

Questions and Answers to guide review of the proposed “Marbled Murrelet” Ministerial Order

The **Implementation Plan for the Recovery of Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) in British Columbia** contains detailed information on the provincial management approach.

Acronyms: Marbled Murrelet (MAMU), Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD), Land Use Objective Regulation (LUOR)

Q: How is MAMU nesting habitat being protected?

A: These areas of MAMU nesting habitat are being protected under a Land Use Objective Regulation under Section 93.4 of the *Land Act* for the purpose of the *Forest and Range Practices Act* to protect this habitat (hereafter referred to as the Order). Once the Order is established, forestry licensees will have 6 months to revise their forest stewardship plans and 5 years to amend their woodlot licence plans to be consistent with this Order.

Q: Why are these areas of MAMU nesting habitat being protected?

A: 1) To ensure sufficient nesting habitat is maintained on provincial Crown land to support viable populations of marbled murrelets across their range in B.C., 2) To meet habitat commitments outlined in the provincial MAMU Implementation Plan, and 3) To achieve expectations under the federal Species At Risk Act.

Q: How much MAMU nesting habitat is being protected?

A: 195,330 hectares of nesting habitat on Vancouver Island and the South Coast are already protected under a variety of conservation designations. This order proposes to protect an additional 60,274 hectares of nesting habitat on Crown land above what is already protected.

Q: Where are these areas of MAMU nesting habitat being protected?

A: Provincial Crown land on Vancouver Island and the Southern Mainland Coast.

Q: Why is no MAMU nesting habitat being protected outside Vancouver Island and the South Coast?

A: The province has established minimum habitat thresholds for all seven Marbled Murrelet Conservation Regions in B.C. Outside Vancouver Island and the Southern Mainland Coast MAMU Conservation Regions, nesting habitat supply will be monitored to ensure existing conservation designations and land use objectives maintain amounts of nesting habitat above minimum habitat thresholds for the 4 other Conservation Regions not included in this order.

Q: Is all of the MAMU nesting habitat on Crown land being protected?

A: This order maintains 100% of the remaining suitable nesting habitat in the East Vancouver Island Conservation Region, 76% of the remaining suitable nesting habitat in the Southern Mainland Coast (SMC) and 58% of the remaining suitable nesting habitat in West and North Vancouver Island (WNVI). Additional habitat loss is allowed in the WNVI and SMC Conservation Regions where this order will ensure available nesting habitat is maintained above minimum habitat thresholds for Crown land.

Q: Why is additional MAMU nesting habitat loss being allowed?

A: This approach to recovery is supported by the Marbled Murrelet Recovery Team and is consistent with the Federal Marbled Murrelet Recovery Strategy (2014) which allows for up to 30% of 2002 habitat levels to be lost. Habitat availability will meet or exceed 70% of 2002 levels province-wide with specific objectives for each Conservation Region in B.C.

Q: Will the MAMU nesting habitat maintained by the Order be protected in spatial, mapped reserves?

A: Not all habitat maintained by the Order will be spatially protected in mapped reserves. The Order specifies amounts of habitat to be maintained at different spatial scales (Landscape Unit (LU) Portions and LU Aggregates). A separate, but complementary, approach is proposed to address spatial habitat management and will result in additional MAMU nesting habitat protected in mapped reserves such as Marbled Murrelet Wildlife Habitat Areas and Old Growth management Areas.

Q: What is the province's spatial habitat management approach?

Outside the scope of the Order, a revised Section 7 Notice is proposed to be established under the *Forest Planning and Practices Regulation* of the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) to guide the future establishment of mapped reserves containing MAMU nesting habitat, including Wildlife Habitat Areas under the *Government Actions Regulation* (GAR) under FRPA, and Old Growth Management Areas under the *Land Act*. These reserves, combined with existing protection, will result in at least 80% of the minimum habitat thresholds in the WNVI and SMC Conservation Regions to be spatially protected in mapped reserves.

Q: How is MAMU nesting habitat being managed on non-provincial Crown land?

A: The province is committed to encouraging shared stewardship of Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat on non-provincial Crown lands. The commitment to engage non-Crown land holders

includes raising awareness of the importance and uniqueness of Marbled Murrelets and their nesting habitat, discussing provincial management approaches, and encouraging stewardship and retention of suitable nesting habitat on non-Crown lands.

Q: What are the potential impacts to the timber harvesting land-base (THLB) and forestry opportunities?

A: Maintaining the minimum habitat thresholds in the area of this order will require all habitat that is currently protected, all unprotected habitat that is not considered to be harvestable and additional habitat that is estimated to impact the THLB by up to 14,500 hectares. The province is committed to working with affected parties to minimize timber supply and operational impacts.

Q: What types of forest are in these areas of MAMU nesting habitat?

A: Due to the structure required to support nesting, the majority of mapped MAMU nesting habitat is considered to be old-growth forest.

Q: How does the Order and spatial habitat management approach relate to the recently released report on old-growth management in B.C.?

A: The province recognizes the importance of old-growth forests for Marbled Murrelet habitat needs. The recently released old-growth report provides context for which temporary deferral areas can be considered to allow for conversations on the future of old growth forests. The report provides an opportunity to consider all values including social, environmental, economic and cultural values, including Marbled Murrelet habitat.

Q: How were these areas of MAMU nesting habitat identified?

A: The MAMU Suitable Habitat spatial layer on Crown Lands maps the best available spatial information on nesting habitat in a given area. On Vancouver Island and the Southern Mainland Coast these include:

1. Low-level Aerial Surveys (LLAS) conducted from a helicopter by qualified observers that map nesting habitat using a six-class ranking system (1 = very high to 6 = nil), where classes 1–3 are considered “suitable”. LLAS are considered the most accurate method of mapping.
2. The BC Model (<http://jem-online.org/index.php/jem/article/view/11>) predicts suitable habitat primarily from a forest cover-based algorithm. Much of this habitat mapping has recently been replaced with more accurate habitat surveys by LLAS.

Removals of Suitable Habitat from harvesting, road building and fires have been updated to 2018 on Crown lands. All methods of MAMU habitat mapping contain some degree of uncertainty.

Q: Is a map available of the protected nesting habitat?

A: Yes. Maps include the locations of suitable habitat and existing reserves on Crown land. In addition, spatial Geographic Information System (GIS) files are available.

Q: Does the MAMU Order apply to the marine environment?

A: No, only to terrestrial (nesting) habitat.

Q: Who does this Order apply to?

A: All *Forest Act* agreement holders required to prepare a forest stewardship plan or woodlot licence plan. The Order does not apply to other, non-forestry natural resource development such as mining or independent power projects.

Q: How is climate change factored into the conservation of suitable Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat?

A: At this time, climate change is not factored into the conservation of Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat.
