Together for Wildlife Strategy Q&A

1. How will a new wildlife and habitat strategy change management and conservation in B.C.?

The Together for Wildlife strategy will move towards a wildlife management and habitat conservation model that brings diverse interests and perspectives together to work collaboratively on shared priorities to improve outcomes for wildlife and their habitat. It proposes a process to focus new investments on high priority actions and encourage new partnerships to deliver wildlife and habitat stewardship. The strategy builds on successful programs and partnerships while identifying opportunities to adapt and improve. It also commits to reporting out regularly on progress, which will improve transparency and accountability for delivering the actions.

You can learn more about the importance of wildlife and habitat to our province, and current challenges at https://engage.gov.bc.ca/wildlifeandhabitat/background/.

Development of the strategy

2. Where is the process to develop a new strategy currently at?

In November 2019, a draft Together for Wildlife strategy was released for review and engagement with British Columbians. We are currently in phase 3 of a 4-phase process:

Phase 1: Initial Discussions – Spring and Summer 2018. During this phase, we asked British Columbians to share their concerns related to wildlife management and habitat conservation in B.C.

Phase 2: Analysis and Collaborative Policy Development – Fall 2018 to Spring 2019. During this phase, we developed policy options and ideas for consideration in collaboration with Indigenous peoples and a broad range of stakeholders.

Phase 3: Validation of Policy Options – Spring 2019 to Fall 2019. During this phase, we are engaging with British Columbians to make sure that the right actions are identified in the draft Together for Wildlife strategy.

Phase 4: Implementation – Spring 2020. During this phase, we will finalize the strategy based on input received during phase 3, and begin full implementation.

3. How was the draft Together for Wildlife strategy developed? Who did you talk to?

The draft strategy was developed over 18 months through comprehensive discussions with Indigenous communities, rural communities, academic institutions, a wide range of stakeholder organizations (resource industry, conservation, hunter, trapper, guide, recreation and tourism), government staff, and the public. We asked what actions we should take to improve wildlife stewardship, and believe this strategy reflects the rich dialogue and diversity of ideas we heard. You can learn more about external engagement at https://engage.gov.bc.ca/wildlifeandhabitat/previous-engagement/.
4. **How are First Nations being consulted on the draft strategy?**

The draft strategy was sent out to all First Nations in B.C. on November 19th, 2019, along with the Policy Intentions Paper outlining proposed amendments to the *Wildlife Act* to support reconciliation. First Nations were asked to contact the Province with any questions or to set up a meeting to discuss the materials. These meetings started in December 2019 and will continue into early 2020.

5. **How were citizens or organizations consulted on the draft strategy?**

Citizens and organizations were invited to visit [https://engage.gov.bc.ca/wildlifeandhabitat/currentengagement/](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/wildlifeandhabitat/currentengagement/) to fill in an on-line questionnaire and share their perspectives. Feedback was accepted until January 9, 2020. We will review and consider all input prior to finalizing and implementing the *Together for Wildlife* strategy.

### Details of the strategy

6. **Why doesn’t this strategy cover fish or species at risk?**

The initiative to improve wildlife management and habitat conservation, which resulted in the *Together for Wildlife* strategy, had a mandate to focus on terrestrial wildlife that are not Provincially “at risk” (i.e., red listed, which includes extirpated, endangered or threatened). This is because other government program areas and jurisdictions focus on fish and species at risk. The current scope of the *Together for Wildlife* strategy includes big game, game birds, furbearers and non-consumptive species that are not threatened or endangered. Species of special concern (i.e., provincially blue listed) are included in the mandate, with a shared responsibility with other programs.

Although different programs focus on different species and ecosystems, we recognize that all wildlife and habitats are connected. Hence, many of the actions in this strategy will benefit many species, especially actions to protect and enhance habitat. In addition, we will maintain or build strong linkages with other programs to ensure coordinated delivery.

7. **What is the First Nations-B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum?**

The First Nations-B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum was formed in December 2018 in response to the Province’s Improving Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Initiative. The forum is an innovative way to support reconciliation and understand perspectives on wildlife stewardship from First Nations across British Columbia. The forum is comprised of participants from 40-plus B.C. First Nations. Their work is not consultation or place-based and members do not represent any other First Nation.

Forum participants worked on four short-term recommended amendments to the *Wildlife Act* and the actions in the draft strategy intended to advance reconciliation and improve wildlife stewardship (Goal 5).

8. **Why is funding generated from hunting and trapping license fees not dedicated to wildlife and habitat stewardship?**

Wildlife in British Columbia are the responsibility of all citizens. Therefore, permit and license revenues have historically gone to general revenue and wildlife and habitat programs are funded through multiple revenue streams. Surcharge fees are directed to the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation and
dedicated to activities that are over and above government’s mandated responsibilities. This model results in a budget that far exceeds the revenue from permits and licenses issued under the *Wildlife Act*. To support the implementation of the *Together for Wildlife* Strategy, the government committed a $10 million annual uplift starting in 2020. This commitment exceeds the annual fees generated from hunting and trapping licenses; however, we recognize that this may be insufficient to meet the needs and expectations of British Columbians for improved wildlife and habitat conservation. Long-term, sufficient and dedicated funding is a priority challenge identified for the Minister’s Wildlife Advisory Council (MWAC). First Nations and stakeholders brought forward many excellent recommendations for funding models during our previous engagement phases, and these will be used as a starting point for future discussions. Dedicating revenue from hunting and trapping licenses remains an option for the MWAC consideration.

9. **Why does the strategy only mention amendments to the *Wildlife Act*, when other legislation (e.g., *Forest and Range Practices Act*) affects wildlife and their habitat?**

The *Together for Wildlife* strategy focuses on the mandates and legislated accountabilities of FLNRORD wildlife and habitat programs in branch and regions. Under this mandate, the *Wildlife Act* provides opportunities to improve wildlife stewardship through existing tools (e.g., access management and wildlife management areas), and new tools that will be considered through a review of the legislation.

Provisions in other legislation that relates to habitat conservation and management will be reviewed implicitly through implementation of the strategy. The Wildlife and Habitat Branch will also coordinate with the appropriate branches to review policy and legislation to improve wildlife habitat stewardship (e.g., see Action 10).

10. **How does this strategy align with other government initiatives, such as land use planning, collaborative stewardship and the cumulative effects framework?**

The *Together for Wildlife* strategy focuses on wildlife and habitat values and there are numerous existing and potential linkages to other stewardship initiatives and programs. Working together across initiatives, levels of government, and internal and external partners to ensure alignment, fill gaps and avoid duplication or redundancies is a central tenant of the *Together for Wildlife* Strategy. This will help to ensure we achieve our shared objectives for wildlife and habitat. Through implementation planning and delivery, important linkages to other programs will be identified.

11. **How will people be chosen to participate on the Minister’s Wildlife Advisory Council?**

Council participants will be selected through an application process that is open until the end of February. Please visit our engagement site to learn more - [https://engage.gov.bc.ca/wildlifeandhabitat/](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/wildlifeandhabitat/).

12. **How will Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees be structured?**

We are currently exploring options for establishing and selecting membership for Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees. These committees must meet the unique needs and priorities of each region and will be designed in collaboration with regional FLNRORD staff. As with the Minister’s Wildlife Advisory Council, there will be a clear and transparent process for modifying existing or establishing new regional advisory committees.

13. **How are economic and environmental interests considered and balanced in this strategy?**
February 3, 2020

A key principle of the strategy is to ensure that wildlife and the economy thrive. Discussions with stakeholders over the past 18 months have largely focused on areas where we can work together to improve wildlife stewardship. For example, programs that aim to enhance the resilience of our forests will benefit the forestry sector as well as wildlife.

In general, a healthy environment and resilient wildlife populations support and complement healthy local economies and communities. The benefits and costs of wildlife stewardship decisions will be informed by evidence and carefully weighed. Where trade-offs exist with social and economic values, management approach usually shifts from a Wildlife Act decision to a Land Act or Cabinet decision and consultation requirements are much more demanding. The rationale for significant decisions will be shared with all British Columbians (action #15), to ensure transparency and accountability around these important decisions.

Implementation of the strategy

14. What resources are available to implement this strategy and how will they be allocated?

The government has committed to a budget uplift of $10 million starting in 2020 to deliver this strategy. Work is now underway on an implementation plan for the actions identified. This implementation plan will identify resource needs, as well as opportunities to leverage other funding sources and partnerships. Once formally established, the Minister’s Wildlife Advisory Council will likely have a key role in recommending priorities for funding.

We anticipate that funding will be allocated through a combination of different mechanisms, including transfers to FLNRORD regions and other ministry partners, calls for proposals for external applications, grants to academic and non-governmental organizations, and support for First Nations partners.

15. Do you have a plan for implementing the actions in the strategy?

Although the strategy has not yet been finalized, we have started to plan implementation for each action in the draft strategy. Implementation planning will be a collaborative process across government, since many of the actions have linkages to several business lines. We will also work closely with the Minister’s Wildlife Advisory Committee, Regional Wildlife Advisory Committees and the First Nations-B.C. Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum to design and deliver implementation.