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Forum This Fall to Explore New Approaches to Freshwater Decision-Making in BC

by Contributor on 12 Jun 2016



http://rosslandtelegraph.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/Original/news_images/thenelsondaily/un/natashaoverduin-upper_columbia_watershed_tour.jpg

A group of tours the Upper Columbia watershed.

With yet another season of drought facing many B.C. residents, the need to manage our water wisely is greater than ever.

Fortunately, the evolving freshwater movement in British Columbia is primed for a breakthrough on protecting this most precious resource, which could serve as a model for the rest of the country.

Across B.C., dozens of water stewardship groups, Indigenous-led initiatives, local and regional governments, and watershed boards are taking action to protect our fresh water.

At a provincial scale, the new *Water Sustainability Act* offers new opportunities for formal shared or delegated decision-making and water sustainability planning for watersheds.

Capitalizing on this window of opportunity, the "**Watersheds 2016: Building Capacity for Collaboration and Watershed Governance in British Columbia**" forum will engage B.C.'s freshwater stewards and leaders in a strategic dialogue of best strategies to support shared governance in the province.

The event takes place from September 30th-October 1st at Simon Fraser University's Wosk Centre for Dialogue in Vancouver. Through panel sessions, field trips, breakout workshops and structured peer-to-peer learning, participants will share stories and learn from existing collaborative initiatives and partnerships — focused on what works, what doesn't work, and how positive relationships are created.

The *Watersheds 2016* program reflects identified community needs and priorities, including: sustainable funding for watershed governance, Indigenous-led planning, and collaborative governance initiatives.

As First Nations across B.C. continue to demonstrate leadership and authority for water governance, exploring examples of how to build respectful relationships between First Nations and other decision-makers will form a cornerstone of the forum.

"The forum is a tremendous, and unique, opportunity for local communities, First Nations, non-profit water leaders and governments to come together in formative discussions on decision-making for freshwater health in B.C.," says Lindsay Telfer, Director of the Canadian Freshwater Alliance.

"B.C. is on the cusp of national – even international – leadership for shared decision-making on fresh water. This event can help propel those conversations, sketching out implementation for water governance that actively includes local communities in the process."

Watersheds 2016 starts with a slate of exciting field trips on the afternoon of Friday September 30th followed by networking, welcomes and a keynote address by lawyer Merrell-Ann Phare that evening.

The next day will feature plenaries exploring collaborative watershed governance and First Nations water planning, interspersed with "hands on" and "big ideas" breakouts on topics including sustainable funding, national water issues and opportunities, and environmental flows and communities.

For current or emerging leaders hoping to make a positive impact in their home watersheds, this practitioner-oriented event offers a hands-on approach for how to improve decision-making around protecting B.C.'s rivers, lakes and streams.

Early bird registration rates are in effect until June 30, with special rates for students, non-profits and First Nations.

The forum is co-organized by four core partners: The POLIS Project on Ecological Governance, The Canadian Freshwater Alliance, The Fraser Basin Council, and The First Nations Fisheries Council.

Watersheds 2016 immediately follows the Canadian Freshwater Alliance's [Living Waters Rally](http://www.freshwateralliance.ca/lwr16) (<http://www.freshwateralliance.ca/lwr16>)—Canada's biennial non-profit gathering on freshwater health.

Visit the event website for more information: <https://watersheds2016forum.wordpress.com/> (<https://watersheds2016forum.wordpress.com/>) and follow #watersheds2016 on Twitter for regular for updates!