

## **ALBERTA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE for the Conservation Affairs Committee**

*June 1, 2020*

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Terms of Reference document is to establish the composition and mode of operation for the Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society Conservation Affairs Committee that will help ensure a consistent, unbiased and accurate approach is taken when providing information and comments on emerging and ongoing wildlife management and conservation issues in Alberta. This document is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Canadian Section and The Wildlife Society parent organization.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Within the Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society (ACTWS), there exists a need to periodically review and provide comments on developing and ongoing public policy and associated issues relevant to wildlife conservation and management in Alberta as well as elsewhere in Canada. For this purpose, the ACTWS Executive Committee established the Alberta Conservation Affairs Committee (CAC). The CAC will coordinate the development and dissemination of science supported information required to inform public policy makers, wildlife professionals, other resource managers, and the public concerning these issues. The CAC will also accept feedback from the Canadian Section and Chapter membership with respect to which issues warrant the attention of ACTWS, and determine, in consultation with the Chapter Executive, which issues will be considered for analysis.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSERVATION AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

- 1) To clearly identify and describe priority issues surrounding wildlife management across Alberta, and where appropriate, contribute information relevant to decision making at all levels of government, as well as other relevant agencies that have an influence on wildlife and wildlife habitats. This will occur through coordination with the Alberta Chapter Executive, and individual expertise within the Alberta Chapter.
- 2) To provide scientific, technical, and ethical background information in a manner that is consistent with the goals and direction of the ACTWS and the TWS parent organization.
- 3) To provide feedback to the Canadian Section of The Wildlife Society on wildlife management and conservation issues of particular relevance to the Canadian context, such that the Canadian Section can communicate with the parent Society to undertake its mandate sensitive to the needs of its Canadian membership.

## **DELIVERABLES OF THE CONSERVATION AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

- 1) Assessment of wildlife conservation policy and management issues that would benefit from the background and experience of members of the Alberta Chapter Executive.
- 2) Commentary on the state of understanding and science of wildlife management issues to governments and other relevant agencies, such that decisions are made using the best available science.
- 3) Assistance with the production of letters to ministers and other officials, “white papers,” or position statements on Alberta and Canadian wildlife management issues as identified by the Alberta Chapter executive committee or members of the CAC.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **ACTWS Conservation Affairs Committee**

The CAC will be responsible for:

- General oversight and management of communication regarding wildlife<sup>1</sup> and wildlife habitats conservation policy and management issues in Alberta on behalf of the Alberta Chapter;
- Identifying issues to be considered, prioritizing such issues, and deciding what specific issues the CAC will address at any given time;
- For each issue referred to the CAC for consideration, collecting relevant information from expertise within the Alberta Chapter and drafting comments on that issue for review by the Alberta Chapter executive committee;
- Identifying organizations with which the ACTWS and CAC can collaborate to address public policy and other issues relevant to wildlife conservation and management;
- Ensuring issues being addressed by the CAC incorporate the best available interdisciplinary science provided by expertise within the Alberta Chapter and beyond;
- Assessing the need for external review of CAC commentary and coordinating the review in an open and consultative manner;
- Ensuring all deliverables of the CAC, in as much as possible, objectively assess policy options, and focus on providing accurate and timely scientific information

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<sup>1</sup> Wildlife is defined to include all wild organisms.

(including information on uncertainty) to inform decision making to the fullest extent possible;

- Ensuring all work commentary and information provided by the CAC has been undertaken in a manner consistent with the best available information, consistent with the high standards of the Alberta Chapter, the Canadian Section, and The Wildlife Society parent organization;
- Submitting all prepared materials to the ACTWS Executive for final approval on all communications, commentary, and information on behalf of the Chapter;
- Ensuring CAC related written materials, including meeting minutes and submitted written materials, are available to ACTWS members through existing Chapter communication tools (e.g. website etc.), and/or upon request; and
- Liaison with Canadian Section of The Wildlife Society and the parent organization including sharing relevant CAC related information, including letters, white papers, position statements, and media releases.

### **Conservation Affairs Committee Members**

Members of the ACTWS will become members of the CAC based on their professional qualifications and interest in wildlife conservation issues in Canada. Consideration will be given to a potential member's geographic location and area of expertise. Members of the CAC will serve as individual scientists working to advance the goals and mandate of the ACTWS.

### **Conservation Affairs Committee Chair**

As per the ACTWS by-laws, the Chair of the CAC is appointed on an annual basis by the incoming President of the Alberta Chapter. The primary role of the CAC Chair is to convene and coordinate the activities of the CAC. The CAC Chair is a non-voting member of the ACTWS Executive and will serve as a primary liaison between the CAC and the Executive.

Specific accountabilities include:

- Support the CAC in confirming its terms of reference and priorities on an ad hoc basis;
- Approach and engage potential committee members on behalf of the CAC;
- Ensure that each CAC member understands their responsibilities and accountabilities;
- Oversee and coordinate the work of the CAC on behalf of the ACTWS Executive, including:

- Planning and scheduling CAC conference calls as needed;
  - Tracking CAC supported deliverables; and
  - Ensure alignment of CAC deliverables with Chapter, Section and parent Society position statements.
- Provide review of Chapter CAC written materials prior to release to ensure consistency with Canadian Section of TWS and TWS parent position statements;
  - Function as a liaison between Canadian Section CAC Chair who will be the primary contact with The Wildlife Society Conservation Network lead; and
  - Ensure an efficient and appropriate flow of information between the CAC and the ACTWS Executive including providing progress reports to the Executive.

### **Relationship with ACTWS Executive**

The CAC will maintain a close relationship with the Alberta Chapter Executive to allow efficient flow of information. Further, the Alberta Chapter Executive will work with the CAC to provide facilitation support to assist in reaching consensus on particular issues.

### **OPERATIONS OF THE CAC**

#### **Representation on external committees/panels**

ACTWS is occasionally invited to provide representation on provincial committees including the Alberta Game Policy Advisory Council and the Endangered Species Conservation Committee. Members of the CAC with interest and expertise are designated by the ACTWS President to represent the ACTWS on these various committee/panels.

CAC expects regular reports from these representatives, which the Chair will communicate to the Executive. These reports will be verbally delivered during CAC meetings and serve to inform the CAC how the ACTWS is being represented in various processes and committees. The guiding principle is that ACTWS represents wildlife science on these external committees. When confidentiality is necessary, the ACTWS accepts and trusts the professional expertise of the designated representative. ACTWS representatives should provide regular updates, including relevant documents (e.g., meeting minutes, reports) as requested to CAC. Reports from external representatives shall be an agenda item for each CAC meeting.

#### **Decision Making**

The CAC shall make decisions based on consensus.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Consensus is defined as no substantive disagreement and might include agreement on a document that describes different perspectives on an issue.

When consensus cannot be reached a decision to move forward will be determined by group majority. Any contradicting perspectives will be recorded in meeting minutes.

Should there be a need to revisit a decision previously taken by the CAC, the CAC will do this in a timely way, along with an explanation.

Transparency, openness, and complete disclosure of information will be key for the successful operation of the CAC. All information related to commentary generated by the CAC (e.g., position statement, correspondence with governments) will be made public.

The ACTWS Executive will maintain final approval authority on communications, commentary and information issued on behalf of the Chapter.

### **Submission Development and Approval**

To have consistent, high quality, and science-based submissions on wildlife conservation policy and management issues in Alberta and Canada, the CAC will strive to follow the following procedure protocol for submission development and sign-off:

- 1) An identified issue is brought forward to the Chapter Executive and/or the Conservation Affairs Committee by the Alberta Chapter CAC or any member for consideration;
- 2) The CAC evaluates the issue and determines whether it warrants further attention and, if required, provides a recommendation to the Alberta Chapter Executive on how to proceed;
- 3) Either a member of the CAC or the group/individual who brought the issue forward is asked to draft the submission. If they are unwilling/unable to do so, the chair of the CAC will do so, or find someone qualified to do so. The submission will be edited and reviewed by the CAC members;
- 4) The final draft of the prepared document is submitted to the ACTWS Executive for approval and signed by the Chapter President and the chair of the CAC, provided they are able to do so. The contributing author may be invited to sign the submission as a third signatory; and,
- 5) All CAC materials prepared by the Alberta Chapter including letters, white papers, position statements etc., will be vetted with the Canadian Section for review before distribution.

### **Meetings**

The CAC will work toward a goal of meeting a minimum of 3 times a year by phone, and once annually at the ACTWS AGM.

The chair of the CAC will regularly interact with the ACTWS Executive Board and the ACTWS Executive Director.

Approved by the Alberta Chapter Executive Committee on 1 June 2020.