



**B.C. WILDLIFE FEDERATION**

**2020 Annual Report  
Regional Roundup  
Regional Report Summary**

## **REGION 1 – Vancouver Island**

Respectfully submitted by Dennis Popplestone

**Chinook Fishery:** Once again, the coast took a major hit on the chinook fishery. Vancouver Island was almost entirely closed to chinook fishing, with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans deciding to maintain the same regulations as 2019. The Cowichan river had an estimated 10,000+ chinook head up the river. This has been the fifth year in a row with over 10,000 chinooks in the river and still no closures being relaxed that were put in place to improve the returns.

**Island Elk Poaching:** Poaching has once again reared its ugly head on the island. There have been over twenty carcasses found of poached elk and just recently 34 elk legs were found dumped near Campbell River. A lack of Conservation Officers in the area has been identified as one of the issues.

## **REGION 2 – Lower Mainland**

Respectfully submitted by Mark McDonald

**Robert Bank Terminal 2 Environmental Advisory Panel:** The Robert Bank Terminal 2 Environmental Advisory Panel (EAP) has recently released their report on the project. Thankfully, many of their conclusions point to environmental damage and cumulative effects that would be irreversible and that mitigation effects undertaken by the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority would not come close to offsetting the damage done by the project. One of the species pointed out to be affected by the project was the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whale population. The EAP's report is now in the hands of the Federal Minister of Environment and will probably ultimately end up in Cabinet for a final decision on the project. Hopefully, they choose to say No to this project as the long-term effects on the Fraser River Delta would be irreversible.

**Skagit Headwaters (Donut Hole) Mining Proposal:** The BCWF continues to oppose the Imperial Metals mining permit for the Skagit Headwaters. The company proposing to mine in the unprotected “donut hole” area of the Skagit Headwaters, Imperial Metals, was responsible for the infamous Mount Polley mine disaster of 2014, which spilled more than 2.6 billion gallons of toxic sludge into the Fraser River watershed, one of the biggest environmental disasters in Canadian history. The proposed mining activities would include creating access roads, conducting surface exploration drilling with associated water supply and catchment sumps, and mechanical trenching over a five-year period of continued disturbance.

**Lesser Snow Geese:** The Fraser – Skagit subpopulation that winters in the Fraser River and Skagit River estuaries was expected to hit the 200,000+ bird mark in 2020, up from around 16,000 in the 1970s. There is still concern about land development of farmland in the region, specifically viable farmland that helps feed returning birds such as the Lesser snow goose, but the Snow Geese population is still considered a wildlife success story.

### **REGION 3 – Thompson-Nicola**

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Ambler

**Big Bar Landslide:** Big bar slide construction is underway to build a permanent fish way. Crews are removing topsoil following the completion of an archeological study. Upcoming work conducted by the prime contractor, Peter Kiewit and sons will include the placement of riprap, minor blasting on the Canyon walls for the construction of the fish way upstream, and further rock stabilization.

### **Region 4E – Kootenay East**

Respectfully submitted by Glenn Flynn

**Elk Valley West Bighorn Sheep Study:** This multi-year study was set up to explore a declining population of BH sheep on the west side of the Elk Valley. In late January we captured 14 sheep, deployed collars, and did health sampling with a local government veterinarian. Movement is being monitored to various ranges throughout the seasons and mortality investigations.

**Elk Study:** This "5-year" study has come to an end, but we continue to collect valuable migration and distribution data on the various elk herds. The data collected is being used by various organizations in the area to further enhance the elk in the Elk Valley; Teck Coal, North Coal, and FLNRORD are just a few on the list.

**Local industry and infrastructure project mitigation:** Teck Coal “Castle Mountain Expansion”, Canfor logging plans, NWP Coal “Crown Mountain” project, and TransCanada Highway (Golden Canyon area) major construction project are just a few of the projects local clubs that required continuous engagement, meetings and correspondence with the concerns for habitat.

### **Region 4W – Kootenay West**

Respectfully submitted by Wally Kampen

**Mountain Goats:** A local mountain goat population is being threatened with extirpation largely due to cougar predation yet overly restrictive regulations such as a one cat personal bag limit remain in place for cougar.

## **REGION 5 – Cariboo-Chilcotin**

Respectfully submitted by Mike Fowler

**Freshwater Fishing:** Ever since I was first elected Regional Vice-President in 2004, I have been trying to get BCWF representation on our regional angling advisory committee. For some reason, I was unable to be successful. That changed this year as FLNRO agreed and I was finally able to assign one of our members a seat.

## **REGION 7A – Omineca**

Respectfully submitted by Ray Klingspohn (Q1-3) and Bob Moody (Q4)

**Nechako Watershed Engagement Initiative:** The consultation process continues with some progress being made regarding the status and health of the Nechako watershed. From the reservoir created to provide water to the Kemano hydropower station and Kenny Dam spillway along the Nechako River to Prince George confluence with the Fraser River. Valuable information is being compiled with the goal of using it to provide Rio Tinto guidance on how they could improve their operations to mitigate problems re fish and wildlife habitat, flooding and recreation.

## **REGION 7B - Peace**

Respectfully submitted by Gerry Paille

**Caribou Recovery:** Government remains committed to continuing maternal penning for the Klinse-Za herd and a broadened wolf removal program across the region. Wolf collaring and removal work continued through the end of March 2020. Lowering moose and/or deer numbers as a method to reduce predation on caribou continues to be a controversial topic with the BCWF stakeholders preferring a multi-species approach that includes with density objectives for caribou, moose, deer, predators and other wildlife and objectives for habitat.

**Northeast Stakeholder Roundtable:** The NE Stakeholder Roundtable remains focused on Treaty Land Entitlement and Site C Land Agreements, Fort St. John Land Resource Management Plan (LRMP), caribou recovery and UNDRIP.

The processes of land transfers to local First Nations are at various stages with the different First Nations, which can be anywhere from finalizing land selections, public engagement around land selections and finalizing agreements.

To date, the Fort St. John LRMP update process includes the following First Nations in the process: Halfway River (HRFN), Blueberry River (BRFN), Doig River (DRFN), Prophet River (PRFN) four local First Nations, local and regional governments, and the Government of BC – stakeholders are regularly updated on the process but are not involved in the discussions. The group is still in the process of finalizing the terms of reference and an engagement strategy describing how and when the public will be involved.

Provincially, the new modernizing land use planning process focuses on the following outcomes: support of reconciliation, healthy and sustainable ecosystems resistant to climate change, sustainable economy and certainty, and trust in resource stewardship.

**Prescribed Burns:** The Prescribed Fire Task Team is a time-limited task team with the end goal of enhancing wildlife habitat in north eastern BC by supporting statutory decisions, by providing knowledge about the use of prescribed fire and by assisting in putting forward proposals that have the best chance of being approved. The final decision authority on prescribed fire is with the BC Wildfire Service. Several proposals, which include plans for multiple burn sites located mostly within the Muskwa-Kechica Management Area are currently undergoing a technical review by government.

### **REGION 8 – Okanagan** Respectfully submitted by Pat Whittingham

**Southern Interior Cougar Collaring Project:** OKBCWF and member clubs have been instrumental in funding and assisting with this project. To date, of 15 cats collared, two have died and three have had collars cease working. There has been an investigation into 241 cougar kills, and it has been determined that 100 were mule deer, 43 white tailed deer, 27 unknown deer, 37 elk, 23 moose, and one each of bighorn sheep and porcupine. Cougars have been killing about one ungulate weekly, half being adults and half being juveniles. There have been some kittens collared and their involvement in their mothers' kills will be tracked via camera traps. Subsequent dispersal will be tracked when these kittens strike out on their own.

**Southern Interior Mule Deer Project:** Data has revealed that 75% of collared deer are migratory and 25% are "homesteaders." From the analysis of 677,507 data points, it has been found that the spring migration occurs mid-May and the fall return is early- to mid-October. Average migration distances are between 43 and 58 kilometres, with the record holder in the Boundary study area covering 118 kilometres. Pregnancy rates have held high at 93%, with an outstanding 69% of does carrying twins. Compared to other jurisdictions including Montana (25 – 55%), Washington (63%), and Colorado (79%), BC is on the high end of the scale for twinning rates. During our neonate captures, we found twins 46% of the time, which compares favourably to Delaware's white tailed deer neonate twins at 44% with no predators.

**Southern Interior Land Trust:** The Southern Interior Land Trust (SILT) was successful in purchasing a 109-hectare tract of land in the Gilpin Range area near Grand Forks. We had sent a letter of support for the acquisition and are now drafting another letter as the adjacent property has become available. This area is prime range for deer, bighorn sheep, elk, and a variety of threatened and endangered flora and fauna.