



BC Trappers Association's Wildlife & Habitat Engagements Response.

The BC Trappers Association thanks Government for the opportunity to respond to this very important issue and does so with the high hopes that Government will act quickly to make changes and address what the public and other stake holders are saying.

The public's assets (wildlife and habitat) are in a state of decline of which we have never seen before. There are many factors that have caused these declines and we all know what the major causes are; resource extraction, predation and maybe to some extent climate change. While Government may not be able to address climate change to the extent that the public would like, they can address resource extraction and predation. Government is reluctant to do so because of potential job losses and due to some public outcry by activists who in many cases are protesting an issue they know very little about.

We; the public, first nations groups, consumptive users and other tenure holders have been bringing these issues to past and present Governments for years and still we see very little change in policy, regulations or enforcement.

The forest industry has been and continues to be the biggest cause of habitat loss and wildlife declines and no lessons have been learned from the past. Look no further than the decline and maybe even the extinction of the Spotted Owl in British Columbia. Caribou are also on the decline and in some areas may be beyond the point of recovery, moose are also in serious decline in many areas of the Province.

These declines are mainly due to loss of habitat caused by the forest industry and also an increase in the wolf population. This statement is not and should not be new to Government, but we still see very little change to the practices both by Industry and Government.

In a recent review of Professional Reliance completed by Government, with input from the public and other stakeholders, it is doubtful that we will see any changes to the current practices.

Last year we saw an unprecedented fire season, with roughly 8 years of the harvestable area of the Province lost due to fire. The forest industry is based on a 100 year rotation so why has the AAC not been reduced effectively immediately to compensate for this loss of timber supply and habitat loss? So far all indications are this year is looking to be the same. Will the forest industry be down to a 90 year rotation or even less without a reduction in the AAC?

Another critical loss caused by Industry is water quality and the impact on salmon and other species. With some salmon stock numbers in serious decline due to increased water temperatures and silting of streams and spawning grounds. Are these too, another species about to be red listed or even worse? This has been a very important food source for thousands of years, for both native and non-native people.

The amount of suitable habitat in this Province is increasingly getting smaller for both the forest industry and wildlife. Only Government has the power and can make the changes that will benefit all. The question is at what extent is Government willing to make the required changes.

Yes it will mean job losses but at the present cut level the jobs in the forest sector will be lost shortly due to lack of timber supply. There are far more jobs at stake in rural BC that also require suitable habitat for their very existence and these jobs are long lasting, with very little impact on the habitat and wildlife.

For far too long the final consumptive user of wildlife has had to pay the price with reduced seasons and lost opportunity. Yet it is the final consumer and Government who provide the funds along with various groups and associations to rebuild the habitat that Industry has damaged.

In some cases there is total disregard to laws, regulations and policies by Industry and lack of enforcement on the part of Government, case in point, the Migratory Bird Convention Act.

There is no more need for studies or science, our wildlife and habitat has already been studied to death and our wildlife can't wait for long term solutions if we expect to have wildlife for future generations to come. It will be a sad day if another species of wildlife is red listed or extinct.

Conclusion:

With trapping being the oldest industry in Canada and British Columbia and the industry that brought the first non-native people to this Province, we have worked

side by side with many of the other industries with very little conflict or impacts to our tenures and industry. Now with diminishing habitat caused mainly by resource extraction by other industries, many traplines are no longer viable. More importantly, the viability of a trapline is a strong indicator of the health of both our wildlife and habitat which we all need. Numerous reports and studies have already been done by contractors on behalf of Government, by Government and in one case a Minister and the outcome is almost always the same. Why have the findings of the Al Gorley Report and Mike Morris's Report (Getting the Balance Right) not been implemented? Loss of habitat is the main message from both reports and yet very little is being done, one example is the use of herbicide by the forest industry for brush control. This so called brush is the very food supply for many wildlife species and the impacts of this practice has been devastating. Again this has only been done for the benefit of the forest industry with no consideration to its impacts. As well the value of these deciduous species in the forest helps to reduce the potential loss due to wildfire.

The BCTA does not hold a lot of faith in this process as there has been other opportunities for the public's input such as; the Forest Stewardship Plans, the on-going Caribou Recovery Program, Professional Reliance Review and PHATAT to name a few. The message has been the same from first nations people and others.

Our wildlife and habitat don't have a voice and it is up to Government to do what is right for future generations. The public has spoken and Industry has been unwilling to change if it impacts their bottom line. It will be a sad day if this process has the same outcome as previous public input.

Respectfully;
Brian Dack
President of the BC Trappers Association