

Planning Process - Management of Red and Blue Species / Ecological Communities

Background:

Species at Risk Act - Legal

The federal *Species at Risk Act* requires the development of recovery strategies and action plans for endangered, threatened and extirpated species, and management plans for species of special concern. Strategies include the identification of critical habitat for species needing protection. The *Species at Risk Act* also establishes the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as a legal entity, ensuring that wild Canadian species, subspecies, and separate populations suspected of being at risk are assessed under a rigorous and independent scientific process.

Wildlife Act – Legal

Section 34 of the BC Wildlife Act - Indicates that a person commits an offence if the person, except as provided by regulation, possesses, takes, injures, molests or destroys

- (a) a bird or its egg,
- (b) the nest of an eagle, peregrine falcon, gyrfalcon, osprey, heron or burrowing owl,
or
- (c) the nest of a bird not referred to in paragraph (b) when the nest is occupied by a bird or its egg.

Provincial – Non-Legal (Comprehensive):

Specialists at the BC Conservation Data Centre, throughout the province, have identified British Columbia's most vulnerable vertebrate animals, vascular plants and natural plant communities. They are placed on provincial "red" and "blue" lists, according to the degree of rarity.

Red List:

Includes any native species that have, or are candidates for Extirpated, Endangered, or Threatened status in British Columbia.

- Extirpated taxa no longer exist in the wild in British Columbia, but do occur elsewhere.
- Endangered taxa are facing imminent extirpation or extinction.
- Threatened taxa are likely to become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed.

Blue List:

Includes any native species considered to be vulnerable in British Columbia. Vulnerable taxa are of special concern because of characteristics that make them particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events. Blue-listed taxa are at risk, but are not Extirpated, Endangered or Threatened.

Purpose

The Stuart-Nechako Business Area desires a pro-active approach to ensuring identification and necessary protection of provincial Red and Blue listed species and ecological communities, when planning development activities. This specifically relates to planning processes associated with: harvesting, road construction and road deactivation.

Scope

This planning process provides Business Area staff with specific information on the process necessary to identify and protect red and blue listed species and ecological communities, when planning and conducting development activities.

Procedure

1. BCTS staff and associated layout contractors will use BC Species and Ecosystems Explorer (<http://a100.gov.bc.ca/pub/eswp/>) to identify:
 - Provincial Red- and Blue-listed species / ecological communities, by applicable Forest District within the Stuart-Nechako Business Area (SNBA).
 - The relevant publications to aid in identification of red and blue listed species and ecological communities.
 - Source material related to Species distribution, life histories, conservation needs, recovery plans and more. The BCTS representative will provide a hardcopy den guide to assist contract staff in field identification and determining associated wildlife species.
2. Link to the appropriate website: <http://a100.gov.bc.ca/pub/eswp/>
3. Utilise the following procedure to establish a list of the red and blue listed species and ecological communities found within the Vanderhoof, or Fort St James portion of the SNBA:
 1. Plants and Animals, or Ecological Communities >>> **Must select one or the other.**
 2. Identification >>> Search Type - **Select combined (not required for Ecol Comm).**
 3. Conservation Status >>> **Select BC List >>> Select Red List and Blue List.**
 4. Forest District >>> **Select Vanderhoof, or Fort St James** as appropriate.

5. **Sort By English Name.**
 6. **Search Now.**
 7. As per the search criteria, a list of records will be indicated, that can be **printed** and/or **exported** in digital format.
 8. Individual **species summaries** and associated **reports** can be printed to aid staff and contractors in field identification of the species and ecological communities.
4. Impacts to Red listed species and ecological communities are to be avoided when planning BCTS development activities within the SNBA. At the strategic planning stage, GIS overlays will be utilised to identify and avoid impacts to red listed ecological communities. At the site level stage, field crews utilising the above described resources in BC Species and Ecosystems Explorer may identify red listed species / ecological communities. Should this occur the procedures outlined below must be followed.
5. Where Red listed species are identified in the field:
- Record the name of the specific species / ecological community identified, its location (preferably via GPS or detailed map) any specific habitat features (i.e. dens, stick nests, mineral licks, trails etc) and the date encountered. If possible take a picture of the species and make field notes (to aid in accurate confirmation).
 - Immediately notify the BCTS staff member supervising the contract/project and cease further layout activities in the local area (avoid this site specific location until notified otherwise by the BCTS project supervisor).
 - BCTS staff will confirm the presence of red listed species / ecological communities and/or habitat features in the field and notify appropriate planning staff.
 - Planning staff will recommend appropriate site level measures to avoid impact to the identified red listed species, update internal overlay coverage and forward relevant information to the BC Conservation Data Centre.
6. Impacts to Blue listed species and ecological communities (including stick nests – as per section 34 of the Wildlife Act) are to be mitigated when planning BCTS development activities. At the strategic planning stage, GIS overlays and habitat information will be utilised to identify the relative abundance of the species / ecological community, risks associated with the proposed development activity and the acceptable limit of impact. Blue listed species / ecological communities will assume a priority ranking in the designation of landscape and stand level retention. At the site level stage, where field crews identify blue listed species / ecological communities, the procedures outlined below must be followed.
7. Where Blue listed species are identified in the field:
- Record the name of the specific species / ecological community identified, its location (preferably via gps or detailed map) any specific habitat features (i.e. dens, stick nests, trails etc) and the date encountered. If possible take a picture of the species or make field notes (to aid in accurate confirmation).
 - Immediately notify the BCTS staff member supervising the contract/project.



- BCTS staff will confirm the presence of blue listed species / ecological communities in the field and notify appropriate planning staff.
 - Planning staff will recommend appropriate site level measures to mitigate impact to the identified blue listed species. Management strategies will vary according to a variety of factors such as: the relative abundance of the species or ecological community within the general planning area, the potential impact to critical habitat, the scope and duration of proposed development activities.
8. BCTS pre-works associated with harvesting, road construction, and road deactivation projects will confirm the relevant red and blue listed species / ecological communities pertaining to the development area.
 9. Multi-phase contractors are responsible to ensure their staff are knowledgeable of: the BCTS planning process pertaining to species at risk, the red and blue species that may potentially be found within the development area and the appropriate resources (as provided within BC Species and Ecosystems Explorer) necessary to identify the occurrence of red and blue listed species / ecological communities in the field.
 10. Upon completion of planned development, the multi-phase contractor / signing forester preparing related site plans must complete an associated site plan check list, indicating the presence or absence of any red or blue listed species / ecological communities. Where warranted (and in co-ordination with the BCTS representative), appropriate text and mitigative measures must be included in the site plan.