



Response to Forest Renewal Policy Initiative

**The submission is on behalf of the BC Wildlife Federation
Forestry Committee Chair Doug Janz
Wildlife Allocations Committee Chair Gerry Paille**

This submission addresses the objective of Sustainable forest management
In the Policy Areas

- Climate Change and Forest Carbon
- Reconciliation with Indigenous Communities
- Fibre Sustainability of Timber and Non-timber Forest Values

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Climate Change

The impact of the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic and wildfire salvage over the last decade has been negative for both timber and non-timber forest values in Interior forests. Climate change risks are increasing wildfires, drought, floods, disease and infestations.

Many of the impacts of climate change have been exacerbated by the current focus on timber supply, silviculture and the short-sighted policy decision made with respect to beetle salvage. Other forest values including landscape and watershed functioning have suffered including wildlife and recreation values. Record low flow in watersheds, and high temperatures in streams affect a variety of environmental and economic values. The effects of overharvesting have been worsened by climate change and the large fires.

The ecological functioning of the forest landscapes should be a fundamental goal to maintain diverse forest values. There must be opportunities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to provide direction in terms of plans and measures to achieve these goals on a landscape and tactical level, including opportunities for stewardship of the resources including habitat and watershed restoration.

Forest planning operations to mitigate the risks of wildfire and the benefits to other resources is non-existent, particularly in the North Eastern part of the province. Wildfire prevention, response and mitigation should be a provincial function that is strategically planned provincially and implemented tactically and consistently in various regions of the province with due consideration of landscape, forest and community values.

To make our forests more resilient and able to adapt to climate change pressures, we need more intensive forest management. Many projects that have been funded by the FESBC and HCTF partnership provide excellent examples of labour-intensive, stand-level activities that may also help alleviate current job loss.

At the 2019 BCWF Annual General Meeting and Convention in Fort St. John, delegates passed a resolution to support the position that clearcuts be burned or manually prepared rather than aerially treating them with treatments such as glyphosate herbicide, except where this is the only effective method to address an invasive species issue.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 - Treatment of clearcuts with herbicides drastically reduces supply of important ungulate food sources. The BCWF urges the government to do more manual treatment of clearcuts and engage in intensive second-growth forest management.



Recommendation 2 - The use of prescribed fire is associated with multiple objectives, but must once again become a recognized and viable tool with specific objectives to create quality wildlife forage opportunities across the landscape.

Recommendation 3 - Establish forest management objectives that support the sustainability and resilience for important forest values at the landscape level, particularly aquatic and terrestrial habitats and fish and wildlife populations.

Cumulative Impacts

Oil and gas and mining sectors operate under their own Act. With large projects in the province such as Site C, there is a need to address the cumulative impacts of all crown land development. Consistency in approach to cumulative effects on landscape sustainability will be more important, particularly in the face of climate change.

Recommendation 4 - An independent Natural Resource Practices Board should be created to assess the impacts of different kinds of development across the entire landscape.

Role of the Natural Practices Board

- Reporting to the legislature that expands on the role of the existing Forest Practices Board to cover all legislation administered by the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.
- Independent performance and compliance audits and reporting should be provided by the Natural Resources Practices Board to the public on key sustainability issues at a landscape and watershed scale to increase the effectiveness and performance of resource management in the province.
- Government should establish and fund a science secretariat to serve as a resource for research and knowledge to assist the Natural Resources Practices Board in collaboration with universities, technical colleges and private and public sector professionals with the required scientific expertise.

Recommendation 5 - Research and implement area specific “moose friendly silviculture practices” similar to those used in other jurisdictions like Sweden where healthy moose populations are largely attributed to modern forestry practices that benefit ungulates.

Recommendation 6 - The costs of habitat and access restoration and mitigation resulting from forestry activities needs to be subsumed by industry and not passed on to the Wildlife and Habitat Branch or organizations like the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation which is largely funded by hunters and anglers.



Forest Tenure Reform

We must move away from volume-based to area-based tenures that are conducive to landscape-level planning for the management and protection of all natural resources. With increasing land-based pressures and dwindling wildlife populations requiring management under the Species at Risk Act, we need a better system to incorporate meaningful stakeholder input in government decision-making.

The BC Wildlife Federation has long advocated for landscape-level planning. This planning should include a range of landscape and watershed values that has community and Indigenous and local government involvement and inventory science and local information. It should: produce a vision for the landscape in terms of what the future state should be; have clear and enforceable objectives for the values; and be developed so there are clear and explicit trade-offs that are made. Arbitrary limits on the potential constraints on timber supply should be removed in establishing forest objectives for a range of values including wildlife.

In terms of Resource Roads there needs to be an assessment and plan of how many roads/road densities are appropriate for a particular landscape. Roads now are approved on a site-specific basis, with little consideration of the ecological, economic, or social impacts on the landscapes or watershed they are in. Deactivation of roads is important in maintaining the functioning of terrestrial and aquatic habitat. Dealing with Resource Roads has been a major policy failure of the last two decades, not because of technical knowledge, but because of an inability to plan, manage and deactivate them. This is an essential component of landscape-level planning.

There must be opportunities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to provide direction in terms of plans and measures to achieve these goals on a landscape and tactical level including opportunities for stewardship of the resources including habitat and watershed restoration. A process such as this should produce a tactical plan that is adaptive in nature, that adjusts its approach as changing environmental, social and economic conditions warrant.

The BC Wildlife Federation would like to be involved in the planning process both in terms of the framework developed provincially and implementation on a landscape scale.

Recommendation 7 - Commit to funding regional round table working groups to collaborate on solutions-based local approaches to improving landscape and watershed sustainability.

Recommendation 8 - Ensure that all forest tenure systems require meaningful consultation about harvesting plans with round table stakeholders representing Indigenous and local governments and local conservation groups.

Roundtable Planning Process

- Look at objectives and activities that increase resilience and adapt to climate change including managing to existing and emerging natural disturbance regimes.
- Provide habitat connectivity to accommodate range shifts and adequate refugia.
- The objectives and standards should maintain and enhance ecosystem services, and particularly water quantity and quality.
- Establish clear and enforceable objectives for wildlife and habitat that support wildlife population conservation as well as sustenance, recreation, commercial, spiritual and sustaining functions.
- Manage wildlife and habitat at multiple scales providing a mix of single species, guilds and ecosystem planning and management to maintain abundant species and recover rare and endangered species and restore legacy impacts of past forest harvesting.