

Wildlife Migration Response Protocol for Highway Operations

Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to enable British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (BCMoT) District staff to respond to unexpected wildlife migrations that may occur on existing Provincial highways in a timely, effective and safe manner.

Migration Event

A migration occurs when a large number of a single species of wildlife begins moving en masse across a highway for a sustained period of time. Migrations can involve any group of wildlife, including amphibians and reptiles. The causes of migration vary from normal seasonal factors to changes in adjacent land use.

Identification of a Migration Event

A migration may be identified by BCMoT District staff through their regular activities, or confirmed by BCMoT District Staff after contacts by BCMoT maintenance contractors, other agencies, law enforcement agencies, the motoring public or the media.

Course of Immediate Action

The two main objectives are maintaining the safety of the motoring public and protecting the migrating wildlife. Depending on the type and magnitude of the migration and the potential safety concern to motorists, steps should be taken to ensure motorists are aware of the migration.

If BCMoT District staff determine that a safety concern to motorists exists, they should exercise traffic control, using temporary warning signs as necessary. Where time permits, public announcements should be coordinated through the Public Affairs Bureau. However, when the migration represents a serious immediate hazard, and the Public Affairs Bureau staff can not be readily contacted, BCMoT District staff should take steps to notify the local media directly. Once a migration has been confirmed by BCMoT District staff or BCMoT contractors, and steps taken to protect the motoring public, Ministry Regional Environmental Manager (REM) and the Public Affairs Bureau must be contacted and advised of the migration event. The REM, or

appointed designate, shall be the BCMoT person responsible for overseeing the BCMoT migration response. In the case of a large scale migration when the REM cannot be reached, the Environmental Management Section at Ministry Headquarters should be contacted as soon as possible.

Protecting the Motoring Public and BCMoT Migration Response Personnel

Where BCMoT managed mitigation activities regarding wildlife migration occur on or close to a provincial highway, steps must be taken to protect the personal safety of those involved in the migration response activities. The following steps must be adhered to:

- The local BCMoT District Manager, or designate, must appoint a BCMoT staff person to be the Migration Event Commander (MEC) responsible for overseeing the activities of the personnel involved in the event.
- Where additional resources are needed to supplement Ministry staff, contractors and consultants, the MEC may consider recruiting volunteers.
- Recruitment of volunteers should be overseen by the MEC, or designate, through local fish and game clubs, streamkeeper groups and other formal associations so volunteers are covered by the insurance carried by these organizations.
- During recruitment of volunteers, all personnel must be advised of the chain of command, how to conduct themselves on the highway right-of-way including WorkSafeBC regulations and requirements, and how to handle the migrating species. They must agree to the conduct requirements in writing.



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- Only those personnel directly involved in the migration mitigation are allowed to be present at the migration location as authorized by the MEC, or designate.
- WorkSafeBC regulations must be observed and all personnel must use WorkSafeBC-approved safety equipment, i.e. reflective vests and footwear.
- Only authorized motor vehicles deemed absolutely necessary for the mitigation activities should be allowed to park or operate at the migration location.
- All authorized motor vehicles must be equipped with emergency flashing lights.
- Traffic control may be necessary to protect the migration response personnel and the motoring public.

Cost of Migration Response

If the services of a species-specific wildlife expert is necessary to assess a wildlife migration and/or provide the Ministry guidance for handling the wildlife species involved, the Environmental Management Section at Ministry Headquarters shall be responsible for contacting and contracting the wildlife expert in consultation with Regional Environmental Managers.

The BCMoT District, in which the wildlife migration is occurring, shall be responsible for all other wildlife migration associated costs, including, but not limited to, signage, traffic control, vegetation management, species salvage, and temporary fence construction.

Media Contacts

The BCMoT MEC should direct all media contacts regarding a wildlife migration to the Communications Manager for Transportation – Provincial Public Affairs Bureau.

For further information, please contact

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