



# Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council

October 15, 2024

Minister Responsible for Wildlife

Dear Minister,

## **Re: Introducing the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council**

Congratulations on your appointment as the Minister responsible for wildlife! We are your Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council, whose role is to provide independent strategic advice on wildlife management in British Columbia, and the implementation of the Province's Together for Wildlife Strategy. We are looking forward to meeting you!

The diversity of wildlife in B.C. is one of our province's greatest treasures. We are fortunate to have a greater variety of species, ecosystems and habitats than any other province in Canada, including some species are not found anywhere else on earth. Wildlife are deeply valued by British Columbians—as frequently indicated in survey results, and reflected in the British Columbia's Coat of Arms. Wildlife are a part of our lives—whether you are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, whether you depend on wildlife for your very existence, or for the pure pleasure of seeing wildlife in nature. When we take care of B.C.'s wildlife and the habitats in which they live, our own health and our economy benefit too.

Your Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council is a non-partisan body. We are individuals from many different regions of B.C., Indigenous and non-Indigenous, all with a passion for wildlife and wildlife habitat—and many diverse viewpoints! Over the past four years Council has provided strategic advice and recommendations to as many as five different Ministers, and we continue to have very positive and supportive working arrangements with your staff. We work closely with Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team (PHTAT), and the First Nations–B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum (Forum). In our years together we have created a “safe” space for difficult conversations, both within MWAC and with our fellow advisory bodies.

We have attached a brief note including recent examples of our work, and some thoughts on priorities for the coming months and years. When we have an opportunity to meet with you we will be looking for your priorities—areas where you may wish to seek advice from Council.

We begin with an invitation. Each year we hold online “Wildlife Dialogues” with Indigenous community representatives and with wildlife stakeholders. These are well attended and provide

an excellent opportunity to hear from people who care about wildlife from all over B.C. Our next Dialogue sessions will take place in late January (January 24th and 28th), and we hope that you will be available to share your priorities with the participants, and to hear from them.

We are hopeful that one of your first actions will be to appoint new members to Council. Some of our members have 'retired' following their second two-year terms, and we are looking forward to new members who will add to our wealth of knowledge and full provincial coverage.

We look forward to hearing from you and also having an early opportunity to meet in person.

Sincerely,

Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council:

Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.) (Co-Chair)  
Nancy Wilkin (Co-Chair)  
Dr. Adam Ford  
Alyssa Lepka  
Andrea Barnett  
Cailyn Glasser

Jason Northcott  
John Bergenske  
Kari Stuart-Smith  
Megan Hanacek  
Naomi Owens-Beek  
Shaun Hollingsworth

Cc: Deputy Minister, Water, Land and Resource Stewardship  
First Nations – B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum  
Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team  
David Muter, ADM, Land Use Planning and Cumulative Effects, WLRS  
Jennifer Psyllakis, A/ADM, Resource Stewardship Division, WLRS  
Logan Wenham, Executive Director, Wildlife, WLRS  
Michael Burwash, Associate Director Wildlife, Fish & Wildlife Branch  
Jen Walker, Director, Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships, WLRS  
Avril Nagel, Manager, Together for Wildlife Implementation

## Briefing Note

A few of Council's Activities and Achievements 2020 – 2024

- Focus on our two fundamental paradigm shifts: Reconciliation (focused on shared decision making and co-governance of wildlife), and Putting Ecosystems First
- 26 recommendations in support of the Together for Wildlife Strategy
- Recommendations to the Premier's Emergency Task Force on Emergencies (wildfire impacts on wildlife focus)
- Policy advice on the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework and a concept paper on a new Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health.
- Advice on updating the B.C. *Wildlife Act* (working collaboratively with PHTAT and the Forum)
- Collaboration with the Deputy Chief Forester regarding the Old Growth Strategy and Forest Landscape Planning
- Principles for the new Conservation Funding Mechanism
- Providing advice on the creation of the Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees. Three of these have been established and represent a new collaborative approach to wildlife and habitat management at the regional level, with more to come
- Policy advice on the Interim Collaborative Stewardship Planning Policy, including requirements for wildlife and habitat objectives in land use decisions
- 26 academic Wildlife Scholarships to students undertaking wildlife research (with 10 more to be announced for the coming year). These focus on academic institutions in rural British Columbia
- Recommendations for increasing fees, fines and surcharges to better support the cost of wildlife management

### PRIORITIES IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS:

Council has identified several "quick wins" for your consideration:

1. **Wildlife Dialogues:** Attend both dialogues in late January 2025, with Indigenous representatives and wildlife stakeholders. This is an excellent opportunity to outline your priorities for wildlife.
2. **Funding:** Permanently dedicate all wildlife license fees to a special account and double the surcharge which flows to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation. This has been widely supported by hunting and trapping organizations. Create clear pathways for First Nations organizations to access funds independently.
3. **Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework:** Release the Implementation Plan for the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework, with on-the-ground examples of how the Framework will work to benefit wildlife. Establish an Office of Biodiversity and

Ecosystem Health to determine biodiversity thresholds and co-ordinate cumulative effects implementation amongst all sectors.

4. **B.C.'s commitment to the Tripartite Nature Agreement and "30 by 30"<sup>1</sup>:** Demonstrate commitment to this agreement with announcements on new conservation areas, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas. The availability of supportive federal funding makes this a priority.
5. **Wildfire:** Increase support for proactive wildlife approaches to wildfire management, including cultural burning.

#### **PRIORITIES IN THE NEXT ONE-TWO YEARS:**

1. **Wildlife Act Renewal:** The Council, PHTAT and First Nations Forum have been working collaboratively with staff to ensure wildlife and habitat objectives are in the renewed *Wildlife Act* legislation.
2. **Wildlife/Forestry:** Accelerate the implementation of the Old Growth Strategic Review Action Plan, which has important implications for wildlife habitat. Enable agreements with First Nations and partners to undertake renewed planning initiatives, which may include Forest Landscape Plans. Invest in access management and road rehabilitation to reduce the number and density of resource roads. Work with Ministry of Forest to establish and implement a 'no net gain' policy on forestry and resource road development.
3. **Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees (RWACs):** Continue to support and initiate RWACs across the province, establishing the beginnings of a new collaborative regional governance model for wildlife in B.C.
4. **Wildlife Research:** Determine the next steps for a new wildlife research model for B.C., bringing together Indigenous science and western science and involving academics, industry and government (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) representatives. Continue the provision of at least 10 wildlife research scholarships each year in partnership with the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation.
5. **Conservation lands:** Implement the Conservation Lands Strategic Plan, ensuring that diverse wildlife habitats are well-represented in the selection of areas, both land and water based. Develop and implement a wetland policy.

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<sup>1</sup> 30% of B.C.'s lands and waters in some form of protective status by 2030.