DISCUSSION PAPER

WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT SPECIES AT RISK: STRATEGIES RECOMMENDED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE CONSERVATION ON MUNICIPAL, REGIONAL AND PRIVATE LANDS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

January 2011

In response to the Minister of Environment's interest in developing a collaborative, provincial vision for species at risk protection on private land, the Ecosystem Branch established a *Species at Risk Local Government Working Group* in the fall of 2009. The purpose of this group has been to develop and obtain support from local government and Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) for a strategic approach to species at risk protection on private land (including municipal and regional government land). The approach aims to build on the extensive work already underway by the local governments in the various regions of the province.

The primary focus of the *Working Group* was to develop a joint discussion paper written from the vantage point of local government and expressing the strategies needed to protect species at risk on local government and private lands.

This discussion paper is meant to facilitate further discussion among local governments about species at risk protection on private lands, ultimately leading to recommendations with broadest support from local government, and which provide a basis for future program and policy development. The *Working Group* wishes to engage elected and senior staff from additional municipal and regional governments and encourages those interested to become involved.

WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT SPECIES AT RISK:
STRATEGIES RECOMMENDED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE CONSERVATION ON MUNICIPAL, REGIONAL AND PRIVATE LANDS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

SPECIES AT RISK LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKING GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2010

This discussion paper outlines strategies for improving protection of species at risk on local government and private lands in British Columbia (B.C.). The collective input from more than 50 of B.C.'s local government elected officials and environmental staff, the Species At Risk Local Government Working Group*, formed the basis for this paper. The primary focus of this discussion paper is to provide recommendations on how the provincial government can work in partnership with local governments to achieve shared conservation goals.*

Species at Risk in British Columbia

Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly
Photo Jennifer Heron

There are more than 1,597 species at risk in British Columbia[1]—plants, vertebrates and invertebrates that are close to becoming locally or globally extinct.

Significant threats to these species include habitat loss caused by human activities (urbanization, road development, logging and agriculture) and invasive alien species that displace native plants and animals. Habitat loss is compounded by cumulative impacts: a single subdivision may have minimal impact on a species at risk, but a dozen developments within the species' range could cause its eventual demise. At present, most species at risk occur in the southern part of the province: eastern Vancouver Island, Fraser River valley, Okanagan and Similkameen River valleys, Thompson and Kootenay regions.

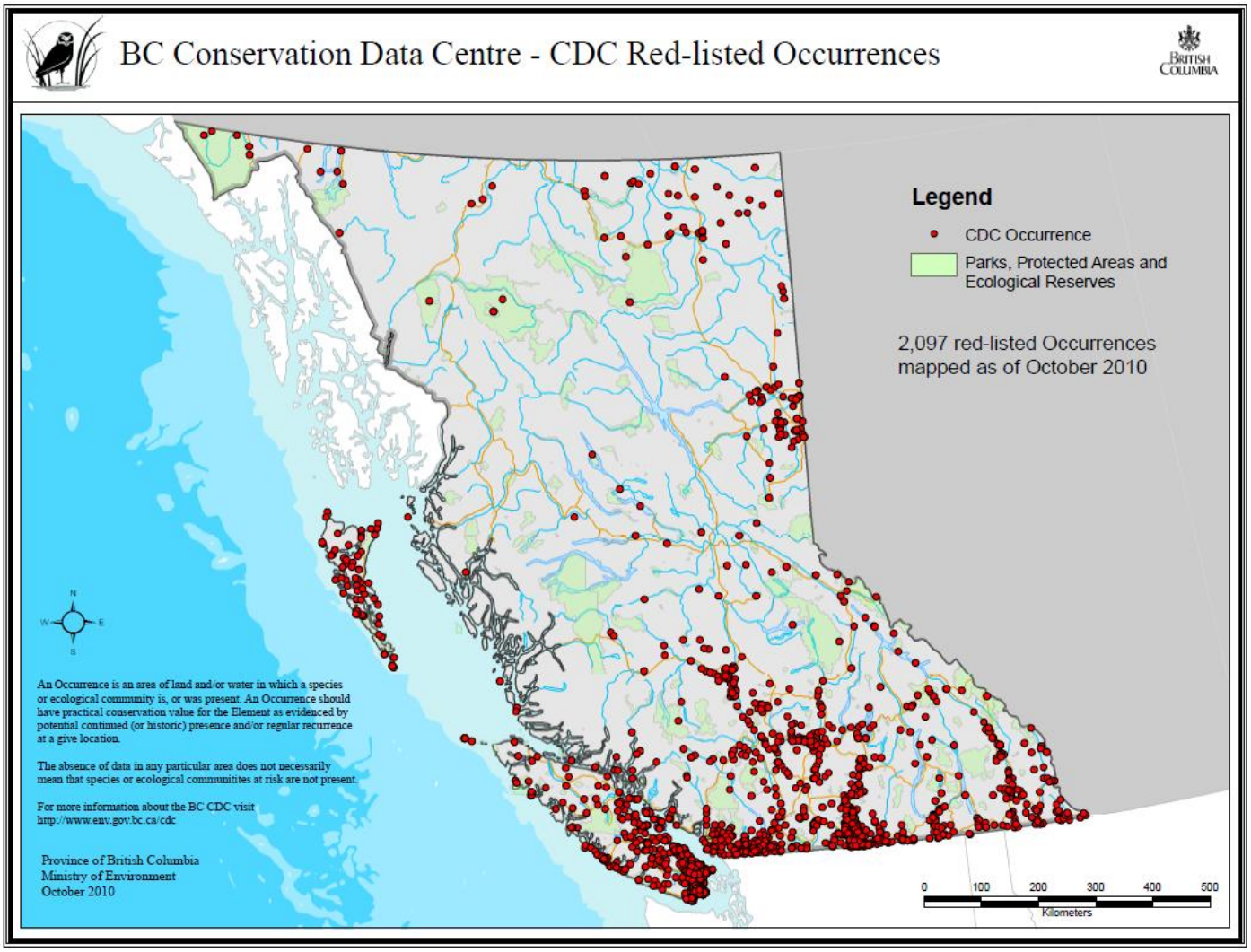
Many people are aware of the decline in iconic species such as the Woodland Caribou or Vancouver Island Marmot, but know little about the loss of species such as the American Badger, Dromedary Jumping-slug or Rusty Cord Moss.

The loss of species is impacting humans in ways we might not realize. We rely on healthy ecosystems to clean our air and water, and support resource-based economies. Biodiversity is the foundation of the human economy— for example, the loss of native bees and pollinators impacts agricultural productivity.

[1] B.C. Conservation Data Centre, http://a100.gov.bc.ca/pub/eswp/ Accessed September 17, 2010
[2] Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. 2005. Living beyond our means: natural assets and human well-being. Statement from the board. Island Press, Washington, D.C. 28 pp. pg 5

Canada is a signatory to the *Convention on Biological Diversity* and Canadians have moral and legal obligations to protect biodiversity. British Columbians agree that species at risk are a priority. In a recent poll, 95% of respondents agreed that the public should be encouraged to become involved in protecting and recovering species at risk, while 74% agreed that landowners should not have the right to use their property in ways that jeopardizes plants or animals at risk of extinction, endangerment or threat. [3]

"Human activity is putting such strain on the natural functions of Earth that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted."
Millennium Ecosystem



B.C. Conservation Data Centre Red-listed species occurrences. Red-listed species includes any indigenous species, subspecies or plant community that is Extirpated, Endangered, or Threatened in British Columbia.

[3] UBC Faculty of Forest. 2008. http://www.harfolk.ca/Publications/bc-SaR-POS_Final-Technical-Report_08-06-24.pdf

The Role of Local Governments

Senior (federal and provincial) governments have some legislation, policies and initiatives to conserve—or at least slow the decline of—species at risk (see Appendix 1). However, local (regional and municipal) governments and private landowners are also important players in conserving species at risk. Although only a small portion of B.C.'s land base is privately owned (~5%), a disproportionately large number of species at risk occur on private land, including about 38% of known plant species- at-risk.[4]

Local governments regulate land use on much of the private property where species at risk occur, and own many important habitats. For example, the entire Canadian populations of Kellogg's rush and Poor Pocket Moss are located in municipal parks.[5] Local government decisions are important because they affect the fate of species at risk on private lands.

Kellogg's Rush
http://www.geog.ubc.ca/biodiversity/eflora/images/Juncuskelloggii.jpg

While local governments have an important role in the conservation of species at risk, they cannot achieve recovery and protection goals alone. The conservation requirements of many species go well beyond the boundaries of any one local government. Successful conservation measures require the collaboration of senior and local governments, First Nations, industry, non-government organizations, private landowners, and knowledgeable individuals. No single group has the knowledge, resources or authority to provide the full suite of measures and activities needed to achieve species at risk protection.

Developing a Shared Approach to Species at Risk Conservation and Management

The B.C. Ministry of Environment set up a *Species at Risk Local Government Working Group* in the fall of 2009 to develop and obtain support for a common, province-wide approach to protecting species at risk on local government and private lands. The approach builds on the extensive work already underway in the various regions of the province. More than 65 representatives from over 50 local governments, including staff and elected officials, have contributed to the *Working Group* and development of this discussion paper.[6] Participation in the process was almost exclusively from the southern half of B.C., perhaps reflecting greater awareness of species at risk issues already affecting these areas. However, it will be important to engage northern local governments in this discussion, as development pressures and threats grow in the north, there are already species at risk in the north and action is need to prevent yet more species from becoming at risk. It should be noted that this discussion paper does not address species at risk on agricultural lands, as these are largely outside the control of local governments.

Yellow montane violet
Photo Lynn Campbell

[4] B.C. Conservation Data Centre
[5] www.speciesatrisk.bc.ca
[6] The views expressed in the discussion paper are not necessarily the views of the local governments from which various individuals were drawn.

Local governments and the needs of these communities vary considerably across the province, and approaches to priority issues, including their approaches to species at risk, also vary widely. Some local governments place a high priority on species at risk protection and management and have found creative ways to achieve conservation goals. Some local governments are concerned about species at risk, but feel they do not have the authority, technical skills or resources to accomplish effective protection. And for some local governments, species at risk are simply not a priority.

The main role that local governments can play in species at risk conservation is to focus on protection of a variety of habitats, especially those identified as important or critical habitats for local species at risk. The unfortunate reality is that even though we retain these habitats, this alone may not be enough to protect species at risk. Lack of connectivity between critical habitats and implications of climate change will also imperil species. A regional plan for biodiversity conservation will often be the most effective approach.

The local government representatives who chose to participate in the *Working Group* identified some common issues and needs that they encourage the provincial government to address. Key concerns from *Working Group* include:

- The respective roles of local and provincial governments are unclear;
- Local governments are already challenged by many competing priorities, and being asked to respond to species at risk can be perceived as more downloading of responsibility from senior governments;
- There are few incentives to encourage local governments or landowners to take on responsibility for species at risk conservation, and limited legislation to require habitat protection;
- Many local governments lack the resources or technical expertise to address species at risk;
- There are tools available to local governments, and several regional initiatives underway, yet awareness of species at risk and the role that local governments can play in their conservation may be low among both staff and elected officials; and
- The province has many different provincial initiatives, all which link directly to conservation, community health and well-being, and directly benefit local government and the citizens within B.C.'s communities. There is a strong need to integrate these many different provincial initiatives to allow for a more efficient use of resources and awareness.

Blue-grey taildropper
Photo Kriistina Ovaska

At the same time, British Columbians can be proud of a variety of initiatives that are already taking place across the province. Some of those available policies and programs are outlined in Appendix 1.

The *Working Group* provided recommendations to the Province under five strategies:

1. Increase local government awareness of species at risk.
2. Facilitate use of effective tools and techniques.
3. Identify and collaborate on shared responsibilities.
4. Conduct ecosystem mapping and encourage data sharing.
5. Engage landowners in species at risk habitat protection.

Strategy 1: Increase Local Government Awareness of Species at Risk

Issues

Local governments face increasing pressures from their communities on the broad topics of health, wellness, and the environment. In some communities, awareness of species at risk may be low among staff, elected officials or both and overall species at risk issues may be low amongst other competing priorities.

Historically, 'wildlife conservation' focused on larger vertebrates and species of commercial significance. Today, there is a greater awareness that species loss relates to other local government priorities, such as the importance of healthy ecosystems to local economies and community health. If local governments are to contribute to the protection of species at risk and their habitats, increased awareness of the issues, opportunities and available resources is needed.

The B.C. Conservation Framework has been developed to coordinate and align conservation efforts across government and non-government sectors. This provincial initiative recommends actions such as ecosystem and habitat protection, invasive species control, stewardship, population management, and planning processes. This initiative provides a key foundation to increasing local government awareness of species at risk, and with further resources will enable and guide local governments on species at risk conservation.

Rocky Mountain Ridged Mussel
Photo Jennifer Heron

Local Government Needs

- Clear science based information on:
  - ◊ the importance and benefits of species at risk to both people and ecosystems,
  - ◊ which species are at risk (with information at a regional/municipal scale), and
  - ◊ the role of local government in protecting the ecological values and species at risk.
- Easy access to biodiversity information, preferably through a 'single window' approach (e.g. website, resource centre with trained staff dedicated to providing municipal/regional guidance).
- Awareness and understanding of local government roles in implementing the B.C. Conservation Framework.

Recommendations: Awareness

To further support local government efforts, the Province could:

1.1. *Provide a 'single window' for information on species at risk, such as links to useful websites and information updates on species at risk and tools. The Stewardship Centre Species at Risk website and CDC Species and Ecosystem Explorer are good resources although information should include up-to-date data on species at risk by electoral area/municipality. Provide a call centre or personnel to help specifically with local government approaches to species at risk conservation.*

1.2. *Increase awareness of existing resources, such as the B.C. Conservation Framework, inventory projects, species at risk data, and best practices documents.*

1.3. *Provide regular, regional workshops targeted separately to staff, elected officials, consultants, and/or local conservation organizations focusing on species at risk specific to their area. These would include updates on legislation and the B.C. Conservation Framework, potential threats to the species and habitat (e.g. new diseases and invasive species), progress on provincial biodiversity strategies, etc.*

1.4. *Provide professional development opportunities (e.g., webinars and workshops) for local government staff, consultants and local conservation organizations to gain a better understanding of species at risk (by taxonomic group), mapping and inventory products, and the B.C. Conservation Framework.*

1.5. *Provide clear information that demonstrates how species at risk and ecosystem conservation can support and link with other local government priorities, such as healthy lifestyles, resilient economies, flood protection, soil conservation, air and water quality, and recreational opportunities.*

1.6. *Integrate species at risk educational opportunities into work within other Ministries such as education and health programs, tourism, and resource-based ministries, such that local government works are linked and cross-referenced with other work being completed elsewhere in the province.*

UBCM could:

1.7. *Include a species-at-risk field trip/workshop session in the annual and regional UBCM conventions.*

1.8. *Guide the province on how to group local and regional governments (e.g. geographical, population based, etc.) to better deliver conservation planning, biodiversity resources and projects.*

Badger *Photo: Richard Klafki*

Local governments could:

1.9. *Place information on local species at risk on their website, including information on incentives for conservation of species and critical habitats, and highlight case studies of successful partnerships with that contribute to species at risk conservation.*

1.10. *Work with local conservation organizations to educate the public about species at risk.*

The South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program is a partnership of more than 40 groups working to protect species and ecosystems at risk. They produce many brochures, planning guidelines and other sources of information for homeowners and local governments.

Strategy 2: Facilitate Use of Effective Tools and Techniques

Issues

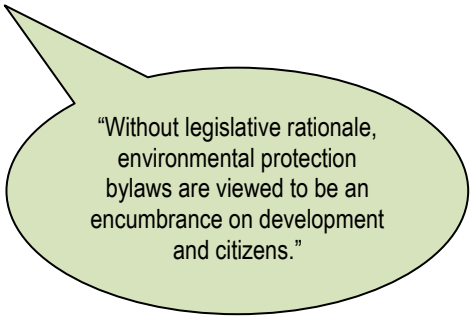
There are many tools that local governments can use to facilitate and promote species at risk protection on local government and private lands (see Appendix 1). These include: regulatory tools such as tree protection bylaws (currently available only to municipal governments) and restrictive covenants; planning tools such as development permit areas and park plans; financial tools such as property tax incentives; and educational tools such as workshops or brochures.

Many of these tools have limitations for protecting species at risk. For example, development permit guidelines can specify habitat protection, but there is no ability to ticket infractions and it is often prohibitive to go to court.

The working group identified the most significant tool missing from the 'toolkit' as provincial legislation that protects all species at risk, that requires detailed inventory when the presence of species at risk is suspected, and then combines species protection with habitat protection for species at risk. Without a clear legislative requirement to protect species at risk, competing and conflicting priorities can make such protection challenging for local government decision-makers.

Local Government Needs

- Legislative authority to protect species at risk and critical habitats on private land
- Legislative authorities to enforce infractions of development permit areas and guidelines, including the ability to serve a stop work order and the ability to seek remedies and apply fines when infractions occur.
- Authority for the Approving Officer (whether employed by the local government or Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure) to refuse subdivision applications for environmental protection reasons.
- Efforts to address alien invasive species under Community Charter regulation.



Many municipalities (such as Port Coquitlam, Vernon and Whistler) use sustainability checklists to encourage developers to protect and restore native habitats as part of the development process.

The Town of Qualicum Beach has identified carrying capacity and ecosystem limits as important elements in its Official Community Plan.

The City of Campbell River has established development permit areas, with supporting guidelines, for Bald Eagle nest trees; the District of Saanich is using development permit areas and guidelines to protect red- and blue-listed species.

Recommendations

To further support local government efforts, the Province could:

2.1. *Enact legislation that requires the protection of all species at risk and their habitats across B.C., including legislation that applies to species at risk protection private land. Examples of potential legislative changes could include bringing the* .BC *Wildlife Amendment Act (2004) into force; requiring habitat protection for species at risk; and controls on threats to species at risk (e.g., further supporting changes to the Motor Vehicle (All Terrain Vehicle) Act with the licensing of all terrain vehicles, increasing the scope of controlled alien species to include plant and invertebrate species); and further supporting the Water Act modernization process with amending the B.C. Water Act to include better protection for riparian areas and riparian habitats*

2.2. *Enable local governments to create bylaws for the protection of biodiversity values (e.g., soil integrity, rock formations and other identifiable wildlife features); enable strong enforcement of development permit area guidelines, including making infractions a civil or criminal offence; and allow regional districts to adopt tree protection bylaws. One means to enable local governments to create such bylaws includes for example, amendments to the Local Government Act and its regulations or the Community Charter and its regulations*

2.3. *Encourage and support the development of local government plans and strategies that address species at risk as part of broader sustainability initiatives (e.g., official community plans and regional growth strategies, urban forest management strategies, urban agricultural programs and pesticide reduction initiatives).*

UBCM could:

2.4. *Share information on examples of successful community approaches.*

2.5. *Offer a new Community Excellence Award for outstanding use of tools/partnerships to protect species at risk and biodiversity conservation values.*

Pink-sand Verbena
Photo Brenda Costanzo

Local governments could:

2.6. *Identify important habitats in regional growth strategies, official community plans and development permit areas. Regularly update these documents to include new inventory information.*

2.7. *Work with partners to develop regional conservation plans, watershed plans and other ecosystem-based plans and strategies.*

Strategy 3: Identify and Collaborate on Shared Responsibilities

Issues

The respective roles of local and senior governments when addressing species at risk protection are not always clear, including how the Canada *Species at Risk Act* applies to local government decisions. Local governments need to better understand their legal authorities, responsibilities and roles with respect to species at risk: what must local governments do, what can they do, and what are the roles and responsibilities of senior governments at all levels?

Further, many local governments lack the technical expertise and resources to identify, protect and manage the broad scope of species at risk within their region. While technical support was once part of the Province's role in the development referral process, this is now mostly achieved through best practices documents, resulting in the loss of site-specific advice.

Mormon Metalmark butterfly
Photo Jennifer Heron

On a positive note, there are many examples throughout B.C. of collaborative efforts to address species at risk issues. Working to further relationships between governments at all levels, non-government conservation organizations and local stewardship groups will help achieve common conservation, ecological health and human wellness goals.

Local Government Needs

- Clear delineation of senior and local government roles, responsibilities and authorities.
- Assistance with implementation of the B.C. Conservation Framework on local government and private lands. This will require technical support (e.g., from species/ecosystems specialists and restoration experts) to develop ecosystem or conservation management plans for local government lands. These plans should be based on a provincial template and standards, yet provide enough flexibility to meet different regional needs.
- Support for collaborative approaches that pool resources, technical expertise and enforcement approaches across senior and local governments and non-government organizations (including land trusts). Resource professionals and local government staff already have enormous workloads and there is limited staff time to allocate to species at risk issues. Collaborative approaches will ensure common conservation goals are met.

The Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team is a partnership of experts affiliated with all levels of government, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, First Nations, volunteers and consultants dedicated to the recovery of Garry oak and associated ecosystems in Canada and the species at risk that inhabit them.

Local governments and the conservation community in the South Okanagan Similkameen are working in partnership to share expertise and resources for increased environmental planning assistance and grasslands protection. With support from the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP), funders Real Estate Foundation of BC's Communities in Transition program and Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program, local governments are leveraging funding for a shared environmental planner amongst three communities.

Recommendations: Shared Responsibilities

To further support local government efforts, the Province could:

3.1. Provide clear direction on roles and responsibilities of provincial and local governments with respect to species at risk, recognizing that local governments cannot take on additional responsibilities without resources and support.

3.2. Provide explicit information on species at risk recovery requirements (e.g. legislative framework, policy, guidelines, etc.), by species and/or ecosystem (including information on yellow-listed species of concern), with best management practices for reducing or mitigating harm, management and recovery.

3.3. Provide technical support for species at risk and ecosystem conservation plans.

3.4. Provide technical support where development proposals include species at risk.

3.5. Identify opportunities for collaborative projects, initiatives, means to pool resources and expertise.

3.6. Assist local governments with incorporating appropriate language regarding species and habitats into their bylaws.

UBCM could:

3.7. Facilitate MOUs or other arrangements to share resources and expertise among multiple governments, particularly smaller governments that may not have the funding resources to allocate to species at risk and conservation. For example by creating shared environmental manager positions or collaborating with non-government organizations.

3.8. Provide information on opportunities for funding and collaboration.

Local governments could:

3.9. Identify important habitats in regional growth strategies, official community plans and development permit areas.

3.10. Where feasible, acquire land for habitat protection (perhaps in cooperation with land trusts) and prepare conservation management plans.

Great Blue Heron fanini ssp
Photo Ross Venessland

Strategy 4: Conduct Ecosystem Mapping and Encourage Data Sharing

Issues

Local governments can work towards protection of a species at risk when there is current mapping about where these species may or may not be present. Ecosystem mapping, inventories and baseline studies at a provincial or regional level provides an economy of scale and consistency across jurisdictional boundaries. Ecosystem mapping (e.g., sensitive ecosystem inventory mapping, terrestrial ecosystem mapping, sensitive habitat inventory mapping, foreshore inventory mapping, watershed mapping, and ecosystem features mapping) provides an essential 'heads-up' that species at risk may be present on a particular property. Ecosystem mapping initiatives have been great resources and tools for municipalities seeking efficient approaches, and thus additional ecosystem mapping is a top request from resource professionals and staff working at the local level. For this information to be of value it must be accurate, up-to-date and with sufficient detail to support local decision-making.

Gray's Desert Parsley
Photo Jennifer Heron

Even where data exist, local government staff may not have the technical expertise or time to interpret inventory data or to implement recovery actions (recommended in species-specific recovery strategies[7]). In areas with large numbers of species at risk, local governments also need assistance with prioritizing and balancing all of the different species and habitat needs.

Environment assessments are often required as part of the land development process. However, many of these surveys lack rigour and consistency as there are no clear guidelines on how data are to be collected. For example, these assessments often miss the appropriate season to complete species at risk surveys. As well, there are many technical complexities in conducting broader region-wide inventories (such as sensitive ecosystems inventories), and it would be helpful to have clear guidelines to support this work. Further, data gathered by local governments and consultants are often not provided to the Conservation Data Centre, resulting in a lost opportunity to update and improve provincial data.

It should be noted that the B.C. Conservation Data Centre is an excellent resource for available data, and is frequently used by local governments. Increasing the capacity of the B.C. Conservation Data Centre is necessary to achieve protection of species at risk on local government and private lands.

Local Government Needs

- Reliable, up-to-date ecosystem mapping/inventory data on a regional or sub-regional scale.
- Technical support to interpret data.
- Guidelines for conducting environmental assessments and a requirement to provide this information to the Province.

"MOE should be funding ecosystem mapping…it is very difficult to find funding to do this work"

[7] See Definitions.

Recommendations: Inventory and Data Sharing

To further support local government efforts, the Province could:

4.1. Fund, conduct and update ecosystem mapping, inventories and data collection.

4.2. Provide support for data interpretation on an as-needed basis.

4.3. Make it very simple for people to enter data into the B.C. Conservation Data Centre website. Ensure submitted data is mapped and integrated into the B.C. Conservation Data Centre databases in a timely manner.

4.4. Provide and maintain clear, mandatory guidelines (terms of reference) for resource professionals on how to gather species inventory information. For example, species inventory and assessment should be completed by appropriately qualified professionals, during appropriate seasons. It should also be required that the resulting inventory and mapping data be provided to the B.C. Conservation Data Centre, which is the central provincial source for species at risk data.

4.5. Require private land holding companies to complete multi-year species and ecosystems at risk inventory and mapping before applying to have forested land rezoned for residential or other non-forest uses.

UBCM could:

4.6. Encourage local governments to submit their data to the B.C. Conservation Data Centre (e.g., through reminders in bulletins and on the CivicInfo website).

Local governments could:

4.7. Submit information gathered on local species at risk to the B.C. Conservation Data Centre.

4.8. Require developers to provide their data to the B.C. Conservation Data Centre

Dalle's Milkvetch
Photo Brenda Costanzo

The Community Mapping Network includes access to a wide variety of data and inventory information that has been gathered at a provincial and local scale. It provides community, stewardship groups, individuals, regional districts and municipalities with an effective low cost delivery system for information on these local habitats and associated land uses.

Strategy 5: Engage Landowners in Species at Risk Habitat Protection

Issues

An increasing number of species at risk are found on private land, where there is little or no legislated protection for many of these species or their habitats. Many landowners and private lands managers are not aware that species at risk exist on their property, and lack the expertise and resources to protect species and their habitats.

Antelope-brush Ecosystem
Photo Jennifer Heron

There are few incentives for protection of species at risk (or habitats) on private land. For developers, it may be seen as detrimental to their investment interests to have species at risk identified, as this could increase their costs (e.g., for assessments) and limit their ability to develop or sell their property as they had planned.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—such as land trusts—play an important role in assisting landowners to identify and protect ecological values on their property, and educating the public on species at risk values. Successful outreach programs require adequate and reliable funding, however resources and long term funding to support these organizations and their activities is increasingly scarce (from both senior and local governments) and lacks long-term commitment.

Local Government Needs

- A suite of incentives (monetary or other) or initiatives that will engage landowners (including developers) and make these individuals more receptive to taking on responsibility for species at risk management on their land.
- Effective landowner outreach programs that are consistent across the province, undertaken by local government staff or non-government organizations that include information on the values of species at risk.
- Detailed best management practices guidelines that are species-specific, ecosystem-specific and region-specific, and written in non-technical language.
- Opportunities, resources and incentives to build relationships with land trusts and conservancies to acquire, purchase or covenant private lands for conservation purposes.

The Islands Trust offers a Natural Areas Tax Exemption Program that reduces property taxes for landowners who have a signed conservation covenant to protect natural areas on their property.

The federal Ecological Gift (Ecogift) Program offers significant tax benefits to landowners who donate land or a partial interest in land to a qualified recipient. Recipients ensure that the land's biodiversity and environmental heritage are conserved in perpetuity.
The Program is administered by Environment Canada in cooperation with other federal departments, provincial and municipal governments, and non-government organizations.

Recommendations: Landowner Engagement

To further support local government efforts, the Province could:

5.1. *Set up a provincial fund (open to stewardship groups and local governments) to provide funding for landowner outreach and incentive programs, including strategic acquisition of critical habitats.*

5.2. *Enable local governments to provide property tax reductions for biodiversity measures.*

5.3. *Provide targeted outreach materials for landowners and developers that provide information on the many values of species at risk, and best practices to maintain and enhance critical habitats.*

UBCM could:

5.4. *Disseminate information on successful incentive programs, and available tools such as density transfer and clustering.*

5.5. *Encourage and support collaborative efforts between local governments and non-government organizations.*

5.6. *Highlight examples/case studies of successful partnership projects relating to landowner engagement.*

Sharp-tailed Snake
Photo Kari Nelson

Local governments could:

5.7. *Require developers to follow guidelines and best practices (e.g., Develop with Care).*

5.8. *Provide incentives to developers to protect species at risk habitat (e.g., through clustering or density transfer).*

5.9. *Provide property tax reductions to landowners who protect species at risk habitats through conservation covenants on their land.*

5.10. *Work with land trusts and local conservation organizations to educate landowners on species at risk.*

Next Steps

The *Species at Risk Local Government Working Group* will continue to meet and discuss these issues on an ongoing basis. The group looks forward to working further with the Province to broaden discussion amongst local governments in the interest of creating a final discussion paper with the broadest support possible.

The *Working Group* suggests that the B.C. Ministry of Environment takes the following 'next steps':

- Work with UBCM to support greater understanding of species at risk values, issues, and available tools for species at risk conservation and management.
- Provide recommendations outlined in this discussion paper to the Species at Risk Task Force.
- Seek opportunities to pilot collaborative projects, consistent with the direction of the discussion paper. For example, identify and implement pilot projects for species at risk protection and management, involving provincial and local conservation organizations, and potentially funding a staff position to assist solely with policy and infrastructure around protecting species at risk on private lands;
- Keep communication open via the Working Group and engage other local governments to join the Working Group.

Sources for Further Information

B.C. Conservation Framework http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/conservationframework/

B.C. Conservation Data Centre http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/cdc/

B.C. Species and Ecosystems Explorer http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/atrisk/toolintro.html

B.C. Species and Ecosystem Recovery Planning http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/recoveryplans/rcvry1.htm

Ecological Gifts Program http://www.ec.gc.ca/pde-egp/

Guidelines and Best Practices documents http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/BMP/bmpintro.html

Sensitive Ecosystems Inventories http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/sei/

Species at Risk & Local Government http://www.speciesatrisk.bc.ca/

Species at Risk Recovery Teams, Recovery Implementation Groups
http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/recoveryplans/rcvry1.htm

Stewardship Centre for British Columbia http://www.stewardshipcentre.bc.ca/

Appendix 1: Existing Resources and Initiatives

Federal Legislation and Commitments

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity is an international, legally-binding treaty for its signatories with three main goals: conservation of biodiversity; sustainable use of biodiversity; and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. Canada's response has been to develop a Canadian Biodiversity Strategy and implement the *Species at Risk Act.*

The federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) was enacted to: prevent Canadian indigenous species, subspecies, and distinct populations from becoming extirpated or extinct; provide for the recovery of endangered or threatened species; and encourage the management of other species to prevent them from becoming at risk. It primarily applies to sites where federal lands or federal contributions are involved. In addition, the federal Minister of Environment can apply SARA to provincial and private lands if the laws of the province fail to provide effective protection for a species at risk. The *Species at Risk Act* requires the development of recovery strategies for all endangered species, identifying what needs to be done to stop or reverse their decline.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) sets controls on the international trade and movement of animal and plant species that have been, or may be, threatened due to excessive commercial exploitation. Within Canada, the implementation and administration of CITES are shared among federal and provincial agencies to make the best use of existing organizational structures and to reduce costs. The Canadian Wildlife Service is responsible for managing CITES species in Canada.

Provincial Legislation and Policies

British Columbia has no stand-alone endangered species legislation. Multiple statutes act together to form the basis of protection of species at risk in the province. B.C. committed to protecting species at risk under the Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk.

The B.C. *Wildlife Act* protects most vertebrate animals from direct harm, except as allowed by regulation (e.g., hunting or trapping). It is an offence to hunt, take, trap, wound or kills wildlife designated as as 'Endangered' or 'Threatened' under the Act , there are high penalties for offence. The *Wildlife Act* also enables the protection of habitat in a Critical Wildlife Area. The Act also protects the nests of some birds (eagle, peregrine falcon, gyrfalcon, osprey, heron, or burrowing owl) and any nests occupied by birds or eggs, but does not protect the habitat of any specific species. Proposed changes under the B.C. *Wildlife Amendment Act* 2004 will allow for the protection of invertebrates and plants, but a regulation to bring the Act into force is still needed.

The B.C. *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) created an Identified Wildlife Management Strategy to provide direction, policy, procedures and guidelines for managing 'Identified Wildlife' (including species at risk) on Crown land. The Strategy aims to minimize the effects of forest and range practices on Identified Wildlife situated on Crown land, and to maintain and (if necessary restore) habitats throughout their ranges.

The Riparian Areas Regulation (RAR) (part of the B.C. *Fish Protection Act*) calls on local governments to protect riparian areas during residential, commercial, and industrial development by ensuring that proposed activities are subject to a science-based assessment conducted by a Qualified Environmental Professional. This regulation only applies to local governments in the Georgia Basin and Okanagan Basin. The B.C. Water Act protects B.C.'s water resources.

The B.C. Conservation Framework directs action for conserving species and ecosystems in B.C. The Framework tools select appropriate actions depending on what is known about the species or ecosystem in question. If this detailed information already exists, the Framework recommends actions such as ecosystem and habitat protection, invasive species control, stewardship, population management, and planning processes. Where information is lacking, detailed studies and assessments may be required.

Local Government Authorities

Generally speaking, local governments in British Columbia function either under the authority of the *Local Government Act* or the *Community Charter* but there may be other applicable statutes or regulations specific to a municipality or depending on the type of local government in an area. For example the City of Vancouver is subject to the *Vancouver Charter*. Local governments may be required or enabled to produce a variety of plans and strategies that address environmental issues, including official community plans, regional growth strategies, sustainability plans, biodiversity plans, infrastructure plans, park or greenway plans, and urban forest plans. They can usually control development through tools such as zoning, subdivision approvals,[8] development permit areas, and park dedication; and can usually regulate activities such as tree cutting, soil removal and use of pesticides..

Non-government Organizations

There are many stewardship and land acquisition programs being undertaken by non-government organizations and land trusts across British Columbia. Organizations with a province-wide or broad regional scope include:

- B.C. Nature (Federation of B.C. Naturalists) http://www.bcnature.ca/
- Ducks Unlimited Canada http://www.ducks.ca/province/bc/index.html
- East Kootenay Conservation Program http://ekcp.ca/
- Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team http://goert.ca/
- Land Trust Alliance of B.C. http://www.landtrustalliance.bc.ca/
- Nature Conservancy of Canada (B.C.) http://www.natureconservancy.ca/
- Nature Trust of B.C. http://www.naturetrust.bc.ca/
- South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program http://soscp.org/
- TLC The Land Conservancy of British Columbia http://www.conservancy.bc.ca/

Many of these groups work in cooperation with senior and local governments to achieve shared goals.

[8] In unincorporated areas the Approving Officer is a provincial employee (Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure).

Inventory and Data

The British Columbia Conservation Data Centre (CDC) systematically collects and disseminates information on plants, animals and ecosystems at risk in British Columbia. This information is provided in a centralized database which provides scientific information on the status, locations and level of protection of these species and ecosystems.

The Stewardship Centre Species at Risk and Local Governments: A Primer for British Columbia website allows people to search for species at risk in their area by name or by ecosystem type, and to learn about threats and ways that local governments can contribute to species at risk conservation.

Sensitive Ecosystems Inventories have been developed to identify remnants of rare and fragile terrestrial ecosystems and to encourage land-use decisions that will reduce development impacts on these ecosystems. There are Sensitive Ecosystems Inventories for east Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands, Bowen & Gambier islands, Sunshine Coast, and the Okanagan Valley from Vernon to Osoyoos.

Publications

Several guidelines and best practices documents are available, including:

- Green Bylaws Toolkit for Conserving Sensitive Ecosystems and Green Infrastructure
  http://www.greenbylaws.ca/
- Develop with Care: Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in B.C.
  http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/BMP/bmpintro.html
- Conservation Covenants - A Guide For Developers and Planning Departments
  http://landtrustalliance.bc.ca/
- Planning for Biodiversity: A Guide for Farmers and Ranchers
  http://www.ardcorp.ca/index.php?page_id=39
- Best Management Practices for Raptor Conservation during Urban and Rural Land Development in B.C.
  http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/BMP/bmpintro.html
- Best Management Practices for Amphibians and Reptiles in Urban and Rural Environments in B.C.
  http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/BMP/bmpintro.html
- Wetland Ways: Interim Guidelines for Wetland Protection and Conservation in B.C.
  http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/BMP/bmpintro.html

Appendix 2: Glossary

Biodiversity: the variety of life on earth in all its forms including genes, species, and ecosystems and the natural processes that link and maintain them.

Blue-listed: any native species, subspecies, or plant community that is considered to be Vulnerable (Special Concern) in British Columbia. These species are of concern because of characteristics that make them particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events.

Economic growth: is an increase in the production and consumption of goods and services. It is facilitated by population growth and/or increasing per-capita consumption and is measured by increasing GDP.

Ecosystem: a complete system of living organisms interacting with the soil, land, water, and nutrients that make up their environment.

Land trust: private, non-profit, charitable organizations that work to conserve land.

Red-listed: includes any indigenous species, subspecies or plant community that is Extirpated, Endangered, or Threatened in British Columbia.

Recovery Planning: a process to identify and facilitate the implementation of priority actions to ensure the survival and recovery of species and ecosystems at risk. The goal of recovery planning is to help arrest or reverse the decline of a species, and/or reduce or remove the threats to its long-term persistence in the wild.

Species at risk (SAR): a species that has been defined as 'at risk' [of extirpation] by either the federal or provincial government.

Steady state economy: is a sustainable alternative to economic growth. Such an economy would be bounded by the physical and ecological limits of the natural world and would strive to maintain constant stocks of natural capital and people "at levels that are sufficient for a long and good life."

Stewardship: an ethic and practice to carefully and responsibly manage resources and ecosystems for the benefit of future generations. Stewardship can be practiced in many ways by governments, organizations, communities, and individuals to benefit the natural environment.

Vertebrate species: animal with backbone, e.g. a mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, or fish.

Yellow-listed: all species that is not included on the British Columbia Red or Blue Lists.

Further Information

Project structure

- Sponsor – Kaaren Lewis, Director, Ecosystem Protection & Sustainability Branch, B.C. Ministry of Environment
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- Project Managers – Jennifer Heron and Lynn Campbell, B.C. Ministry of Environment
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