



JUN 28 2019

Mr. Devon Page
Executive Director
Mr. Kegan Pepper-Smith
Lawyer
Ecojustice
425 Carrall Street, Suite 390
Vancouver BC V6B 6E3

Dear Mr. Page and Mr. Pepper-Smith:

Thank you for your correspondence of May 8, 2019, written on behalf of your client, the Wilderness Committee, concerning the Spotted Owl. I regret the delay in responding.

You have requested that Environment and Climate Change Canada post as final, by December 31, 2019, a habitat action plan for the Northern Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) (Spotted Owl) that is compliant with the requirements of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) and that fully identifies critical habitat for the species.

I share your concern over the situation faced by this species. As you know, the federal government, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, agreed in 2018 to implement a pan-Canadian approach to transforming species at risk conservation in Canada. This transformation shifts Canada from a species-by-species approach to conservation to one that focuses on multiple species and ecosystems.

While the federal government is guided by this pan-Canadian approach, you will be interested to learn that the Department, in partnership with the Government of British Columbia, will prioritize completion of an updated, SARA-compliant recovery document for the Spotted Owl in the shortest feasible timeframe. We have determined that this approach will afford the most conservation benefit to the species, by building upon the work that British Columbia has undertaken to date.

In regard to the habitat action plan referenced in your correspondence, I believe that the concerns you have raised about the conservation of the Spotted Owl will be more directly addressed with an updated recovery strategy, which completes to the extent possible the identification of critical habitat. The updated recovery



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strategy will then provide key support for multi-species conservation action planning in southwest British Columbia under the aforementioned pan-Canadian approach. Environment and Climate Change Canada will be working closely with British Columbia to complete this task and, in doing so, will be gathering best available information and engaging species experts as appropriate. This will include consideration of the science advice that Mr. Jared Hobbs has provided. I have asked departmental officials to work with British Columbia to meet with you to discuss ongoing Spotted Owl conservation activities in the province, and to go over plans for future activities.

As you know, whenever Environment and Climate Change Canada officials undertake to produce or substantively update SARA-compliant recovery documents, there are co-operation and consultation obligations that must be met (for example under section 39). For this reason, the earliest that an updated recovery document could be completed for the Spotted Owl is the summer of 2020.

If you have questions, comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Blair Hammond, Director for the Canadian Wildlife Service's Pacific Region, at blair.hammond@canada.ca or 604-350-1977.

I trust that this information is of assistance, and I extend my best regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C McKenna', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Honourable Catherine McKenna, P.C., M.P.