



SUBMISSION TO THE BRITISH COLUMBIA LEGISLATIVE SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Gerry Paille
Peace-Liard Regional President
Chair BCWF Wildlife and Allocation Committee June 2020
Thank You for the Opportunity to Provide a Submission

Thank You for Your 2019 Recommendations

Fish and Wildlife Conservation and Management

29. Increase funding for fish and wildlife conservation, management and data collection, including exploring potential revenue sources such as fees from hunting, fishing, natural resource and nature-based tourism enterprises for this purpose.
30. Create and fund a comprehensive species-at-risk legislation to protect and recover species, including prioritizing bio-diversity and species preservation, in consultation with communities, Indigenous peoples and the business sector.

Unfortunately, neither recommendation was implemented, and in fact, corresponding budgets have been decreased.

There is a Lack of Investment in our Fish and Wildlife Populations

- British Columbia's fish and wildlife management agency remains as one of the most understaffed and underfunded of any of the fish and wildlife agencies when compared to similar jurisdictions in Canada and the US.
- The wildlife and habitat branch's 2020 budget did receive an uplift of \$10 Million (*Together for Wildlife*) as promised two years ago, but the impact has been offset by the previously mentioned budget cuts to the Ministry of FLNRORD. Additionally, the spending of the \$10 Million is currently capped at 75% through a special warrant related to COVID-19.

\$10 Million *Together for Wildlife* Budget Breakdown

- 40% on the ground - access management, population management, habitat etc.

- 15% Inventory and research
- 4% Engagement in Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council
- 14% Indigenous communications
- 5% Conservation Lands
- 22% Staffing

The BC Wildlife Federation submits that the portion for on the ground actions that actually impact habitat and put more wildlife on the landscape needs to be increased. The BCWF also feels that engagement, Indigenous communications, and staffing, while important, are core government responsibilities and should not be funded through the *Together for Wildlife* initiative and therefore need additional government funding.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

- Chronic Wasting Disease continues to move towards BC from the south by way of Montana and the east from Alberta. If CWD gets a foothold in BC, it could cause a significant financial impact to the province by affecting the agriculture sector and the ability of licenced hunters and indigenous peoples to harvest deer, elk and moose for sustenance — there are also potential impacts to tourism.
- Stakeholders, including the BC Wildlife Federation and First Nations, are currently providing funding and volunteer hours for the surveillance programs in the East Kootenays and the Peace — this is a core government responsibility.
- **Recommendation:** Provide additional funding to the provincial wildlife health section to do comprehensive surveillance programs to sample for CWD and to adequately respond once CWD is detected in BC.

Recommendations

The Premier mandated Minister of Forest Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD) to: "Improve wildlife management and habitat conservation and collaborate with stakeholders to develop long and short-term strategies to manage B.C.'s wildlife resources."

We are now more than three years into the current government's mandate. The province has not yet moved this mandate or its platform commitment from paper to the forest.

The province of B.C. should immediately:

1. Dedicate all hunting license fees to wildlife management;

2. Dedicate a portion of all rent from those who make money off our natural resources (logging, mining, ecotourism, etc.) to fish and wildlife management;
3. Ensure that all funding is leveraged and that it results in on-the-ground management activities;
4. Set objectives for habitat, fish and wildlife in legislation;
5. Ensure that those who contribute funds have a say in how they are allocated via an inclusive governance model;
6. Include First Nations.

In Region 7B, Peace-Liard

- Stakeholders continue to provide funds and volunteers for core government responsibilities such as prescribed fire projects and wolf reduction initiatives. There continues to be a lack of government funding to do meaningful landscape level actions.
- There remains a concern about FLNRORD staffing levels in the region as well as issues with recruitment and retention.

Recommendation: Provide salary and other incentives to attract and maintain staff in the NE.

- While work on Site C is accelerating, there still is no evidence of a financial commitment from BC Hydro to compensate for the impacts of Site C on fish, wildlife and habitat.
- The existing Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program needs to focus more on landscape level actions that replace the habitat, fish and wildlife that have been lost from decades of BC Hydro activities in the region.
- Government's commitment to engagement with indigenous peoples through the principles of UNDRIP has become a significant part of the workload for FLNRORD staff in the region.

Recommendation: Government needs to provide additional funding and staffing so that the important commitments to indigenous peoples are fulfilled and the landscape level work on habitat, fish and wildlife are not unduly impacted.