

Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council Meeting #30 Minutes

June 12 and 13, 2024

In-person and via Zoom

Attendees		
Council Members:	Staff:	
Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.)	Jen Walker, Director, Strategies and Partnerships Branch, WLRS	
Nancy Wilkin	Avril Nagel, Manager, Together for Wildlife Implementation, WLRS	
Adam Ford	Jennifer Psyllakis, A/ADM, Resource Stewardship Division, WLRS	
Alyssa Lepka	Michael Burwash, Associate Director Wildlife, Wildlife Branch, WLRS	
Andrea Barnett (online)	Jenn Meilleur, Manager, Partnerships and Engagement, WLRS	
Cailyn Glasser (online)	Catherine Denny, Wildlife Biologist and Stewardship Planning, WLRS	
Doug Heard	Diana McNeill, Business Operations & Engagement Coordinator, WLRS	
Jasper Lament	Pam Doerksen, Director Strategic Initiatives, Wildlife Act Review, WLRS	
Jason Northcott	Morris Prosser, Wildlife Policy Analyst, Engagement and Shared Decision Making, WLRS, and Co-Chair, First Nations Forum	
John Bergenske		
Kari Stuart-Smith	Logan Wenham, Executive Director, Wildlife Branch, WLRS	
Megan Hanacek (online)		
Mike Demarchi	Guests/Panelists:	
Naomi Owens-Beek	Cait Nelson, Wildlife Health Biologist, WLRS	
Shaun Hollingsworth (regrets)	Dennis Paradine, Manager Tripartite Framework Funding and Policy, WLRS	
	Raychl Lukie, T4W Coast Area Lead, Strategies and Partnerships Branch, WLRS	
	Jessica Ruskin, Executive Director, Forest Resiliency and Archaeology, MOF	
Consultants:	Leah Malkinson, Director, Forest Landscape Planning Branch, FOR	
Derek Thompson	Norah White, Director, Forest Carbon and Climate Services Branch, FOR	
Sairah Tyler	Margaret Gibbs, Director Provincial Stewardship Strategies	
	Tony Pesklevits, Deputy Director, Provincial Operations, BC Wildfire Service, FOR	
	Lisa Tedesco, Cultural and Prescribed Burning, FOR	
	Sagarika Saha, A/Director, Conservation Strategic Initiatives, WLRS	
	Josie Beruldsen, Unit Head Conservation Policy and Planning, WLRS	
Purpose of Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Considerations for transition to new Council and mandate ◆ Updates on Forestry and Wildfire ◆ Discuss the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework and Office ◆ Review MWAC communications ◆ Hear updates from working groups ◆ Reflect on role of Council, lessons learned and looking forward ◆ Celebrate! 	
Action items (from June meeting)	Lead	Status
Share Cait Nelson's contact information with Council.	Sairah Tyler	Complete

Send Council's briefing note on resource roads to Norah White and Margaret Gibbs.	Judith Cullington	Complete
Invite Norah White to Strategies WG July meeting for further discussion on the Land Governance Vision.	Strategies Working Group	Complete
Review discussions re the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework and Office and provide advice for Council on steps for the government team to consider during interregnum and transition.	Strategies Working Group	Autumn meeting
Seek early face-to-face meetings with the current and new Ministry Executives	Co-Chairs, staff	In progress
Consider an improved model for reaching the Minister (beyond just letters)	Council	Complete
Review revised Terms of Reference	Council	Complete
Review the revised key messages	Council	In progress
Further discuss communications and transition at the August meeting.	Council	August meeting
Seek an in-person meeting with the new Minister early in the mandate.	Council, staff	In progress
Consider Jenn Meilleur's offer to support Council through a Working Group that can explore and pilot shared decision-making.	Council	Complete
Prepare a detailed report on T4W funds spent to date	Staff	In progress

Minutes

1. Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.) provided a welcome prayer and confirmed the meeting agenda.
2. Approval of April 2024 meeting minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Action items from last meeting completed or in progress. <i>Moved by Mike Demarchi, seconded by Doug Heard to approve the April 2024 meeting minutes. Approved.</i> ♦ Council to consider focusing on outstanding recommendations, noting that next steps will fall under the purview of the incoming government. ♦ July 23 is the start date for the 'soft interregnum' (limited staff support).
3. Updates	<p>Wildlife Act Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Pam Doerksen, Jason Northcott, John Bergenske and Morris Prosser provided updates on the <i>Wildlife Act</i> review engagement and the work of the Wildlife Act Review Joint Working Group (presentation). ○ Phase 1 is complete, with targeted engagement with Rights and Title holders and advisory bodies complete. The Team continues to meet with Nations upon request. Further consultations with Nations will continue post-election. ○ Morris Prosser discussed an approach to joint or consent-based statutory decision-making when aligning legislation with the <i>Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act</i>.

- The *Wildlife Act* does not currently allow for co-governance, so this is a priority focal point.
- The Joint Working Group continues to meet every two weeks. Key topics considered to date include reconciliation, funding, and objectives setting.
- Council noted the importance of RWACs and two-eyed seeing – RWACs need to be included in the *Wildlife Act*, with dedicated funding.

Funding

- ♦ Council has sent two recent letters to Minister Cullen regarding funding.
- ♦ Jasper Lament provided an update on next steps in response to the Minister's April letter on dedicated funding.
 - Council has continued to strongly recommend a wildlife and habitat funding model that adequately funds T4W. A new model requires an 'everyone pays' approach. Great examples of how the Province has achieved this model are ICBC and BC Hydro.
 - Minister's letter did not provide any new information or commitments.
 - Minister's letter on funding priorities still anticipated.

Chronic Wasting Disease

- ♦ Cait Nelson provided an update on Chronic Wasting Disease ([presentation](#))
 - The 2006 Surveillance and Response Plan is updated every three years, and a number of actions have been implemented – focusing on mitigating the risk of disease spread through transport and disposal restrictions and testing within B.C. Now focused on using that gathered information to inform management moving forward.
 - Proposing a new CWD management planning table, specifically with regional First Nations involvement, in addition to the provincial advisory team and regional working groups. There will be a strong focus on education, communication and enforcement.
 - Selective removal is deemed to be an effective tool to reduce CWD-infected animals, along with focusing on hunter harvest and testing.
 - Council inquired how the response actions will change based on the surveillance activities, how they restrict the movement of carcasses out of the areas they were hunted, and how testing results can be expedited to support decisions on safe consumption in a timely manner.

ACTION

- Sairah Tyler to share Cait Nelson's contact information with Council.

Research

- ♦ Adam Ford provided an update from the Research Working Group and the BC Wildlife Research Co-Operative Model
 - Council has provided feedback on the Co-Op model. It will be further reviewed by the Research Working Group following revisions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students have been short-listed for this year’s scholarships. ○ Scholarships could use improved scoping guidelines regarding eligibility.
<p>4. Panel Discussion on Forestry, Ecosystems and Wildfire</p>	<p>PANEL PRESENTATIONS</p> <p>Panel members provided updates on efforts related to forestry, ecosystems and wildfire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Forest Landscape Planning work and <i>Forest and Range Practices Act</i> (FRPA) legislative initiatives (Jessica Ruskin, Leah Malkinson) (presentation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Landscape Planning was introduced through 2021 amendments to FRPA. They specify objectives for forest landscape plans and the subsequent forest operational plans. Once these plans are completed for an area, they will replace forest stewardship plans (target: Summer 2024) ○ Key objectives include supporting reconciliation through collaborative forest planning with Nations and addressing landscape level forest management challenges (climate change, increased disturbances on the land, wildfire, drought etc.) through setting landscape and stand level expectations and the where and how for harvesting and other forestry activities. ○ Strong interdependence between forest landscape plans and WLRs’ land use plans requires effective collaboration and integration. ○ Leah Malkinson provided an overview of the hierarchy of forest related planning and management and gave an overview of FLP projects. ◆ Old Growth Action Plan (OGAP) (Norah White, Margaret Gibbs) (presentation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Office of the Chief Forester now has a second deputy to ensure better alignment with the Forest Landscape Planning process. ○ OGAP went public at the end of May. It is deeply interconnected with the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework. ○ OGAP has three broad goals related to co-governance in the area of biodiversity reforms and transitioning the forest-based sector – all 30 actions support these goals. ○ Resource roads will be a focal point <p>ACTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Judith Cullington to send Council’s briefing note on resource roads to Norah White and Margaret Gibbs. ➤ Strategies Working Group to invite Norah White to their July meeting for further discussion on the Land Governance Vision. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ BC Wildfire and actions resulting from Wildfire Task Force (Tony Pesklevits, Lisa Tedesco) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Update on the Premier’s Expert Task Force on Emergencies

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was announced in September, got mobilized quickly in October, and wrapped up in April. The Task Force met 13 times in that window, with over 60 partners and expert stakeholders. ○ The Task Force identified improvements related to nine deliverables. ○ Many of MWAC’s recommendations around quick wins are being actioned ◆ Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health (Sagarika Saha) - focus on next steps (presentation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Immediate focus for the Framework is focused on engagement, and the alignment of different policy initiatives ○ Council noted a strong interest in concrete actions, a focus on policy gaps and barriers ◆ Council is pleased to hear the two paradigm shifts that they have championed from their inception – reconciliation and prioritizing biodiversity and ecosystem health – show through so clearly as integrate parts of forest landscape planning and wildfire resilience strategy. ◆ Presenters were encouraged to consider how Council can assist each of the initiatives presented.
<p>5. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health (BEH) Framework and Office</p>	<p>PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Adam Ford and Kari Stuart-Smith provided an update on discussions at Strategies Working Group. <p>Discussion on draft Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Concerns that Framework taking too much time; needs to focus on implementation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bold decisions and actions are needed (example of approach to wildfire). ○ Office of Biodiversity an important role: a “Bonnie Henry for land” or Chief Scientist as in Alberta. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current thinking to place Office within a Ministry rather than above Ministries. ○ Need to look at immediate (starting) steps; take incremental steps to make sure this is going in the right direction. <p>Council discussed what the Framework should do/what success looks like (summary of notes).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ What is the purpose of the BEH office? What problem is being solved? Key considerations for the Office to act on include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implementation of cumulative effects ○ Consider where nature is marginalized because permits and authorizations don’t prioritize it; and have authority to make an order for change. ○ Objectives and thresholds for road density and habitat, among others, that can sit across all relevant Ministries and have cross-sector implementation to achieve those objectives ○ Help natural resource decision-makers prioritize biodiversity

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implement the Environmental Mitigation Policy ○ Ensure traditional food sources are available (via permitting limits), as food supplies are often too impacted by the time the Species at Risk thresholds come in. ○ Ensure meaningful insertion into the authorization and permitting system ○ ‘Find the gaps’, and establish objectives for them ○ Must have the power to set objectives and thresholds, to consider cumulative effects, and the power to audit and ensure compliance ○ Cross-sector governance, high-level objective setting, and strategic planning across industries (generating mandates) ○ An oversight body, with some authority for orders or a key conduit to the Minister to flag considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Council questioned how these many provincial government initiatives, along with the many Nation-specific policies and plans, will fit together and have some level of implementation. Staff spoke to cross sector governance and coordination and rethinking the natural resource sector, with objective setting at the very high level and generating mandates at the high level. Lots of signals indicate that this is emerging. ◆ Council could provide some clear advice to enable the Province to begin implementation early in the new mandate. <p>ACTIONS/NEXT STEPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strategies Working Group to review discussions re the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework and Office and provide advice for Council on steps for the government team to consider during interregnum and transition.
<p>6. Review of Strategic Concerns</p>	<p>PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION</p> <p>Alyssa Lepka and Michael Burwash provided an update on a series of concerns raised (presentation).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Concern regarding increased human-grizzly bear interactions across the province, and also the impact on caribou populations, which affects their right to sustenance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alyssa Lepka suggested that the Province could authorize Nations to provide their own hunting tags to non-Indigenous people, and use those funds to manage their own wildlife projects. ○ Michael Burwash spoke to the effectiveness of the WildSafeBC program, and the role of First Nations communities and being able to set appropriate objectives at that regional level. The Control of Species policy is being reviewed, and that is a good place to discuss additional tools for management decisions. ○ Members spoke to the greater need of teaching humans to live with bears, and the importance of education and good practices.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ There are ongoing challenges managing caribou populations despite actions and draft herd plans, because of their habitat still being logged in some places of the Wolverine population with minimal best management practices. ♦ Alyssa Lepka spoke to the challenge of accessing T4W funding, and the lack of transparency. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communications are key – focus on the work being done, planned work, as well as reports back – staff is working on this ○ The Tripartite Framework agreement on Nature Conservation is designed as a governance framework and is being used now to focus on funding issues.
<p>7. Two-Eyed Seeing</p>	<p>PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Alyssa Lepka shared slides on two-eyed seeing and how it translates into setting priorities for wildlife. It is about making space for Indigenous Peoples to sit at the same table to set priorities, rather than being told what the priorities are. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concern raised by some Council members that more progress is needed on this throughout the Province and that, despite messaging, this is still not happening. It is still status quo of top-down, western science-based decision making, especially at the regional level. ○ Province has begun workshops about ethical space with regions, and another round is starting soon. There is also the opportunity to support staff further through facilitation to help hold space for difficult conversations, and this is being piloted for a couple smaller initiatives. ○ Much of this will come about through the <i>Wildlife Act</i> amendments, and it will be very important to socialize the <i>Wildlife Act</i> so there is better communication about what this looks like. ♦ Some members noted that some Nations do not share their traditional knowledge. This creates a challenge when the aim is to have transparent decision making that includes both western science and traditional knowledge. Open communication and collaboration and transparency are key to get to shared decision-making, especially at the local level.
<p>8. Council Roundtable</p>	<p>DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Council spoke about what they are most proud of from their time on Council. Highlights included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A safe and ethical group where discussions can be freely held ○ Collaborative approach ○ Reputation as trusted advisors ○ Success in moving towards the paradigm shifts
<p>9. Reflections</p>	<p>DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Council discussed successes, frustrations, lessons learned, and impact for Council moving forward (working notes). Highlights include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ What has worked well

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council has provided input into key initiatives, and helped guide them in the right direction ○ A trusting, safe space; respect for each other despite diverse perspectives ○ Relationship with government staff across a number of levels and branches ○ Collaboration with PHTAT and the Forum ◆ What has been challenging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Five different Ministers – yet Council has been resilient! ○ Wildlife Strategy was never socialized across government sectors as strongly as it could have been, which leads to less triangulation between Ministries ○ Council wants greater buy-in and interaction from the Ministers, and real dialogue – this may require changes to communication and messaging. Currently advise staff more than the Minister despite being called the “Minister’s” Wildlife Advisory Council ○ Need to ensure new Council members reflect the diversity, skills and focus needed to tackle the challenges ahead. ○ Need to determine where Council can be most effective, and the defined scope of Council ○ Messages not getting through all the way to the staff who implement ○ Dedicated funding has not moved forward ○ Not being able to share information at the right time, this lack of transparency was a challenge ◆ What was learned/surprising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Time commitment required by Council members ○ Lack of a public profile for T4W ○ Limited capacity by staff to take action and implement T4W further ○ Missing some interests/perspectives at the table ○ Need for realistic expectations of what the Council can achieve <p>ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Council to seek face-to-face meetings with the current and new Ministry Executives ➤ Council to consider an improved model for reaching the Minister (beyond just letters)
<p>10. Closed session</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Council continued discussions in closed session
<p>11. Council Communications and</p>	<p>DISCUSSION</p> <p>Terms of Reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Avril Nagel provided an update on the proposed revisions to the Terms of Reference.

<p>Terms of Reference</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Terms of Reference has been updated, further updates forthcoming after this Council meeting ○ It will include more clarity on communications based on the conversation from this meeting <p>ACTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Council to review revised Terms of Reference. <p>Council Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Nancy Wilkin noted Minister Cullen's suggestion that Council have a more 'public' voice. Council discussed what types of communication they may wish to engage in. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purpose is to advance implementation of the T4W Strategy – part of that effectiveness is being seen by the Minister and them championing Council's recommendations; but Council can also influence staff; and advise on other initiatives. ○ Council is interested in more and different communications, both externally and internally – more effective avenues of communication with the Minister, T4W staff, other Ministries and initiatives outside of T4W, resource sector, a report back to those that created T4W on the implementation of the goals, and perhaps something more public. An annual update on T4W may be appropriate. ○ Council to further define the audience and purpose for communications, can then determine communication tactics. Jenn Meilleur has offered to help support this effort. Avril has updated the key messages for Council review. ○ Website can better reflect what Council is accomplishing – add an activity page dashboard, ensure updates get there in a timely manner, as well as helping ensure people can find the site ○ Council discussed how to respond to letters that Council receives, or that staff receives but Council wishes to weigh in on. Council will substantively answer letters. ◆ Next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council to discuss further what communications are of most interest, including how to be more proactive with reaching key audiences ○ Council to write to the outgoing Minister to provide gratitude and to share desired messages for the incoming Minister ○ Council to prepare information to include in the transition binder for the incoming Minister ○ Council to meet incoming Minister early in the mandate, and seek to explore preferred communication methods for greatest efficacy. Council to present how Council would feel more heard and prioritized by the Minister. ○ Jenn Meilleur to support staff develop a communication plan.
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	<p>ACTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Council to review the revised key messages. ➤ Council to further discuss communications and transition at the August meeting. ➤ Council to seek an in person meeting with the new Minister early in the mandate.
<p>12. Other Business</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Council to consider Jenn Meilleur’s offer to support Council through a Working Group that can explore and pilot shared decision-making. ➤ Staff to prepare a detailed report on T4W funds spent to date
<p>13. Closing</p>	<p>Council discussed upcoming meetings from now through end of interregnum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Council will continue to meet as per usual, despite the interregnum (Strategies WG, Secretariat, Joint Wildlife Act WG, Co-Chairs, full Council) ◆ Upcoming meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ June 19 Strategies Working Group meeting is cancelled ○ Next Strategies Working Group July 17 ○ Control of Species meeting (date TBD) ○ Next Council Meeting: August 14 (via Zoom)