



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

IMPROVING WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AND HABITAT CONSERVATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Phase Two Engagement Progress Update –
What We Heard and What is Next



January 2019

I want to thank everyone who contributed to the first phase of our engagement in Improving Wildlife Management Habitat Conservation in British Columbia.

Now complete, Phase One sought insight and ideas from Indigenous peoples, environmental groups, resource sectors and the public on new approaches to wildlife management and habitat conservation. We heard from 122 Indigenous communities, 50 stakeholder groups, and more than 1,400 members of the public in a series of in-person and online outreach events. Major themes identified in Phase One will be developed into policy options and ideas for consideration in Phase Two, which will happen December 2018 to April 2019.

This paper summarizes what we heard in Phase One, including existing challenges and opportunities, recommendations for improving wildlife management and habitat conservation, and how people would like to be engaged in the future. This paper also identifies the key themes and outlines the collaboration process for Phase Two. The key themes are as follows:

- reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples,
- stakeholder engagement,
- funding,
- wildlife planning and objectives,
- data, information and knowledge,
- wildlife habitat management,
- decision-making, and
- achieving desired outcomes.

Phase Two consists of engagement with Indigenous communities and stakeholder groups. After the conclusion of that engagement, we will be publishing a policy intentions paper for comprehensive public engagement in summer 2019. Through this engagement, British Columbians will be able to provide their perspectives on a range of potential strategies and actions to implement an improved wildlife management and habitat conservation strategy.



Honourable Doug Donaldson

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



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Introduction

This report is a progress update for the engagement process on the Improving Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation initiative, which aims to develop a new strategy that will help sustain and manage wildlife populations and their habitats.

The Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (the Ministry) is building the strategy together with Indigenous peoples, stakeholder groups and the public. The government's goal is to protect B.C.'s rich natural diversity and ensure that future generations will continue to enjoy social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits that the wilderness provides.

The initiative is also a part of the B.C. Government's commitment to implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and acting on the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action recommendations. The Province has committed an additional \$14 million over the next three years for the development and implementation of the new strategy.

The Ministry is conducting a four-phase collaborative process. It began with a blank-slate approach, in which a discussion paper summarizing challenges affecting wildlife management and habitat conservation was used to invite thoughts, concerns and ideas regarding habitat and wildlife conservation in B.C. as it exists now and what needs to happen going forward.

This report provides information summarizing the Phase One discussion paper and input from stakeholder groups, the public and Indigenous communities. After compiling feedback from thousands of emails, online submissions, workshops and engagement sessions, the Ministry developed eight key themes that will serve as the framework for deeper discussion in Phase Two. This report also details these eight themes and how they inform the proposed engagement going forward in Phase Two.

1/ Phase One Overview – Spring and Summer 2018

Phase One included a series of outreach and engagement events designed to generate discussion with and from Indigenous communities, rural communities, wildlife and habitat organizations, resource industry sectors, other stakeholders and the public to hear about issues they believe should be considered in any new wildlife management and habitat conservation strategies in B.C.

In order to support Phase One of the engagement, in April 2018 the Ministry published a discussion paper called *Improving Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation in British Columbia: A Primer to Support a Conversation with British Columbians*. Please see: https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/377/2018/05/WL_DiscussionPapers_FINAL_May-22.pdf

The paper was intended to support open discussions with Indigenous communities, stakeholders and the public to facilitate creative and practical ideas to improve wildlife management and habitat conservation in B.C., to receive input on the engagement approach and learn how people would like to be involved in the future.

The discussion paper identified the following challenge areas and related discussion questions:

Advancing Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples

What programs and policies are most important to advance meaningful and lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and will help implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)?

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?

Declining Wildlife Populations

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

Increase in 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?

Wildfires and Extreme Weather

What are the most effective ways to proactively adapt to the impacts of climate change to wildlife and habitat?

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 to ensure trust and transparency among all parties?

Human-Wildlife Conflicts

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

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?

Given the similarity of comments from the public and stakeholder engagement processes, the results are combined and summarized in Section 2.0 of this progress report.

The feedback from engagement with Indigenous communities is summarized in Section 3.0.

2/ What We Heard – Public and Stakeholder Engagement

In April 2018, the Ministry convened integrated stakeholder engagement sessions with more than 80 individuals representing 50 organizations and seven stakeholder sectors that have significant involvement with wildlife management and habitat conservation.

From May 22 to July 31, 2018 the Ministry sought feedback from the general public and various stakeholder sectors on the Improving Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation in British Columbia: A Primer to Support a Conversation with British Columbians discussion paper. The Ministry received 1,137 online comments, 298 emails and 49 stakeholder submissions. Input came from sector leadership, as well as individuals not associated with a stakeholder group, which overall represents a combination of stakeholder and public views.

Full reports on the comments from those engagement events can be found at: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/wildlifeandhabitat/what-we-heard-reports/>

The feedback has been combined and is summarized in the following sections 2.1 to 2.6.



A male spotted towhee, Fraser Valley – Rick Skerry

2.1 Funding and Governance

- Centralize resources and responsibilities from various ministries to protect and manage wildlife and habitat under one department/organization, set consistent objectives for wildlife management and incorporate habitat conservation provisions in natural resource legislation. Ensure decisions are free from the influence of politics and the resource industry.
- Create a well-resourced and effective funding model for wildlife and habitat conservation with independent financial oversight. Potential funding sources include resource sectors, tourism, outdoor and related equipment, collaborative partnerships and 100% of hunting tag and licence fees.
- Remain flexible to allow for adaptations that address regional factors and changing habitat conditions. Ensure government collaborates with local communities, sectors and environmental groups to respond to changing ecosystem conditions.

2.2 Wildlife Management

- Set clear, quantifiable goals for wildlife management and species-specific objectives, based on scientific data and Indigenous Knowledge, at the provincial and regional levels to improve the results of wildlife management efforts. Progress must be monitored regularly so that goals can be adjusted as needed.
- Use science-based decision-making to improve management of all wildlife species, including predators to support the recovery of ungulate populations.
- Reduce wildlife and habitat disturbance through incentive-based public education on human-wildlife conflicts and enforcement of existing legislation, as well as through improved land use planning and enhanced Conservation Officer Service reporting venues (RAPP line, website, smartphone apps).
- Employ a multi-species approach for a more practical, efficient and effective strategy to address ecosystem complexity and resiliency than a single-species approach.
- Embed and prioritize wildlife and habitat conservation values in legislation that reflect their intrinsic value, beyond that as commodities. Such values should also be reflected in land use planning, mega project and resource development, conservation and habitat recovery.

2.3 Habitat Conservation

- Reduce habitat loss resulting from development and industry through sustainable land use planning and large-scale, holistic ecosystem planning. Set clear objectives for habitat restoration, wildlife recovery and research, and identify measures of success to monitor.
- Legislate habitat conservation and protection through provincial parks, wildlife reserves, special protected habitats (desert, old growth, grasslands) and covenant lands, to protect from human access and resource extraction.
- Reduce human access to critical habitats, and work with landowners to improve wildlife corridors between critical wildlife habitats. Reduce road network density and rights-of-way that lead to fragmented habitat, and ensure access management is a high priority for future wildlife management.
- Recognize the cultural and economic value of wildlife and habitat protection so that they are on par with revenue and job-creating industry sectors. End resource industry self-regulation, and require a minimum percentage of land base to be set aside for wildlife protection at the local level.
- Update forestry standards and legislation to improve wildfire management, including increasing prescribed burns, and reducing wildfire suppression except where there is a direct threat to communities. Increase public education on the scientific benefits of prescribed burns.



A pair of Dall's sheep – Ministry of Forest, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development

2.4 Community Engagement

- Expand engagement and create more opportunities for effective, inclusive discussions with multiple stakeholders, Indigenous communities, the public and those with regional and local knowledge. Use public education campaigns to provide non-partisan, science-based information on wildlife and habitat conservation, management decisions, and Indigenous rights.
- Build on the successful collaborative partnerships between the Province, stakeholders and others, and support innovative new partnerships with the public, private and non-profit sectors with the goal of building trust, sharing resources and information, co-managing projects and invigorating community engagement.
- Strengthen collaboration with Indigenous peoples, building capacity and partnerships so they can participate in wildlife management decisions and conservation work earlier in the process. Ensure engagement forums are impartial, open, transparent and inclusive. Incorporate Indigenous Knowledge and values into management plans, and collect data on wildlife harvest with Indigenous communities to ensure sound wildlife management.

2.5 Knowledge and Information

- Enhance data, science and access to information to make informed decisions. Ensure the data framework is kept current, and that data comes from a wide range of sources, including resource sectors, ENGOs, Indigenous peoples, citizen science, railways and commercial truckers (for collision data), farmers, trappers and volunteer groups.
- Use sound science, knowledge and information as the primary basis for all decision-making to underscore new and revised legislation.
- 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. Enhance communications systems to ensure the flow of crucial information to stakeholders.

2.6 Increase Monitoring and Enforcement

- Enforcement should be improved for existing wildlife and habitat-related regulations in the *Forest & Range Practices Act*, the *Wildlife Act* and other relevant statutes to be meaningful and effective. Continue building the Conservation Officer Service to stem poaching, other crimes and violations, and to build positive community relations.

3/ What We Heard – Indigenous Communities Engagement

From June to August 2018, the Ministry met with 122 Indigenous communities and organizations in 23 facilitated sessions throughout B.C. In each session, participants were invited to share their perspectives on improving wildlife management and habitat conservation. There were many overlaps with what was heard from the public and stakeholders, but also many issues specific to Indigenous communities.

By far the most commonly raised themes related to recognition of title and rights, and the need for meaningful co-management as equal partners in wildlife management and habitat conservation, supported by appropriate resources and stable funding. The recognition of UNDRIP and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action were viewed as positive first steps, but participants said that more must be done to protect Indigenous rights.

Another commonly raised issue was to ensure that the Province educate the public service, stakeholders and the general public regarding the nature of Aboriginal rights and title (Aboriginal Rights) under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act 1982*, and how the exercise of these Aboriginal Rights underlies the unique relationship Indigenous people have to their lands and resources.

There were numerous calls to expand and increase protection of existing habitat reserves, address invasive species and recognize wildlife values equally with economic values. Doing so would rely on enhanced data collection and management that also incorporates Indigenous knowledge early in the process. It was noted that such data and information should underpin reforms to government resource management policies, and that increased monitoring and enforcement of existing legislation, coordinated with Indigenous communities, is critical in habitat conservation and wildlife management strategies.

Above all, Indigenous peoples advanced the need for a holistic perspective, drawing on the idea of interconnectedness in the ecosystem as an important Indigenous context to bring into wildlife and habitat management policy. This was often raised in the context of the great diversity of ecosystems and Indigenous cultures across the province.

The full “what we heard” report from the facilitator is provided here: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/377/2018/12/Indigenous-What-We-Heard-FINAL.pdf>



*Mule deer doe,
Kelowna, BC –
Ron E. Racine*



Osprey juveniles test their wings, Fraser Valley – Rick Skerry

4/ Key Policy Development Themes for Phase Two

After reviewing comments from Indigenous groups, stakeholders and the public, the Ministry has determined the following eight priority policy themes merit deeper consideration and discussion in Phase Two engagement to help the Ministry develop an effective, collaborative and long-term strategy to manage wildlife and conserve habitat in B.C.

4.1 Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples: This policy theme will rely on the report prepared by Indigenuity Consulting and will be co-designed with Indigenous communities. Policy backgrounders will be developed in collaboration with Indigenous peoples.

4.2 Stakeholder Engagement

- Identify how participation from a range of contributors and interests can inform effective management and protection of wildlife and habitat, and determine how they could be involved in or advise on decisions.
- Identify the best ways to gather information through engagement that will support sound decision-making, as well as the funding and other resources needed to improve engagement.
- Ensure engagement is inclusive and collaborative.
- Develop a framework to measure the success of engagement.
- Identify ways to measure the impact of wildlife and habitat decisions for all groups.
- Determine how to best communicate information and decisions to the public.

4.3 Funding

- Identify sources of long-term, sustainable government funds, potential alternatives and the amount of funding required.
- Educate the public about the value of increasing funding for wildlife initiatives.
- Provide Indigenous communities with the capacity-building resources they need so they can participate more fully in wildlife management and habitat conservation.

4.4 Wildlife Planning and Objectives

- Ensure there are clear wildlife objectives in management plans and guidelines for resource sectors, including requirements that they consider wildlife and habitat in their plans.
- Outline the mechanisms and governance structures to establish objectives, and ensure objectives are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely.
- Establish a process to assess the effectiveness of wildlife and habitat objectives, report on progress, and determine how other agencies share accountability.

4.5 Data, Information and Knowledge

- Explore ways to increase and improve data collection and sharing, to better support transparent, robust and informed decisions for wildlife management and habitat conservation. Communicate clearly with the public about these decisions.
- Specify the types of information that should be used in decision-making and planning (e.g., Indigenous Knowledge, local and citizen science, scientific data).
- Determine how Indigenous communities participate and integrate their culture and knowledge and how what support or funding is needed.
- Determine who will collect the information, and how it will be distributed.
- Identify other ministries, agencies and sectors that collect information, and how it can be shared collaboratively.

4.6 Wildlife Habitat Management

- Identify the appropriate amount, distribution and quality of habitat required for wildlife conservation, measure the effectiveness of wildlife plans, form collaborative partnerships and understand how habitat conservation contributes to wildlife goals.
- Assess the effectiveness of current legislation, and determine whether updated and/or new legislation could improve habitat conservation.
- Analyze the effectiveness of habitat conservation for all ecosystems.

4.7 Decision-making for Wildlife and Habitat

- Remedy the limitations in existing legislative and policy tools that include wildlife and habitat in natural resource management decisions, and provide decision-makers with the tools they need to clearly explain how wildlife and habitat values are considered in the decision-making process.
- Improve processes to ensure wildlife and habitat information, knowledge and science is effectively applied to natural resource management decisions.
- Improve how wildlife and habitat values are balanced with social and economic values.
- Improve how Indigenous rights are considered in wildlife and habitat decisions.

4.8 Achieving Desired Outcomes

- Develop a transparent process to assess and determine whether wildlife management and habitat conservation objectives and actions are achieved.
- Engage with British Columbians to get their perspectives on the best ways to effectively measure performance.
- Outline how performance management is funded, prioritized and communicated.

Bighorn sheep gather on a hillside – Ministry of Forest, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development



5/ Phase Two – Proposed Engagement Strategies

Phase Two engagement for the Improving Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation Initiative is intended to generate analysis and collaborative policy development. The Ministry will draw on the eight priority policy theme areas outlined in Section 4.0 to inform Phase Two engagement sessions.

The Ministry is proposing a provincial wildlife forum as a primary but non-exclusive venue to have ongoing provincial-level discussions about wildlife and habitat opportunities with Indigenous communities. The Ministry will also engage with stakeholders in a concurrent series of workshops and online forums starting in December 2018 through to April 2019.



*A couple of common
mergansers –
Rick Skerry*

5.1 Proposed Indigenous Communities Engagement: Wildlife Forum

As part of the commitment to implement UNDRIP in the Improving Wildlife and Habitat Conservation initiative, the Province is committed to collaborating with Indigenous communities to co-produce potential solutions to issues that have been raised.

The Wildlife Forum has been developed based on input received during Phase One. It is intended to foster the kind of discussions and results that emerge when Indigenous leaders, knowledge experts and representatives of the Province come together in a collaborative space, and will serve as a starting point for discussions on how to approach improvements in wildlife management and habitat conservation.

The Ministry wishes to build an inclusive, transparent and collaborative process with Indigenous communities in British Columbia to discuss the development of provincial policies and legislative options that improve the management of wildlife and habitat. The Wildlife Forum is an opportunity to gather leaders and knowledge holders from all across the Province to offer a wide variety of perspectives from interested First Nations.

In an effort to capture the full range of perspectives around British Columbia, the Ministry has invited participants who characterize the diversity of geographic and wildlife management experiences through the Province. Additional members may be added.

Initial Scope of Forum Discussions

The objective of the forum is to engage in dialogue that can improve and enhance wildlife resources in British Columbia, as well as identify ways to more effectively and efficiently conserve wildlife habitat. Some proposed topics include:

- Recommendations on possible changes to legislation, regulations, policy or program development, particularly as those changes relate to First Nations
- Provincial or regional Indigenous governance models
- Shared decision-making recommendations
- Shared monitoring and enforcement models
- Information-sharing models
- Funding models
- Models for incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into decision-making
- Other topics proposed by the forum

The Ministry recognizes this is an ambitious and important list of topics to address and looks forward to working with the forum to make progress on mutually identified priorities. The initial focus of discussions will be on the “What We Heard” reports referenced in Sections 2.0 and 3.0, as well as any documents or perspectives brought by participants.

The Ministry is committed to working with the forum to design a collaborative process.

Relationship to Consultation

The work of this forum would **not be considered as consultation** with First Nations. Any products, such as recommendations on legislation or changes to provincial regulation, policy, practices or procedures will be subject to appropriate consultation. Participants are not asked to represent any other Indigenous governments or communities.

5.2 Proposed Stakeholder Engagement

Based on feedback from Phase One, provincial stakeholder groups will collaboratively develop policy options and ideas for consideration. The objectives for engagement with stakeholders in Phase Two are:

- Communicate input received in Phase One to stakeholders
- Build on input received in Phase One Engagement
- Engage stakeholders collaboratively
- Include a broad range of provincial stakeholder sectors
- Build trust and confidence among stakeholders and the public
- Develop policy options and ideas for improving wildlife management and habitat in B.C.

Phase Two engagement will be through an initial combination of an online webinar and a provincial two-day workshop, followed by smaller working groups meeting in online webinars. The workshop will be an opportunity for both structured discussions and informal conversations, while the webinars and workshops will be spread over the next few months so that there is time for reflection and full consideration of ideas. Eight provincial stakeholder sectors will be invited:

- Conservation, wildlife and environmental groups
- Hunters, trappers and guides
- Tourism and recreation
- Energy and mining
- Forestry
- Agriculture
- Habitat conservation and land trusts
- Academia and research

5.3 Proposed Public Engagement

All applicable policy documents generated to support Phase Two engagement are available at <http://engage.gov.bc.ca/wildlifeandhabitat>

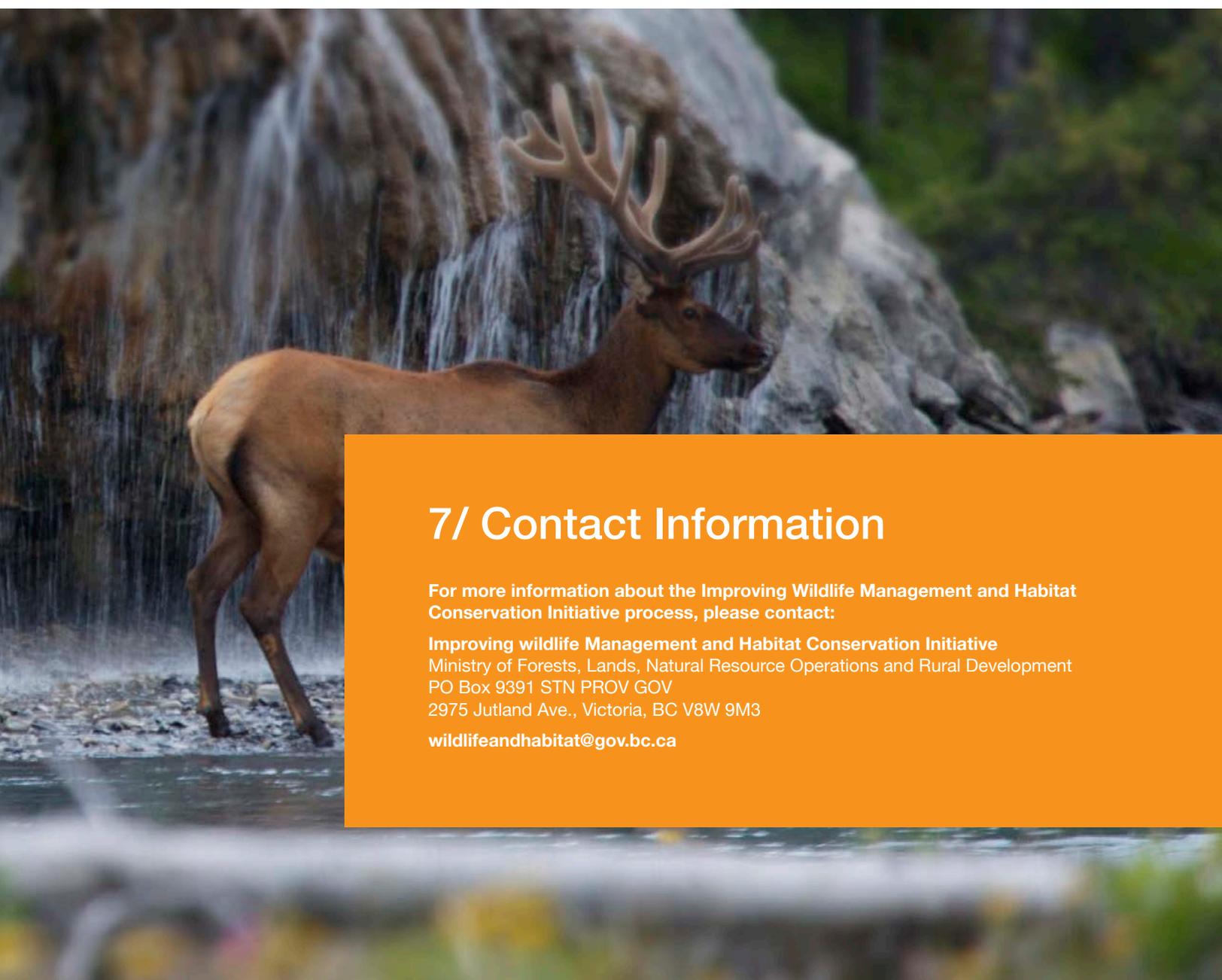
The public will be invited to comment on the intentions paper that will be generated following the Phase Two collaboration.

6/ Next Steps

Following the completion of Phase Two in Spring 2019, the Ministry will start Phase Three of the initiative: Validation of Policy Options. Phase Three will begin by publishing a Policy Intentions Paper, which will reflect the input received from the Phase Two engagements, and will describe options for the implementation of a proposed Wildlife and Habitat Strategy for British Columbia. The Ministry will undertake broad and transparent engagement on this paper and all British Columbians will be able to provide their opinions and perspectives on a range of potential strategies and actions.

Although completion and full implementation of the Improving Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation Strategy is expected in 2020, the Ministry aims to implement changes throughout all phases of this initiative.

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



7/ Contact Information

For more information about the Improving Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation Initiative process, please contact:

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Cover Image: Grizzly in British Columbia alpine fields – Doug Shelley

