



## Species at Risk and Your Professional Obligation: New Guidance Paper Gives Direction

**WHERE SPECIES ALREADY AT RISK MAY BE** adversely affected by land and resource use, resource professionals have an obligation to ensure sound stewardship. The College of Applied Biology of BC and the Association of BC Forest Professionals have come together to publish a species at risk guidance paper to address these issues.

*Managing Species at Risk in British Columbia - Guidance for Resource Professionals* describes the inconsistencies, gaps and uncertainties in the legislation, policy, public interest and scientific information. Nevertheless, federal and provincial legislation and regulations, including those regulating resource professionals, require that professionals advise or prescribe management activities that complement the recovery or adequate protection of species at risk to a level where they are no longer at risk. So, how should a resource professional deal with those gaps, ambiguities and uncertainties?

The guideline recognizes that most resource professionals will not have expert knowledge about species at risk, but all are expected to make themselves aware of species at risk that are likely to occur in areas affected by their professional advice. They are also expected to maintain a good working knowledge of local species' vulnerabilities and of suitable management practices to mitigate adverse impacts. If they are not well informed, a team approach is recommended; they should consult other professionals who do have that knowledge.

Particularly in the context of land and resource use activities that have a moderate to high risk of harm to species at risk or their habitats, resource professionals are expected to:

1. be reasonably informed of species in the areas affected by their advice or activities;
2. be reasonably informed of the requirements to conserve such species;
3. consult with other professionals if additional information about such species is necessary;

4. assess risk to such species from proposed professional advice or activities;
5. be informed of all relevant legal requirements concerning stewardship of species at risk;
6. advise or suggest alternatives, including alternatives that complement legal requirements if necessary, that may mitigate impacts on species at risk; and propose that their professional associations advocate for change if laws or policies appear to conflict with sound stewardship of species at risk.

These expectations are considerable. Meeting them involves professional judgement, which in turn involves consideration of many factors—legislation, policy, court decisions, the public interest, current scientific information, field observations and professional obligations to clients or employers. Each factor is burdened with gaps and unknowns. For example, scientific knowledge is usually limited and changing over time. Legislation and policy tend to lag behind scientific knowledge. Fluctuating economic conditions can complicate judgement. Management plans for species at risk are often incomplete or provide inadequate guidance. Nevertheless, an increasing number of species continue to be listed as at risk. Resource professionals have to respond to changes, including changes in human population pressures, in societal expectations and in responsibilities associated with professional reliance.

This guidance paper came about because the College of Applied Biology of BC and the Association of BC Forest Professionals decided that as several professionals can be involved in management of forest and range resources, there is considerable value in having joint guidance provided to various types of resource professionals. In 2007, the College of Applied Biology of BC and the Association of BC Forest Professionals signed a Memorandum of Understanding which,



This woodland caribou cow is listed as threatened under the Species at Risk Act.

in part, sets down cooperation in areas of practice overlap between 'applied biology' and the 'practice of professional forestry.' The memorandum directs a joint committee to pursue initiatives of common interest, including the development of guidance documents to assist members in their professional practice.

Ideally, guidance documents help members when they exercise their judgement in professional practice. They must be general enough to have broad application to members of both professional organizations, but also specific enough to serve as good practice advisories in particular situations. Guidance documents are not a panacea but are based on a combination of common sense and professional planning to improve stewardship and minimize practice risk. We hope *Managing Species at Risk in British Columbia - Guidance for Resource Professionals*, will meet all these needs. 🐾

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*Managing Species at Risk in British Columbia - Guidance for Resource Professionals* was based on the 2003 guidance paper, *Managing for Species at Risk: What are a Forester's Professional Responsibilities?* Ben van Drimmelen was retained by both the CABBC and the ABCFP to update and revise the 2003 document. He was assisted by a task force of six forest professionals and professional biologists.



*The Vancouver Island marmot is one of the species at risk for which forest professionals are obligated to ensure sound stewardship. But what does that actually entail and how far does one's professional obligation go?*

Photo: John Deal