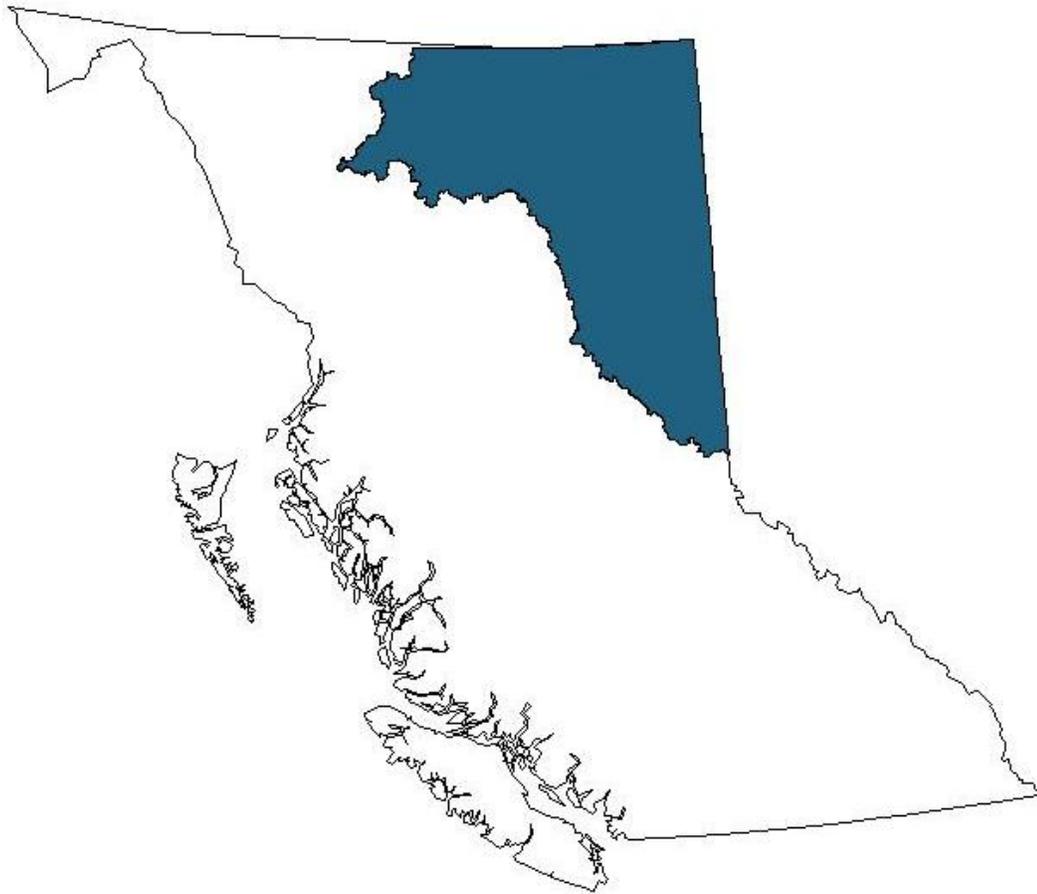


NORTHEAST REGION FISH AND WILDLIFE PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Identifying concerns and priorities for Fish and
Wildlife management in the Northeast



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INTRODUCTION

In an effort to increase participation in Fish and Wildlife Management by stakeholders in the Northeast Region, in 2012 we sent out notices to local people, groups and organizations that we have dealt with individually, inviting representation into a new Public Advisory Committee. The main objective for creating this group is to discuss fish and wildlife management issues in a forum that allows and encourages open dialogue among all stakeholders and Ministry fish and wildlife staff. The intent is to not start the discussion with a pre-conceived regulation change, as it often has been done historically, rather to discuss wildlife management priorities for our region based on a whole range of parameters, such as, population objectives, issues, conflicts, management, etc. We feel this is a more efficient and fruitful approach, which not only brings different perspectives in the conversation, but it also recognizes that regulations are only one in a suite of management tools that can be used to achieve objectives and goals.

We followed the initial call for members for this committee with a conference call late in 2012. At this meeting we discussed the needs and objectives for forming this committee, and loosely discussed terms of reference, which we haven't formalized yet in a document, but we feel that members have been in agreement with the principles. In May 2013 we held a face to face, day-long meeting in our Ministry office in Ft. St. John and discussed many aspects of fish and wildlife management in our region, as well as concerns brought up by the participants.

At the May meeting we also agreed to canvass stakeholders in the Region about fish and wildlife management priorities issues. This would provide the committee and our Ministry staff as a starting point to direct subsequent discussions and actions to address and implement some of these ideas. The Northern B.C. Guides Association had developed a simple survey (sample attached at the back of this report) which was suitable for this project so it was sent to each committee member and they were asked to distribute within the organization they represent, collect the feedback and send it to the Ministry representatives on the committee. This small report is a summary of those responses.

RESULTS

A total of 10 responses were received from the survey, some very detailed and offered additional insights and suggestions beyond the questions asked in the form. Because of the broad and complex issues in fish and wildlife management, and the high degree of interaction among these issues, it was challenging to summarize the responses into concise and meaningful summaries. Some issues clear span many areas of management, and have complex economic, social and political components.

All the comments for questions 1 to 9 were first summarized into short statements that captured the main points of each response. A list of these statements is provided in Table 1. Some of the issues identified in the responses, for example predation, occurs multiple times but this is not captured in Table 1. To show the relative importance of specific issues, all the responses were assigned to broad categories and a score assigned based on the number of times they appeared in the responses. A score was then assigned based on their frequency of occurrence and summarized in Table 2. For example, the “Regulations” category was the most common one with a score of 15, which means that issues related to regulations appeared 15 times in the responses. Despite that the interpretation of which category an issue might belong to can be a subjective exercise, and also some issues can fit in several categories, I still feel this summary captures the intent of the responses. A graphical representation of this rating is shown in Figure 1.

Responses for question 10 were summarized separately, because of the ranking methodology for specific issues or areas. Respondents were asked to rank each of the 11 items from 1 to 11, with 1 being the most important from their perspective. Some people chose to assign a 1 to multiple or all items, because they felt that these had equally high importance. Table 3 shows a summary of the rankings, and because 1 is the highest priority, when summing the responses, the ones with the lowest sum had the highest priority. This is reflected in the ranking column of Table 3. A graph of these rankings is also shown in Figure 2.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To my knowledge, this is the first time a survey of our stakeholders in our Region has been done and documented. This is not to imply that valuable interactions through conversations and other communication has not occurred in the past between various stakeholders and Ministry staff, but there is great value in documenting and summarizing these discussions. The intent of this small and informal survey is to encourage those who are interested in collaborating and engaging in the management of fish and wildlife in the Peace Region, in letting their views known. We don't see this as the end of a conversation, rather very much the beginning, and we hope that the Public Advisory Committee will provide an efficient and effective forum for discussing fish and wildlife management in our Region.

Some issues, such as predation and its effect on desirable hunted species, are complex and we should avoid solutions that may be quick, short-term, reactive and lack means of evaluating their effectiveness. The setting of management objectives cannot be underestimated as being a very important component of successful fish and wildlife management. Management plans for individual species are the places where these management objectives can be identified, which will hopefully help in focusing conversations towards solutions. Very often people will come into a public meeting having already made up their mind on wanting to implement a specific regulation change. This has often resulted in contentious disagreements among all those present. Regulations are one of many tools used in fish and wildlife management, and the regulation itself should not be seen as the end result, rather a means to achieve a specified objective. It is the intent of forming the Public advisory Committee to foster these types of discussions that are focused on setting objectives and results. The data from this survey provides a starting point for these discussions.

Table 1 – List of comments and suggestions provided by survey respondents.

Question	Issue		
1	Predator control	Bison increasing and impacting other species and habitats (such as alpine areas)	
	Inventories (species and habitat)	Special management for high access areas for sheep	
	Stakeholder input	Concerns with 7-50 cow and 6-pt bull elk	
	Resolve FN consultation issues	Increased occurrence of GB in agricultural zone	
	Better inventory	Too long to change regs for mule deer, don't want the same to happen to elk	
	Simpler methods for doing burns	Our resources are undervalued, especially seen by small fines levied on those who don't respect our resources	
	More consistent sheep management between regions		
	Increased enforcement of transporters		
	Simplify permitting process	3 Lack of control for resident sheep hunters. Packers and air charter companies do not have the same level of committment to managing specific areas for sheep as GO do.	
	Maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations for the benefits of all		
2	Increase bison LEH opportunities	Decreased elk in the Tuchodi and increased predators have put more pressure on other species	
	Decline in Arctic grayling catch rates in some watersheds	Negative attitude from farmers on wildlife needs to change, if crops cannot be harvested due to weather and wildlife use it, wildlife should not be penalized by increased harvest	
	High black bear numbers, bag limit is sufficient but the requirement to remove edible portions may limit desire to hunt		
	Remove wolf bag limits	4 Moose reduction as a result of increasing grizzly	
	Bull trout should be a management priority	Need an elk management plan for the Kechika	
	Bull trout concerns, especially with non-compliance, need stiffer penalties	Restrict harvesting of young Stone sheep rams	
	2	Decline of moose due to predation	Reduce deer season length
		Loss of habitat for caribou	5 Changes in harvest strategies, not regulations.
		Increased grizzly populations and predation impacts	Change elk season in 7-51 and 7-52 from Sept 1-10 to Sep 5-15, it would reduce the number of Albertans that hunt with a BC resident.
		Lack of Stone sheep inventory, provincial inconsistency	Restrict motorized vehicle during hunting season
Lack of wolf population control		Start wolverine rifle season August 1	
Negative impacts from expanding bison populations		GOS Bows only for Bison south of Liard R.	
Reduction in sheep and grizzly quotas reduce interest by outfitter to invest in the species.		Change bag limit of elk to 1 cow & 1 bull/separate	
Decline in deer populations		Reduce the number of resident tags in October, too much pressure on elk, deer and	
Consider hunting moratorium for depressed populations, such as mule deer			
Manage at a smaller scale			
Increased harvest of sheep due to increased access			
Bison management plans			

moose

ATH permits are being abused

Wolverine season should coincide with sheep season, they are significant predators

Allow more than 1 line for ice fishing

More special regulations such as fly fishing only (ex Burnt)

6 Better access management

7 More burning for winter range

Unregulated access from industrial development is increasing hunting pressure on populations

More reactive to population changes

8 Need more hunting pressure on grizzly, would instill some fear for humans

More involvement from GO in burning

More GO involvement in inventory work

NPRGC would like to support a project on Stone's sheep

Concerned about increased use of pesticides and its potential and unknown impact on fish and wildlife

9 Would like to partner in wolf control

The GO business is driven by economics, ultimately enhanced wildlife opportunities will increase employment and return on investment.

Overcrowded bison season, each bison tag also brings in elk, deer and moose tags

Predation impacts on sheep from eagles, wolverines and coyotes are underestimated

Manage wildlife not people

Would like to partner on lake trout and bull trout studies in the Peace River

Better protection of bull trout spawning areas

Table 2 – Summary of scores for issues identified by survey participants. The score represents the number of times an issue or topic was identified as being important.

ISSUE	SCORE
Regulations	15
Predation	14
Conservation concern	9
Species plans	9
Access	5
Management	5
Burning	3
Collaboration	3
Enforcement	3
Harvest rates	3
Inventories	3
Health	2
Permitting	2
Quota management	2
Sheep Management	2
Stakeholder collaboration	2
Agriculture	1
FN Consultation	1
Guide Outfitter management	1
Habitat loss	1
Increased Hunting Opportunities	1

Figure 1 – Histogram of scores for responses to questions 1 to 9.

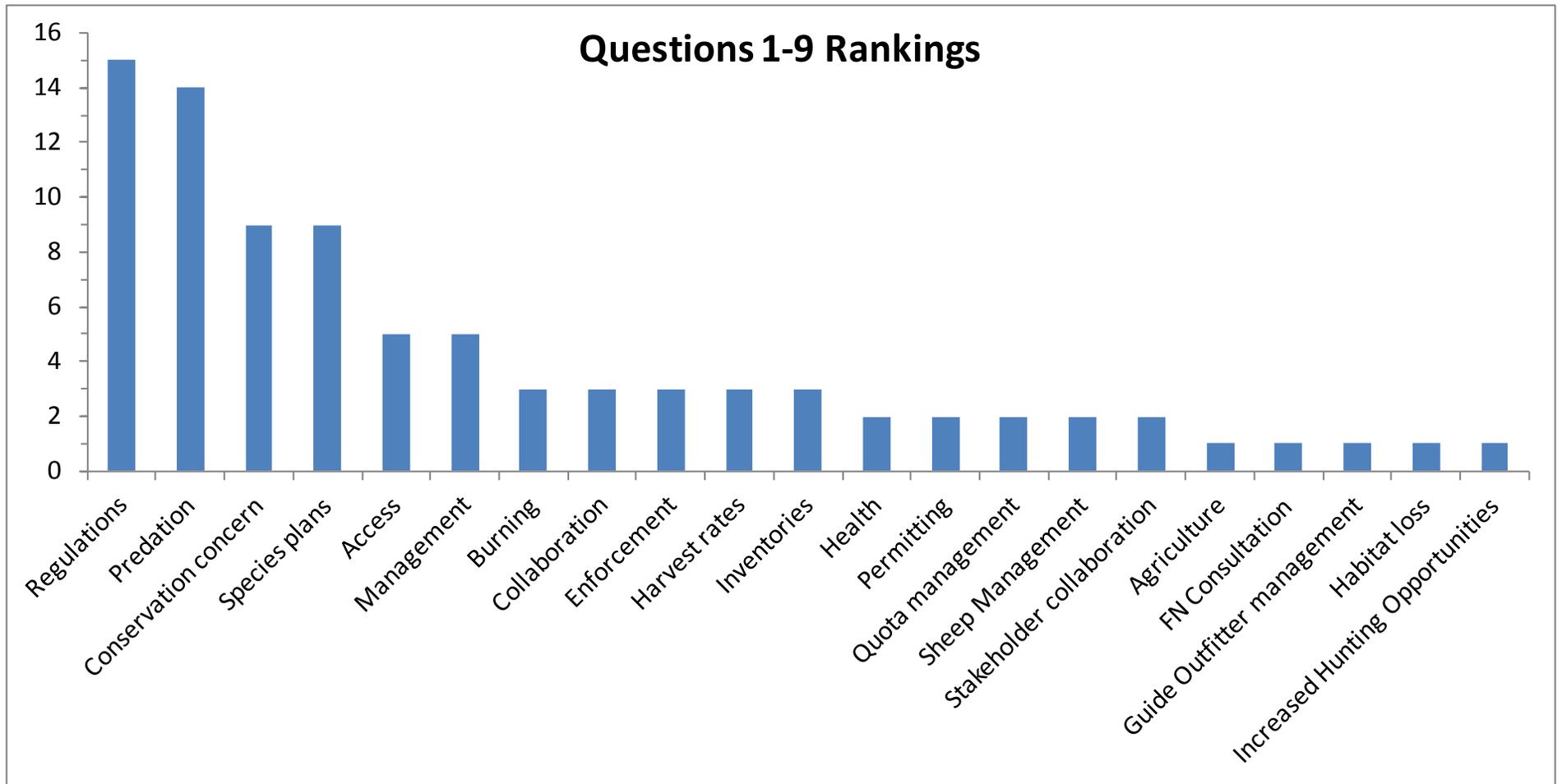
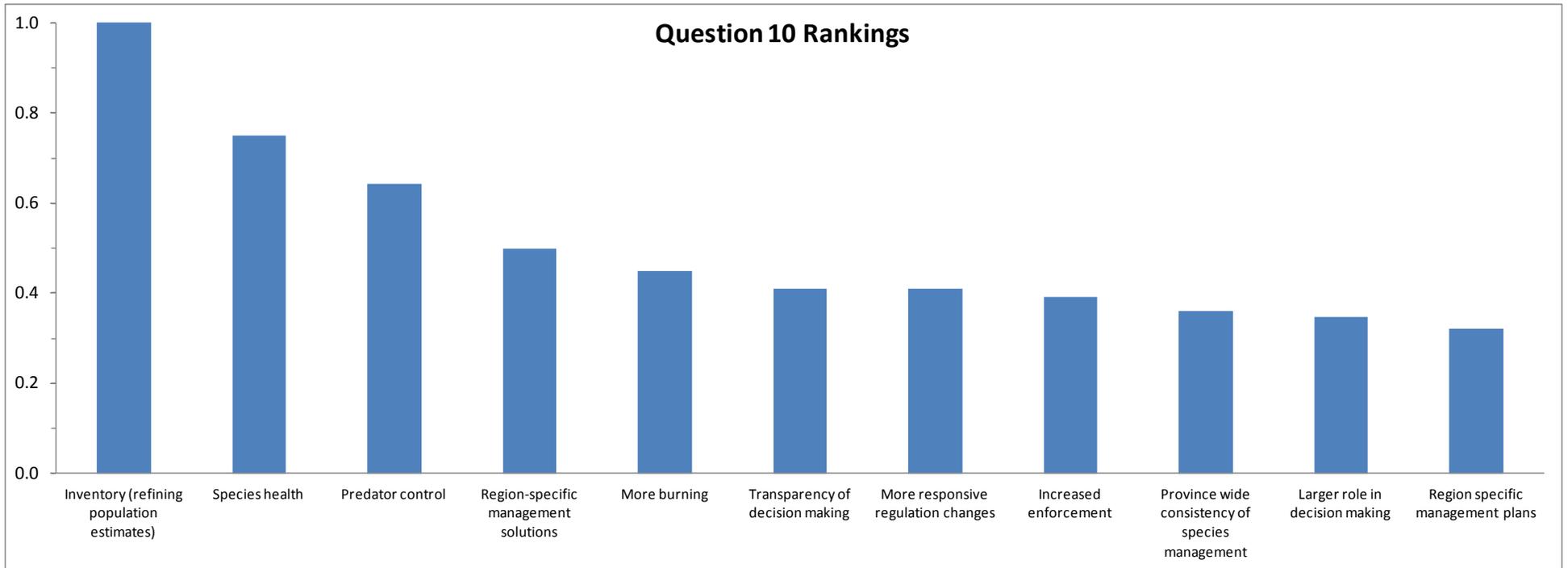


Table 3 – Summary of scores by survey participants for issues listed in Question 10

Criteria	Score (1 = highest priority, 10 = lowest priority)						Total	Ranking	
Inventory (refining population estimates)	5	1			1	1	1	9	1.00
Species health	2	2			4	3	1	12	0.75
Predator control	1	3	2	5	1	1	1	14	0.64
Region-specific management solutions	4	8	1		2	2	1	18	0.50
More burning	3	5	3	6	1	1	1	20	0.45
Transparency of decision making	7	6		4	1	3	1	22	0.41
More responsive regulation changes	6	9		1	2	3	1	22	0.41
Increased enforcement	9	7			3	3	1	23	0.39
Province wide consistency of species management	11	4	1		5	3	1	25	0.36
Larger role in decision making	8	6	4	3	2	2	1	26	0.35
Region specific management plans	10	10		2	3	2	1	28	0.32

Figure 2 – Histogram of scores for responses to Question 10.



APPENDIX - Form used in this survey.

Regional Advisory Committee Survey

1) From your perspective, what are some of the major priorities for fish and wildlife management in our region?

2) Are there specific wildlife species that you are especially concerned about? If so, what are your concerns?

3) Are there any concerns you have that are species and geographic location specific? For example, related to plains bison at Pink Mountain, moose in the South Peace, etc. Provide as much detail as you can.

4) Are there specific concerns that you may have to your area of operation? For example, is there a particular management strategy of a species in your guide area that you feel could be use better management practices or could use a “tweak” in management(or regulation) strategy that would benefit that species and/or user groups?

5) What would be a specific regulation change you would like to see? Please give rationale for any changes keeping in mind that conservation is the number one driver of management.

7) What are some of the long term trends related to fish and wildlife populations and their habitats, that you feel provide us with relevant information to consider in future management actions?

8) Are there specific projects that you'd really like to see developed and be a partner in? Think about what the objectives might be.

9) Provide any additional thoughts and suggestions that are not covered by the questions above.

10) Please rank (#1 most important) the following as to importance. What is most important to you? Please feel free to rank equally if equally important to you.

- () Burning/more____Less____
- () Inventory work (refining population estimates)
- () Enforcement (more Conservation Officers enforcing the wildlife act)
- () Transparency of decision making
- () Larger role in decision making
- () Predator control
- () Species health
- () More region specific species management plans
- () Quicker reaction to population changes (regulation changes)
- () More province wide management of species /uniform management region to region
- () Region driven solutions to wildlife management
- () _____(other)
- () _____(other)