

ENGAGEMENT BACKGROUNDER PEACE REGION (Region7B) WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Overview

The Province is working on a suite of hunting regulations and management actions for implementing the necessary measures towards meeting the Crown's obligations coming out of the *Yahey vs. BC* (June 29, 2021) decision.

Treaties are solemn exchanges of promises and the Treaty rights guaranteed by them are constitutionally-protected. Government is required to honourably and diligently carry out these promises.

These proposed hunting regulations, which are intended for the 2022 season, are aimed at addressing the ability of Treaty 8 First Nations to continue their way of life and begin to address the impacts of industrial development of the rights guaranteed in this Treaty.

The proposed hunting regulation changes are an interim measure and only one part of a broader package of actions specific to improving wildlife stewardship, upholding Treaty rights, and habitat conservation and the future of resource management.

Any new hunting regulations will be reviewed after two years as part of the next regular hunting regulation cycle. This review will be informed by the new information collected through compulsory reporting, new inventories, and research inclusive of Indigenous knowledge. Significant new funding will be invested in wildlife management to support this work and ensure a collaborative path going forward.

Stakeholder feedback is an important part of implementing these measures in the best possible way to increase the hunting opportunities and/or improve the hunting experience for all hunters (Indigenous and licensed) in the Peace in a manner consistent with the Crown's Treaty obligations.

Background

The Province has a duty to live up to its treaty obligations. Honouring this duty can also help create a pathway to improving wildlife management and establish certainty for the benefit of all British Columbians.

The Treaty infringement requires a reset. Looking ahead, rebalancing and aligning objectives, investments, and monitoring systems to a new standard will require a new way of working together.

The general roadmap for this work is already expressed in the Province's commitments as expressed in the [*Together for Wildlife*](#) initiative.

Our work in the Peace Region (Region 7B) is bringing the Province, Treaty 8 Nations, and stakeholders together in a shared management vision.

Actions being proposed are loosely divided into two phases:

Phase 1: Immediate Regulation Changes.

- Immediate measures to adjust the 2022 hunting regulations for moose and caribou in Region 7B

Phase 2: Designing the Path towards Together for Wildlife

- The establishment of a Regional Wildlife Working Group.

- A review of the 2022 and 2023 hunting seasons for moose and caribou to help inform future management actions.
- Broad measures to address wildlife habitat and improve research and monitoring to inform future management actions.

Phase 1: Immediate Hunting Regulation Changes

Phase 1 proposes three separate measures that collectively seek to improve the practice of Treaty 8 members' way of life generally, while additional measures for habitat and land use authorizations are put in motion and better information is gathered.

The effect of the hunting regulation changes will be approximately a 50% reduction in the number of moose killed by BC Licenced hunters in the Region 7B. There will also be a reduction of the number of BC Licenced hunters in Region 7B, which will be reviewed annually through the regional wildlife working group (Immediate Measure 3).

Immediate Measure 1: Proposed Caribou Hunting Management Change

Prioritization of Caribou Conservation

- Prioritize caribou conservation and eliminate the remaining hunting seasons in Region 7B for minimum of 2 years as a precautionary measure and to support Treaty 8 Nations conservation actions.
- Over the next two years, the Province and the T8 Nations will work together to develop an approach to wildlife co-management that improves our shared understanding and management of the wildlife resources in a manner consistent with the *Together for Wildlife Strategy*

Immediate Measure 2: Proposed Moose Hunting Management Change

Prioritization of Moose Hunt and Harvest Management

- Prioritize immediate relief to the infringement of treaty rights for the 2022 and 2023 moose hunting seasons by closing all open seasons, establishing an Interim Annual Allowable Harvest (AAH), establishing any bull Limited Entry Hunt (LEH) seasons, and assigning guide outfitter quotas.
- Distribute LEH authorizations in a manner avoiding the Treaty 8 seasonal round for moose hunting (e.g. August and rut closures).
- Over the next two years, the Province and the T8 Nations will work together to develop an approach to wildlife co-management that improves our shared understanding and management of the wildlife resources.

Annual Allowable Harvest

- Set a conservative Annual Allowable Harvest (AAH) for BC Licensed moose hunting in Region 7B.
- The target will be informed by a recommendation to reduce the number of moose killed by 50% and the number of BC licensed hunters by 50%.

LEH Seasons

- Establish two LEH seasons; September 1-15 and September 16-30, and
- one LEH season from Oct 16th to 31st, and
- one LEH season Nov 1st to 15th

LEH Zones

- Establish the area of MU 7-32 outside of the Peace Moberly Tract as LEH Zone A and LEH Zone B.

Spatial Closures

- Close the Peace Moberly Tract to moose hunting.
- Change the area around Moose Lake in Management Unit 7-51 from a rut closure to a closure for moose hunting (Map H27 in the 2020-2022 Hunting and Trapping Regulations Synopsis).

Harvest Monitoring

- Implement compulsory reporting by licensed hunters to help provide detailed and timely information.

Phase 2: Designing the Pathway to *Together for Wildlife*

Immediate Measure 3: Establish and Resource Regional Wildlife Working Group

Establishing a Regional Wildlife Working Group will provide opportunities for dialogue with Treaty 8 communities, provincial government programs, industry, stakeholders, local governments, and the public that complement the government-to-government relationships the Province is committed to pursuing with Indigenous governments.

- The Province will establish a regional wildlife working group, which will include the Province, Treaty 8 Nations, and stakeholders in discussions around wildlife management.
- The Province will establish a regional wildlife working group and will ensure sufficient resourcing and staff to support the work of this group.

Our success depends on making sure we are on the right path, which means assessing whether we are delivering on intended outcomes. There are two milestones intended to review progress on the pathway to co-management.

Milestone 1: Joint management review of the 2022 moose and caribou hunting seasons

- The Province through the newly established regional wildlife working group will conduct a management review of the 2022 hunting seasons.
- The purpose of 2022 season management review is to make recommendations for improving Immediate Measure 2 in a manner consistent with the Crown's Treaty obligations.

Milestone 2: Joint comprehensive management review of the 2023 moose and caribou hunting season.

- The Province through the regional wildlife working group will conduct a comprehensive management review of the 2023 hunting season.
- The purpose of the comprehensive review is to consider whether new information (inventories, monitoring, research) supports a different collaborative approach that increases opportunities both for Treaty 8 and licenced hunters and make recommendations

for the 2024 season.

Immediate Measure 4: Support moose population growth

To improve wildlife stewardship and uphold Treaty rights, we need the right tools to deliver tangible, on-the-ground changes in a timely way. Thoughtful habitat management sustains wildlife abundance and drives population growth.

In the Peace Region (Region 7B) the Province will

- support the development of cultural and wildlife habitat burn plans with participating T8 Nations for implementation in 2022-24;
- develop a plan to eliminate the use of aerial application of herbicides;
- develop plans for protecting important moose habitat;
- develop land protection measures; and,
- seek resources for habitat restoration and enhancement.

Immediate Measure 5: Invest into Research and Monitoring

The right data, information, and knowledge, including Indigenous knowledge, are essential for successful wildlife stewardship and honouring Treaty 8 promises. Acquiring and sharing the right data, information, and knowledge will require collaboration with Indigenous governments, local governments, resource industries, stakeholders, non-government organizations, and the public.

Monitoring change is fundamental for measuring success

- The Province will seek to bring substantive new investments to wildlife inventory and research to inform the Parties' co-management of wildlife and the regional wildlife working group.

Summary

As proposed, these five immediate measures and two milestones chart the path to improving wildlife management in Region 7B and the ability of Treaty 8 First Nations to continue their way of life. They represent part of our commitment to transform the relationship between Treaty 8 Nations and the Province of BC and provide stability for all in the Region.

Feedback

If you would like to offer your feedback on proposed path forward go to the Angling, Hunting and Trapping Public Engagement website at <https://apps.nrs.gov.bc.ca/ahte/>.