465

ESTIMATES NOTE (2025) **Confidential** Ministry of Environment and Parks Environmental Protection Division **March 2025**	**Elk Valley Water Quality including ABMP and Water Treatment**

General Water Quality (WQ)

- **Addressing WQ is a continuing priority for the ministry; a dedicated team of environmental protection experts and independent statutory decision makers are using the Environmental Management Act (EMA) to improve WQ. We are working closely with Ktunaxa First Nations in our efforts.**
- **The ministry's Compliance and Environmental Enforcement Branch is holding Elk Valley Resources (EVR) accountable to meeting regulatory requirements and is responding with enforcement actions such as Administrative Monetary Penalties when non-compliances are found.**
- **The ministry's permitting team in the Authorizations and Remediation Branch continues to prioritize application reviews for projects like new water treatment that further improve WQ.**
- Four active mines are operated by EVR, a company formerly owned by Teck and operated under the name Teck Coal Ltd. but now owned mostly by Glencore. Permit conditions and regulatory requirements did not change as a result of the name change and transfer of ownership. Following the transfer, the Ministry of Mining and Critical Minerals reviewed and updated the financial security and environmental protection requirements included in the security.
    - Any expansions of existing mines, or new mines, will need to demonstrate how they can comply with all regulatory requirements, and they need to fit within the established framework of improving water quality.
- Over 215 mine inspections have been completed by ENV since 2014, including 65 inspections of the Valley-wide EMA permit which addresses water quality.
- Enforcement responses are escalating over time, with increasing numbers of Administrative Monetary Penalty (AMP) referrals for ongoing non-compliances.
    - Over $17.2M in AMP's have already been assessed to Teck, including some significant fines related to water quality exceedances and delays in implementing water treatment. A large $16.5M penalty is under appeal.
- There are seasonally elevated levels of selenium and nitrate at some locations in the watershed, but robust environmental monitoring programs show functioning aquatic ecosystems in the mainstem Elk and Fording Rivers.
- Selenium levels in the downstream transboundary Koocanusa Reservoir exceed BC's proposed water quality objective (WQO) and Montana's water quality standard. However, monitoring programs have not detected ecosystem impacts.
    - Some fish tissue selenium levels exceed thresholds where effects to the fish are possible, but the majority of fish tissue samples (98%) are below

the threshold for safe human consumption.

- EVR is predicting full compliance with all water quality limits and targets by 2028.
- B.C. is participating in the International Joint Commission (IJC) process – see IJC Estimates Note in the ENV Binder.

Area Based Management Plan (ABMP) Amendments

- **The ABMP has been in place for 10 years and it is working; it has driven significant investments, and it provides a strategy to manage cumulative effects and protect ecosystems from multiple mines in the watershed.**
- **In response to a Ministerial Order issued in July 2024, ministry staff are amending the ABMP to ensure it remains relevant and reflects the latest science. Staff are on track to complete the first amendment by July 2025.**
    - The first amendment is focused on transferring ownership of the plan to the government from industry, and a second amendment will review the selenium target in Koocanusa Reservoir after the first amendment is done.
    - The amendment process includes deep engagement with Ktunaxa First Nation Governments, and opportunities for input by industry, Canadian and US Agencies, US Tribes, and the public and stakeholders.
- As part of the second amendment, ENV intends to complete the work that was undertaken with the Ktunaxa First Nation, in partnership with US Agencies, to develop a draft selenium WQO for Koocanusa Reservoir.

Water Quality Treatment:

- **EVR is now operating 4 water treatment facilities: 2 large tank-based Active Water Treatment Facilities (AWTFs) and two Saturated Rock Fills (SRFs).**
- **Water quality downstream of these facilities is improving, as record amounts of selenium and nitrate are being removed from the watershed.**
- **EVR now has capacity to treat 77.5 million liters/day - an investment of over $1.4B. The ministry is holding EVR accountable to construct more facilities.**
    - EVR will be adding or expanding 6 more treatment facilities by 2027, which will bring the treatment capacity to almost 150 million liters/day.
- The new SRF technology is showing very effective treatment of selenium and nitrate and is proving to be a more robust and cheaper technology than AWTFs.
- Other technologies are now being deployed, and EVR continues to invest in research and development. They are at the global forefront in developing technologies for both treatment and source control of coal mining impacts.

Contact: A.J. Downie, Director, Southeast Coal Mining Team
Authorizations and Remediation Branch
Environmental Protection Division, Government Financial Information

ESTIMATES NOTE (2025) **Confidential** Ministry of Environment and Parks Strategic Services and Indigenous Partnerships Division **March 2025**	**International Joint Commission for the Kootenay Watershed**

KEY FACTS

Joint Reference:

- B.C. is fully engaged in the International Joint Commission (IJC) process in the Elk-Kootenay watershed. B.C. supports the reference and we see this as an opportunity to build trust and understanding between B.C, Canada, United States, and Ktunaxa governments.
- 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.
- 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.
- The IJC process will respect the 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 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 jurisdictions.

Background

- Canada and the United States, in partnership with the transboundary Ktunaxa Nation, have initiated the IJC through a joint reference. The objective of the IJC reference is to reduce and mitigate the impacts of water pollution in the Elk-Kootenai/y watershed, as committed to in the Joint Statement of President Biden and Prime Minister Trudeau on March 24, 2023. The reference was transmitted to the IJC via joint ambassador statement on March 11, 2024.
- The reference instructs the IJC to assist governments in the establishment of a formal governance structure (Governance Body) to support information sharing and co development of options for future action.
- The Governance Body is composed of 18 members, six each from Canada, the United States, and the Ktunaxa governments.
    - Canada's delegation is split evenly between federal and provincial representatives. B.C.'s Governance Body members are the Deputy

Ministers of ENV, Mining and Critical Minerals, and the Intergovernmental Relations Secretariate.

- The reference also instructs 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.
    - The Study Board will provide the IJC with a plan of study, an interim report in September 2025, and a final report September 2026. These reports will provide an analysis of the current available science and identify data and research gaps to improve understanding of the water quality issues in the watershed.
- B.C. is aware that there have been requests for IJC involvement in other transboundary watersheds. B.C. is not supportive of IJC involvement in any other watershed and will continue to work collaboratively with neighbouring states and transboundary First Nations and Tribes.
- The Elk-Kootenay/I IJC reference is specific to the history and complexity of water quality influences, historical and ongoing water quality exceedances, and unique relationships of the region. Specifically, to requests for an IJC reference in Alaska, B.C. is not aware of any exceedances of Alaskan water quality standards.

Next Steps/Intergovernmental Considerations

- The Study Board released a draft Plan of Study that is currently under IJC review. The plan includes a budget and financing request to the federal governments of Canada and the United States for a total of $4.9M. The currency is not specified to be CAD or USD.
- 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.
    - B.C. and the IJC have an MOU in place to provide funding for B.C. to hold a Study Board Manager position and support B.C. participation in other Study Board related work. This funding covers the salary and costs of one full time employee equivalent at a BIO 30 pay scale.
    - B.C. also has a representative on the Government Advisory Committee to the Study Board, and staff may be asked to participate in the technical working groups at the discretion of the IJC.

Contact: Lisa Paquin, Executive Director,
Strategic Policy Branch
Strategic Services and Indigenous Partnerships Division, 778-698-4419

Issue: Elk Valley Cumulative Effect Framework, Developing Valued Component Objectives and Targets

Recommend Response:

- WLRS and Ktunaxa First Nations are jointly developing draft objectives and targets to manage for cumulative effects via restoration and conservation initiatives and incorporated into statutory decisions in the Elk Valley. The Framework has been developed through a Collaborative Stewardship Forum.
- Objectives and targets represent the desired condition for six valued components, which are represented by current condition assessments. The valued components identified for the Elk Valley include grizzly bear, westslope cutthroat trout, high elevation grasslands, bighorn sheep, aquatic ecosystems and old and mature forests.
- Managing for cumulative effects through decision-making, restoration and conservation strategies will be key to advancing continued responsible mining in the Elk Valley.

Additional Response points (if needed):

- WLRS continues to work with statutory decision-makers, proponents and First Nations to ensure objectives and targets provide clear/defensible guidance to help inform decisions regarding permitting, restoration and conservation.
- Objectives and targets will be used with current condition information to help assess the impact of new projects as well as provide guidance for proposed mitigations, restoration and reclamation.
- Endorsement of the framework is intended to be through agreement between BC and Ktunaxa leadership.
- Draft objectives and targets are expected to be available for use in assessing cumulative effects from mining

development including the Fording River Extension project (FRX) which is anticipated to be resubmitted April 2025.

Key Facts:

- The Elk Valley Cumulative Effects Management Framework was initiated in 2012 as an Environmental Assessment Certificate condition for Teck's (Now Elk Valley Resources) Line Creek LCO2 project.
- Financial implications of the objectives/targets will be assessed once the final drafts are completed (grizzly bear, bighorn sheep, westslope cutthroat trout, aquatic ecosystems to be completed by May 31,2025). Completing of draft objectives for high elevation grasslands will need to be inclusive of the FRX Environmental Assessment process. Completion of the draft objectives for old and mature forests will be consistent with the provincial old growth strategy which is currently in progress and being delivered by the Ministry of Forests.

Date Prepared/Revised: March 3, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor: Name: Laurel Nash	Phone: Government Financial Information
Alternate Contact for Issue: Name: Ray Morello	Phone: Government Financial Information

Issue: Fording River Extension EA Readiness Decision (EAO)

Recommended Response:

- I understand Elk Valley Resources (EVR) has worked closely with Ktunaxa First Nations (KNFN) for nearly two years to address their concerns in a revised detailed project description.
- EVR is targeting submission of a revised Detailed Project Description (DPD) to the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) in April 2025.
- The EAO will determine readiness to restart the Environmental Assessment (EA) once the revised DPD is submitted.
- The readiness decision will be made by the Chief Executive Assessment Officer of the EAO, and further questions should be directed to the Minister of Environment and Parks.

Key Facts:

- EVR's four operating coal mines in the Elk Valley sustain more than 3,600 direct and 7,200 indirect jobs in B.C. These mines are important economic drivers for the province and in 2023 accounted for 81 percent ($663.5M) of all mineral tax.
- The Fording River Extension Project (FRX) is an expansion to EVR's existing Fording River Operations coal mine, critical for sustained mining in the region.
- FRX is a proposed open pit metallurgical coal mine located 15 kilometres northeast of Elkford, BC with a mine life of up to 50 years.
- Intergovernmental Communications

- In the previous readiness decision KNFN asserted that FRX will result in extraordinarily adverse effects based on existing cumulative effects on water quality, west slope cutthroat trout, big horn sheep, high elevation grasslands and KNFN rights.
- The 2023 readiness decision for the FRX EA required Teck to submit a revised Detailed Project Description that includes plausible mitigations for extraordinarily adverse effects on KNFN rights.

- If FRX proceeds beyond the readiness decision, the EAO will work towards an efficient EA with all parties. EAO will work with permitting agencies to reduce the overall regulatory timeline to the extent possible under legislation.

Date Prepared/Revised: February 24, 2025	
Ministry Executive Sponsor:	
Name: Todd Goodsell	Phone: 778 696-2125
Alternate Contact for Issue:	
Name: Sheldon Reddekopp	Phone: 778 943-6999

Issue: Reconciliation Priorities with Ktunaxa First Nations

Recommend Response:

- My Ministry continues to be creative in supporting the ongoing work in the Elk Valley to achieve the goal of sustained mining to support economic interests while managing environmental values and advancing reconciliation priorities.
- B.C. and Ktunaxa Nation have a strong and longstanding relationship, WLRS is committed to developing co-management arrangements that support our reconciliation path.
- Under my Ministry, a Southeast Initiatives Secretariat (SEIS) has been established to prioritize working in partnership with Ktunaxa to advance stewardship initiatives and solutions to key environmental issues in the Elk and Flathead valleys.

Key Facts:

- Intergovernmental Communications
-
- The Ktunaxa Nation Council Society (KNCS) includes: ʔakisq̓nuk, ʔaq̓am, Yaqan nuʔkiy (Lower Kootenay Indian Band), and Yaq̓it ʔa·knuqƛi'it (YQT).
- Intergovernmental Communications
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- Intergovernmental Communications

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- As resource revenues tend to be shared with minimal conditions (compared to other transfers, such as program funding), Ktunaxa can allocate the funding at its discretion. This will enable greater self-determination and autonomy while also building Ktunaxa's governance capacity and internal accountability structures.
- With increased fiscal capacity Intergovernmental Communications in the province, the need to consider a Intergovernmental Communications is placed at the forefront with Ktunaxa.
- The Province wants to work with Ktunaxa to understand how Intergovernmental Communications Intergovernmental Communications

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES:

- B.C. shares Ktunaxa's interests in strong governance and stewardship in their territory and has been taking steps to better understand Ktunaxa's stewardship, social, political and economic aspirations, and how we can support the Ktunaxa to achieve their vision.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

- No enhanced fiscal commitments are made beyond the extension of current forest revenue sharing arrangements, and capacity funding that continues at current levels centrally through G2G agreements with the collective Ktunaxa governments.

NEXT STEPS:

- WLRS will continue to support the implementation of the Intergovernmental Communications with Ktunaxa to advance Intergovernmental Communications Intergovernmental Communications

Date Prepared/Revised: April 11, 2025

Ministry Executive Sponsor:
Name: Laurel Nash Phone: 250-508-1670

Alternate Contact for Issue:
Name: Wayne Giles Phone: 250-426-9475

SOUTHEAST INITIATIVES SECRETARIAT
(SOUTHEAST COAL)

Additional Ministries:

- Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship (WLRS; Lead)
- Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV)
- Environmental Assessment Office (EAO)
- Forests (FOR)
- Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (IRR)

Issue:

- Metallurgic (or steelmaking) coal mining in the Elk Valley region of Southeast British Columbia (BC) is critical to the economy with Elk Valley Resources' (EVR) four operating mines accounting for 83 percent of total coal production in BC ($8.8B) and sustaining more than 3,600 direct and 7,200 in-direct jobs in the province.
- The Elk Valley is subject to numerous complex and interrelated issues that result in a challenging regulatory environment for continued metallurgic coal mining. A cross-ministry Southeast Initiatives Secretariat (SEI Secretariat) has been established by BC to advance a coordinated strategy to establish conditions necessary to support continued responsible metallurgic coal mining in the Elk Valley. EMLI contributes resources to the SEI Secretariat.

Background:

- EVR operates four metallurgic coal mines in the Elk Valley: Fording River Operations, Greenhills Operations, Line Creek Operations and Elkview Operations with an additional site, Coal Mountain Mine, in care and maintenance since 2019.
- The four operating EVR mines are important economic drivers for BC. In 2023 they:
    - Accounted for 83 percent of total coal production.
    - Generated ~$8.8B in total production value.
    - Accounted for 81 percent ($663.5M) of all mineral tax collected.
- Decades of historic mining activity and the ongoing development of EVR's mines in the Elk Valley have led to significant waste rock accumulation, alteration of land and water courses, and impacts on the environment. As a result, the Elk Valley is a complex regulatory environment for mining due to the environmental impacts with significant interest from Indigenous Nations, the public, United States (US) tribes, and US federal and state agencies.
- Given the complex regulatory environment, EVR and other proponents' ability to advance mine expansions through the Environmental Assessment (EA) process to sustain operations (e.g., EVR's Fording River Extension) or develop new mines (e.g., NWP Coal's Crown Mountain EA) has been limited.

*This briefing note outlines a major corporate issue for the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation that was not included in the Corporate Transition Binder.

- In July 2024, Deputy Minister's Committee on Natural Resources established a Southeast Initiatives Secretariat (SEI Secretariat) comprised of representatives from the Natural Resource Sector (NRS) Ministries, including EMLI, under the leadership of a dedicated Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) to develop and implement a coordinated and aligned cross-ministry strategy to establish conditions necessary to support continued responsible metallurgic coal mining in the Elk Valley.
    - It is expected that the development of the strategy by the SEI Secretariat will be a refinement of existing ministry strategies for the Elk Valley to align actions with the short-term priority of supporting EAO with a decision on whether to proceed to an EA on the FRX Project.
- In addition to supporting the work of other NRS Ministries and the collective priorities of the SEI Secretariat, EMLI is advancing ministry-specific work around permitting, bonding, and reclamation and closure.

<u>Permitting</u>

- Mining is a highly regulated industry requiring many authorizations from multiple different provincial permitting agencies.
- EMLI, through the Major Mines Office, manages the coordinated authorizations process for major applications to streamline, avoid duplication of efforts, and harmonize a single consultation process with Indigenous Nations for proposed projects requiring multiple provincial authorizations.
- Dedicated staff from permitting agencies (EMLI, ENV and WLRS) are assigned to administer the regulatory processes associated with EVR's Elk Valley mines. Given the complexity and scale of EVR's mines, EVR advances, and BC staff adjudicate a high volume of permitting work. In 2023, 57 authorizations were issued to EVR, each requiring review and assessment by BC staff.
- BC's permitting priorities in the Elk Valley are water quality mitigation projects, and mine expansions.
    - EVR's ability improve water quality conditions is needed to mitigate environmental impacts of historic and current mining, and to establish support for continued responsible mining in the Elk Valley.
    - Until the broader SEI Secretariat strategy is implemented and BC is positioned to consider large, EA-level expansions, smaller mine expansions under EA thresholds need to be advanced by EVR and considered by BC to maintain operations at the mines.

<u>Bonding</u>

- Under the *Mines Act*, the Chief Permitting Officer has the authority to set the amount and form of security reflective of the reclamation, environmental, and closure liability obligations present at a mine.
- The current liability assessed for EVR's five Elk Valley mines is $2.495B which has

*This briefing note outlines a major corporate issue for the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation that was not included in the Corporate Transition Binder.

been fully bonded: $1.9B in surety bonds and the remainder through the exploration incentive security.
- EMLI is undertaking a review of the liability associated with EVR's water treatment facilities that will result in an increase in the total bond required for the five coal mine sites. The decision to increase the bonds for the five coal mine sites is anticipated to be referred to the Chief Permitting Officer for decision in early 2025, following discussions with EVR and consultation with First Nations.

Reclamation and Closure

- BC and EVR's ability to demonstrate and plan for effective, long-term, mine reclamation and closure is critical for establishing support for continued mining in the Elk Valley.
- Mines in BC are required to submit updated Reclamation and Closure Plans (5 Yr RCPs) every five years, which include updated reclamation liability cost estimates.
- The 5 Yr RCPs for each of EVR's five Elk Valley sites have been reviewed by technical staff from BC and the Ktunaxa Nation Council (KNC).
- EMLI has initiated a process to amend the EVR 5 Yr RCP requirements to ensure reclamation and closure planning and reporting are effectively demonstrating EVR's reclamation and closure obligations and total liabilities.

Implications / Considerations / Opportunities:

- EVR's four operating metallurgic coal mines in the Elk Valley are important to the BC economy and are a major employer in the region. However, decades of development have resulted in negative environmental impacts which makes authorizing further mine expansions challenging.
- To support establishing the conditions necessary to enable continued mining, EMLI will continue to advance priority work related to permitting (water quality mitigations and non-EA mine expansions), bonding, and reclamation and closure, in addition to the broader SEI Secretariat strategy.

Decision(s) Required / Next Steps:

- EMLI is putting substantial effort into amalgamating and modernizing the Elk Valley permits and closing the gap between estimated liabilities and security held for those sites in the next 6 months.
- There are no decisions or next steps required by the incoming Government specific to EMLI's mandate in the Elk Valley.

*This briefing note outlines a major corporate issue for the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation that was not included in the Corporate Transition Binder.