



Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

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

Minister Katrine Conroy
Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

November 15th, 2021

Dear Minister Conroy

Thank you for your letter dated June 28th, 2021, supporting our recommendations and enabling Chief Harry and myself as Co-Chairs to communicate with your office directly. Council has been working diligently in smaller Working Groups to advance the goals and actions of Together for Wildlife (T4W). That work has included participation by members of the First Nations-B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum (Forum). We have also met with the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) and Old Growth Teams, the Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team (PHTAT), and the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF), and will continue to engage with these and other partners to further advance the T4W Strategy.

Your Council wishes to acknowledge the major changes you are leading in British Columbia with respect to Forest and Range policy, Landscape Level Planning, and furthering reconciliation with Indigenous Nations in B.C. Congratulations! Please know that we will continue to collaborate and bring forward our knowledge and expertise to assist you and improve the emphasis on, and outcomes for, wildlife and wildlife habitat.

This letter presents recommendations requiring your immediate attention as well as some with a longer timeline. Full reports from three of our Working Groups are attached and will be posted on your newly launched [Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council \(MWAC\) website](#). The recommendations in this letter have all been endorsed by your full Council.

Objectives Working Group: T4W Actions 8, 2, and 16. (Attachment #1)

Reports, audits, and court decisions have confirmed that wildlife stewardship planning in B.C. is *ad hoc* and where it does occur, differs among plans, species, and regions. As well, the absence of a legislative framework enabling a vision of wildlife stewardship and objective setting is a barrier to overcoming this problematic situation. We appreciate that you are fully aware of this situation, having tabled the *Sustainable Wildlife Management Act* in 2016. Accordingly, **Council recommends the following:**

1. By June 2022, complete a Wildlife Stewardship Planning and Objective-Setting Policy, jointly with the Forum. See Attachment #1 for the Council's recommended policy foundation.

2. By Fall 2023, enact legislation that legally establishes objectives for wildlife and habitat stewardship and key ecosystems (e.g., wetlands, grasslands, riparian areas, old growth forest) as a priority that applies to all sectors (forestry, mining, oil & gas, tourism, transportation, agriculture, urban development, etc.).
3. Establish diverse and collaborative Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees to support the development of local wildlife stewardship plans. Significant progress must be made towards establishing these committees by Spring 2022.
4. Develop local wildlife stewardship plans collaboratively with Indigenous governments, and with stakeholder engagement through Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees, in all regions of the province.
5. Develop and implement monitoring programs and performance measures to determine if objectives are being met for key ecosystems on all public and private lands, including Conservation Lands.
6. By June 2022, increase transparency by establishing a public registry for wildlife stewardship planning.

Funding Working Group: T4W Action 13. (Attachment #2)

To help implement T4W, the Wildlife and Habitat budget was increased by almost 10 million dollars. However, overall wildlife and habitat stewardship in B.C. remains significantly underfunded – hence the need for a new dedicated funding model and innovative partnerships to leverage money. To achieve Action 13, T4W consultants will be preparing an evidence-based assessment of options for sufficient and dedicated wildlife and habitat funding. To further support this Action, **Council recommends the following:**

7. Support the following principles with respect to new long-term, stable and dedicated funding for wildlife and habitat. The background on each of these principles is in Attachment #2.
 - A. Everyone pays: dedicated funding will come from all residents and visitors, as well as direct users.
 - B. The funding agent will be impartial and will leverage and match provincial and federal funding.
 - C. The decision-making process will be clear and transparent, will respect the needs of Indigenous communities to be part of the decision making, and will follow best practices for governance.
 - D. Annual expenditures on wildlife and habitat will be publicly reported, with regular audits by the Auditor General.

Implementing T4W will require a new dedicated funding model built on these principles and informed by the ongoing work of the Council. Incremental changes to existing funding models would complement this new model. Here are the first incremental changes that **Council has recognized and endorsed:**

8. Enact regulatory changes to double the surcharge on hunting and species licenses for resident and non-resident hunters, effective immediately and with regular cost of living updates to the surcharge (the last increase was in 2004 and inflation has substantially eroded the purchasing power of these dollars). Council supports the BC Wildlife Federation 2021 resolution on this matter.
9. Together with your colleague Minister George Heyman, undertake a review, rationalization, and increase of the fines levied under the *Wildlife Act*. Council supports the Conservation Officer Service in recommending this action, and furthermore adds that these fines should be dedicated to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF), which likely will require a regulation change under the *Financial Administration Act*.

Research Working Group: T4W Actions 4, 5, and 7 (Attachment #3)

There are key knowledge gaps in the scientific understanding of what limits wildlife populations and the steps needed to manage these populations to meet objectives. Uncoordinated efforts across government scientists, regional staff, academics, and private sector consultants limit our ability to rapidly and cost-effectively respond to scientific demands. Designing the 'next study' to help guide management decision making requires better coordination among these sectors as well as better access to the data that have already been collected. These efforts complement both the Funding and Objectives Working Groups' recommendations to fund monitoring of stewardship activities. Accordingly, **Council recommends the following:**

10. Work with your Environment and Land Use Committee colleagues to establish the funding needed to complete the BioHUB Initiative, which has the potential to transform the management and accessibility of wildlife data in B.C. (estimated at \$5.5 million). "Open access" principles must become the norm, with independent oversight on data security.
11. Work with your colleague, Minister George Heyman, and his team from the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) to formulate an improved policy that better incentivizes data sharing with FLNRORD. As an example, include a requirement for data uploads through BioHUB as part of the EAO permitting process.
12. Integrate management targets with rigorous monitoring to track progress towards these goals. Funding for stewardship efforts must include support for monitoring and account for cumulative impacts of human activity on wildlife, not just project-specific impacts.
13. Support the work underway by the Research Working Group to develop options for the creation of a scientific advisory team (or similar body) to support information needs of provincial advisory bodies (PHTAT, Forum, MWAC), support the prioritization and coordination of wildlife science needs across regions, and facilitate interactions among governments (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and non-government scientists.

Additional Recommendations

BC experienced another extraordinary wildfire season in 2021. While many wildlife species benefit from wildfire, the scale and intensity of fires in recent years requires more thoughtful management to ensure post-fire land use activities result in conditions that meet species and ecosystem objectives. Accordingly, **Council recommends the following:**

14. That government establish an interdisciplinary, collaborative team to ensure that wildfire recovery management actions (e.g., salvage, retention, reforestation) are developed with Indigenous Nations, informed by the best available information (Indigenous knowledge, science, professional assessments), inclusive of stakeholder input, and implemented with enforceable tools.
15. That post-fire decisions clearly balance the priority for wildlife and wildlife habitat, together with ecosystem health and resilience, with other values and economic drivers.
16. That government prioritize the implementation of cultural and prescribed fire to proactively reduce the severity of future wildfires and improve wildlife habitats.

In our January 21st, 2021 letter to you, Council gave support to the work between your ministry staff and the forest industry, regarding policy changes on forest roads rehabilitation. It is disappointing that after ten months Council has not seen any encouraging signs of improvement – particularly given the significant negative impact that access is having on wildlife throughout much of BC. Therefore, **Council recommends the following:**

17. The implementation of a stumpage appraisal mechanism that enables the holder of a cutting authority to fairly and equitably recover the costs incurred of carrying out beneficial forestry roads rehabilitation work.

As Co-Chairs of your Council, both Harry and I have been impressed by the work undertaken by the Working Groups, and the collaboration with the Forum, PHTAT, HCTF, and the FRPA and Old Growth Teams. We feel positive these recommendations will advance T4W in a robust manner. We are also very pleased that you will be welcoming participants at the Stakeholder Wildlife Dialogue on December 1st, 6-8 pm and that Minister Nathan Cullen will be welcoming participants at the Indigenous Wildlife Dialogue on November 26, 9-11 am.

Your Council looks forward to meeting with you on November 23rd, and hope that this letter provides the basis of an enduring, positive, and important discussion.

Sincerely,

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

CC: Honourable Nathan Cullen, Minister of State for Lands and Natural Resource Operations
Roly Russell, Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Development

Rick Manwaring, Deputy Minister, Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Secretariat

David Muter, Assistant Deputy Minister, Resource Stewardship Division

Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

First Nations – BC Wildlife Advisory Forum

Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team

Attachment 1

Towards a Policy for Wildlife Stewardship¹ Planning and Objective-Setting in B.C.

Preamble

This document provides advice and recommendations from the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council to the Province regarding a policy on wildlife stewardship planning and objective-setting in B.C. The Council recognizes that Provincial government staff will need to develop the policy in collaboration with First Nations, as well as to engage internally (within and across Ministries) and with stakeholders to incorporate their perspectives. Accordingly, it is not Council's intention to table the Policy, but rather, lay the foundation for it.

The Council supports shared decision-making with Indigenous Nations in B.C., which will shape all aspects of wildlife and habitat stewardship, including planning and objective-setting. At this time, definitions of shared decision-making range across a broad spectrum of processes and relationships, from collaborative to joint-statutory decisions enabled by legislation. Additional policy work and broad engagement to define shared decision-making with Indigenous Nations is needed. Hence, a wildlife stewardship planning and objective-setting policy, and all policies, will need to be regularly reviewed and updated as shared decision-making in B.C. evolves.

The Council also recognizes that B.C.'s legislative framework does not currently realize the vision of wildlife stewardship planning and objective setting. Further, various reports, audits, and court decisions have concluded that the current objectives-setting framework is insufficient and changes to the legislative and regulatory framework are needed.

Rationale

A Policy for Wildlife Stewardship Planning and Objective-Setting in B.C. (hereafter referred to as the Policy) should support the vision and goals of the *Together for Wildlife* strategy – specifically Action 8:

“Beginning in 2020, we will establish clear, measurable objectives for wildlife stewardship that take into consideration the interactions among species. In 2021, in collaboration with the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council and the First Nations–B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum, we will draft a renewed approach for setting objectives and linking wildlife populations and habitat. We will implement this approach after broad engagement, by developing provincial stewardship frameworks and regional stewardship plans for priority species and populations.”

In addition, an effective Policy can be expected to:

¹ The term “wildlife stewardship”, as opposed to “wildlife management”, is used to reflect Indigenous worldviews and the perspectives of many British Columbians that we collectively have a responsibility to protect and conserve wildlife and habitat, and account for the interests of current societies and future generations.

- Ensure that wildlife and their habitats thrive, are resilient, and support and enrich the lives of all British Columbians
- Support reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, by ensuring that planning incorporates Indigenous knowledge and creates the space for shared decision-making with Indigenous peoples
- Ensure wildlife and habitat are considered fully by decision-makers
- Focus wildlife and habitat stewardship actions to meet wildlife objectives established through wildlife stewardship plans
- Improve transparency and accountability for all aspects of wildlife stewardship planning

The Policy should ensure that the guiding principles of stewardship are applied consistently across the province, while providing flexibility to address regional and local circumstances.

Scope

The Policy should apply to terrestrial **wildlife**² species and their habitats with a primary focus on vertebrate species that are harvested, viewed, culturally important, ecologically important, and/or would benefit from objective-setting. Beyond these 'priority species', other Policies exist or could be developed for threatened and endangered species (subject to recovery planning), aquatic species, and **ecosystem** objective-setting, in alignment with this Policy.

Integration with government commitments, programs, and policies

The Policy should integrate with other government commitments, programs and policies. In particular, it should support B.C.'s commitment to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), including, but not limited to, articles:

- Article 18, Section 1: Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own Indigenous decision-making institutions.
- Article 24, Section 1: Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their healthy practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals. Indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services.
- Article 31, Section 1: Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.
- Article 32, Section 1: Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.

² Bolded terms are defined below.

In alignment with the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)*, the policy should be co-drafted with the appropriate levels of First Nation representatives, and be broadly enabling of government-to-government relationships and shared decision making.

Existing policies may need to be updated to reflect the requirements of the Policy, such as the Control of Species Policy, [Big Game Harvest Management Procedure](#), or species-specific procedures for stewardship/management.

The Policy's success will be facilitated by additional policy, procedures, and guidance that may be required to fulfill its purpose in a consistent and transparent manner. For example:

1. Policies for shared decision-making with Indigenous Nations that are broad and enabling for wildlife stewardship, including planning, objective-setting and monitoring
2. Procedures for public and stakeholder engagement, including social science research techniques
3. Policies for ecosystem stewardship (e.g., for wetlands, grasslands, Old Growth), recognizing the importance of ecosystems for biodiversity.
4. Procedures for setting wildlife objectives, habitat and ecosystem objectives, and linking wildlife objectives with habitat objectives
5. Guidance on legal and policy tools that may be used to implement species plans (e.g., Access Management Areas under the *Wildlife Act*, Wildlife Habitat Areas under the *Forest and Range Practices Act*, decision-making under the Cumulative Effects Framework and Timber Supply Review), that is kept current as legislation and policy changes
6. A long-term schedule for developing, implementing, and evaluating provincial and local species stewardship plans that is driven by the priorities of Indigenous Nations and stakeholders
7. Templates and guidance on content for provincial and local stewardship plans
8. Ministry/department roles and responsibilities for stewardship plan development and implementation
9. Capacity needs (people, skill sets and budgets) to develop and implement wildlife stewardship plans (as noted by the Funding Working Group)

Who is Affected by the Policy?

The Policy would affect:

- All British Columbians
- Indigenous peoples, recognizing that Indigenous peoples' food, social, and ceremonial use of wildlife takes priority after conservation
- All orders of government, including Indigenous, federal, provincial, and local governments
- Sectors that benefit from wildlife for hunting, trapping, guide-outfitting, ecotourism, wildlife viewing, nature study, research, etc.
- Natural resource extraction industries
- Tourists and visitors to B.C.
- Other jurisdictions with whom B.C. shares trans-boundary wildlife populations

Policy Statement

The following components should be considered for inclusion in the Policy, recognizing that Policy will need to be updated as shared decision-making with Indigenous Nations evolves:

1. Wildlife stewardship plans are developed in accordance with the following principles:
 - a. Interconnectedness – recognize that all living and non-living things and communities are integrally dependent on each other.
 - b. Collaboration with Indigenous peoples – respect ancestral connections, beliefs, protocols, and management practices that vary among and within Indigenous Nations across the province.
 - c. Engagement with **stakeholders** – ensure engagement with Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees and broad public participation³ to understand stakeholder **values**, inform plan scope and content, and solicit feedback on draft stewardship plans
 - d. Collaboration across boundaries – ensure wildlife and habitat stewardship spans regional and political boundaries.
 - A diversity of knowledge– connect all relevant data, information and knowledge, such as: **Indigenous Knowledge**, Western science, local knowledge, citizen science, ecological concepts, historical wildlife population trends, habitat capability, habitat suitability, and habitat effectiveness
 - e. Planning for climate change – understand potential effects (positive, adverse, neutral) of climate change on wildlife species and their habitats
 - f. **Adaptive management** – planning, implementing, and monitoring wildlife stewardship in a dynamic manner that seeks opportunities for correction and improvement
2. Wildlife stewardship plans are established for all harvested species at a provincial level, and for priority species at a regional level (e.g., regionally important wildlife, species in priority ecosystems), as determined collaboratively by Indigenous Nations and stakeholders. Plans may also be established for species that are not harvested and are a priority for Indigenous Nations or stakeholders.
3. Wildlife stewardship plans may be established for single species or multiple species and must consider interactions among all living things and the environments that sustain them.
4. **Provincial** wildlife stewardship plans set broad **goals** and procedural **objectives** (e.g., target dates to complete regional plans), and provide a framework to manage one or more species, including:
 - a. A high-level summary of current **cumulative knowledge**, and knowledge gaps, to strategically guide research and adaptive management
 - b. Known and hypothesized threats to the wildlife population(s)
 - c. Potential management **strategies** and considerations for these strategies (e.g., ecological factors, socio-economic factors, provincial policy, or legislation)
5. **Local** wildlife stewardship plans set wildlife **objectives** and include:
 - a. The current state of cumulative knowledge at a local scale, knowledge gaps to be filled and recommendations for doing so

³ <https://www.bcauditor.com/sites/default/files/publications/2008/report11/report/public-participation-principles-and-best-practices-british-columbia.pdf>

- b. Clear, measurable wildlife population objectives – potentially for different timeframes (e.g., short and long term) – and recognizing natural variability
 - c. **Strategies** to achieve wildlife population objectives, considering threats to the population, and the potential impact and effort of different actions
 - d. Specific strategies to employ across a continuum of population levels, with more intensive management when populations are further from established objectives (i.e., when there are greater risks to the population)
 - e. A monitoring plan to evaluate success, including **performance measures**
 - f. A schedule to review and potentially update objectives and strategies over time (e.g., in response to new information, change in a species' conservation status)
6. Draft provincial and local wildlife stewardship plans are peer reviewed by experts (e.g., qualified professionals, Indigenous Knowledge holders) prior to finalization.
 7. Provincial and local wildlife stewardship plans are posted publicly once completed, as are the components from which they were developed (e.g., cumulative knowledge background, wildlife objectives, implementation plans) to ensure transparency.
 8. Provincial wildlife stewardship plans are signed off by the Wildlife & Habitat Director, Assistant Deputy Minister, Minister or Environmental Land Use Committee, as well as by the appropriate Indigenous Government Organization(s), with a higher level of sign off for plans with greater potential socio-economic implications.
 9. Local wildlife stewardship plans are signed off by the Regional Executive Director, the Wildlife & Habitat Branch Director, and the appropriate Indigenous Government Organization(s) where applicable. These approaches are expected to evolve as shared decision-making policies evolve.
 10. Signed-off objectives are government policy. Government will put regulatory mechanisms in place to meet habitat objectives, will make all reasonable attempts to implement all recommendations in plans, will provide rationale for unaccomplished actions and a plan to implement any yet to be met recommendations, and will report out on how plans inform decision-making. As shared decision-making policies evolve, signed-off objectives may become policy for both the Province and Indigenous Nations.
 11. Plans are reviewed at least every five years and updated as needed.
 12. Progress reports (e.g., stewardship actions and monitoring completed) for signed-off plans are posted publicly on an annual basis, following a standard template. Key status information is reported at a local scale, and, where needed, rolled up at provincial scale (e.g., population size/trend, habitat status).

Definitions

Adaptive management is a systematic process for continually improving management policies and practices by learning from the outcomes of operational programs.

Ecosystems are a dynamic complex of plant, animal and microorganism communities and their abiotic environment, all interacting as a functional unit.

Goals are broad, general statements that expresses a desired future condition, and often not attainable in the short term. Goals may be identified to meet interests or values and provide context for setting objectives.

Habitat is the air, soil, water, food and cover components of the environment on which wildlife depend directly or indirectly in order to carry out their life processes.

Habitat capability is the potential of the land, under ideal conditions, to sustain the biotic conditions that comprise the habitat required by a given species. Capability is dictated largely by geo-climatic factors that are typically outside the control of wildlife managers. Habitat capability may be more relevant for establishing long-term population objectives.

Habitat suitability is the current conditions of a given area regarding its ability to support a given species by meeting their needs for food, water, cover, access to mates, etc. Edaphic (soil nutrient and moisture) and seral (successional) stage are common factors influencing suitability. Predator density can also be a determinant of suitability. Wildlife managers can influence habitat suitability. Habitat suitability may be more relevant for establishing short term population objectives.

Indigenous Knowledge is embedded in Indigenous practices for stewarding complex ecosystems and the wildlife that depend on them. These systems of knowledge are based on lived experience on the land by Indigenous knowledge holders, as well as on oral transmission of knowledge over hundreds or even thousands of years. This is place-based knowledge and can help address many stewardship-related challenges. Indigenous Knowledge and Western science may be equally valued through a concept referred to as 'Two-Eyed Seeing' for wildlife and habitat stewardship.

Interconnectedness refers to a worldview where humans are closely related to other natural entities, including all living and non-living things (also known as Kincentric ecology).

Cumulative knowledge includes all relevant data, information and knowledge, such as **Indigenous Knowledge**, science, local knowledge, citizen science, ecological concepts, historical wildlife population trends, habitat capability, habitat suitability, and habitat effectiveness.

Local spatial scales may be wildlife management regions, wildlife species population management unit(s), watersheds, or First Nation territories. Local plans should support collaboration among and between wildlife management regions, First Nation territories, and partners with shared interests and roles to achieve success towards identified objectives.

Objectives describe a specific desired future outcome or condition that supports a goal. These may be expressed for the short term (e.g., 5 years) and long term (e.g., 15 years), and may be procedural (e.g., target dates to complete regional plans) or biological (e.g., wildlife population and distribution objectives; habitat amount, distribution and condition objectives).

Performance measures will track progress towards objectives. These might include indicators (metrics) that are expected to lead to meeting established objectives, such as harvest success rates, sex ratios within (sub)populations, area of habitat protected, number of wildlife species residences protected, road mortality incidents, etc.

Stakeholders are everyone with an interest in, or potential impact or benefit to, wildlife and their habitats in British Columbia.

Strategies are a logical set of specific and verifiable actions that together are likely to achieve an objective or set of objectives, and/or reveal whether an objective has been met. Collectively, strategies

form an action plan. Plans may identify a range of different strategies in response to different population metrics (e.g., different harvest strategies for different population sizes).

Values includes human desires, activities, and traditions that are related to the species or to the potential implications of implementing the strategy. These may include harvesting or viewing potential, cultural use, interpreted intrinsic or ecological value of species to current or future generations. Values may be determined through many different approaches, including public surveys or regional wildlife advisory committees. Note that the term “values” also has specific uses and definitions under existing legislation (e.g., *Forest and Range Practices Act*) and related initiatives (e.g., cumulative effects) in B.C.

Wildlife is any species of animal, plant, or lichen that is native to B.C. Note that the *Wildlife Act* defines wildlife as raptors, threatened species, endangered species, game and other species of vertebrates prescribed by regulation, and for some sections includes fish but not controlled alien species.

Attachment 2

Funding Principles

Wildlife is of utmost importance to British Columbians, providing social, economic, environmental, and cultural benefits. For many of us, the simple existence of wildlife is a fundamental value. Our rich natural diversity is inextricably linked to our way of life, and we need to ensure that wildlife and their habitats are resilient as we face challenges like climate change. However, despite the recent \$10 million lift to the Wildlife and Habitat budget, wildlife stewardship in B.C. is currently significantly underfunded.

To address this funding gap, the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council is developing recommendations to the Minister for a new dedicated funding model and identifying opportunities for innovative partnerships to leverage dollars for wildlife and habitat.

Additional funding for wildlife in British Columbia will support:

- Viable, healthy, robust current and future populations of wildlife
- Meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous peoples to support wildlife stewardship and access to healthy, wild foods
- A balance to ensure that wildlife stewardship and the economy thrive

These principles have been developed to guide the selection of funding models and partnerships.

	Dimensions of Funding	Associated Principles
1	SOURCE: Where should wildlife and habitat funding come from?	a) Reliability: Long-term, stable, and dedicated funding. b) Everyone pays: Everyone who lives in or visits B.C. pays for healthy and abundant wildlife (not just direct users). c) Responsiveness: Funding opportunities (such as federal and philanthropic funding) are continually assessed and accessed as they change through time.
2	AGENT: Where is the wildlife and habitat funding held?	a) Leveraging: The funding agent leverages and matches provincial and federal funding. b) Impartiality: The funding agent is impartial, and is seen by the public to be impartial.
3	GOVERNANCE: Who decides where funding for wildlife and habitat goes? (includes process and policy considerations around funding)	a) Transparency: The decision-making process around the allocation of funding for wildlife and habitat is clear and transparent. b) Respect: The needs of Indigenous communities are part of the decision making, as determined and expressed through their Indigenous Governing Bodies. c) Following best practices: Effective funding governance in B.C. builds on best governance practices in other jurisdictions.

<p>4 MONITORING AND REPORTING: What accountability measures are needed around funding for wildlife and habitat?</p>	<p>a) Public: There is comprehensive, publicly available Annual Reporting of expenditures on wildlife and habitat spending.</p> <p>b) Accountable: The Auditor General provides regular audits of wildlife and habitat expenditures.</p>
--	--

Additional Recommendations

Increased Surcharges on Hunting and Species Licenses

The BC Wildlife Federation (BCWF) recently passed a resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the BC Wildlife Federation request that the Province of BC double the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation surcharge on hunting and species licenses for resident hunters and non-resident hunters, effective immediately; and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the BC Wildlife Federation request that future Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation surcharges be calculated on a cost of living index and updated regularly.

MWAC notes the following points:

- BCWF is the first stakeholder group to propose that they provide new dedicated funds to advance wildlife stewardship in BC. Doubling the existing surcharges is a positive, voluntary step which will deliver ~1% of MWAC's goal for new dedicated funding. MWAC hopes this action will inspire other stakeholders to take similar positive action to help attain this T4W goal.
- MWAC supports BCWF in this request. This is consistent with the T4W Action 13 to support dedicated long-term funding for wildlife and habitat stewardship, and also reflects the value of wildlife to British Columbians.
- Additional surcharge funds to HCTF should be considered in conjunction with the work that the MWAC Co-Chairs are leading to broaden the scope of HCTF funding to better reflect Indigenous needs and processes.
- While this will produce a welcome increase to the HCTF budget, MWAC is aware that this is a 'drop in the bucket' when compared to the very large funding increase needed to adequately support wildlife stewardship in B.C. The Funding Working Group will continue its work to seek new funding models for the other 98% of our funding goal.

Increases to Fines for Wildlife Infractions

The Conservation Office Service has proposed a review of the fines for wildlife infractions. This includes a rationalization of the fines (higher fines for more significant infractions) and proposed increases to the fines.

MWAC supports increased fines, noting the following points:

- An increase to fines is an economic signal of the importance and value of wildlife to British Columbians. The amount of fines should be reviewed on a regular basis and increased as needed, at least in line with inflation.
- An increase to fines will not contribute to dedicated funding for wildlife stewardship, unless a decision is made to dedicate fines to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (or similar body) or to have a new dedicated surcharge added to the fines.

- In Ontario, all fines and penalties are dedicated to a fish and wildlife special purpose account, which is invested in fish and wildlife management. The Ministry may wish to consider adopting this approach; adopting or mimicking the Ontario model would take B.C. a bit closer to the T4W goal for new dedicated funding.

Attachment 3

Research Goals and Tasks

Goals for the Research Working Group

There is an urgent need to improve the role of science and knowledge in the stewardship of wildlife and habitats in British Columbia (B.C.). This need is reflected in the combined challenges of providing better information for decision makers and for supporting the outcomes of management actions (i.e., effectiveness monitoring and adaptive management). These challenges were identified in the Together for Wildlife engagement process in 2017-2020.

Here, “wildlife science” is used in a general way to include the way we collect, understand, and share information on ecosystems, the people who use and interact with wildlife, and the Indigenous Knowledge of communities across the province. Wildlife science also includes the practice of using this information in decision making.

The use of science in decision making is important because:

- 1) it tends to lead to better outcomes for society;
- 2) it provides a clearer understanding of tradeoffs made in the face of competing outcomes;
- 3) it enhances public trust and confidence in decisions.

Science and ‘more information’ alone cannot solve the complexities of the problems facing the province’s wildlife populations, but without this knowledge, we are using guesswork that sacrifices time and energy on matters that require urgent responses.

There are a number of barriers to the use of science in decision making that the Minister’s Wildlife Advisory Council is uniquely positioned to help resolve through recommendations on strategic policy and funding efforts – much of which builds on a strong, multi-sector community of researchers, scientists, and data providers who are already working hard for better wildlife science in B.C. These recommendations include Goal 2 of the Together for Wildlife Strategy, which states:

“Data, information, and knowledge drive better decisions We will make new investments in biological, social, cultural and economic data collection, as well as cumulative effects assessments, research, modelling and monitoring.”

Goal 2 consists of 4 actions (Actions 4,5,6,7) that share a common thread of developing and communicating the best possible information to help support management decisions that conserve and restore wildlife in B.C.

The Role of MWAC in Supporting Goal 2

Science and research play an important role in quantifying trade-offs for the complex decisions made by managers and elected officials. A priority for Together for Wildlife is to ensure that people have the knowledge needed to navigate multiple-competing demands on the landscape for the betterment of wildlife and people. Unfortunately, the 'community of practice' of wildlife science in BC suffers from:

- 1) Funding shortfalls and missed opportunities to leverage research funding with external partners;
- 2) Lack of coordination, prioritization, and research planning across regions and researchers;
- 3) Weak or arbitrary links between researchers and decision makers;
- 4) Weak or non-existent exchanges between ecological, social, and Indigenous knowledges;
- 5) Lack of access and awareness of archival studies and data;
- 6) Missed opportunities to work collaboratively across stakeholder and industries to support the science of wildlife conservation and restoration;
- 7) Missed training opportunities for staff and recruitment of new managers/scientists.

Priority Tasks for the MWAC Research Working Group

- 1) The Research Working Group will *examine and recommend* models to support better access to more relevant science at a senior decision-making level. Dependent upon the outcome of the working group's review of different delivery models for enhanced science, these models *may*:
 - a. Form a Wildlife Science Advisory Team to support the work of groups such as the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council [MWAC], the Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team [PHTAT], the First Nations – B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Forum, subject matter (e.g., chronic wasting disease, sheep, primary prey management), and regional management bodies;
 - b. Include scientists from the public, private, and academic sector.
 - c. Include expertise in ecological, social, and Indigenous ways of knowing.
 - d. Be tasked with collating information to support research prioritization for Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation [HCTF] and Together for Wildlife [T4W] funded projects.
 - e. Support the design and coordination of strategic research efforts across regions that harmonizes with provincial and regional objectives setting.
 - f. Co-chaired by a government and senior non-government scientist.

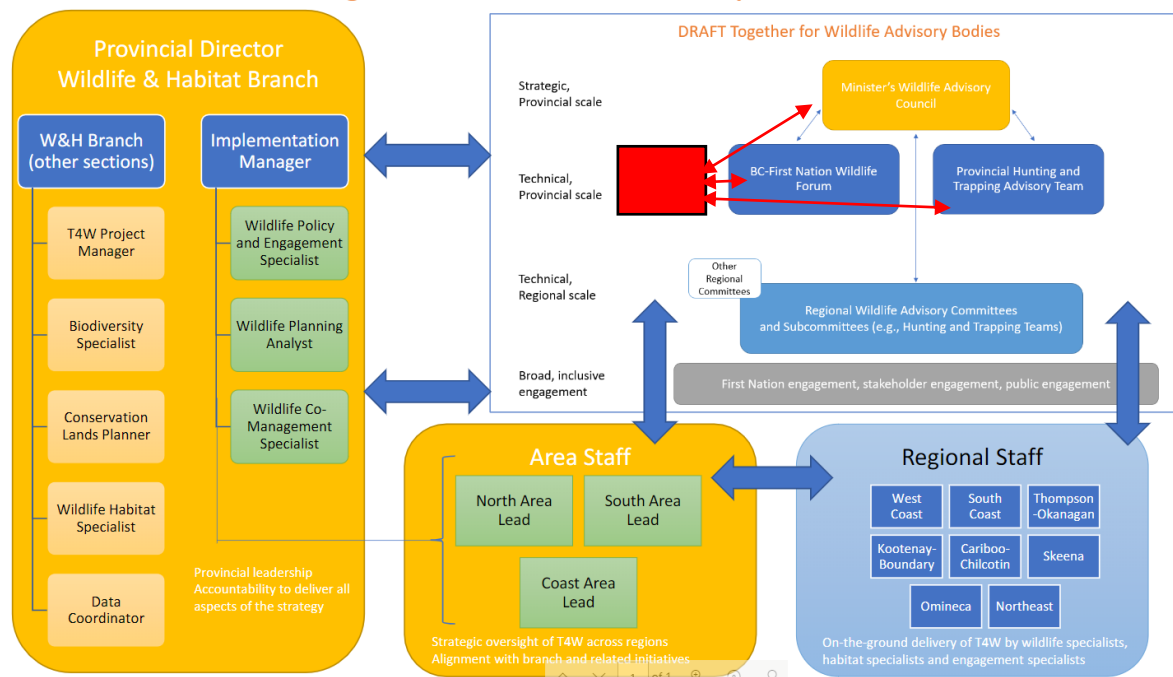
Duties aside, such a team must be recognized and therefore asked by MWAC, the Minister, and other bodies in the T4W system for technical advice on policy matters [what do we know, not know]. It would advise on the allocation of targeted research funding and adaptive management designs, and multisector researcher coordination. If implemented, this B.C. Wildlife Science Advisory Panel would build in the success and failures of other technical advisory groups such as the "[Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat](#)", "[Alberta Science Advisory Panel](#)", "[Federal Office of the Chief Science Advisor](#)", and the "British Columbia Forest Carbon Initiative's Science and Research Agenda Advisory Committee."

- 2) Coordinate with the T4W contractor to understand the role post-secondary institutions can play in re-shaping the status of wildlife science in B.C. in conjunction with other provincial research efforts as part of Goal 2, Action 5.

- 3) Support better wildlife data management and access procedures, including ways to improve uploading of data by regional staff for provincial databases and improving access to less-sensitive information for existing and ongoing studies. This outcome builds on existing upgrades to the province’s wildlife information management system (i.e., BioHUB).
- 4) The Research Working Group will *examine* how end users of research use science to make decisions – through this examination, the working group will better inform recommendations that bolster the quality and accessibility of science for the wildlife management community of practice.

December 2020

DRAFT Together for Wildlife Implementation Structure



*Cross boxes are proposed

The Research Working Group is evaluating the effectiveness of a science advisory group that could support groups such as the Minister’s Wildlife Advisory Council [MWAC], the Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory team [PHTAT], and the First Nations – B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Forum [see red box above].