

July 26, 2018

RE: Wildlife and Habitat Engagement

Clean Energy BC (CEBC) is an industry association that represents over 120 members, including operators and developers whose sole business is renewable power production, as well as suppliers, contractors, service providers, post-secondary institutions, and 12 First Nations. Our members are involved in many of the 124 Independent Power Projects currently in operation throughout BC, and the 10 projects that are currently in development.

CEBC's membership works throughout the province as natural resource developers. We believe in protecting BC's wildlife and habitat and want to support the biodiversity of our province. As part of the permitting requirements, renewable energy projects must complete many environmental studies and maintain operational environmental monitoring at project sites, and therefore have valuable input for BC's wildlife and habitat management strategy. In what follows, we offer our feedback on the challenges currently facing wildlife management and habitat conservation in British Columbia that are posted on the Wildlife and Habitat Engagement website.

Challenge 1: Advancing Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples

Our membership comprises of 12 First Nations, and the majority of our other members work with indigenous people, supporting existing projects. Improved access to clean energy is one of the most effective tools available when it comes to advancing reconciliation. Empowering First Nations to make their community low-carbon helps to mitigate and adapt to climate change in addition to conserving wildlife and habitat.

Challenge 2: Increasing Involvement and Shared Stewardship

Habitat conservation concerns can be addressed by supporting collaborative groups like the Energy Forum — “A shared voice to promote better climate, energy and environmental policy and practices”. As an Industry-NGO collaboration, members of the clean energy industry and wildlife-focused non-profits engage in dialogue.

Advantages of Low-impact Industry

Challenge 3: Declining Wildlife Populations

Challenge 4: Increasing Human Activity

Challenge 5: Wildfires and Extreme Weather

Supporting low-impact industry such as renewable energy projects can help address many of the questions posed in Challenge 3,4 and 5. BC's clean energy industry employs many people throughout the province and it has the potential to create many more jobs, increase affordability and strengthen our local economy. One of the biggest threats to species at risk is climate change and clean energy is one of the most powerful solutions for combatting this. Wildfires and extreme weather pose a large threat to wildlife as it can negatively impact significant areas of critical habitat.

Challenge 6: Better Information

Clean energy projects are required to complete a multitude of environmental assessments and maintain on-going environmental monitoring through operations. From these assessments, a wealth of scientific data on BC's natural environment has been and continues to be collected. Our members do not feel like the value of this data is being properly managed by the Provincial Government or taken into consideration for future decision-making.

The clean energy industry invests a lot of time and resources into recording and upholding a high standard of all data collected. There is a great knowledge-sharing opportunity if this data is used to its full potential. When data is used in reports, visibly acknowledging the company that funded the research would be appreciated.

Challenge 7: Human-Wildlife Conflicts

Our membership is well-informed to prevent and mitigate human-wildlife conflict.

Challenge 8: Funding

Our members have contributed significant funding to Provincial government conservation initiatives for many species, notably Northern spotted owl and grizzly bear. Our members are supportive of continuing these contributions because they acknowledge the value in protecting species at risk and conserving habitat. However, there is a need for much greater transparency as to where these funds are being allocated.

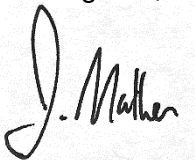
CEBC suggests that when a proponent supplies external funding to a conservation initiative, correspondence on the progress, research and findings of the program are upheld. Understandably, there may be a lack of resources for researchers to liaise directly. We propose that another government personnel be assigned to maintain the relationship between the proponent and provincial researchers. In addition, much of the scientific research should be made available to the public and academia so that we can all continue to learn and improve.

Closing

CEBC is pleased to provide the feedback contained within this letter and welcomes the opportunity to expand on our experience, knowledge and ideas related to wildlife and habitat management strategies in BC. We would therefore like to request a meeting to provide additional feedback on the challenges and opportunities posted on the engagement website at your earliest convenience.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate in contacting me directly.

Kind regards,



Jae Mather
Executive Director, CEBC