



**SPECIES AND ECOSYSTEMS AT RISK
LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKING GROUP
DISCUSSION PAPER
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT SURVEY RESULTS
2016**



A summary of services provided by the government of British Columbia related to the recommendations within the Discussion Paper *Working Together to Protect Species at Risk: Strategies Recommended by Local Government to Improve Conservation on Municipal, Regional and Private Lands in B.C.*

In the spring of 2014, participants of the [Species and Ecosystems at Risk Local Government Working Group](#) (SEAR LGWG) were asked to participate in a survey on the recommendations within the group's [Discussion Paper](#).

Two separate surveys were created, one for local government participants and one for Provincial staff. The Discussion Paper contains 5 key strategies and 45 recommendations, written from the local government perspective, 23 of which are directed towards the provincial government.

The Ministry of Environment (MoE) continues to coordinate and support the SEAR LGWG. Regional Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO) offices continue to work with local governments on regional and site-specific issues. Staff from MoE's Ecosystems Branch, MFLNRO regional offices and Ministry of Agriculture provided the following detailed accounts of how their work has contributed towards the 23 recommendations, under 5 key strategies.

1. Increase local government awareness of species at risk

The provincial government has been working within regions and headquarters in various ways to contribute towards the recommendations under this strategy. This includes:

Province-wide:

- Updating the [Species and Ecosystems Information Portal](#) (broken links have been fixed). Data submissions now go to this central data repository for ALL SEAR information.
- The Conservation Data Centre (CDC) outreach has continued to expand each year, particularly within Provincial Government offices in various regions. Outreach has also included groups that have approached the CDC, including Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT), Oil and Gas Commission, BC Hydro, Registered Professional Foresters, Professional Biologists, amongst others.
- The CDC is creating online training modules to guide use of the CDC tools and information.
- [Habitat Wizard](#) has been updated to include many of the main data sources in Data BC for SAR as an easy way to view spatial data. Regional MFLNRO staff are available to provide local SAR information or answer questions.
- Release of [Develop with Care](#) in 2012 and updated in 2014. It includes the following complementary documents:
 - [Guidelines for Amphibians and Reptile Conservation during Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia \(2014\)](#) (PDF 48.1MB)
 - [Guidelines for Raptor Conservation during Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia \(2013\)](#) (PDF 2.75MB)
 - [Supporting Information - Air Quality](#) (PDF 411KB)
 - [Urban Ungulates Conflict Analysis](#)

- MoE is working closely with a number of other BC ministries on a project under the [Species at Risk 5-year Plan](#) that is working on recommendations for encouraging voluntary protection of SEAR on private and local government lands. Representatives from the SEAR LGWG have been included on the SEAR Incentive Working Group.
- BC Ministry of Agriculture (AGRI) regional agrologists and planners, with support or consultation from Specialists, provide input to local government through Official Community Plans (OCPs), Ag Area Plans, Regional Growth Strategies, Edge Planning initiatives and through consultation with Ag Advisory Committees; they are available for referrals and questions through [AgriService BC](#) (AGRI information portal) or through direct contact at regional offices.
- The AGRI-led, federal-provincial Growing Forward 2 Agreement includes consideration of SEAR, Biodiversity or Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) activities linked to communication events that engage local government representatives and producers (i.e., workshops, field days, factsheets). EFP Program and reference materials are available on the [BC Ministry of Agriculture](#) and [Agriculture Research and Development Corporation](#) (business division of the BC Ag Council) websites.

Regionally:

- One MFLNRO region is working to create a single window for information sources for Qualified Professionals (QPs) that will include information on SEAR. Regional MFLNRO staff are available to contact for local SEAR information and have recently developed 44 plants at risk and four freshwater mussel fact sheets and guidance documents for QPs that will also assist local governments with identification, Environmental Assessment (EA) reviews, and the Province's guidance on how these species should be managed. The MFLNRO staff in the region hold a workshop every 1-2 years (2012, 2014), including one in November 2015 for QPs, local governments and others. The focus was on working around water and SEAR and included a presentation from Canadian Wildlife Service on Critical Habitat, a presentation on Environmental Mitigation Policy and regional resource management initiatives.
- Inventory training was provided in 2013 for mussels and rare plants and other workshops focussing on SEAR were held in 2012, 2014, and 2015.
- One MFLNRO region held local government workshops in several locations, covering a variety of subjects including SEAR and management considerations, as presented in [Develop with Care](#).
- One MFLNRO region is currently working on a data set to spatially identify environmental values and legal land-use zones, and link these to land managers, best management practices, area-specific management reports and contacts for referrals or questions.
- One MFLNRO region has worked with a local partnership organisation and now has Sensitive Habitat Inventory Mapping (SHIM) (Foreshore Inventory and Mapping (FIM) and Aquatic Habitat Index (AHI)) maps for an area online, and will have SHIM and a Cultural & Conservation Values Map posted for another area by summer 2016. A MFLNRO biologist has been identified as the 'GO TO' person and available to answer questions on SEAR. MFLNRO staff refer to [iMap](#) and referral values maps to respond to e-referrals received from Front Counter BC (FCBC). The regional MFLNRO program works with local non-government organisations and special interest

groups on wetland and habitat restoration projects, and demonstrates funding sources/tools/experts available to all.

- The *Ecosystem Values in the Northeast* document provides some information on environmental values, including SEAR, and guidance to minimize impacts on these values.
- In one MFLNRO region, numerous workshops were held in 2015 targeting local governments and included wetland and aquatic species at risk.
- Another region completed a SEAR workshop in November 2013 with presentations on existing resources and a Q & A session on SEAR resources, data and mapping. The workshop raised awareness of SEAR with local government planning staff and on a follow-up conference call in June 2014. Updates will be provided to individual local governments in the summer of 2016.
- The *Innovative Subdivision Design* report was completed in 2015 in one region to retain valued community and environmental assets. This profiles examples and highlights the most helpful parts of each guidance document to help local governments and developers make better use of them. Local conservation organisations have quarterly meetings in this region and MFLNRO staff can provide presentations to them on water, riparian and foreshore related species (e.g., Environmental Mitigation Policy). The Angling, Hunting & Trapping Engagement website is used for Access Management Areas for motor vehicle closures to protect habitat for SEAR. Local governments and consultants/contractors are advised of the location of best management practices when they submit a referral for development.
- In 2008, one MFLNRO region held a Workshop on Collaborative Watershed Management. This was very successful and worked with real estate agents, surveyors and backhoe operators.
- The Puntzi Lake community was given a presentation on American White Pelicans because there is more recent pelican activity on the lake. Recreation Sites and Trails BC are partnering with MFLNRO to put up an information sign about pelicans at Puntzi Lake.
- The Research and Effectiveness Monitoring Board has held regular Webinars showcasing research conducted on Boreal Caribou in the Northeast. Consultants and First Nations have been invited and any one from the public is welcome.
- One region is assisting a local government to identify indicators of a healthy community, encourage planting native tree species in greenspaces and encourage local governments to follow guidelines within Develop with Care.
- One region worked with local conservation groups to develop two Shoreline Management Guidance documents which will be available this summer (2016) with a series of internal meetings followed by external presentations/open houses.
- A MFLNRO region is currently working on an Online Stewardship Baseline tool which provides thresholds for priority species, however the BC species explorer is still the "go to" site for mapping and documents. A regional conservation group assists with our outreach and information sharing with local governments and First Nations. The group generally conducts a number of workshops each year focused on SEAR. Habitat protection can support local government priorities in maintaining green space and ecosystem services. The awareness of these benefits has increase significantly over the past 10 years.

2. Facilitate use of effective tools and techniques.

The provincial government has been working within regions and headquarters in various ways to contribute towards the recommendations under this strategy. This includes:

Province-wide:

- The [Species at Risk 5-year plan](#) includes a review of legislation including “*Analyze opportunities for and make recommendations regarding changes to existing or new policy and legislation to address gaps in protection for species at risk, ensuring input from stakeholders and the public is considered prior to making any changes*”.
- The BC *Water Sustainability Act* and regulations came into force in early 2016.
- Controlled Alien Species (CAS) Regulation was enacted in Fall 2012 and includes aquatics (zebra/quagga mussels, snakeheads).
- Pesticide reduction initiatives are led by MoE or Ministry of Agriculture in agricultural areas.
- Note: both municipalities and regional districts can create bylaws for protecting SEAR (see *Local Government Act* 919.1 (1) “*An official community plan may designate development permit areas for one or more of the following purposes: protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity*”). The [Green Bylaws Toolkit](#) is a great resource for local governments developing bylaws for SEAR.

Regionally:

- Local governments are aware that MFLNRO staff in the region are available to help with ecosystem mapping and associated wording in plans (e.g., OCPs) for SEAR, review of projects, and in some cases, development of best management practices which have been adopted through agreements with some local governments. MFLNRO staff are working directly with local governments to implement best management practices and recommendations set out in recovery strategies.
- One MFLNRO region is planning to work with regional districts to use the Development Permit Areas (DPA) tool when rezoning for more development in/near sensitive areas.
- One region has proposed 13 motor vehicle Access Management Area's (AMA's) for the area, which if approved would then be inserted into the Hunting & Trapping Synopsis for 2016-2018.
- Under the *Park Act*, Stum Lake access has been restricted to protect the red listed American White Pelican. Under the *Wildlife Act* the pelican has been legally designated as an Endangered species.
- One MFLNRO region has Motor Vehicle Closure Areas under the *Wildlife Act*, and Hunting and Trapping Regulation that restrict access to identified high elevation areas.
- MFLNRO staff in one region are currently working with local governments to facilitate inclusion of Soil Removal/Deposit and Watercourse Protection (e.g., OCP, DPAs) bylaws to protect wetlands.
- MFLNRO staff in one region are involved in a regional districts’ Growth Strategy and other regional initiatives led by conservation groups, and conduct referrals on OCP and bylaw amendments when asked.

- The Province, including regional offices, recognises that local governments are important partners for identifying opportunities for collaborative projects and applying for jointly funded/collaborative projects (e.g., Habitat Stewardship Fund).

3. Identify and collaborate on shared responsibilities

The provincial government has been working within regions and headquarters in various ways to contribute towards the recommendations under this strategy. This includes:

Province-wide:

- One of the four key focus areas within the SEAR Incentive Project (see page 9) is to explore options for clarifying local governments' roles and responsibilities with respect to SEAR.
- SAR recovery documents are available on the MoE website and many of these are available through the [BC Species and Ecosystems Explorer](#) (BCSEE) under the publications section of a species or ecosystems search.
- EFP Program Group Plan and BMP cost-share Program provides annual funding and identifies possible alternative or supplementary funding for project developments linked to increasing biodiversity. The federal [Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands](#) (SARPAL) program is connected to EFP BMPs that have links to SAR Recovery Strategies. There are other possible synergies with other conservation funds, ecological services initiative, local government funding.

Regionally:

- A MFLNRO region discussed this Third Strategy as a group in 2013, including how staff could help and what limitations local governments have in terms of resources. MFLNRO staff made it clear to local governments that they are available to help with ecosystem mapping in particular.
- As noted above, MFLNRO regional staff are currently developing SAR fact sheets and guidance documents for QPs that will also assist local governments with identification, Environmental Assessment reviews, and the Province's guidance on how these species should be managed.
- Ecosystem staff in one region provided information on SEAR for a regional district's fire interface program, and attended a meeting with the Puntzi Lake community to discuss how to reduce disturbance to a new breeding pelican colony.
- The *Ecosystem Values* document provides links to best management practices and information on SEAR. Another source of information is *A Compendium of Wildlife Guidelines for Industrial Development Projects in the North Area, British Columbia - Interim Guidance*: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/BMP/bmpintro.html#third>
- Regional MFLNRO staff engage and provide support to local governments as requested, barring any resourcing constraints. For example, staff provide technical support for local government Planning and Parks staff (e.g., Western Screech-Owl Stewardship Agreement with the regional district's Parks department); review and provide input to bylaw development and revisions, OCPs etc.; and referrals for local governments where environmental concerns are identified. One region is currently updating their referral process and responses to ensure comments are appropriate to help with decisions on proposals.

- One MFLNRO region has the opportunity to partner with local non-government organisations and apply for funding from a local trust. Another region has provided support for a couple of plans in the region including helping with specific language for plans or bylaws.
- MFLNRO regional staff are continuously asked for SEAR data by local governments and others, and refer to the CDC or our existing databases.

4. Conduct ecosystem mapping and encourage data sharing

The provincial government has been working within regions and headquarters in various ways to contribute towards the recommendations under this strategy. This includes:

Province-wide:

- The BC CDC has contractors working through a backlog to map occurrences, with the possibility of mapping other priority areas if funding is available (e.g., from local government funds). Inventories are mostly funded regionally. CDC does outreach upon request and availability. Also available by phone or email. However, specific implications need to be addressed regionally (MFLNRO) or by species or ecosystems experts (CDC can provide appropriate contacts).
- The CDC simplified data entry by routing all submissions through the Species and Ecosystems Information Portal and now there is online incidental sighting form available at http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wildlife/wsi/incidental_obs.htm. The data goes to Wildlife Species Inventory and the CDC mines from this Database.
- The CDC is planning a significant upgrade to the [BC Species and Ecosystems Explorer](#) (BCSEE) tool in the next year or two based on user survey results.

Regionally:

- This was identified as a priority by a region's local governments at a regional SEAR workshop and necessary for requiring Qualified Professional assessments for SEAR. It was also identified in another region as a high priority by Regional Districts and a base for any meaningful next step in protection for SEAR.
- MFLNRO staff provide support as requested, barring resourcing constraints, and encourage proponents and researchers to enter their data in a timely manner.
- A MFLNRO region encourages industrial proponents and internal researchers to submit data and mapping to the Provincial repositories (i.e., [Species and Ecosystems Information Portal](#)). This is sometimes made a permit or licence condition to ensure it occurs.
- In one region, some local non-government organisations with professional staff ensure data is submitted to the BC CDC (now [Species and Ecosystems Information Portal](#)). Additionally there are obligations through existing treaties and committees that require hydro producers to submit research reports and results do get entered.
- Submitting data to the [Species and Ecosystems Information Portal](#) is consistent with a MFLNRO region's Urban bio-inventory Terms of Reference (Develop With Care, Appendix B).

- Best management plans indicate that a Qualified Professionals should be used and data submitted to the [Species and Ecosystems Information Portal](#). This information is provided through referral responses.
- [Resources Information Standards Committee](#) (RISC) standards are available online for Qualified Professionals to follow.
- Note: it tends to be difficult to ensure data is submitted. One region has done community asset and environmental mapping through volunteers and the weak link is data entry and funding.

5. Engage landowners in species at risk habitat protection

The provincial government has been working within regions and headquarters in various ways to contribute towards the recommendations under this strategy. This includes:

Province-wide:

- As one of the projects under the [Species at Risk 5-year Plan](#), the SEAR Incentive Project is developing recommendations, for practical and effective approaches (including incentives) to encourage private landowners and local governments to protect SEAR on their lands in BC. The project includes an internal provincial government project team and an external working group, which includes staff from local governments and UBCM.

Regionally:

- At a regional workshop in 2013, providing SEAR information to the public was identified as an area of interest from local governments and is something the MFLNRO regional office will look to follow up on.
- MFLNRO regions are raising awareness of [Develop with Care](#) and accompanying documents.
- Other materials are available, for example in one region there is a pamphlet on developing waterfront and lakeshore guidelines. The document *Ecosystem Values in the Northeast* provides helpful links for engaging with private landowners on SEAR issues.
- The most effect tool used in one region for engaging with private landowners was the product of a local conservation group partnering with government, who approached every private landowner in an area and toured the property to identify beneficial and damaging activities (e.g., removing aquatic and riparian vegetation for beaches or retaining walls). This provided an opportunity to present pamphlets, guidelines and websites to private landowners.
- MFLNRO staff held a community meeting on American White Pelicans and their habitat requirements for private land and resort owners, where staff provided a presentation, reference materials and answered questions. As a result, resort owners were then able to pass on information to their clients and the locals were more informed about the habitat requirements for the pelicans.