

Feb 15/2014 Species at Risk

1 - A Federal court judge ruled that, both the environment minister and the Fisheries Minister broke the law by failing to enforce the Species at Risk Act - case in point the Neehako white Sturgeon, Pacific Humpback whale, Marbled murrelet and the Southern mountain Woodland Caribou. Justice Anne MacLaurin says this is the tip of the iceberg, & said there are major systemic problems in the two ministries, charged with protecting endangered and threatened wildlife. A challenge was brought forward by 5 environmental organizations who asked the court to enforce provisions to do under the Species at Risk Act. In every case the gov't had failed to propose recovery strategies after the species were formally identified, missing deadlines by up to 6 1/2 yrs. A spokeswoman from Environment Ministry Leona Aglukkaq acknowledged that management plans are currently required for 192 species of which 163 are overdue but said that they have significantly accelerated this progress in recent years & are also finalizing a posting plan with respect to upcoming recovery documents & progress reports. The judgement cited evidence those recovery plans could have an impact on approval of Northern Gateway pipeline, which will affect all 4 of the species cited in the case. Not posting recovery strategies deprive the ministers of considerable leverage strategies in dealing with impact of industrial development on Species at Risk. The gov't didn't contest the evidence but deny recovery strategies have been intentionally delayed in order to facilitate industrial development. - This is a stern wake up call to gov't. Stewart Elgie prof. of environmental law (University of Ottawa) likened species on the list to critical-care patients at a hospital emergency ward. If you don't act quickly some species face real risk of extinction, so this kind of delay 5 yrs + more threaten their very survival. When legislation came into law 2003 some 200 threatened species required protection plans and this created a backlog.

March 28 Nature Conservancy of Canada has bought 743 Hl of endangered grassland near Osoyoos - Sage & Sparrow Conservation

area which also has provincial conservation areas on either side of it. The money came from the Federal gov't's natural areas conservation program, several non-gov't foundations & private donors. Bought at \$44M. IT is home to more than 30 species at risk including Sage Thrashers - an extremely threatened bird. There are also canyon bats, burrowing owls, Tiger Salamanders, & rare half moon hairstreak butterfly. There are also 5 species of snakes including rattlesnakes and boa. This area is at the northern Tip of the Sonora Desert that begins in Mexico. It will be open to the public for hiking but closed to motorized vehicles and development.

9 March 17. The Caribou herd known for its epic annual migration between the Northwest Territories and Alaska is now thriving after a decade of decline. The herd has grown to 197,000 - the highest since biologists in Alaska, Yukon & Northwest Territories began counting in 1972, controlled by ^{hunting} rules.

11/ THE BC Gov't is looking to make some changes to the Agricultural Land Commission, saying it's outdated and things change, farmers have been looking for more flexibility in land-use decisions including, possibly oil and gas development but you can't do it at the cost of (agriculture) agriculture, we need to look at the importance of food security not only for our province, but as an economic driver down the road. Minister Bill Bennett said farmers will have opportunities to explore value added agr. activities on their land subject to reviews by regionally appointed officials. Of BC's 20,000 farmers 3/4's generate less than \$50,000 in sales annually. Just 10% of the land within the reserve, generates 85% of total farm sales. They didn't give any concrete examples of value added activities but they are going to talk with the commission, the agricultural industry & union of BC municipalities on what that may be. Anthony Pearl, professor of urban studies & political science at SFU said BC needs a better economic strategy for the agriculture sector but this doesn't do it. Just opening up land for unspecified future non-agricultural use doesn't seem to be the right way.

15/ The issue of changing boundaries in parks is another issue that's being tinkered with for industrial development, like

Pipelines, mining or logging or LNG. They plan to remove land from our park lands without considering a no-net loss policy for parkland lost or heavily impacted by these uses or consideration for wildlife or biodiversity. Both Lee & Jan have written excellent letters to the paper on those subjects. It's a gradual erosion of land.

6 March 12 BC Govt has introduced the water Sustainability Act into the Legislature. It is to update and replace the old water Act which came about in 1909. The Water Sustainability Act will regulate & protect ground water. It recognizes that ground water & surface water are interconnected & addresses the need to manage them under the same regulatory regime. The ministry also released a paper titled "Pricing BC's Water & asked Public to comment on water until April 8. Pricing will be set in regulations that will be updated before 2015. There is concern that the new legislation may not charge enough to large scale users.

7. The bad report on climate change is certainly disturbing but there is really not much direction from gov't especially the federal scene. BC is touting its carbon tax as a great helper but we've heard of a lot of fraud etc about it. All the agencies are just talking development of everything possible so where will it end there are good things happening but there are always more people and more vehicles and people still don't believe there is anything going on!