

## **Update on Protecting Vulnerable Species: A Five-Year Plan for Species at Risk in British Columbia**

In 2013, the Province of British Columbia published a plan to improve management of species at risk in BC. [\*Protecting Vulnerable Species: A Five-Year Plan for Species at Risk in British Columbia\*](#) resulted in a number of important actions to protect rare species and ecosystems in BC. The species-at-risk plan laid out actions to be considered under five themes in order to balance British Columbia's economic, environmental, and social priorities. These themes are:

- Improving species conservation through management at the ecosystem and landscape scale.
- Providing the best available information to support identification, management and recovery of species at risk.
- Encouraging British Columbians to embrace stewardship of species at risk across all lands
- Applying protection for species at risk consistently across all sectors.
- Measuring and reporting on government's investments in species at risk.

This document outlines specific key achievements, made between 2013 and 2017, under each of these themes.

### **Improving species conservation through management at the ecosystem and landscape scale<sup>1</sup>**

Specific achievements related to this theme include:

- Incorporating species-at-risk occurrence data from the [Conservation Data Centre](#) (CDC) into the [Natural Resources Permitting Project's](#) online portal.
- Implementing a [Cumulative Effects Framework](#) (CEF) to assess and track current environmental condition and ensure it stays within government's existing objectives.
- Implementing the [Environmental Mitigation Policy](#) across the natural resources sector.
- Conducting an extensive coast-wide engagement process – including First Nations, the federal government, the forest sector, local governments, and species experts – on BC's proposed management approaches for Marbled Murrelet and Northern Goshawk; and developing Implementation Plans to mitigate impacts to these wide-ranging species.

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<sup>1</sup> Species at Risk Five-Year Plan (SAR 5-Year Plan) pp. 16-19.

- Piloting a threats-based approach to managing species at risk in the Kootenay-Boundary Region.
- Establishing four new provincial [Wildlife Management Areas \(WMAs\)](#) and expanding four more, adding over 10,000 ha of high value grassland, riparian, estuarine and wetland habitats and migration corridors, supporting a range of species and ecosystems. For example, the [Lhá:lt/ Harrison-Chehalis WMA](#) contains important wintering, migration and breeding habitats for many fish and wildlife species including Bald Eagles, Trumpeter Swans, White Sturgeon, and five salmonid species, and is internationally recognized as a [Salmon Stronghold](#) and [Important Bird Area](#).
- Designating [6.1 million ha of Ungulate Winter Range \(UWR\)](#) under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA), and adding [over 500,000 ha of Wildlife Habitat Areas \(WHAs\)](#). Nearly half of these WHAs protect the Telkwa caribou herd (229,721 ha), about 163,000 ha protect Boreal Caribou, and nearly 2 million ha of this UWR protects additional caribou habitat.

## Providing the best available information to support identification, management and recovery of species at risk<sup>2</sup>

Specific examples of achievements under this theme:

- Staff conducted field-based activities designed to protect habitat and mitigate threats to species, e.g., screening whitebark pine for rust resistance and propagating resistant stock; undertaking actions to [protect and recover Southern Mountain Caribou](#), including maternal penning, wolf control, heli-skiing best management practices, and monitoring and restricting snowmobile access.
- BC led the development of an additional 56 science-based recovery plans for species at risk. [Management, recovery or implementation plans](#) have now been developed for over 220 BC species at risk.
- The [Boreal Caribou](#) Implementation Plan was revised to reflect five years of research, and in 2017 was posted for public consultation. Results of this consultation led to additional review.
- A science update on genetics and foraging habitat for Northern Goshawk, and collaborating with the federal government in a Southern Mountain Caribou Protection Assessment, improved understanding of how to protect and recover these species.

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<sup>2</sup> SAR 5-Year Plan pp. 20-27

## Encouraging British Columbians to embrace stewardship of species at risk across all lands<sup>3</sup>

Specific examples of achievements under this theme:

- Involving the public in species at risk protection through a Species at Risk Public Engagement website; [hundreds of British Columbians](#) provided responses online.
- The Oil and Gas Commission drafted a province-wide list of species to be considered High Priority Wildlife and managed under the *Oil & Gas Activities Act*.
- Implementation planning for wide-ranging species (Woodland Caribou, Northern Goshawk, Marbled Murrelet) included a high level of First Nations involvement, e.g., in the Klinse-Za Caribou Maternity Pen Project and Prophet River Boreal Caribou habitat enhancement.
- Creation of the Lhá:lt/Harrison-Chehalis Wildlife Management Area was achieved in part through the ongoing efforts of the Crown Land Securement Partner Program (CLSP) and working with First Nations. Government [committed another \\$100,000 to this program](#) from 2015 through 2019. The CLSP includes the Province, Ducks Unlimited Canada, The Nature Trust of BC, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service, Wildlife Habitat Canada, and the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation.
- Most of the CLSP partners participated with the Province in a multi-partner land management program involving BC- and Non-Governmental Organization-owned conservation lands in the West Coast region ([Vancouver Island Conservation Land Management Program](#)), which includes specific management efforts for ecosystems and species at risk.
- The Province held a [Species and Ecosystems at Risk Local Government Working Group](#) symposium in 2017; this was attended by provincial staff, local governments and key conservation groups.
- Throughout the Five-Year Plan the Ministries of Environment (ENV) and Agriculture worked together to enhance priorities for species and ecosystems at risk (SEAR) on private agricultural lands.
- The Province participated on the panel that reviews funding proposals for the federal [Habitat Stewardship Program](#), with over 50 important proposals reviewed in 2017 alone.
- In 2017, the BC government budgeted \$27 million over 3 years to continue its caribou recovery program.
- Government provided support to the [Coastal Douglas-fir Conservation Partnership](#), a group composed of over 20 partner organizations jointly aiming to improve conservation and management of rare Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystems and their species at risk.

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<sup>3</sup> SAR 5-Year Plan pp. 28-31

- The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy initiated a project encouraging private landowners and local governments to protect species and ecosystems at risk on their lands.

## Applying protection for species at risk consistently across all sectors<sup>4</sup>

Specific examples of achievements under this theme:

- The Province undertook a review of gaps in policy and legislation for species at risk protection, and in 2017 was given a mandate to create endangered species legislation.
- Implementation of Wildlife Habitat Features, a protection measure enabled under FRPA, was trialed in the Kootenay region and comprehensive engagement and consultation were completed.
- ENV provided the function of Scientific Authority for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).
- The Province participated in national working groups and committees (Canadian Wildlife Directors Committee, the federal/provincial Species at Risk Coordinating Committee, Recovery of Nationally Endangered Wildlife program, and the [Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada](#)) to provide advice on policy, legislation, and regulatory processes.

## Measuring and reporting on government's investments in species at risk

Specific examples of achievements under this theme:

- An indicator on the change in [status of native vertebrate species in BC](#) was published by Environment Reporting BC in 2013-2014. In 2017, Environment Reporting BC reported on the [status of land designations that contribute to conservation in British Columbia](#). Source data and results are available for download under the [Open Government Licence – BC](#). The methods and analysis code for deriving the results are also publicly available online.
- A [new website on species at risk in British Columbia](#) provides a central repository of information on species at risk, recovery planning, species status, and more. A reporting box, "Planning at a Glance", is included on this site, indicating the number of recovery planning documents posted in total and per year.

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<sup>4</sup> SAR 5-Year Plan pp. 32-33