



Reference: 41720

June 17, 2024

VIA EMAIL: anneehetherington@gmail.com

Dear Anne Hetherington:

Thank you for your email of April 24, 2024, containing background information regarding the Conservation Lands in the Bulkley Valley. I am pleased to respond.

Firstly, I would like to emphasize the Province's commitment to preserving biodiversity and conservation. We recognize the immense value of our natural environment and the critical role it plays in sustaining fish and wildlife, supporting ecosystems, and contributing to the overall well-being of communities. The Conservation Lands Program is an important focus of the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS), and expansion of the program has been identified as one of the Actions of the Together for Wildlife strategy:

Action 11. Starting in 2020, we will make investments to manage existing Conservation Lands and acquire new priority lands for wildlife stewardship. We will use these funds to leverage additional investments, and we will strengthen ties with Indigenous governments, conservation partners, resource industries, and stakeholders to better secure and manage Conservation Lands to achieve wildlife objectives.

Furthermore, the Province is actively engaged in initiatives aimed at mitigating the impacts of climate change, promoting biodiversity research, and monitoring, and expanding our network of protected areas to ensure the long-term viability of our ecosystems. The recently signed historic tripartite Nature Conservation Framework Agreement between British Columbia (B.C.), First Nations and the Government of Canada, speaks to our commitment to halt or reverse biodiversity loss and create more resilient landscapes in the face of increasing risk of wildfire, flood, and drought. We understand the critical importance of biodiversity conservation in maintaining ecological balance, supporting wildlife populations, and preserving the natural beauty of our province.

As committed to by WLRS Deputy Minister Lori Halls, WLRS Skeena is in the initial stages of scoping a project to consider new Wildlife Management Area(s) in the region. Some of these may be over defined areas that were previously administered under the Land Act. With respect to the Wildlife Habitat Management Areas (WHMAs) in the Bulkley Valley, I recommend you work with the Community Resources Board (CRB), given their involvement with the Forest Landscape

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Planning (FLP) process that will cover this area. I expect the WHMA objectives to carry through into tactical-level, forestry operations plans.

With respect to the information you provided on the issues and competing interpretations surrounding Conservation Lands, this is information to bring to the FLP process via the CRB. If the CRB has been contacted and is not a viable option, please reach out to WLRS again.

Thank you for raising your concerns with respect to Conservation Lands. Your valuable expertise will be needed when public input is being sought as part of our many conservation and stewardship initiatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nathan Cullen". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nathan Cullen
Minister