



Reference: 31430

December 15, 2023

VIA EMAIL: nancylwilkin@gmail.com, harryn@nisgaanation.ca

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

Dear Simoogit Hleek (Chief Harry Nyce Sr.) and Nancy Wilkin:

Thank you for your letter of August 3rd, regarding the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework and a supporting Office for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health and thoughts regarding resource roads and wild sheep. I also thank you for your letter from September 15th regarding the catastrophic wildfire season and recovery effort. I appreciate your input on the Strategic Plan for Conservation Lands and your letter to the Provincial Hunting and Trapping Advisory Team regarding fisher. The Council is a critical advisor; we are deeply appreciative of the thoughtful effort that goes into the development of your recommendations.

With the recent re-organization the responsibility for the *Wildlife Act*, Together for Wildlife is fully under the responsibility of my Ministry. I will continue to share information and your advice with my cabinet colleagues when relevant, and I remain committed to collaborative and integrated solutions.

I support the specific responses to your new recommendations below, but first I want to address the concern raised about ongoing racism that was witnessed and endured over the last year at association meetings and on social media. Unfortunately hate and racism have a long history in B.C., rooted in power and control and long-standing patterns of discrimination and oppression. This is not acceptable; we must all stand together in commitment to take action against hate and racism.

Our government is advancing programs, overseen by the Parliamentary Secretary on Anti-racism Initiatives and coordinated by the [Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network](#), to ensure we provide direction and resources to staff and communities to assert a zero-tolerance position to racism and ensure all British Columbians feel safe and valued. Through support from the Resilience BC team and others, the Wildlife Habitat and Species Recovery (WHSR) team is developing a specific anti-racism framework to extend learning, develop skills, and provide practical resources and tools to all staff. This framework will be shared with the Council, and we are committed to providing Council members with the same support to help lead the anti-racism expectations all British Columbians should uphold.

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Regarding wildfires, this has indeed been a catastrophic year for B.C. that has taken a toll on communities and individuals. We appreciate the Council's kind words and share the interest to prioritize wildfire recovery efforts with consideration for ecosystem recovery and long-term resilience. Currently, there is work underway to assess the damage in wildfire areas including impacts to habitat. We will continue to monitor progress and implementation of wildfire recovery efforts and we are committed to the delivery of these efforts in partnership with First Nations and communities.

Regarding recommendations, "Recommendation 23: Communicate the Importance of the Framework", we recognize the importance of prioritizing biodiversity and ecosystem health as part of our broad efforts to transform and improve the natural resource management system in B.C. The importance is reinforced through our acceptance of all recommendations from the Old Growth Strategic Review and our commitment to reconciliation and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

The detailed considerations the Council has provided to support "Recommendation 24: Establish the Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health to oversee the implementation of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework" is also greatly appreciated. These considerations have been shared with relevant program areas for consideration in engagement materials and policy recommendations and we appreciate your continued support and advice as this policy framework takes shape.

Regarding, "Recommendation #25: Resource Roads Action Plan and Comprehensive Road and Access Management Strategy", the Province acknowledges the significant impact of resource roads on wildlife but is not currently considering the development of a new strategy. Instead, these recommendations will inform work in cumulative effects, the biodiversity and ecosystem health framework, land use and forest landscape planning processes, and assessments underway to identify corridors and connectivity. We appreciate the thoughtfulness of this submission and will consider the suggestion of a strategy in the future. Staff will also continue to track progress on resource roads and provide updates to the Council on progress.

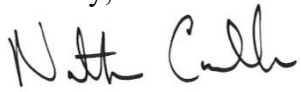
Finally, regarding the health of wild sheep in "Recommendation #26 the Ministry of Agriculture and Food staff are currently working to better understand the overall sectoral impacts of exclusion or management criteria on domestic sheep and goat industries", I am aware of the limitation of legislative authority through the *Wildlife Act* that could better mitigate risk of disease transfer. As your letter advocates, collaboration and cooperation between Agriculture and Food, Forests and Water, Land and Resource Stewardship is ongoing to advance sheep separation. This work will continue. Also, as part of the *Wildlife Act* Review project, mechanisms to improve the protection of wild species from health risks will be considered.

In summary, many of the Council's recommendations form key considerations for critical priority work such as the *Wildlife Act* review, ecosystem health and biodiversity framework and our commitments to protecting and conserving 30% of BC's land and freshwater by the year 2030. Given the importance of these initiatives and deep connections to the vision and many elements of Together for Wildlife, I appreciate the Council's focus on these key areas.

With these additions, staff have compiled updates on all MWAC's current and previous recommendations in the attached appendix.

Again, thank you for your ongoing commitment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nathan Cullen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "N" and "C".

Nathan Cullen
Minister
Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Theme	Related recommendations and status.	Response and Update for October 2023
Objective setting/monitoring and stewardship planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By June 2022, complete a Wildlife Stewardship Planning and Objective-Setting Policy, jointly with the Forum. Ongoing. 2. By Fall 2023, enact legislation that legally establishes objectives for wildlife and habitat stewardship and key ecosystems as a priority that applies to all sectors. Ongoing. 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. Ongoing. 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. Ongoing. 6. By June 2022, increase transparency by establishing a public registry for wildlife stewardship planning. Complete. 	<p>Recommendation 1 is underway. The timeline has been extended due to the connection with the Wildlife Act review. A framework is expected by March 2024.</p> <p>Recommendation 2 is underway as part of the Wildlife Act review; objective settings is a key policy theme for the Fall 2023 engagement. MWAC will be a key partner throughout the review. This initiative is scheduled through to 2026. This recommendation will also inform consideration of future legislation or legislative changes to support implementation of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework.</p> <p>Recommendation 4 Wildlife stewardship planning in collaboration with Nations is underway in all regions as part of government-to-government agreements and initiatives such as Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Frameworks. Expanding the scale and scope of collaborative planning and shifting to co-management is a large focus of current work. The stewardship planning and objective setting policy, when finalized, will provide additional support to help staff in their joint planning efforts. A new external website is now available. A planning schedule and plans will be added as they are completed (see recommendation 6).</p> <p>Recommendation 5 is underway. A draft performance measure framework is under development for Together for Wildlife and has incorporated MWAC feedback to date. Current analysis on potential measures aims to balance the need for performance measures to show progress and demonstrate accountability while being manageable to track administratively and feasible to measure over time. Together for Wildlife staff also continue to work with other program areas to understand how the related assessments can be enhanced to support tracking outcomes (Forest Range and Evaluation Program, Cumulative Effects Framework, Conservation Lands etc.). A full review of the Together for Wildlife Strategy will be completed through the fiscal 2024-2025 year and results publicly reported.</p> <p>Recommendation 6 is complete. A Wildlife Stewardship Planning Documents webpage has been completed and became publicly available in early February 2023. Next steps are to ensure regular follow-up with provincial and regional staff in order to keep the webpage content up-to-date.</p>
Local governance and regional wildlife advisory committees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Establish diverse and collaborative Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees to support the development of local wildlife stewardship plans. Significant progress must be made towards 	<p>Recommendation 3 and 20 are underway. Ministry staff have made significant progress over the course of the last 12 months including two staff engagement sessions, the development of a policy options paper, conversations with Nations and stakeholders at the regional level to gauge interest, and capacity building such as ethical space training to support staff readiness to promote inclusive governance. Currently a procedures paper is being developed, building from the results of a recent staff workshop that aimed to</p>

	<p>establishing these committees by Spring 2022. Ongoing.</p> <p>20. Regional wildlife advisory committees - we strongly encourage you to support the creation and implementation of these rwacs across B.C. Ongoing.</p>	<p>understand the barriers, opportunities and critical success factors that are needed for implementation of a regional bodies. Regional efforts are at different stages: some are in early stages of launching a regional body and others are just beginning to assess feasibility. Rwacs are a central piece to implementation of Together for Wildlife but must be established with flexibility in order to account for varied needs across the region and that account for collaborative tables that are already established. Overall, the complexity of initiating the rwacs was not fully appreciated and this deliverable will take time to do thoughtfully to ensure durability.</p>
Funding	<p>7. Support the Council’s recommended principles with respect to long-term, stable, and dedicated funding for wildlife and habitat. Complete and ongoing.</p> <p>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. Ongoing.</p> <p>9. Review, rationalize, and consider increases of the fines levied under the Wildlife Act. Ongoing.</p> <p>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. Complete and ongoing.</p> <p>18. Increased Funding for the B.C. Hydro Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program. Ongoing.</p> <p>21. Governance of Funding - Council recommends that a permanent, dedicated conservation funding mechanism for T4W be developed. Complete and ongoing.</p>	<p>The principles outlined in Recommendation 7 and 21 are being considered as part of the <i>Wildlife Act</i> review. Advice was also shared across the ministry to serve as a reference for the recently announced Conservation Finance Mechanism and Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation. Several elements of the principles align with government priorities (e.g., informing decisions with science and Indigenous ways of knowing and values; promoting a culture of equity, inclusion, and diversity; and grounding investments in sustainable finance principles such as environmental, social and governance factors). We will continue to factor in these recommendations as we determine new funding structures and funding governance.</p> <p>Recommendation 8, 9 and 18 Compliance and Enforcement and Funding are key themes identified in the review of the <i>Wildlife Act</i>. Changes to surcharges, fees and fines associated with offences are being considered.</p> <p>Recommendation 12 As a principle, we are taking deliberate steps to explicitly identify targets and monitor progress for key values in partnership with First Nations and other organizations. The Cumulative Effects Framework and the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework are cornerstones to realizing the outcomes of this recommendation.</p>
Science, research and data	<p>10. Establish the funding needed to complete the BioHUB Initiative, which has the potential to</p>	<p>Continued financial support for BioHUB, as encouraged in Recommendation 10, is underway. A one-year extension of capital funding was approved for BioHUB and associated systems. In addition, Together for</p>

	<p>transform the management and accessibility of wildlife data in B.C.. “Open access” principles must become the norm, with independent oversight on data security. Complete and ongoing.</p> <p>11. Work with the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) to formulate an improved policy that better incentivizes data sharing. Complete and ongoing.</p> <p>13. 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. Ongoing.</p>	<p>Wildlife has invested in the BioHUB and related systems. WLRS is working with NRS Ministries and First Nations to transform how and why we restrict access to sensitive information, moving towards collaboratively managed, openly accessible wildlife data.</p> <p>In line with Recommendation 11, the EAO made recent changes to their application to improve access. EAO’s application information requirements have been updated to include the requirement for use of existing government standards and the submission of data to government data repositories.</p> <p>The concept of developing a structure to support research priorities of the Province and its advisory bodies, as noted in Recommendation 13, is being considered as part of the second phase of a research delivery options analysis under Action 5 of Together for Wildlife. Included in this work is an assessment of various models including the creation of a Wildlife Co-op delivery model, including how a Co-op science unit could be integrated with a Provincial science and Indigenous knowledge advisory team.</p>
Wildfire and Cultural and Prescribed burning	<p>14. 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. Ongoing.</p> <p>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. Ongoing.</p> <p>16. That government prioritize the implementation of cultural and prescribed fire to proactively reduce the severity of future wildfires and improve wildlife habitats. Complete and ongoing.</p>	<p>Related to Recommendation 14 and 15, the Province is actively seeking ways to analyze and recover the land base from large scale wildfires and mitigate future events. New approaches, in partnership with First Nations, and with consideration of climate change and build back better principles need to be applied. To support, the Ministry of Forests is currently developing a Wildfire Land Based Recovery Strategy. The Strategy will improve existing and further guide the Ministry using a collaborative and adaptive approach to wildfire recovery that enables resilient ecosystems based on ecosystem, cultural and economic consideration. Collaboration and input from other Ministries, stakeholders, industry, First Nations and stakeholders, to ensure interdisciplinary considerations will inform the development.</p> <p>Recommendation 16 is underway. The Province has prioritized expanding the use of cultural and prescribed (C&Rx) burning and has also included cultural and prescribed burning in the Declaration Act Action Plan, and Forest Policy Intentions Paper, with full implementation to launch in 2023. Over 30 C&Rx fire projects were fully or partially implemented in 2022, with over 60 planned for 2023. FOR has established dedicated C&Rx Fire program team in BC Wildfire Service, which is leading a cross-government strategy to expand the use of C&Rx fire. In February 2023, the Province launched consultation on initial policy changes to support Indigenous cultural burning, and a proposed co-development process to build a long-term, co-managed C&Rx fire policy and program framework in</p>

		partnership with First Nations and collaboration with other partners.
Roads	<p>17. Implement 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. Not Accepted.</p> <p>19. Funding for Wildlife Crossings and Corridors. Complete and ongoing.</p> <p>25. Resource Roads Action Plan and Comprehensive Road and Access Management Strategy. Not Accepted and ongoing in alignment with existing processes.</p>	<p>Recommendation 17 and the relevant suggestions in the recent submission related to the stumpage appraisal mechanism were provided to the accountable Ministry of Forest branch. Given the complexity of the stumpage appraisal system and market interactions, at this time efforts to achieve better road outcomes will be addressed through forest landscape and land use planning processes and objective setting. Work is also underway to improve coordination of road restoration and rehabilitation opportunities (see Recommendation 25).</p> <p>Recommendation 19 is underway. There have been some significant investments in advance habitat corridors such as the recent announcement of plans for a wildlife overpass on Highway 3 near Radium in the East Kootenay through a partnership between the Province of BC, Parks Canada, Teck, the Village of Radium Hot Springs, the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, the Ktunaxa Nation Council and the Shuswap Band. This project represents an investment of approximately \$7M. A strategic approach, to prioritize opportunity, support partnerships, and to take action to improve the conservation and protection of important wildlife corridors and consistently incorporate wildlife considerations into planning processes, is also in development.</p> <p>Recommendation 25, The Province acknowledges the significant impact of resource roads on wildlife but is not currently considering the development of a new strategy. Instead, this recommendation (and those above) will inform work in cumulative effects, the biodiversity and ecosystem health framework, land use and forest landscape planning processes, and assessments underway to identify corridors/connectivity. Guidance will be developed and a strategy may be considered in the future.</p>
Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity	<p>22. Integrated Decisions on Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity - Council endorses the continued development of the Declaration on Ecosystem Health and Biodiversity as it presents an opportunity to bolster the paradigm shift. An essential first step will be to build broad-based support from Indigenous Nations and stakeholders (including industry) for this Declaration. Complete and ongoing.</p> <p>23. Communicate the importance of the</p>	<p>Recommendation 22, 23 and 24 the B.C. Government is committed to implementing all 14 recommendations from the Old Growth Strategic Review, including recommendation 2 “Declare conservation 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”. The Old Growth Strategic Review was shaped by the recognition that society is undergoing a paradigm shift in its relationship with the environment and the way we manage our interaction with it.</p> <p>WLRS is working in partnership with First Nations and will be engaging industry, and other stakeholders to build broad-based support and help shape the draft Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework (“Framework”) and will broaden the engagement and continue the communication of importance in</p>

	<p>“framework”. Complete and ongoing.</p> <p>24. Establish the Office of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health to oversee the implementation of the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework. Ongoing.</p>	<p>the coming months. Importantly, the management and 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.</p> <p>The specifics of Recommendation 24 describing the role and structure of the proposed Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health will be considered as a part of advancing a Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework.</p>
Species Specific	<p>26. Wild Sheep in B.C. Ongoing.</p>	<p>Ministry of Agriculture and Food staff are currently working to better understand the overall sectoral impacts of exclusion or management criteria on domestic sheep and goat industries. Collaboration and cooperation between Agriculture and Food, WLRS and Ministry of Forests is ongoing to advance sheep separation regulatory objectives. This work will also continue as part of the Wildlife Act review to determine options to improve the protection of wild species with respect to health risks.</p>