Adding your voice to the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Framework

The province of B.C. released a Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework that could completely shift the way we manage our forests in B.C. This framework provides strategic direction for changes in legislation and current practices to prioritize biodiversity and ecosystem health in the province. Here are some of the highlights included in the framework:

- The framework is built on the foundation of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- The framework will follow a whole-government approach to ensure that biodiversity and ecosystem health is a priority across all natural resource sectors
- A plan to open a Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Office in partnership with First Nations to implement the outcomes of the framework

While this framework is a step in the right direction, there are some gaps. We have a window of opportunity to add our voices and submit feedback on this framework only until January 31st, 2023. By submitting feedback, you play an important role in making sure this framework is strong, which will set the stage for a strong Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Law.

Using your phone or computer, write an email with feedback on the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework and send it to biodiversity.ecosystemhealth@gov.bc.ca.

Send an email to: biodiversity.ecosystemhealth@gov.bc.ca

Ideas for your email submission:
- What areas of the framework are weak and need to be strengthened?
- Are there things missing in the framework that you would like to see included?
- Are the outcomes of the framework practical, realistic, and achievable?
- Why is this framework important to you and your community?
- When would you like to see the outcomes of this framework happen?

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Examples of Core Recommendations:

1. **We need Government to prioritize and uplift Indigenous sovereignty and knowledge:**
   - Partnership and co-development must be embedded in the entire framework and implementation plan.
   - The existing Western way of defending and conserving the natural world must be done in a manner that respects and engages Indigenous rights, jurisdiction, laws, and knowledge.
   - IPCAs and Indigenous-led stewardship need to be front and centre in both the Framework and new legislation.
   - We acknowledge B.C.’s commitment to making UNDRIP and DRIPA foundational to the Framework, but we must see explicit commitment to upholding Indigenous leadership in its implementation while addressing stark contradictions such as recent approvals of resource extraction without consent.
   - The Framework must commit capacity funding for First Nations to support the readiness and implementation of the Framework. This should include funding to support Nations who wish to defer old growth logging in their territory, and the advancement of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.

2. **We need Government to follow through on their commitment to new legislation co-developed by First Nations:**
   - Establishment of new tools and designations that strengthen on-the-ground protection and stewardship of species and ecosystems is a critical component of this commitment.
   - The success of the Framework relies on a whole of government approach with all ministries held accountable for prioritizing biodiversity and ecosystem health in any decisions that affect the landbase.
   - Government must become an advocate for biodiversity and ecosystem health, act as a counter pressure to industry actors who want to uphold the status quo, and proactively remove barriers like industrial tenures to help Nations seeking to protect their lands and waters.

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3. We need Government to include in their implementation plan:
   - Clear milestones with measurable objectives and associated timelines;
   - Immediate guidance to planning tables to prioritize biodiversity and ecosystem health in all decisions and measures to protect the most at-risk species and ecosystems in real-time.

4. A commitment to setting up the Office of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health before the end of the Spring legislative session ensuring the Office is given sufficient staffing, funding, and authority over natural resource decision-makers to carry out its mandate.
   - Office should be guided by independent western and Indigenous expertise.
   - Pathways for objective advice and oversight to support the Office in achieving its mandate could be helpful, especially when navigating diverse Indigenous knowledge systems.

5. New legislation and amendments to existing laws
   - New legislation needs to include enshrined, cross-sector objects and standards for the full realization of the paradigmatic shift.
   - The law needs to implement the Framework fully so that the priority has “teeth.”
   - The framework should prioritize new legislation over amending legislation in the implementation plan to give full effect to priority of BEH across all industry sectors.
   - A new law needs to include provisions for species at risk.
   - New toolbox, new tools: A new law needs to enable new tools and designations to fully implement the paradigm shift.

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Email Template
(copied & paste into your email)

Dear [Your Local MLA],

My name is [insert name] and I live in [insert current location].

I am writing to submit my comments for the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework.

(Optional) I have a personal interest in how this framework will impact the future of forests in BC [insert testimony and/or statement of interest].

(Optional) I have concerns about ongoing industrial logging occurring in the province and want to ensure this framework is strong to ensure healthy forests and good jobs for local communities.

Some recommendations I would like to contribute are: [insert recommendations].

I appreciate you reviewing my comments and trust that you will take community recommendations into serious consideration for the final Biodiversity and Ecosystem Framework.

[insert signature, location]

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