

Wildlife and Habitat Engagement Responses

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The engagement approach and how you would like to be involved in the future

This is an area that has shown great improvement over the last couple of years. I think it was realized that government to government communication at the exclusion of additional stakeholders was an ineffective means of progression, and I'm encouraged to see the process becoming much more inclusive.

Questions posed in the challenges section

• *Challenge 1: Advancing Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples*

I think it's time to focus on the wildlife issue. All stakeholders are claiming a vested interest in wildlife conservation. Therefore, perhaps the most effective way to encourage reconciliation is to do what's best for the animals. It is unlikely that a century-old, nation wide issue will be solved by this particular exchange, however, our part in contributing to overall reconciliation (which requires a holistic, all-ministry approach) should be to focus on the wildlife, as that is fitting with the Indigenous cultural beliefs.

• *Challenge 2: Increasing Involvement and Shared Stewardship*

Because the regions across our province are so diverse, giving regional managers more decision making authority would allow for more timely, informed decisions to be made and actions to be implemented.

The more stakeholders involved, the more complicated the decision process gets. Priority should be given to conserving wildlife, not encouraging bureaucracy. If too many people are involved, the government will spend it's time managing people. The job is to manage wildlife.

• *Challenge 3: Declining Wildlife Populations*

Action is required in all listed opportunities. However, this is a very time sensitive issue, and these goals are drastically hindered by layers of bureaucracy. There needs to be a more efficient system to allow the government and stakeholders to act on the objectives that are listed. Perhaps if areas could be managed more regionally, i.e. the regional managers assume more decision making abilities, action could be implemented more swiftly.

• *Challenge 4: Increasing Human Activity*

I think access management is pivotal. With regards in particular to logging, I think that when the last load of logs comes out, the road should come out. As there is already heavy machinery on site, this would be cost-effective. Furthermore, as well as

replanting trees, the industry should also be responsible for replanting vegetation that local wildlife eats, paying particular attention to those species at risk.

I'm out on the ground, I see the practices are constantly improving, but a lot of these things that they do for the wildlife won't matter if they leave the access open.

The benefits of access management are innumerate and multivariate. While we cannot prevent people from being in the wilderness, limiting easy access prevents many wildlife encounters. When wildlife is continually stressed by increased human activity it can disrupt reproductive cycles, causing at-risk species to not conceive that year, or conceive late, resulting in a late born young which likely will not survive the winter. It increases opportunities for predators, and it increases pollution in our forests.

- ***Challenge 5: Wildfires and Extreme Weather***

Perhaps controlled burns in strategic locations (e.g. grasslands) could be beneficial to wildlife, and could reduce the fuel for the monster fires we have witnessed as of late.

- ***Challenge 6: Better Information***

These issues are time sensitive. Research is time consuming and expensive. This is a time when an expedited decisions need to be made using the information we have right now. There are hard decisions to be made, it might be unpopular, but it's time to put the wildlife first. There's no use waiting until it's too late when we have mostly stable populations to conserve today. Case in point, there is a herd of caribou in Revelstoke that have less than 10 animals left with 2 full time biologists still "researching". Obviously it's too late to save that herd, but there is a herd in the Itchas that is facing a similar fate, but there is still time to save them if we act now.

Science-based decisions can be made with the information we have now. We don't need to have completed research papers to take effective action.

Furthermore, I would like to emphasize that science-based decisions should be required and politics should not be permitted to carry any weight as they did with the grizzly hunt ban.

As for the sharing of information amongst stakeholders - that seems straightforward. Just share it. Include all parties in the release of information via email. And no more government to government decisions that completely blindside all other invested parties.

- ***Challenge 7: Human-Wildlife Conflicts***

Again, this goes back to limiting access. Limiting access is more cost-effective than any of the suggested opportunities, and should be a first priority. I'm encouraged by the increased involvement the agricultural community has played as far as providing habitat for wildlife and developing programs to mitigate problem wildlife (e.g. LPP). I think that the agricultural community has the potential to be a powerful ally in the conservation of wildlife as they own large tracts of land often with good habitat.

• **Challenge 8: Funding**

If private financing is permissible within the government (?) organizations like SCI give moneys for conservation efforts.

With regards to reprioritizing money that you already have, I think the major allocation of funds at this critical time should be solution focused - real, on the ground, action items, as opposed to more research and more meetings. Again, these decisions may not be popular, but they would be what's in the best interest of wildlife.

Issues or concerns you think we should be aware of;

I'm very concerned with caribou calf recruitment and steelhead returns in the Chilcotin river.

Ideas or solutions you or your organization wishes to share

With regards to wildlife conflicts, many animals are needing to be destroyed if they become a problem; but rather than waste the animal, there could be something in place for an Outfitter to take a sportsman out for a hunt. This way the meat is used, there's a contribution to the economy and could make a large impact on individual businesses, all the while encouraging sustainable wildlife populations.

Anything you wish to share on the topic of how wildlife management and habitat conservation can be improved in B.C.

We have the opportunity to be leaders. Our wildlife is more diverse in our province than most places in the world. If we make conservation a priority, we could be a model for countries around the world.

Thank you for considering my responses,

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