



Wild Sheep Society of British Columbia

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January 8, 2020

RE: Together for Wildlife Statement _ Nov 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

After a long 18 months of consultation with the current BC NDP government the 900 member Wild Sheep Society of BC (WSSBC) was disappointed to read the “Together for Wildlife” document (TFWD) published November 2019. Our executive, directors, members and volunteers have given valuable time and money to attend meetings, webinars and conference calls with great hope of creating a new management and funding model that would stop the decline and lead to legitimate improvements in habitat and wildlife around the province. We consider the TFWD a do nothing approach to what we feel is an alarming and extremely urgent issue.

The WSSBC was impressed with and appreciated the extensive consultation process, as well as the involvement of 60 stakeholder groups and 1400 members of the public. We found a surprising amount of commonality amongst the groups, especially during the mixed workshops. The process told us that there is broad concern across BC in the way we manage our wildlife and habitat, there is consensus on the solutions and there is urgency for action. The common goal of improving wildlife for all British Columbians has united a diversity of stakeholders. We feel this government has trivialized the urgency to address declining wildlife and the issues agreed upon through the 18 month consultation period. Additionally, we are very concerned and have received several letters from our members on the complete lack of connectivity with the First Nations during this process. Without collective discussion between titleholders and stakeholders the NDP government is continuing to promote division and animosity.

The government rightly addressed the key issues of communication, funding, science based management, and measurable objectives. However, the Actions in the TFWD are by and large targeted for after the next election, which is all too familiar to the WSSBC and a strategy the NDP said they would not engage in within the “NDP Wildlife Position Improving Wildlife Management” document. Actions contained in the TFWD identified “plans to plan” with no concrete commitments or tangible, on the ground action for wildlife. This strategy is unacceptable to the WSSBC, which we made abundantly clear early in the consultation process. This status quo approach will result in an escalation of action by the WSSBC and its members to hold the government accountable for the commitments they made in the NDP Platform of 2017. During the first 32 months of governance the NDP government is on track to be the proportionally lowest spending government on wildlife

The mission of the Wild Sheep Society of BC is to promote and enhance wild sheep and wild sheep habitat throughout British Columbia



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and natural resource management in the history of the province. It has continued all of the practices it criticized during the last election. It is also further isolating the citizens of this province that consider wildlife and their habitat part of the culture, heritage and fabric of BC.

<https://action.bcndp.ca/page/-/bc-ndp-our-commitments-updated.pdf>

“British Columbia’s biodiversity, fish and wildlife populations and the habitat upon which they depend are under threat due to lack of funding, government cuts to staff and ineffective policies.” (BC NDP Platform, 2017, p.59)”

“We will ensure dedicated funding for wildlife and habitat conservation, give wildlife and habitat a priority....” (BC NDP Platform, 2017, p.60)

“We will put all funds from hunting licenses and tags into a dedicated fund for wildlife and habitat conservation (BC NDP Platform, 2017, p.60)”

“We will bring people who rely on our wildlife resources together and ensure they all participate in and contribute financially to conservation.....” (BC NDP Platform, 2017, p.60)

What the WSSBC is seeking from this government is yet unsatisfied and unchanged.

1. Dedicated funding at arms length from government including the entirety of hunting license and tag fees

Of particular concern in the TFWD is the \$10M “funding increase”. This falls short of the approximately \$12M of hunting license and tag fees the NDP committed to in their 2017 platform. It is also laughable when compared to the budgets of other jurisdictions both in proportion of general revenue and total amount. Also, with no identified destination for this money, no strategy on how it will be spent and no apparent consultation with stakeholders we view this money as a political carrot and at extremely high risk of government waste. That there is no assurance that this money will be spent effectively deeply concerns our membership and there is no trust in this government to follow through.

Action 9 speaks to “leveraging” other funding opportunities. These funding pots are already in use mostly by NGO’s including the WSSBC. This Action is not leveraging, it is reorganizing existing sources of funding.



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2. Rent from other industries (retail, tourism, mining, forestry etc.)

There is no Action in the TFWD to create funding mechanisms so other consumptive and non-consumptive user groups of wildlife and habitat can share in the cost of proper management.

3. Legislated objectives for habitat and wildlife (not secondary to other land uses)

A “review of current legislation” does not provide certainty that wildlife will hold the same value as industry on the landscape. It is also not adequate to consider improving 10% per year of “islands” of habitat already under current designation.

4. Integrate wildlife and habitat management (Environment and wildlife ministries should work together)

No mention in the TFWD

5. Focus on science that moves the needle, not simply counting money that counts things as they decline.

While inventory and data are crucial to effective management, we want the government to institute actions and tools immediately that are already identified at great cost (Ex. Gorley Report for moose, prescribed burning, wild/domestic sheep separation, predator control for certain species in certain areas, removal of linear features, etc.). We also continue to be concerned about this governments history of allowing social pressure to drive wildlife management (re: grizzly bear hunt closure).

6. Science and research that is transparent, accountable, legitimate, outcome-based, and independent from political interference. Traditional ecological knowledge and citizen science needs to be formalized

7. Roundtable management (multi-stakeholder initiative), which includes First Nations and is both provincial and regional in scope. Members should be accountable with no power asymmetry

While the Minister’s Wildlife Committee and Regional Committees would satisfy this, there is no plan in the TFWD on who will be on these committees and there is no plan to ensure titleholders and stakeholders will have a mechanism to communicate.

8. Biennial report on trends/updates/budgets/plans which is independent from political interference

In conclusion, the TFWD does not show the members of the WSSBC that the BC NDP government plans on fulfilling their platform commitments. The Actions in the TFWD do

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not meet our expectations communicated throughout the “Improving Wildlife Management and Habitat Conservation” consultation process. The Actions in the TFWD continue the dismal, declining status quo for wildlife and their habitat in BC, further distancing BC from most other jurisdictions that are enjoying stable and increasing wildlife populations. This status quo approach will result in an escalation of action by the WSSBC and its members to hold the government accountable and pursue a new management and funding model for the benefit of BC’s wildlife and their habitat.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kyle Stelter'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kyle Stelter
President
Wild Sheep Society of BC