

Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

Government of British Columbia

Improving Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation in British Columbia

Public & Stakeholder Engagement
FINAL WHAT WE HEARD REPORT
November 2018

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Final Report

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The B.C. Government made a commitment to “Improve wildlife management and habitat conservation, and collaborate with stakeholders to develop long and short-term strategies to manage B.C.'s wildlife resources.

As the first phase, in May 2018, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development released a discussion paper, Improving Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation in British Columbia.

The resulting feedback is summarized in this report. The feedback is being used to develop policy options and an intentions paper that will be released for public engagement. The goal is to implement a new wildlife management and habitat conservation strategy, including any necessary legislative changes in 2020.

1.1 METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT USED TO OBTAIN FEEDBACK

Feedback on eight topics was collected from May 22 to July 31, 2018. There were several ways to participate:

- Sharing ideas and solutions in the public online discussion forum
- E-mailing comments to WildlifeAndHabitat@gov.bc.ca
- Sending written submissions to the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development by e-mail

1.2 ENGAGEMENT PROCESS PARTICIPATION

Using the three engagement platforms allowed the Ministry to gather significant input from British Columbians, including:

- 1,137 comments received through online dialogue
- 298 e-mails
- 49 written submissions

1.3 KEY THEMES

The feedback received from the public and stakeholder engagement was categorized according to five topic areas: governance, wildlife management, habitat protection, engagement, and knowledge and information. The predominant themes from the engagement process were summarized according to these topics, and are as follows:

GOVERNANCE

- Centralize resources and responsibilities to protect and manage wildlife and habitat, and ensure decisions are free from the influence of politics and the resource industry.
- Create a dedicated funding model for wildlife and habitat conservation with independent financial oversight.
- Use science as the primary tool for making wildlife and habitat management decisions.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

- Identify objectives and resources for wildlife management, including scientific data collection, and regional and species-specific objectives to improve the results of wildlife management efforts.

- Review best predator management practices using science-based decision making and use predator management as a means of managing ungulate decline.

HABITAT PROTECTION

- Reduce habitat loss resulting from development and industry, especially forestry. Increase habitat protection through restoration efforts, legislative tools, incentives, and regulation on industry practices.
- Reduce road network density and rights-of-way that lead to fragmented habitat, over-hunting, and increased mortality due to predation. Access management should be a high priority for future wildlife management.

ENGAGEMENT

- Facilitate high-quality public engagement opportunities and roundtable discussions with Indigenous Peoples, stakeholders, citizens, and those with regional and local knowledge. These discussions should focus on creating an inclusive environment that supports common goals.
- Ensure that the professional reliance model does not erode the public engagement process.

KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

- Ensure that scientific findings are transparent and publicly available and report back to the public on the scientific basis for which wildlife management decisions are made.
- Improve and support the use of citizen science where data collection is limited.
- Improve the understanding of the economic and cultural value of wildlife and habitat.

Several of the comments received indicate that there is need for the Province and Indigenous peoples to communicate more effectively about the nature of Aboriginal rights and title. It is important to recognize that Indigenous peoples have a special constitutional relationship with the Crown. This relationship, including existing Aboriginal and treaty rights, is recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. Comments about changing the constitution are outside the scope of this engagement. The Province recognizes that First Nations may have established Aboriginal rights to harvest wildlife for food, social and ceremonial purposes in their traditional areas, and that treaty First Nations have treaty rights in relation to harvesting wildlife. Such uses of wildlife must be sustainable and harvesting methods must not jeopardize safety or the use and enjoyment of property.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 BACKGROUND

British Columbia is renowned for its breathtaking natural beauty, spectacular terrain, and its diversity of wildlife that is greater than that of any other province or territory in Canada. British Columbia contains 16 distinct large ecosystems (known as biogeoclimatic zones) that provide a diversity of habitat required to support various life stages for many wildlife species.

This range of wildlife delivers abundant environmental, cultural, social and economic benefits to all British Columbians. Wildlife is especially important to Indigenous peoples for food and for cultural, social and ceremonial purposes. Wildlife populations also support activities such as hunting and guide outfitting, angling, trapping, wildlife viewing, photography, research and field study. Wildlife also has an inherent and intrinsic value to most people.

In recent decades, the loss, fragmentation and alteration of wildlife habitat due to human population growth, expanded economic development, climate change, extensive mountain pine beetle outbreaks and catastrophic wildfires¹ have placed increasing pressures on certain wildlife populations, some of which are now in decline.

These challenges, along with the need for true and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, changing societal expectations, declining wildlife populations in some areas, and the increased involvement and engagement of conservation groups, stakeholders and the public in wildlife management and habitat conservation, have prompted the provincial government to review the way it manages wildlife and habitat. The provincial government, Indigenous peoples, communities, industries, and all British Columbians share responsibility for sustaining our natural endowment for future generations.

The Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (“the Ministry”) has developed a four-phase process with the end goal of a new wildlife and habitat management strategy that will improve wildlife management and habitat conservation in British Columbia. This work includes:

1. Initial discussion with Indigenous peoples, rural communities, wildlife and habitat organizations, natural resource development industry stakeholders and the public.
2. Analysis and policy options development based on feedback from Phase One.
3. Validation of policy options which will be shared and discussed with the same group as in Phase One.
4. Implementation of a new provincial wildlife and habitat management strategy.

The intention of this report is to provide a careful and rigorous analysis of the information collected through the online discussions, emails and written submissions from Phase One of the Project and provide a coherent account of what was heard. The resulting report will inform the next steps in the Project.

¹ It should be noted wildfire can have positive benefits for some wildlife species

2.2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF ENGAGEMENT

The purpose of the engagement was to host an open discussion with Indigenous peoples, rural communities, wildlife and habitat organizations, natural resource development industry stakeholders and the public to find creative and practical ways to improve wildlife management and habitat conservation in British Columbia.

The Province will use this report summarizing public and stakeholder input, as well as the input from Indigenous communities, to prepare policy options and an intentions paper to inform a new wildlife management and habitat conservation strategy.

2.3 PROJECT TEAM

The project team included engagement specialists and biologist consultants from Urban Systems and government staff.

2.4 SCHEDULE

The public engagement was completed between May 22 and July 31, 2018.

2.5 ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents the summary results of the public and stakeholder engagement. It includes a record of findings from the public input from Phase One, including online discussion, emails, and written submissions. The Ministry recently spent three months meeting with Indigenous leaders and communities. Results from the in-person meetings with Indigenous communities were treated separately and are not included in this summary of input; a second report was completed in fall 2018.

3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to analyze and report on input provided by stakeholders was designed to identify common themes, ideas and solutions within the wildlife and habitat management engagement data. The data was collected from British Columbians through several formats, including online dialogue, emails and written submissions.

3.1 ENGAGEMENT PLATFORMS

- The engagement process was held from May 22 to July 31, 2018: The public was invited to participate in online discussion forums and share ideas pertaining to eight challenge areas.
- The public was invited to send emails to WildlifeAndHabitat@gov.bc.ca
- Stakeholder organizations were invited to send written submissions to the Ministry.

3.2 CHALLENGE AREAS

The Ministry identified eight challenge areas to managing wildlife and habitat and created respective questions to guide responses that address these challenge areas. The questions were available on the online discussion forum, and in the [Discussion Paper](#) that was available for download through an engagement [website](#). The challenge areas and questions are as follows:

1. Challenge 1: Advancing Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples
 - What programs and policies are most important to advance meaningful and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and help implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)?
2. Challenge 2: Increasing Involvement and Shared Stewardship
 - 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?
3. Challenge 3: Declining Wildlife Populations
 - What measures need to be taken to proactively manage wildlife and habitat and prevent wildlife from becoming species at risk?
4. Challenge 4: Increasing Human Activity
 - What is the most effective way of ensuring that wildlife and habitat are healthy while fostering a healthy economy to ensure life is affordable for British Columbians?
5. Challenge 5: Wildfires and Extreme Weather
 - What are the most effective ways to proactively adapt to the impacts of climate change to wildlife and habitat?
6. Challenge 6: Better Information

- 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?
7. Challenge 7: Human-Wildlife Conflicts
- What are the most effective ways to reduce wildlife-human conflicts in British Columbia?
8. Challenge 8: Funding
- 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?
9. Additional topics
- What challenges are we missing?
 - What currently works well in B.C. for wildlife/habitat management?
 - What changes in wildlife/habitat management are most needed for B.C. (i.e., what are the highest priority challenges)?
 - Are there any challenges or opportunities listed that concern you? Why?

3.3 ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

The online discussion forum was available to the public and stakeholders for participation between May 22 and July 31, 2018. Eight discussion forums welcomed dialogue from diverse views to address each challenge area identified by the Ministry. To ensure that all forum users were able to participate in an exchange of information and ideas in a positive, constructive and beneficial way, the content was moderated before being posted. In total, the online discussion forum generated 1,137 individual posts ranging in length from a few lines to an entire page.

3.4 EMAILS

The public was also invited to email comments between May 22 and July 31, 2018 on the discussion paper. In total, 298 e-mails were received.

3.5 WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Lastly, written submissions were accepted as e-mail attachments. The public and stakeholders were invited to e-mail their submissions to the Ministry. In total, 49 responses were received. Responses were posted online.

3.6 PARTICIPATION – BY THE NUMBERS

Table 1 below shows the distribution of comments/submissions for each engagement method. Each submission was read and themed according to the solution provided. Where a comment contained multiple solutions that fell under different themes, the comments were split and considered individually. For this reason, the number of proposed solutions that are presented in this report is greater than the number of submissions received (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Number of submissions/posts and comments by engagement type

Discussion type	Schedule	Submissions/Posts	Distinct Comments Identified
Online Forum	May 22 to July 31, 2018	1,137	1,305
E-mails	May 22 to July 31, 2018	298	320
Written Submissions	May 22 to July 31, 2018	49	227

4 WHAT WE HEARD

4.1 WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE ONLINE DIALOGUE

Input was received from participants representing a wide range of roles, including concerned citizens, stakeholder organizations, Indigenous peoples, industry groups, government, academics, professionals and recreational users. Each online dialogue post was read carefully and categorized in several ways, including (where relevant):

- Challenge area;
- Topic;
- Concerns associated with each topic;
- Proposed areas of improvement associated with each topic; and
- Specific actions identified for each area of improvement.

A high-level summary of the data shows the breakdown of the number of posts and distinct comments within the posts that were received according to the region and role (see **Tables 2 to 4**). ***Note: When individual posts contained more than one topic, concern, improvement or action, the post was split, and these comments were categorized separately. These are referred to as “comments” in the tables below.***

In analyzing the results from the online discussion forum, several key themes emerged:

- the highest number of posts by region were from the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island, and Kootenay (see **Table 2**);
- the highest number of posts by role were from hunters, trappers, and guides; from non-motorized recreation enthusiasts; and motorized recreation enthusiasts (see **Table 3**);
- the highest number of comments by challenge were concerning Challenge 3: Declining wildlife populations, Challenge 2: Increasing involvement and shared stewardship, and Challenge 4: Increasing human activity (see **Table 4**);
- most comments could be categorized under five broad topic areas, which included:
 - governance,
 - habitat conservation,
 - wildlife management,
 - engagement, and
 - knowledge and information (see **Table 5**).

Table 2. Number of posts by region

REGION	NO. OF POSTS
Lower Mainland	182
Vancouver Island	99
Kootenay	89
Omineca	77
Okanagan	75
Outside of BC	38
Thompson	36
Skeena	35
Cariboo	33
Peace	11

Table 3. Number of posts by role

REGION	NO. OF POSTS
Hunter/trapper/guide	288
Recreation - non-motorized	148
Recreation - motorized	97
Non-affiliated	96
Other	86
Environmental organization	72
Industry - forestry	55
Indigenous	38
Agriculture	33
Academic institution	27
Professional association	24
Industry - energy	11
Provincial government	9
Local government	7
Industry - minerals	5
Federal government	1

Table 4. Number of comments by challenge question

CHALLENGE QUESTION	NO. OF COMMENTS
Challenge 1	126
Challenge 2	210
Challenge 3	370
Challenge 4	134
Challenge 5	90
Challenge 6	60
Challenge 7	106
Challenge 8	120
Other	89

Table 5. Number of comments per topic

TOPIC	NO. OF COMMENTS
Governance	364
Habitat conservation	357
Wildlife Management	311
Engagement	157
Knowledge and Information	53
Other	34
n/a	29

A short list of the 10 most frequently mentioned areas of concern and improvement areas were identified for further analysis (see **Table 6 and 7**). **Table 8** provides a breakdown of the number of comments related to each area of concern according to role. This provides a closer look at specific issues that were identified through the online dialogue and by whom.

Table 6. Number of comments for top ten areas of concern

TOP 10 AREAS OF CONCERN	NO. OF COMMENTS
Habitat objectives and designations	243
Funding	213
Wildlife health and population management	207
Public and stakeholder engagement	112
Science in governance	98
Wildlife-human conflicts	64
Habitat enhancements and protection	41
Enforcement	34
Tools to manage habitat and reduce risk	32
Indigenous collaboration and decision-making	29

Table 7. Number of comments for top ten improvement areas

TOP 10 IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	NO. OF COMMENTS
Create a dedicated funding model	147
Use science-based decision-making	131
Use predator management	80
Reduce habitat loss (non forestry-related)	77
Reduce habitat loss (forestry related)	66
Increase and improve public and stakeholder engagement	56
Reduce disturbances to wildlife	38
Improve scientific understanding of impact of unreported wildlife harvest	36
Use more prescribed burns to prevent wildfires	35
Use land use planning to reduce habitat loss	34

Table 8. Number of comments for top ten areas of concern by role

	HABITAT OBJECTIVES AND DESIGNATIONS	FUNDING	WILDLIFE HEALTH AND POPULATION MANAGEMENT	PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	WILDLIFE-HUMAN CONFLICTS	SCIENCE IN GOVERNANCE	MEASURABLE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES	HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND PROTECTION	ENFORCEMENT	TOOLS TO MANAGE HABITAT AND REDUCE RISK
Academic institution	4	5	3	3	1			4	1	2
Agriculture	7	4	6	4	1	2	2	1		1
Environmental organization	22	15	13	6	3	4		3	5	2
Federal government			1							
Hunter/trapper/guide	63	67	62	32	16	32	12	3	3	
Indigenous	6	3	10	5			2			5
Industry - energy	1	1	4	1	2	1	1			
Industry - forestry	10	11	9	3	3	2	3	1	1	4
Industry - minerals	1	2	2	1			2			
Local government	2	1		1	1					
Non-affiliated	23	8	9	11	9	6		6	4	4
Other	16	17	16	9	11	6	5	6	3	
Professional association	8	4	3	2	1	1			1	1
Provincial government	3	1		1		2			1	
Recreation - motorized	19	16	28	5	3	12	2	3	3	1
Recreation - non-motorized	32	32	21	18	7	19	6	2	6	7

4.1.1 Challenge Questions

An analysis was done to identify the distribution of solutions in each of the challenge areas according to the region and role of the commenters (see **Tables 9 and 10**). Again, the challenge areas that were identified to guide online discussions were:

- Challenge 1: Advancing Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples
- Challenge 2: Increasing Involvement and Shared Stewardship
- Challenge 3: Declining Wildlife Populations
- Challenge 4: Increasing Human Activity
- Challenge 5: Wildfires and Extreme Weather
- Challenge 6: Better Information
- Challenge 7: Human-Wildlife Conflicts
- Challenge 8: Funding
- Additional topics

Table 9. Number of comments per challenge area by region

	CHALLENGE 1	CHALLENGE 2	CHALLENGE 3	CHALLENGE 4	CHALLENGE 5	CHALLENGE 6	CHALLENGE 7	CHALLENGE 8	ADDITIONAL TOPICS
Cariboo	3	5	8	5		2	4	5	3
Kootenay	8	17	46	11	5	5	3	5	6
Lower Mainland	23	28	75	23	11	9	15	23	17
Okanagan	10	18	32	21	9	3	9	11	6
Omineca	5	19	25	10	11	5	5	7	12
Outside of BC	4	4	15	6	4	1	3	4	3
Peace	1		7						
Skeena	6	8	9	3	3	1		2	1
Thompson	7	12	8	5	2	2	2	5	7
Vancouver Island	14	15	26	10	8	3	6	11	7

Table 10. Number of comments per challenge area by role

	CHALLENGE 1	CHALLENGE 2	CHALLENGE 3	CHALLENGE 4	CHALLENGE 5	CHALLENGE 6	CHALLENGE 7	CHALLENGE 8	ADDITIONAL TOPICS
Academic institution	2	2	5	2	1	1	2	3	3
Agriculture	2	5	7	1	2	1	4	1	3
Environmental organization	7	7	19	6	2	1	4	5	6
Federal government			1						
Hunter/trapper/guide	24	45	76	36	19	10	13	33	12
Indigenous	10	4	12	1	3			3	1
Industry - energy	2	1	7	1	1	1	1		
Industry - forestry	4	8	12	7	5	1	2	2	1
Industry - minerals		1	7		1				
Local government			1	1		1	1	1	
Non-affiliated	9	8	20	9	2	5	9	4	12
Other - Please specify below	3	13	23	10	3	2	7	10	3
Professional association	2	2	4	2	1		1	1	4
Provincial government		1	2	1	1				2
Recreation - motorized	9	15	35	8	9	1	3	8	5
Recreation - non-motorized	15	32	38	14	9	6	7	12	8

A further analysis was conducted to identify, within each challenge question, the most common concerns or issues and the proposed improvements offered to address them. For each challenge question, the most common concerns were identified using a minimum threshold of 10 mentions (which constituted a common concern). The analysis also includes a description of the improvement areas that were mentioned in relation to these concerns (see **Tables 11 to 19**).

4.1.2 Challenge 1: Advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples

Table 11. Concerns related to Challenge 1: Advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples

CONCERN	NO. OF COMMENTS
Indigenous collaboration and decision-making	29
Wildlife health and population management	40
Public and stakeholder engagement	12

Proposed Improvements for Challenge 1: Advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples

- Improve and increase engagement with First Nations communities.
- More effective communication about the nature of Aboriginal rights and title.
- Ensure that there is a meaningful engagement process with First Nations and the public.
- Increased public education on the First Nations communities and reconciliation.

4.1.3 Challenge 2: Increasing involvement and shared stewardship

Table 12. Concerns related to Challenge 2: Increasing involvement and shared stewardship

CONCERN	NO. OF COMMENTS
Funding	24
Habitat objectives and designations	23
Science in governance	35
Public and stakeholder engagement	66
Wildlife health and population management	17

Proposed Improvements for Challenge 2: Increasing involvement and shared stewardship

- Create a dedicated funding model to improve shared stewardship of habitat and wildlife.
- Increase involvement and funding of scientific community as primary method to improve habitat and wildlife.
- Reduce involvement of development and industry to reduce habitat loss, as industry does not respect shared stewardship.
- Increase involvement from land use planning groups as primary method to improve habitat and wildlife.
- Improve understanding of economic and cultural value of wildlife and habitat as primary stewardship model.
- Support North American Wildlife Management Model as primary stewardship model.
- Increase public engagement and improve engagement process; engage with all groups of the public equally to foster shared stewardship.
- Do not increase involvement and shared stewardship, consensus approach leads to failure. Decisions should be made based on engaging with specific user groups; should be made by government; or should be made by scientists.

4.1.4 Challenge 3: Declining wildlife population

Table 13. Concerns related to Challenge 3: Declining wildlife population

CONCERN	NO. OF COMMENTS
Wildlife-human conflicts	21
Tools to manage habitat and reduce risk	10
Funding	42
Habitat objectives and designations	91
Science in governance	31
Wildlife health and population management	102

Proposed Improvements for Challenge 3: Declining wildlife population

- Improve scientific understanding of impact of unreported wildlife harvest.
- Reduce disturbances to wildlife.
- Reduce the impacts of road and rail on wildlife.
- Protect habitat immediately to halt the decline of wildlife populations.
- Increase use of science in decision-making processes to assess impacts on wildlife populations, including in development, hunting, industry, land use planning, etc.
- Prioritize a more holistic approach to ecosystem management as a means to recovering wildlife populations.
- Create a dedicated funding model for mechanisms that will help wildlife populations recover.
- Increase scientific funding towards studying and solving wildlife population declines.
- Reduce habitat loss from development and industry to halt wildlife decline.
- Use land use planning to reduce habitat loss, and thus to halt wildlife decline.
- Apply the precautionary principle with respect to declining wildlife populations.
- Improve scientific and cultural understanding of the value of wildlife and habitat.
- Use predator management, as population decline in ungulates is severe and may not recover naturally.
- Eliminate predator management, as humans should let wildlife populations regulate themselves.

4.1.5 Challenge 4: Increasing human activity

Table 14. Concerns related to Challenge 4: Increasing human activity

CONCERN	NO. OF COMMENTS
Access management	10
Funding	10
Habitat objectives and designations	66

Proposed Improvements for Challenge 4: Increasing human activity

- Reduce access for industry and recreation in wildlife habitat.
- Create a dedicated funding model to fund recovery of habitat from human activity.
- Reduce and restrict development and industry from causing habitat loss.
- Use land use planning to reduce and mitigate habitat loss from human activity.
- Improve understanding of economic and cultural value of wildlife and habitat to mitigate the sprawl of human activity into wildlife habitat areas.

4.1.6 Challenge 5: Wildfires and extreme weather

Table 15. Concerns related to Challenge 5: Wildfires and extreme weather

CONCERN	NO. OF COMMENTS
Habitat enhancements and protection	28
Habitat objectives and designations	20

Proposed Improvements for Challenge 5: Wildfires and extreme weather

- Reduce habitat loss from development and industry to protect the resilience of natural habitat to extreme weather.
- Use prescribed burns to increase early seral habitat.
- Employ adaptive resource management.

4.1.7 Challenge 6: Better Information

Table 16. Concerns related to Challenge 6: Better information

CONCERN	NO. OF COMMENTS
Public and stakeholder engagement	11

Proposed Improvements for Challenge 6: Better information

- Improve the engagement process and increase levels of engagement with the public.
- Improve and increase public education on wildlife and habitat issues.

4.1.8 Challenge 7: Human-wildlife conflicts

Table 17. Concerns related to Challenge 7: Human-wildlife conflicts

CONCERN	NO. OF COMMENTS
Human-wildlife conflicts	25
Funding	15
Habitat objectives and designations	17

CONCERN	NO. OF COMMENTS
Wildlife health and population management	14

Proposed Improvements for Challenge 7: Human-wildlife conflicts

- Reduce disturbances to wildlife.
- Increase scientific funding to improve understanding of human-wildlife conflicts.
- Increase municipal funding for wildlife education, and to implement by-laws and enforcement to prevent human-wildlife conflicts (e.g.: enforcement of bylaws on leaving garbage out and feeding of bears).
- Reduce habitat loss from development and industry to limit wildlife in cities.
- Use land use planning to reduce habitat loss and reduce human developments in wildlife areas.
- Use predator management to eliminate an increasing number of predators.
- Reduce over-hunting to restore natural wildlife populations and limit wildlife entering urban areas.

4.1.9 Challenge 8: Funding

Table 18. Concerns related to Challenge 8: Funding

CONCERN	NO. OF COMMENTS
Funding	105

Proposed Improvements for Challenge 8: Funding

- Create a dedicated funding model for wildlife and habitat protection and management.
- Fund and involve scientists in decision-making to improve wildlife and habitat management.

4.1.10 Additional topics

Table 19. Additional topics

CONCERN	NO. OF COMMENTS
Habitat objectives and designations	14
Science in governance	13
Wildlife health and population management	21

Proposed Improvements for additional topics

- Reduce habitat loss from development and industry.
- Improve understanding and economic and cultural value of wildlife and habitat.
- Use science-based decision-making.
- Support North American Wildlife Management Model.
- Use predator management.
- Eliminate predator management.

Table 20 provides a description of the top 10 most commonly proposed improvements and a summary of the most commonly identified solutions for each.

Table 20. Summary of proposed actions for the top ten areas for improvement

TOP 10 IMPROVEMENTS IDENTIFIED	NO. OF COMM-ENTS	SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
1. CREATE A DEDICATED FUNDING MODEL Commenters support the creation of a dedicated funding model for wildlife and habitat conservation	147	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinvest 100% of funds derived from hunting tag fees and licenses back into conservation, similar to Pittman-Robertson Act in the United States. Tax all outdoor equipment and reinvest funds into conservation. Increase fees and taxes on equipment, under the condition that funds are reinvested in conservation. Tax other user groups, especially resource and tourism industries. Ensure that there is independent oversight of funding.
2. REDUCE HABITAT LOSS Commenters are concerned with the loss of habitat and support increased habitat protection. Specifically, the loss of habitat due to forestry practices garnered a high number of comments. The commenters support increasing habitat protection through legislative tools and environmental restoration of areas affected by human activities.	143	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidate habitat conservation provisions in natural resource legislation so they apply to all industries and human activities across B.C. Address habitat loss, alteration and fragmentation. Protect and restore habitat, especially winter ranges, wetlands, and grazing lands. Manage development to reduce (eliminate) net loss of habitat. Review grazing practices and rights for free range cattle. Reduce road network density, including deactivation and restoration of logging roads. Focus on cumulative effects of resource industry practices. Increase level of protection of habitat corridors. Increase awareness and action concerning the effect of plastic pollution on marine habitat. Set clear objectives for wildlife recovery, research, and accountability to inform habitat enhancements and protection. Conduct large scale ecosystem planning. Prioritize holistic consideration of ecosystems. Increase environmental standards for extraction companies and stop allowing industry to self-regulate. Create legislation to ensure that a portion of resource industry profits are returned to habitat restoration or improvement. Impose industry regulation to deactivate logging roads. Limit or ban clear cutting in critical wildlife habitat. Create legislation to require higher standards for reforestation of indigenous tree species, especially to increase replanting of deciduous species.

TOP 10 IMPROVEMENTS IDENTIFIED	NO. OF COMM-ENTS	SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a stumpage rate or tax on the amount of area of forest that is harvested and use funds towards conservation. ▪ Incentivize and research sustainable logging practices (e.g., selective logging). ▪ Ban aerial/chemical spraying of glyphosate and defoliants that cause disease and decline of ungulate population. ▪ Ban the cutting of old growth forests. ▪ Ban monoculture and tree farms. ▪ Allow regeneration of natural forests and grow climate adapted species. ▪ Create meaningful changes to Forest and Range Practices Act. ▪ Eliminate the use of cut block layout design as the primary method of harvesting timber in the forestry industry to improve habitat for wildlife. ▪ Increase attention to the health of all hydrological features. ▪ Manage development to improve and protect habitat. ▪ Cease attempting to create consensus and take measures to protect habitat immediately.
3. USE SCIENCE-BASED DECISION-MAKING Commenters would like to see science as the primary basis for decision-making	131	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remove politics and emotions from wildlife decision-making. ▪ Eliminate the influence of public opinion on wildlife management decisions. ▪ Use scientific best practice to inform all wildlife management decisions. ▪ Manage and increase public engagement as a tool for user groups to inform wildlife managers and biologists of wildlife trends. ▪ Increase the role of biologists in decision-making. ▪ Increase reliable funding and resources for research and implementation. ▪ Research and review key decisions and strategies based on science, including the grizzly bear hunt ban, wildlife exclusion fences, baselines for wildlife population management, and the cumulative impacts of industry practices and development.
4. USE PREDATOR MANAGEMENT Commenters support the management of predators to recover ungulate populations	80	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use predator management as a key tool to allow ungulate populations to recover. ▪ Investigate and eliminate the impacts of forestry practices on predator-prey relationships, specifically with respect to cut blocks and logging roads. ▪ Deactivate logging roads. ▪ Review the grizzly bear hunt ban. ▪ Ensure that hunters continue to have a voice with respect to conservation.

TOP 10 IMPROVEMENTS IDENTIFIED	NO. OF COMM-ENTS	SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
<p>5. CONDUCT MORE / BETTER ENGAGEMENT</p> <p>Commenters support increased Indigenous and public engagement; new approaches to engagement; or better representation of a specific group</p>	56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage and demonstrate listening with all users. Ensure that the wildlife management role and knowledge of consumptive user groups, esp. hunters, is not overlooked. Ensure that there are resources for meaningful participation of First Nations groups in habitat protection and restoration. Create advisory committees composed of diverse stakeholder groups. Increase the value placed on Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Partner with, enable and empower First Nations and local groups to play a key role in wildlife management decision-making and conservation efforts. Ensure that the Professional Governance Act (Bill 49) does not erode public involvement. Honour treaties and respect First Nation rights. Identify and communicate collective impacts and opportunities for local change. Ensure that engagement forums are neutral, open, transparent, deliberate, and inclusive. Create opportunities for roundtable discussions with a clear purpose for bringing various groups together. Increase government information campaigns to eliminate misinformation and to provide non-partisan, scientific information to the public via various media sources. Improve collaboration between hunting community and NGO's.
<p>6. REDUCE DISTURBANCES TO WILDLIFE</p> <p>Commenters support reducing human disturbances to wildlife and human-wildlife conflicts, including more enforcement and increased fines for problematic behaviours</p>	38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase and enforce fines for disturbance of wildlife or for encouraging behavior that endangers wildlife. Create and enforce by-laws against garbage and other attractants of wildlife. Create legislation to penalize wildlife feeding. Ban wildlife viewing, tours, and feeding (esp. of grizzlies) to ensure a consistent approach to wildlife treatment that does not conflict with hunting. Improve understanding of human-wildlife conflicts and address the underlying causes, such as the presence of attractants in communities. Provide incentives and disincentives to encourage individuals and communities to prevent human-wildlife conflicts. Expand programs to mitigate impacts and conflicts of agricultural communities and wildlife. Improve wildlife corridors to provide safe passage for wildlife to move across barriers, such as roads. Reduce human encroachment into natural habitat.

<p>7. WILDLIFE HARVEST</p> <p>Commenters felt that accurate data is essential to wildlife management.</p>	36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve scientific understanding of impact of unreported wildlife harvest. ■ Make meaningful changes and improvements to the Limited Entry Hunting (LEH) system.
<p>8. INCREASE USE OF PRESCRIBED BURNS</p> <p>Commenters felt that it was essential to use prescribed burns to remove excess fuel from the forest floor and create habitat</p>	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengthen legislation and increase requirements for forestry sector to prevent wildfires, including removal of surplus fuel on forest beds and improved tree diversity for fire protection. ■ Increase strategies and implementation of controlled burns and fuel removal. ■ Prioritize prescribed burns to improve over-wintering habitat. ■ Review the policy and legislation to identify barriers to implementing prescribed burns and ecosystem restoration. ■ Increase public education on scientific benefits of prescribed burns. ■ Reduce wildfire fighting initiatives except where there a direct threat to communities.
<p>9. USE LAND USE PLANNING TO REDUCE HABITAT LOSS</p> <p>Commenters felt that land use planning had a strong role to play in improving habitat protection and reducing the impacts of development on wildlife</p>	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conduct large scale ecosystem planning, land use planning at the landscape level, and sustainable design in urban and resource planning. ■ Prioritize holistic consideration of ecosystems. ■ Manage development to improve and protect habitat. ■ Reduce new development in wild areas. ■ Increase urban density and reduce urban sprawl. ■ Protect critical valley bottoms for ungulates. ■ Amend the Parks Act to ensure conservation areas are fully protected. ■ Create clear and defined policies and regulations on development, including higher standards to prevent sprawl and development in wildlife areas. ■ Set realistic economic targets for growth that are compatible with land use planning needs. ■ Define a healthy economy as a sustainable economy. ■ Increase the role of biologists in decision-making. ■ Include biologists in the process of planning resource extraction to minimize the impact on critical habitat and to set meaningful remediation targets. ■ Create a land use planning board that is science-led and includes First Nations participation. ■ Develop a protocol to ensure timely action and implementation of conservation targets. ■ Increase the level of protection for habitat corridors. ■ Create legislative tools to incorporate wildlife targets in municipal planning. ■ Increase conservation areas and legislate a minimum percentage of land base to be set aside for wildlife at the municipal level. ■ Focus on cumulative effects of resource industry practices.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require corporations to offset impacts for all projects (large and small) across all resource sectors.
10. PLACE A HIGHER VALUE ON WILDLIFE AND HABITAT Commenters supported valuing wildlife and habitat more, and better understanding this value	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the economic worth of wildlife and habitat as equal to other sector of the economy, such as industry. Value and increase investment in wildlife conservation and Conservation Officers. Reduce economic development in sensitive areas and increase investments in sustainable industry sectors (green economy). Increase public awareness of the consequences of habitat loss. Catalyze a cultural shift that places a higher value on ecosystems.

4.2 WHAT WE HEARD FROM E-MAILS

Emails were analyzed according to the topics, concerns, and improvement areas that corresponded to each comment. The emails did not contain demographic information (role, region) and did not respond to the challenge questions.

In total, 298 emails were received; however, 238 of these emails were form letters submitted on behalf of organizations through letter writing campaigns. Although these form letters were considered, they were not themed. Additionally, they were considered separately from e-mails from individuals (i.e., attached letters). There were 59 individual submissions that were received, 7 of which were not considered due to privacy constraints.

Due to time constraints, twenty-seven of the emails (52%) were randomly selected for theming. These selected emails were themed by topic, concern and any proposed improvements, which were subsequently used in analysis (see **Table 21**). ***Note: When email submissions contained more than one topic, concern, improvement or action, the submission was split, and these comments were themed separately. These are referred to as “comments” in the tables below.***

Even though not all emails were selected for detailed theming, each email was read and solutions that were identified in all emails were recorded.

The most common areas of concerns from the emails were:

- Objectives and designations: specifically, participants were concerned with habitat loss and the lack of objectives and designations to protect and enhance habitat.
- Science in governance: commenters felt that science should be used as the primary basis for making wildlife management decisions.
- Wildlife health and population management: proposed improvements in this area of concern were split between supporting predator management, opposing predator management, and taking action towards managing invasive species.
- Wildlife health and population management: proposed improvements in this area of concern included reducing overhunting and / or fishing.

Table 21. Number of comments by topic, concern and proposed improvement area in emails

TOPICS	NO. OF COMMENTS BY TOPIC	CONCERNS AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS	NO. OF COMMENTS BY CONCERN / IMPROVEMENT
ENGAGEMENT	3	Collaboration/decision-making	1
		Public/stakeholder engagement	2
		Improvement: More and / or better engagement	2
GOVERNANCE	13	Coordinating policy, legislation and wildlife strategy	1
		Lack of funding	3
		Improvement: Create a dedicated funding model	3
		Lack of science in governance	6
		Lack of transparency in government decision-making	2
		Poor program delivery & performance management	1
HABITAT CONSERVATION	12	Habitat enhancement	1
		Improvement: Increase use of prescribed burns	1
		Lack of objectives and designations	11
		Improvement: Reduce habitat loss	10
		Improvement: Improve understanding of economic and cultural value of wildlife and habitat	1
KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION	1	Involve citizens and stakeholders in collection of data (citizen science)	1
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT	19	Balance wildlife-human conflicts	7
		Improvement: Reduce overhunting / fishing	3
		Other	4
		Lack of legislative, regulatory and policy tools to support wildlife management	1
		Lack of measurable management objectives	2
		Wildlife health and population management	9
		Improvement: Eliminate predator management	2
		Improvement: Use predator management	2
		Other	5

4.2.1 Letter writing campaigns

Letter writing campaigns were considered separately from individual e-mails. Over the course of the public engagement process, 238 e-mails were submitted on behalf of two organizations using form letters. The organizations that hosted letter writing campaigns included the Wild Sheep Society of BC (14 submissions) and Wildsight (224 submissions). Samples of the form letters for these submissions are included in the tables below (see **Table 22 and 23**).

Table 22. Organizational submissions: Wild Sheep Society

ORGANIZATION	NO. OF SUBMISSIONS
Wild Sheep Society of BC https://www.wildsheepsociety.com/	14
SAMPLE FORM LETTER <p>The engagement approach is a positive step and we appreciate the opportunity to provide input, however, we feel the timeline is too long. We have been vocal for a long time that the downward trajectory of BC's wildlife and habitat needs to change. With little to no results we are very skeptical that this lengthy consultation will lead to meaningful action in time to recover some species of wildlife.</p> <p>I feel that reconciliation and consultation with First Nations is a critical part of wildlife recovery in BC. I also believe that the process should be open and transparent and inclusive of legitimate stakeholder groups in a roundtable format while protecting First Nation's rights. Transparency and inclusiveness will allow all groups to have meaningful input without alienating any one group.</p> <p>The BC Government can "increase involvement and shared stewardship" by creating a new wildlife organization made up of First Nations, stakeholder groups and professionals in wildlife management. This new group would use science, measurable objectives and increased land use planning to make informed decisions on management of wildlife and their habitat. Funding could be generated through wildlife and habitat user groups such as hunting licenses sales, outdoor gear sales tax, logging and mining contributions. Finally, this group would gain social support for these actions through the responsible stewardship of the resource.</p> <p>The Wild Sheep Society of BC is a strong proponent of prescribed burns to restore wildlife, increase the resiliency of our forests and protect property. We have been working hard to initiate and fund prescribed burns for wild sheep and other species. While we have funding in place we have found it very difficult to navigate the government process to have successful prescribed burns within the current framework. Mandating regional burn plans with multiple pre-approved sites annually to take advantage of burn conditions when they occur is imperative.</p>	

Table 23. Organizational submissions: Wildsight

ORGANIZATION	NO. OF SUBMISSIONS
Wildsight https://wildsight.ca/	224
<p>SAMPLE FORM LETTER</p> <p>Thank you for providing me the opportunity to comment on a renewed wildlife and habitat conservation strategy for British Columbia. Wildlife is in decline across the province and urgent action is needed now.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We need legislative changes to prioritize wildlife habitat ABOVE resource extraction and recreation. ■ We need clear, measurable and binding targets for both wildlife populations and habitat, with immediate concrete actions for specific declining and threatened species. ■ Hunting regulations must prioritize healthy wildlife populations above allowing people to hunt. ■ Wildlife management needs to use traditional and local knowledge to be effective on the ground—top-down, one-size-fits-all approaches don’t work. ■ We need connected and protected landscapes to maintain healthy ecosystems that support wildlife. Core habitat and movement corridors need legislated protection on both Crown and private land. Recreation access management must be stronger and strongly enforced—including immediate action to reduce road density. ■ Wildlife needs sufficient staff and funding to collect up to date data, to act for threatened populations and to enforce land-use decisions. <p>British Columbians love our wildlife—and it’s time for our government to invest in the future health of our wildlife populations and ecosystems.</p>	

4.3 WHAT WE HEARD FROM WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

A total of 49 written submissions were approved for analysis. In general, there was consensus of deep concern for the current state of wildlife management in British Columbia. The following is a summary of main concerns and solutions/ideas from the written submissions.

- The responsibility of wildlife management is spread across several ministries. Wildlife management staff, resources and responsibilities should be coordinated through a single organization.
- There is a lack of clear objectives for wildlife management. There is a need to identify regional and species-specific objectives with defined actions to be taken to improve the results of wildlife management efforts.
- Relative to neighbouring jurisdictions (Alberta, USA), B.C. wildlife management and species population declines are among the worst. B.C. should implement practices used in neighbouring jurisdictions such as the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation (NAMWC) and the Pittman-Robertson Act.
- Wildlife management decisions involve politics and resource industry influence and are not always based the best interests of wildlife. Wildlife management decisions should be free of politics and resource industry influence and should involve multiple stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples, citizens and those with regional and local knowledge.

- There is a lack of scientific data and the resources to collect it to support wildlife management. Funding should be increased for staff and resources to provide the necessary scientific data needed to make informed decisions. The data should be transparent and publicly available.
- The density of road networks and other right of ways have fragmented habitat, increased human-wildlife conflicts and benefited predator species. Access management should be a high priority for future wildlife management.

The above list provides a summary of some common concerns and solutions/ideas, however, there was a large variety of opinions and proposed solutions/ideas offered among the submissions. For a more in-depth review of what was said in the written submissions refer to the analysis below. Submissions are also available on the Engage BC website at <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/wildlifeandhabitat/written-submissions/>.

The stakeholder submissions were analyzed by organization, role and the challenge question they addressed. Each submission was read, and any solutions proposed were identified and recorded. The solutions were not themed according topic or improvement area due to the range of length of these submissions – some being up to 29 pages.

The majority of submissions were received from individuals, environmental organizations, and hunters, trappers, and guides. A complete list of organizations that provided written submissions is available in **Table 24**.

Table 24. List of organisations by sector that provided written submissions

SECTOR	ORGANIZATIONS
ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BC Chapter of The Wildlife Society ▪ BC Conservation Foundation ▪ BC SPCA ▪ Ducks Unlimited, Nature Conservancy, Nature Trust ▪ Grizzly Bear Foundation ▪ North Columbia Environmental Society ▪ Rabbitats ▪ Stop the spray BC ▪ Wildlife Collision Prevention Program ▪ Wildsight ▪ Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative
HUNTER/TRAPPER/GUIDE (9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BC Backcountry Hunters and Anglers ▪ BC Bowhunting Community ▪ BC Trappers Association ▪ BC Wildlife Federation ▪ Golden District Rod & Gun Club ▪ Guide Outfitter Association of BC ▪ Lake Windermere District Rod & Gun Club ▪ Peace-Liard Wildlife Association ▪ Wild Sheep Society
INDUSTRY (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clean Energy BC

SECTOR	ORGANIZATIONS
INDUSTRY – FORESTRY (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council of Forest Industries (BC) ▪ Federation of BC Woodlot Associations ▪ Private Forest Landowners Association ▪ Truck Loggers Association
INDUSTRY – MINERALS (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Association for Mineral Exploration ▪ Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers ▪ Mining Association of British Columbia
OTHER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BC Government and Service Employees' Union
PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Association of Professional Biology ▪ Canadian Bar Association
RECREATION (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commercial Bear Viewing Association
INDIVIDUAL (NON-AFFILIATED) (18)	

The comments were, for the most part, concerning Challenge 6: Better information, Challenge 2: Increasing involvement and shared stewardship, and Challenge 8: Funding (see **Table 26**).

Table 25. Number of comments by challenge question

CHALLENGE QUESTION	NO. OF COMMENTS
Challenge 1	22
Challenge 2	32
Challenge 3	26
Challenge 4	21
Challenge 5	17
Challenge 6	33
Challenge 7	25
Challenge 8	32
Other	19

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The feedback of the What We Heard Report is being used to develop policy options and an intentions paper that will be released for public engagement. This report reflects what was heard from British Columbians as part of the B.C. Government's commitment to collaborate with stakeholders to develop long- and short-term strategies to manage B.C.'s wildlife resources and create an improved wildlife management and habitat conservation strategy by 2020.

This report is a summary of the feedback received in the engagement process, which included almost 1,500 comments received from participants across the province and beyond.

An important amount of feedback speaks to the need to create dedicated funding, resources, and management that will protect B.C.'s wildlife and habitat beyond the ebb and flow of political will and interest groups. The most important tool that is underscored to accomplish this, is the use of science-based decision-making in **governance**.

Continuing along those lines, participants feel that there should be clear objectives and reliable resources to support **wildlife management** research and strategies in B.C. This includes using science and best practice to manage all wildlife decisions, rather than on public opinion. A significant amount of comments demonstrated that there was a high level of controversy and concern related to decisions to ban predator management based on public opinion.

The majority of comments on **habitat protection** called for urgent action to better regulate development and industry, to increase the importance of habitat and wildlife in impact assessments and decision-making, and to increase accountability, incentives, and restoration of habitats. There is a significant amount of concern of large-scale habitat loss and the cascading impact of current forestry practices.

While many participants expressed appreciation of the current **engagement process**, it is generally felt that there is room for improvement. Suggestions range from facilitating high-quality public engagement opportunities with the public and roundtable discussions with Indigenous Peoples, stakeholders, and those with regional, local, and technical knowledge. Notably, many comments call for creating an inclusive environment that supports common goals.

Although there are fewer comments concerning **knowledge and information**, the primary concern is transparency. The public feels that it is important that decision-makers source and release scientific findings that are the basis for decision-making. Additionally, there is interest in bolstering scientific data collection and education using citizen science programs.