

Lake Windermere District Rod and Gun Club

This document is a response to the Government of BC's discussion paper on Improving Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation in British Columbia of April 2018. The Honourable Doug Donaldson – Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resources Operation and Rural Development asked for discussion. The conversation which follows is from the Lake Windermere District Rod & Gun Club of Invermere, B.C.

General Discussion

Humans have placed themselves at the top of the living organism pyramid, removed themselves as part of the natural ecosystem process and taken the position if it is good for human needs then everything else must fit in. The change that is needed is to reinsert ourselves back into the natural process. Wildlife can live without humans as they did many millennia before our arrival, but they cannot survive with negative human interference. Humans are here to stay so that is not up for discussion. The task before us is how to reinsert ourselves back into the natural process using our intelligence and science to do this. Some key points we need to focus on are:

- We must stop treating wildlife as a resource as we do with coal and timber. Wildlife needs to be managed as a trust. It should not be looked at as a commodity.
- Wildlife must be managed by the Province and as the sole proprietor.
- Cumulative effects on habitat must be addressed with wildlife habitat given first priority.

With these in mind the discussion paper asked us to reflect on challenges and offer both insight and ideas on how to address.

Challenge One – How to advance reconciliation with indigenous peoples in wildlife management and habitat conservation.

- Indigenous people can have a say in wildlife management but cannot be the sole managers. Wildlife move great distances throughout the Province, between regions and geographic areas. They need to be managed under one overall plan which would be dynamic through time and addressed by all human elements.
- There are more than indigenous people who are stakeholders in wildlife management thus these other stakeholders must be realized and have a voice.
- When land rights and management are being discussed with indigenous people habitat conservation must be a number one priority for the flora and fauna need. An appropriate amount (minimum one third) of lands claim money must be set aside.
- Critical wildlife habitat and species at risk are to remain under the jurisdiction of the Province.
- There is a need for First Nations to create discussion papers regarding their intentions on how they plan to manage habitat and ecosystem values within their traditional territory or treaty area.

Challenge Two – How to increase involvement of non-governmental conservation organizations, wildlife and habitat stakeholder and general public in wildlife management and habitat conservation.

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- There is a need for an Ombudsman type group to review and have oversight regarding wildlife management and habitat conservation within the Province. The make-up of this group should come from the scientific, professional and regular citizen base of the Province.
- We are not supportive of Regional or Provincial Boards as has been used in the past to offer direction on wildlife management.

Challenge Three – Some wildlife populations are declining across the province.

- Address cumulative effects. Wildlife first! The current Front Counter BC referral process is broken and does not support habitat conservation. It is too broad based with more of a focus on land management.
- Stop managing species by species and manage by landscape types and population densities of all wildlife within. BY doing so habitat conservation will be brought into the picture and discussed.
- Decrease the Annual Allowable Cut in Timber Supply Areas to reflect habitat needs and practice proper conservation.
- Return to selective cutting of timber and decrease clear cuts size when used.
- Look at other jurisdictions outside BC that are managing wildlife successfully and adapt their methods here.
- Greater application of enforcing laws and regulations especially within the natural resource sections.
- There continues to be Limited Hunting Permits (LEH) issued where it is known the numbers are below sustainable numbers. Current Wildlife Managers continue to hold limited permits for these wildlife (example Mt. Goats) under the reasoning that if they remove them from the LEH process in fear they will not be able to place back into the LEH process if/when numbers improve. This is not the way to manage wildlife and these managers are practicing poor decision making.

Challenge Four – Habitat loss, alteration and fragmentation are increasing due to human activity.

- Need to manage wildlife and their habitat for wildlife needs and not just to accommodate human needs.
- Need to have motorized and mechanical assisted closures in critical wildlife areas and critical habitat areas.
- Seasonal disturbance closures for all activities when critical for wildlife to be left alone.
- Look at Wildlife Management Areas as important study and refuge areas and regulate as such.
- Get rid of professional reliance and put the management and oversight back into the hands of government agencies.
- Need to look at gaps between and among major movement corridors and move to fill these in. Wildlife needs to be able to move back and forth between habitat types required for their living.

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- A lot of habitat needs to be restored through controlled burns and open landscape restoration. For wildfire areas this means not just planting trees for commercial use but how the landscape can be restored for wildlife use as well.

Challenge Five – Climate change is resulting in more wildfire and extreme weather, contributing to wildlife diseases, forest health issues and the spread of invasive species, affecting wildlife populations and altering habitat.

- This challenge has more to do with human needs and adapting. Wildlife are already adapting and have many thousands of years more experience at this than humans. We need to see how we fit into this change and adapt as wildlife are doing. Unless technology and science can come up with new knowhow it may mean we humans cannot stay in some areas.
- For the most part let mother nature take her course. Prepare for altered ecosystems and look for adaptive techniques.
- Be clear on what species best suit the habitat that will be altered due to climate change and manage for them.
- Review climate models that show what habitats will survive/change, what wildlife will stay and move and manage for these parameters.

Challenge Six – There is a growing need for better information on wildlife and habitats to inform management and conservation outcomes and achieve robust compliance and enforcement.

- Create a knowledge base network, similar what is being used by Kootenay Conservation Program that is based on wildlife and habitat needs. The network would be comprised of research and up to date literature on wildlife and habitat management that all resource users, managers and the public have access to. This can be contracted out rather than have in-house staff carry out.
- Hire some outside help of respectable and well versed people to get things back on track.
- Increase Conservation Officer numbers along with proper detection training and equipment.
- Broaden the number of seasonal wildlife guardians.
- Place Wildlife, Fisheries and Habitat staff under one agency and not in the current Ministry which is a resource extraction and land manipulation type ministry not conducive to wildlife management and habitat retention.

Challenge Seven – Concerns about human-wildlife conflicts are increasing, including those related to agriculture impacts, urban wildlife, wildlife-vehicle collisions and dangerous wildlife.

- Urban areas require movement corridors with natural features in place for wildlife moving through. Regulations must be put in place to make this happen.
- Movement corridors need to be part of an agriculture operations and land must be set aside with natural landscape features left or put in place.
- Where fencing is installed along highways over and under passes for wildlife must be installed. The same holds true for fish passage in that culverts/bridges must be installed to permit fish passage.
- Reduce speed substantially in high wildlife areas along highways so drivers have time to react.

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- Continue and update education for agriculture impacts, urban and dangerous wildlife .

Challenge Eight – Wildlife management and habitat conservation are funded through annual Ministry budgets, contributions to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation from surcharges on hunting, trapping and guide outfitter licenses, and through partnerships. Current funding levels may not meet expectations for improved wildlife and habitat conservation.

- Use US model (Pittman-Robertson) where taxes from recreational items go into funding for wildlife management.
- All resource users including commercial, industry, non-commercial and indigenous pay into the funding model.
- Increase BC Hydro contribution to Fish & Wildlife Compensation in the Columbia River Treaty area starting at \$50 million and tied to COLA.

Thank you for the offer to comment.



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