



Reference: 219017

December 9th, 2015

Mike Morris, Parliamentary Secretary
Parliament Buildings
Victoria British Columbia
V8V 1X4

Dear Mike Morris:

Thank you for your review of wildlife habitat management in British Columbia. I asked you to conduct a review of policies and strategies that guide the management of wildlife habitat, within the context of British Columbia's resource based economy and I am responding on behalf of government to your report "Getting the Balance Right: Improving Wildlife Habitat in British Columbia".

In the aftermath of the unprecedented mountain pine beetle infestation, I am aware that there have been impacts on wildlife habitat. I agree that we need to enhance the way in which we manage for wildlife habitat and wildlife populations, especially in the Interior. Your report provides me with advice that will help to guide future direction and policy.

Your submission emphasizes the importance of habitat for our province's wildlife resource, which contributes to the cultural and economic fabric of the province. Our wildlife plays a central role in First Nations' traditional culture, as well as recreational activities that enhance the health and well-being of British Columbians and visitors.

With respect of specific advice provided, I have asked ministry staff to consider your advice in the context of actions already underway. The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations has several current and new strategic and operational activities at varying stages of development that correspond to recommendations in the report.

These include implementing the Cumulative Effects Framework and the new Forest Enhancement Program being developed. We are also exploring ways of adding to our wildlife inventory initiatives and information.

Government is also moving forward with phase one of hunter transformation which is intended to move a portion of the hunter registry and licencing to an electronic system in 2016. Phase two of this project will transform the licencing system and enhance the collection, storage, and retrieval of harvest data.

Some of your recommendations such as a Resource Developers Guild will require further consideration and study as well as consideration of the possible impacts on other areas of resource management. There may however be other ways of achieving the intent behind your advice. Other recommendations such as consolidating all resource related statutes have been considered in the past and found to be too cumbersome for managing our diverse natural resources effectively. Such a piece of legislation would be very complex and could have unintended consequences. Having noted this, through the multi-year Natural Resource Permitting Project, we are working to achieve the same objective, in a manner that does not require extensive consolidation of statutes at this time.

Thank you for your report and the important contribution it will have in ensuring the ministry continues to advance work to appropriately manage wildlife habitat in British Columbia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Thomson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Steve Thomson
Minister