



<DATE>

VIA EMAIL

Dear <>:

The Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRO) is intending to propose the below *Wildlife Act* regulatory amendments this summer 2021.

LICENCED TRAPPING HARVEST REPORT

FLNRO is creating an online Trapping Harvest Report in the BC Hunting Online system for licensed trapping activities. The Ministry is proposing regulatory amendments to require all licensed trappers to report on their fur bearing trapping harvest to improve wildlife management decisions. The proposed amendments will improve transparency and predictability of information regarding the licensed trapping activities that are occurring throughout the province.

The new reporting requirements will not apply to indigenous trappers who are exempt from requiring a licence to trap under *Wildlife Act* Section 11(9). However, the BC Hunting Online system will be available for any licence exempt trapper to voluntarily report their trapping harvest.

Currently:

- Licensed trappers must report on their harvest only in limited circumstances. For example, harvest reporting may be required under a special permit (e.g., trapping within a Park), or in specified areas for specified species (e.g., wolf on Vancouver Island).

The proposed amendments:

- 1. Require licensed trappers to report on their fur-bearing trapping activity for each licensed trapping year within 30 days of the end of the trapping year**

The intent is for the trappers to report the following information:

- their trapping licence number;

- their Fish and Wildlife Identification number (FWID);
- whether the trapper harvested during the trapping year; and
- for each animal killed in the trapping year:
 - as applicable, either the trapline number or indication harvest occurred on private property;
 - the species;
 - the management unit where the harvest occurred;
 - the month the harvest was taken; and
 - the sex of the animal.

2. Render trappers who do not submit their report within 30 days of the end of the trapping year ineligible for licences, permits and limited entry hunting authorizations and obtaining a guiding territory certificate

A licensed trapper that fails to submit an Annual Trapping Harvest Report will not be eligible to apply for or obtain a licence, permit, limited entry hunting authorizations and guide territory certificates under the *Act*.

3. FLNRORD will also be proposing an attached offence for a failure to submit a trapping report

Licensed trappers who fail to report on their trapping harvest activities may be charged with an offence (\$230 fine).

The proposed amendments are responsive to previous requests from First Nations to improve the information about licensed wildlife harvest activities that may be occurring within territories. Better information will also support the implementation of government-government agreements and ongoing improvements to our shared stewardship of wildlife with Nations and wildlife management decision making. Collectively this work contributes to the province’s commitment to improved wildlife stewardship and habitat conservation and advancing reconciliation as outlined in the Together for Wildlife Strategy.

The proposed amendments are also responsive to the requests of licensed trappers and the BC Trappers Association to improve aspects of the management system including collection and storage of data.

MANAGEMENT OF NON-NATIVE RABBITS

FLNRO is proposing minor amendments to the Designation and Exemption Regulation (the “D&E Regulation”) under the *Wildlife Act*. The Province does not anticipate any adverse impacts to Aboriginal or treaty rights to hunt, trap or fish and does not foresee any impacts on other matters regulated through the *Act*.

For background, European rabbits and eastern cottontail rabbits are both non-native invasive species that multiply quickly and damage landscapes and infrastructure. Invasive rabbit colonies originate from the deliberate release of domestic (pet) European rabbits, or from the human introduction of eastern cottontail rabbits (not a pet species). Both European rabbits and eastern cottontails are listed on Schedule C of the D&E Regulation, along with other non-

native invasive species. These two rabbit species are therefore referred to as Schedule C rabbits.

Currently:

- regulations allow individuals to capture and release (with geographic restrictions) Schedule C rabbits, but do not allow individuals to surrender captured Schedule C rabbits to a rescue facility without a permit. Similarly, rescue facilities are not able to rehome surrendered rabbits without a permit.

The proposed amendments will support improved rabbit management by enabling transfer of possession without a permit to facilitate the removal of Schedules C rabbits from the landscape, while also prohibiting the release of captured Schedule C rabbits into the wild.

The proposed changes are described as follows:

1. Section 3 of the D&E Regulation currently allows individuals to relocate non-native, invasive Schedule C rabbits in the wild without a permit. This is in contravention of ministry policy and the effort to prevent the spread of Schedule C rabbits. This exemption increases the risk that the range of Schedule C rabbits will expand, resulting in further damage to both ecosystems and infrastructure. The proposed amendments would remove the exemption for the release of Schedule C rabbits.
2. There is not clear authority to re-home or surrender a captured Schedule C rabbit to a rabbit rescue facility without an authorizing permit. Section 9 of the D&E Regulation exempts a person from requiring a permit to take, possess, transport or kill a Schedule C rabbit, if the person hunts, takes, traps, wounds or kills the rabbit themselves. These regulations frustrate rabbit rescue facilities, as in order to legally take in captured rabbits, they need to capture them directly. Similarly, they cannot adopt rabbits out to prospective homes without a permit for the same reason. Further, any kind of enforcement of these provisions is made challenging by the fact that non-native European rabbits born and raised in captivity may be possessed, transported, trafficked, or imported/exported without a permit. The amendments would give clear authority to surrender and re-home Schedule C rabbits.
3. Some species of birds are improperly classified under Schedule C as they are naturally occurring pests. Three bird species (crows, black-billed magpies, and brown-headed cowbirds) are designated as Schedule C invasive species, preventing their release back into the wild even though they are either naturally occurring 'pests' or invasive species that have overrun an area where little additional damage would be caused by their release in urban settings. The proposed amendment will move crows, black-billed magpie, and brown-headed cowbird from Schedule C (generally invasive species) to Schedule B (generally native 'pest' species).

Thank you for taking the time to consider these proposed amendments. All input will be carefully considered and please provide any feedback on how to improve consultation for similar amendments in the future.

Who can I talk to for more information?

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the proposed changes, email us at FirstNationsEngagement@gov.bc.ca. We appreciate your input within 30 days of receipt of this letter. If you require additional time, please advise Pam Martins.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Psyllakis
Director
Wildlife and Habitat Branch