



BCWF News

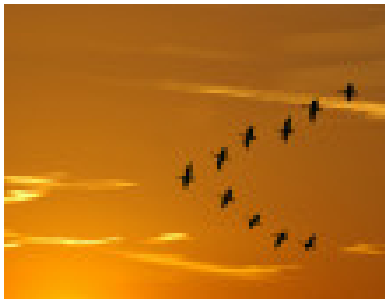


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(This is an special issue of
our Newsletter that will
carry only these two articles
that carry messages for all
of our members)

Views from the Minister of Environment, the Hon. Barry Penner on Several Critical Issues Affecting the BCWF

On Run of the River Projects

British Columbia's natural splendour and diverse fish habitat are an angler's dream.

Sparkling lakes, rivers and streams captivate young and old alike, with their hearts set on catching "the big one." Collectively, our waters form an incredible legacy – one the provincial government is committed to preserve. Yet, despite government's ongoing oversight work to protect our environment, misconceptions persist over how B.C. manages its water resources, especially with respect to run-of-river power projects.

These projects bring benefits to rural British Columbia, like good-paying jobs, local taxes and lowered greenhouse gases. In these uncertain economic times, the jobs and billions of dollars of new investment in B.C. are important to our province.

But first, let me explain what actually has to happen before a proponent even begins to build a renewable power project on a B.C. river.

Prior to construction, a proponent must obtain permits, leases and licences to use Crown land and water resources. Provincial and federal regulatory agencies then assess the potential impacts of a proposal, including how it might affect the river's flow, existing land and recreational uses, other resources and First Nations' interests. The project's owner must meet specific fish-centric conditions, and maintain adequate stream flows from a biological perspective. Most projects are located on non-salmon bearing portions of streams with an ultimate goal to achieve no net loss of fish habitat.

In addition, numerous conditions must be met before, during and after construction. From potential impacts on fish and wildlife, to First Nations and any other existing use, every water licence must meet strict environmental criteria. In total, a typical run-of-river project will require more than 50 permits, licences, reviews and approvals from 14 regulatory bodies, including federal, provincial, local and First Nations. In addition, projects over 50 megawatts must receive a certificate from my office under the Environmental Assessment Act before they can even proceed to the next step of acquiring the necessary permits and licences.

Still, some people insist B.C. is "selling off" its provincial water resources at the

expense of our environment. Those who say this apparently don't know the difference between renting and owning.



Granting a licence is not the same as transferring ownership to a private company. In 2003, our government limited the term of water licences. Previously, there was no automatic expiry date. Licences are now for a fixed term and when that term is up, water rights revert back to the Crown. During the term of the licence, proponents must typically pay millions of dollars in water rental fees, helping support public services like healthcare and education.

Public ownership of BC Hydro is enshrined in legislation introduced by the BC Liberal Government. It cannot be privatized. In fact, under our government BC Hydro is undertaking a multi-billion dollar expansion of its dams and generating facilities, and is consulting on a possible new dam on the Peace River known as Site C.

Does British Columbia need more electricity? Yes.

Over the last six years, BC Hydro reports they have imported up to 15 per cent of the electricity we use, much of it from coal-fired plants in the U.S. These plants are a large source of CO2 emissions, which are contributing to climate change.

The good news is that small hydro projects in B.C. generate renewable electricity without producing greenhouse gas emissions – something this government has committed to reducing by 33 per cent by 2020. We need more clean energy to meet these targets.

However, in moving to more renewable power, we're also committed to ensuring each and every project is assessed through a thoughtful, measured process. About 60 water licences have been issued since 2001 for independent power producers. In contrast, since 2001, 154 IPP water licence applications have been rejected or withdrawn.



As someone who enjoys fishing, and as a former Park Ranger, I value British Columbia's rich environmental legacy – our beautiful backcountry with its streams, lakes and rivers and bountiful fish and wildlife. And as Minister of Environment, I'm committed to ensuring these values are preserved for us and for our children.

When it comes to run-of-river projects, the Government of British Columbia is committed to doing the right thing – in the right way – to acquire the clean power we need and the protection our magnificent environment and precious water resources deserve.

On Wildlife Inventory

Wildlife inventory is the cornerstone of modern wildlife management.

Information gathered from wildlife surveys is used to develop and or evaluate management objectives, for both sustainable use and conservation. Because management decisions, such as setting harvest levels, are based on survey results, it is essential that inventories be conducted.

B.C. has made a strong commitment to the inventory of game species through the initiation of the Big Game Inventory Fund, and to species of high conservation

concern through the Conservation Framework.

B.C.'s Big Game Inventory Fund was initiated in 2005. This helped to optimize the allocation of the provincial inventory budget in a way that best balances the values of conservation versus socioeconomic interests, especially hunting values.

To date, more than \$2 million has been allocated to 52 separate inventories on high priority big game species (primarily elk, moose, mountain goat and mountain sheep). In many cases, these surveys have identified additional opportunities for hunting.



A further commitment to wildlife inventory is addressed in the Wildlife Program Plan. Under our goal of wildlife use, we are conducting ongoing inventory, monitoring and assessment of wildlife populations to ensure sustainable use as a key strategy.

To support this strategy, we have identified the following activities in the plan:

- Maintain and expand the big game inventory program to include other harvested wildlife species through integration and alignment with Conservation Framework inventory priorities.
- Implement policies that enable regional biologists to set harvest allocations among user groups using scientific information (e.g. inventories).
- Develop a long-term funding strategy and identify resources for big game stock assessment (e.g. wildlife inventory, harvest analysis, and population modelling)

It is also noteworthy that wildlife management agencies are increasingly being challenged by various groups who want to stop hunting, and whose tactics include questioning the scientific validity of data and methods used to manage wildlife (for example, grizzly bears).

Our inventory and research of grizzly bears allows B.C. to maintain a comprehensive, scientifically-based grizzly bear management program. We reversed the province-wide ban on grizzly bear hunting imposed by the previous government and manage harvest levels on a Grizzly Bear population Unit (GBPU) basis.



On Wildlife Allocation

I know there are many hunters out there who have a keen interest in the implementation of British Columbia's new wildlife harvest allocation policies and procedures.

Wildlife harvest allocation is the process of dividing the harvestable portion of a game population between hunter groups, in this case resident hunters and non-resident hunters (guide outfitter clients). Historically, this process was not transparent, was not adequately informed by relevant information, and often resulted in unfair allocation splits.

The Harvest Allocation Review project began in 2004 in an effort to give certainty to both resident and non-resident user groups in their allocation splits and how those splits would be applied. The intent of the review project was to develop a

transparent and efficient allocation procedure that is fair to both residency groups. Despite ongoing challenges in implementation, this objective appears to have largely been met.

A set of eight policies and procedures, collectively referred to as “Allocations Policy,” received ministerial approval in March 2007. The new policies and procedures represent, in some cases, a significant departure from previous practices. Both groups have some degree of concern over how their component of the harvest is going to be impacted.



Implementation of these policies and procedures is now well underway in a defined “implementation phase.” During this phase, stakeholders will need to adjust their practices to minimize impacts and maximize the benefits of the new procedures before full implementation in 2012. Headquarters staff continues to provide advice to regional biologists on allocations matters.

Since the approval of the new policies and procedures, most of the allocated species in British Columbia have been subjected to the calculated allocation percentages. The remaining species, less than five, will come under new percentages in 2009.

The new allocation policies and procedures for the wildlife harvest represent a consistent and transparent approach to allocation of wildlife harvest. Both residency groups are keenly aware of allocation decisions and are monitoring implementation closely.

The new policies and procedures represent a step forward for wildlife management in British Columbia. Since allocations are now based on data, implementation has uncovered some knowledge gaps in how we have historically managed wildlife. Ministry staff are working to address those gaps and continue provide British Columbians with the most sound, scientifically defensible wildlife management possible. We welcome the continued partnership of the BCWF as we move forward with this important piece of policy.

And the Views from Ms. Carole James, Leader of the BC National Democratic Party (NDP)

Every year, in early winter, my husband Al and I head out for our annual ice-fishing trip.



For me, nothing matches BC’s northern wilderness as a place to relax and to re-charge. The pristine surroundings, the total peace and quiet, a bonfire on the frozen lake, combined with the occasional thrill of a catch at the end of the fishing line, are just a few of the simple, yet unmatched rewards of these yearly trips.

I never expected that I would get so much from taking time out in BC’s wilderness. I grew up in the city. Hunting and fishing were not part of my life. In 2002, that all changed when I took a new job in Northern BC and met my future husband, Al Gerow.

Al comes from the Burns Lake First Nations Band. For him hunting and fishing is a centuries’ old tradition. Accompanying Al on hunting and fishing trips has taught me a great deal about a way of life for thousands of British Columbians and a deep

respect for the hunting and fishing community. These trips have also taught me about the incredible contribution many people in the hunting and fishing community make to habitat protection and to a sustainable environment.

The fact is that hunting and fishing are long-standing traditions enjoyed by generations of British Columbians. They are a strong part of our collective culture. That's why BC Wildlife Federation's role in creating awareness is so vital to our province, our environment and our communities. Your efforts promoting hunting and fishing in a way that is ethical, safe, sustainable and environmentally responsible are critical, as are your education and training programs.



I applaud your work eliminating unproven and unscientific assumptions related to hunting and fishing, as well as your strong focus on conservation and habitat protection.

For all these reasons, I believe that it's critical that the government ensures that your input and expertise inform BC's policy work related to hunting and fishing. As someone who has first hand experience with BC's hunting and fishing community, I know how much the BC Wildlife Federation contributes to our province and to the environment and wilderness that make B.C. such an incredible place to call home.

We want to hear from you

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If you have any comments, questions or an article for future newsletters please contact Jorge at development@bcwf.bc.ca or 604-291-9990 Ext. 223 or feel free to contact any BCWF staff member.