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Improving Wildlife Habitat and Conservation in BC - Response to Provincial Discussion Paper on Wildlife Habitat Engagement July 30, 2018

1. What programs and policies are most important to advance meaningful and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and help implement UNDRIP?

Reduce Scarcity. In times of abundance there is no conflict and no issue between FN and non FN allocation of resources. It is the Province's responsibility to ensure that abundance is adequate for ALL users, in which case the perceived and real conflicts related to scarcity will no longer be applicable.

2. How should a broad range of stakeholders be involved in wildlife management and habitat conservation decisions? What are your suggestions for a new governance model for wildlife management and habitat conservation?

Science based management ONLY – no management decisions based on revenue, political or social pressure. Invest and commit to science based management. Consider technical working groups for FN and Stakeholders implemented regionally with LOCAL representation from FN, Scientists, stakeholders. Management plans sit on a shelf and gather dust – continue to invest in the plans, but more importantly, invest in the process and keep it current and iterative.

3. What measures need to be taken to proactively manage wildlife and habitat and prevent wildlife from becoming species at risk?

Wild places should be delineated and set-aside to be managed for multiple use, but should conform to a more comprehensive management planning process that includes more strict protections related to forestry, access, and species at risk. The management for these areas should employ the best science to manage issues related to wildlife and disease. Most importantly, these areas must remain open to the public willing to access them on foot, and our public lands heritage should be better publicized so that British Columbians and the rest of the planet are more aware of the high value of these lands, resources, and their traditional uses.

Forestry practices on private lands should conform to the same regulatory and environmental standards as those on Crown Lands.

Any listing of endangered species must have a legislated target for delisting prior to being listed and these targets must be science based and upheld under the law.

4. What is the most effective way of ensuring that wildlife and habitats are healthy while fostering a healthy economy to ensure life is affordable for British Columbians?

Assign more of the existing tax revenue to land and wildlife management so we have better information for planning and management decisions. Manage for wildlife populations First, wildlife use Second (harvest, viewing, trapping, etc), and industrial/commercial activities that affect habitat Third.

5. What are the most effective ways to proactively adapt to the impacts of climate change on wildlife and habitats?

Climate change is real, but wildlife are more resilient if the populations are healthy – climate change must be considered in management planning and assessment. Understanding current and potential effects from climate change requires research, funding, and investment – invest tax revenue in Science.

6. How can Traditional Ecological Knowledge, citizen science and other forms of knowledge complement science to support decision-making? What are the best ways to share information broadly so that there is transparency and trust is gained among all parties?

Traditional knowledge and citizen science are great sources of information, but are NOT sufficient on their own to address the extremely complex management problems facing wildlife in BC. A Science based management approach, considering all information, but using the best available data and tools is the only way to effectively manage. Commit to a science based approach and consider all data. This costs money, and TEK and citizen science should not be relied on as an alternative to the extreme investment that will be required to adequately manage wildlife in this province.

7. What are the most effective ways to reduce wildlife human conflicts in British Columbia?

Reduce human-wildlife conflict through more effective public education, provision of adequate habitat, limitations on motorized access, and promotion of responsible use. Urban populations are becoming more and more detached from wildlife and the media is not helping by portraying wildlife as cuddly pets. Our wildlife heritage in this province is important enough, that some basic and balanced understanding of this should be taught to all British Columbians in school. Everyone should understand our wildlife heritage, what wildlife is, how the resources are used, and how the ongoing use and science based management of wildlife can contribute to healthy populations. Basically – teach wildlife management 101 to all kids in school and try to get as many kids into wild places as is feasible by funding programs with existing tax revenue generated by extractive commercial industries.

8. What are the best funding models, funding sources, and creative financing ideas that could increase resources for wildlife management and habitat conservation and provide additional flexibility for how funding is prioritized and allocated?

Provincial wildlife management budgets are tiny in comparison to similar US states with less diverse wildlife and smaller populations of people. We cannot adequately manage a resource without sufficient funding (how much does the province invest in forestry as a comparable). There is plenty of tax revenue already generated by commercial/industrial activities that impact wildlife and habitat, and generated by consumptive and non-consumptive users. The current problem with funding could likely largely be resolved by reinvesting existing tax revenue into wildlife management.

- All revenue from all associated existing license sales should go to wildlife management.

- Consider increasing “consumptive use” license and tag fees for residents by small increments, and by much larger increments for non-residents.
- All user groups must also pay their fair share; institute permitting and licensing systems for “non-consumptive” users (hikers, ORV, etc).
- Increase LoO and other land use licensing fees to support wildlife management.
- Commercial and industrial development including forestry should be managed to enhance wildlife populations and a more significant portion of the stumpage revenue from forestry practices should be redirected to wildlife management.
- Redirect all existing tax revenue from all consumer related products (hunting, firearms, ammunition, hiking, mountain climbing, ORV, etc) to wildlife habitat and management. This could be achieved by better management of existing tax revenue or by assigning a targeted excise tax, similar to the Pittman Robertson tax in the USA.
- Consider a separate agency to manage wildlife in BC (similar to a Fish and Game Agency), where they were responsible for protecting our traditional use of wildlife resources and ensuring healthy wildlife populations for the shared benefit of all British Columbians.

I think people and industry would generally be supportive of tax if they knew 100% of the revenue went directly to science based wildlife management with diligent fiscal management.

Summary

Our wildlife heritage is something all British Columbians should be proud of, including traditional First Nations use of wildlife resources, hunting, trapping, the evolution of backcountry tourism, wildlife photography, etc. Equal considerations should be given to all of these resource use practices and they should be promoted equally and fairly by government. Politicizing wildlife management benefits no one and hurts wildlife. Respect our wildlife heritage, invest in good science and rely on science based management.

Regards,
