



**Restore Confidence.
Rebuild BC.**

BC Wildlife Federation – Election Questions and Responses

1. FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

In B.C., we now have endangered steelhead, endangered caribou, record low salmon and moose populations, and in parts of the province, declining sheep and mule deer populations. Dwindling fish and wildlife values mean increased social conflict and a loss of food security and tourism-related jobs, all while leaving today's British Columbians wondering if they will leave this province better than they found it.

Fish and Wildlife Questions: What do you feel is the most critical factor negatively impacting B.C.'s fish and wildlife and their habitats? If you are elected, what legislative changes or initiatives will you commit to in order to reverse the declining trends for B.C.'s fish and wildlife, and how do you envision that change making a positive impact? Please include costing and timeline for your plan.

BC Liberals Response:

British Columbia's landscape represents an incredibly diverse range of species and habitats – some of the most incredible in our country and the world. BC Liberals believe our natural environment must be protected for future generations – we owe it to our kids to make sure that we leave things in better shape than we found them. The challenges of today are significant – from invasive species, conservation challenges, to the protection of wetlands and more - but they can be met head on and the BC Liberals will do just that.

Unlike John Horgan's NDP Government that cut the Ministry of Environment's budget by \$4.6 million, a BC Liberal Government led by Andrew Wilkinson will act to enhance fish and wildlife populations, for the benefit of all British Columbians who love and depend on our great outdoors for jobs and recreation. We look forward to sharing more details on these actions with the release of our full platform.

2. HABITAT AND WATER SUSTAINABILITY

The BCWF, in partnership with the Watershed Security Coalition, is calling for increased investment in watershed security in British Columbia. Population growth, increased development and a warming climate are putting pressure on watersheds in every region of B.C. The solution is to invest in wetland and streambank restoration, invasive species removal, indigenous and local government watershed monitoring programs, and fish and wildlife stewardship. We need to ensure we have sufficient water left in rivers to support salmonids' migration to their spawning grounds in regions most impacted by climate change.

Habitat and Water Sustainability Questions: Will you establish a B.C. Watershed Security Fund to fund local and regionally-led clean water initiatives and create good, sustainable, local jobs for British Columbians of all ages and backgrounds in watershed restoration, monitoring, technology, training and education? Please provide costing and timeline for your water security plan.

(Jurisdiction: MoE, FLNRORD, Ministry of Health)

BC Liberals Response:

Clean water is a vital to maintaining a healthy province and rebuilding B.C.'s economy. BC Liberals have a long and deep commitment to promoting healthy watersheds, sustainable ecosystems, and thriving communities supported by responsible resource development. A BC Liberal government led by Andrew Wilkinson will continue to build on that record. As a cabinet minister, Andrew Wilkinson helped pass B.C.'s *Water Sustainability Act* and supported hundreds of millions of funding for initiatives to protect B.C.'s water. His commitment to promoting healthy watersheds as a cabinet minister will only continue as Premier.

British Columbians across our province depend on our natural environment for not only their recreation, but also their jobs. Over the coming days, we will be releasing our platform that will outline how we intend to prioritize the protection of B.C.'s watersheds and the local jobs and economies that depend on them. As we adapt to our new normal during the pandemic, we must take strong action to protect and enhance our fish and wildlife populations – and the BC Liberals pledge to do that.

3. PARKS AND PUBLIC ACCESS

The BCWF is calling for the government to increase funding for B.C. parks and to build new campsites with a B.C. resident priority to catch up with the current heavy demand. Additional funding is required to hire more park rangers and conservation officers. Public access to public resources such as fish, wildlife, public roads, and campsites is a growing British Columbia issue.

Parks and Access Questions: Will you increase funding for B.C. parks and Conservation Officer Service and implement resident-priority booking processes? If so, how much will you allocate for these budgets, when and how many more campsites will be built? Is public access to public resources and activities such as fishing, hunting, camping and hiking important to you? How will you protect British Columbians access to crown land and address attempts to restrict public access to B.C. parks and wild spaces

(Jurisdiction: MoE)

BC Liberals Response:

British Columbia is world renowned for its unique and diverse environmental features. An essential part of that is B.C.'s vast parks and protected areas system. As British Columbians learned this summer during the pandemic – our parks and protected areas are critically important as we navigate our new normal and stay close to home.

Earlier this John Horgan's NDP Budget cut the funding of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy by \$4.6 million, including significant cuts to the Environmental Protection, Environmental Sustainability, BC Parks, and Conservation Officer Services. By comparison, Andrew Wilkinson supported millions of dollars of investment for campsite and park expansion. Under the BC Liberals, 84 new parks were established as well 156 new conservancies, two new ecological reserves, and 13 new protected areas. We also expanded more than 75 parks, six ecological reserves, and four protected areas.

Parks, protected areas and public access to the backcountry will be prioritized under BC Liberal government. We're excited to share our commitments with you soon.

4. FISH AND AQUACULTURE

The BCWF joins with other sports fishing and conservation groups to push for full implementation of the Cohen Commission's recommendations. The aquaculture industry needs to be transitioned to closed containment where possible.

BCWF members and partners have been doing salmon enhancement for years. Citizen scientists and Indigenous communities know what needs to be done to help the fish both as smolts and returning adults. We need to engage all parties to work on sensible solutions to issues. The community fishers need to have a place at the table when discussions are held between governments. There are roughly 9,000 jobs created by community fishing service providers.

Fish Management Questions: With the collapse of salmon populations happening across B.C., how do you anticipate the rebuilding of these populations? How will you ensure the recovery of the endangered steelhead? Will you ensure aquaculture moves to closed containment? Please provide the resources you will dedicate and a timeline for all three questions.

(Jurisdiction: Ministry of Agriculture)

BC Liberals Response:

As a cabinet minister, Andrew voted to provide over \$12 million to the Pacific Salmon Foundation, a non-profit citizens group dedicated to the conservation and restoration of wild Pacific salmon and their natural habitats in BC and the Yukon. He also voted to provide about \$3 million per year to the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC.

In July, the BC Liberal Steelhead Caucus once again called on the John Horgan and the NDP to take action to protect the endangered species. For three and a half years, John Horgan and the NDP have ignored the issue. While recent federal funding is important – steelhead are a provincial, not federal responsibility and the NDP's failure to take real action could result in the loss of this incredible species.

If the BC Liberals form government, we will take action on salmon and steelhead conservation in order to protect these vital and iconic species. For more details, please see our platform soon.

5. PREDATOR MANAGEMENT

Many mountain caribou populations are at a record low and moose populations are in significant decline in parts of B.C. Science has shown anthropogenic change as the leading cause, as wolf predation has become a major source of mortality.

The growing grizzly bear population has become a major concern in many of the northern rural and First Nations communities recently. There have been close-call bear encounters and attacks including human and livestock losses. While this scenario may not be important to most of the population that lives in the southern part of the province, it is of serious concern to the northern portion.

Question: Do you support predator management as a part of sustainable science-based wildlife management?

Response:

Any time there is a close call with a predator, that is very concerning to us. As a party, we are committed to protecting both people and wildlife.

A BC Liberal government led by Andrew will take the necessary steps to protect people and species if endangered by predators with a responsible, thoughtful, science-based approach. Predator management has to be part of a prudent and holistic approach to species and ecosystem management.