

Dear Ministers Heyman, Donaldson, Fraser, Mungall, Trevana, and Popham,

We are pleased that British Columbia is moving forward on species-at-risk legislation; the need for this is both critical and urgent. We are independent scientists with collective experience in species at risk science, policy, and management, including extensive involvement with recovery teams and initiatives, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, and the Species At Risk Advisory Committee. We offer our advice to you as the Government works towards introducing provincial species at risk legislation (the “Act”). We plan to release a detailed set of recommendations in September 2018.

Below we highlight key elements that our group has discussed to date.

B.C. should strive for legislation that sets and achieves recovery objectives to prevent the further loss of provincial biodiversity. Rather than focussing on reporting, **we recommend legislation that emphasizes action and progress**, by:

1. Mandating an **independent Oversight Committee (OC)** with appropriate expertise that:
 - a. Convenes independent, multi-stakeholder Recovery Teams charged with **prioritizing actions and overseeing progress towards recovery**. Recovery Teams may be specific to ecosystem (e.g., Garry Oak ecosystems), region (e.g. Great Bear Rainforest), or species (e.g., mountain caribou), as deemed appropriate by the OC.
 - b. **Oversees the listing process** (see item 2).
 - c. **Provides a public record of the efficacy of the Act** by setting deadlines for identifying, prioritizing, and carrying out recovery actions, tracking recovery activities and population trends as reported by the Recovery Teams, evaluating whether government has carried out prioritized actions, and summarizing progress annually.
2. **Adopting a dual-listing process:** (a) automatically adopt listings of BC species from the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) and (b) initiate an evaluation process for species whose status requires special consideration in BC. The latter may include species not in SARA but recommended for listing by COSEWIC, the BC CDC, or other parties.
3. **Charging Recovery Teams to oversee progress towards recovery targets.** Recovery Teams will use modern scientific tools to prioritize actions (e.g., cost-effectiveness evaluation) and then recommend prioritized actions and a monitoring plan to Government, using living documents that are publicly available and updated in light of new data. Recovery Teams report annually to the OC on recovery activities planned and undertaken, as well as updates on population numbers as trends in the distribution and abundance of listed species.
4. Triggering a **mandatory review by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change** when recovery objectives set by the OC are not met within timelines prescribed.
5. **Securing sufficient funding and government capacity** to support the OC and Recovery Teams, as well as implement prioritized conservation actions (including private land stewardship if a priority action) and to monitor progress effectively and efficiently.
6. **Ensuring that formal listing decisions, recovery priorities, and data are permanently, publicly, and freely available** through an online, centralized portal (such as a Conservation Data Centre). Critically, data from all activities related to the Act by all stakeholders should be submitted to this portal and made available without undue delay.
7. **Making an explicit commitment to scientific integrity**, including accountability, open information and data, scientific rigour, transparency, and independence for scientific advisors and committees.

We would be pleased to meet with you at any time to discuss species at risk legislation in B.C.

Sincerely,

Drs. Sally Otto (University of British Columbia), Alana Westwood (Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative), Karen Hodges (University of British Columbia), Chris Johnson (University of Northern British Columbia), Arne Mooers (Simon Fraser University), Brian Starzomski (University of Victoria), and Chris Darimont (University of Victoria)

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