



Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

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

January 16, 2024

Minister Katrine Conroy, Finance

Minister Josie Osborne, Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation

Minister Nathan Cullen, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Dear Ministers Conroy, Osborne, and Cullen,

Re: Fish and Wildlife Compensation Programs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cc: Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Margo Sadler, FWCP Program Manager
Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council
First Nations – B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum
Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team
David Muter, ADM, Land Use Planning & Cumulative Effects, WLRS
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