

ILLUMINATION:

Insights and Perspectives for Building Effective Watershed Governance in B.C.

OLIVER M. BRANDES & TIM MORRIS
WITH JENNIFER ARCHER, LAURA BRANDES, MICHELE-LEE MOORE,
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Environmental Law and Policy



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ABOUT THE RESEARCH TEAM

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**NATASHA OVERDUIN** RESEARCH & EDITORIAL SUPPORT

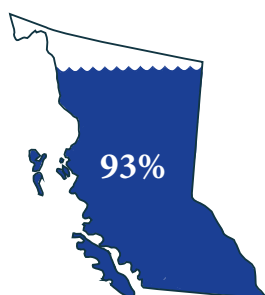
Natasha Overduin is the Watershed Governance Project Manager and Research Associate at the POLIS Water Sustainability Project. Natasha's work in 2015/2016 is focused primarily on supporting capacity-building for watershed governance in B.C. through

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Executive Summary

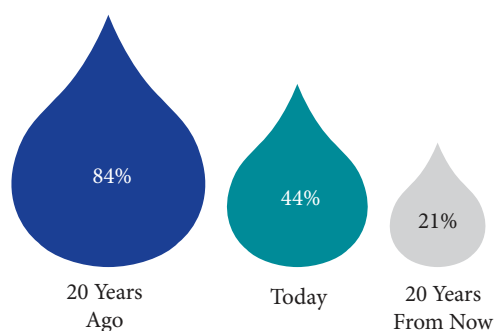
In British Columbia, addressing freshwater challenges is a critical economic, social and ecological priority. The historic drought of 2015 depleted reservoirs, dried up streams, and resulted in severe water use restrictions in many regions of the province. Along with more frequent and costly floods, these types of extreme events are becoming *more extreme and* more common. At the same time, competition for access to our most precious resource is rapidly increasing, driving conflict and public concern.

As B.C. awakens to its new water reality, the link between sustainable management and how decisions are made—*governance*—is gaining public attention. Growing recognition exists that current decision-making processes are not working, and that ensuring clean, flowing fresh water today and for the future requires a bold shift towards new forms of governance at the watershed scale.

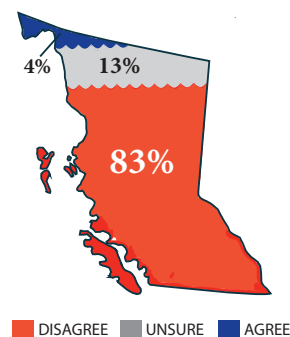


Percentage of British Columbians Who Agree Fresh Water is “Our Most Precious Resource”

INFOGRAPHICS BY MARCI JANECEK



Percentage of British Columbians who agree that B.C.'s fresh water was/is/will be good



Percentage of survey respondents who believe the current approach to management and decision making about water in B.C. is fine

WHY THIS STUDY? WHY NOW?

The potential for a significant governance shift is reflected in elements of the new provincial *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA or the *Act*), which not only strengthens rules to protect water for nature, but also enables alternative forms of local watershed governance. A genuine window of opportunity exists to kick-start a world-class governance regime in British Columbia.

Recent reports and events exploring the concept of watershed governance have laid a foundation for reform in British Columbia. However, considerable knowledge gaps still exist in turning concept into practice. Through an extensive investigation involving interviews, surveys, and a First Nations roundtable, this study illuminates the practical needs and capacities required to implement watershed governance in B.C. At its core, the study provides critical insights into the question: *What is needed NOW to make watershed governance work in British Columbia?*

RESEARCH APPROACH

The multi-disciplinary research team took a three-tier approach to gather perspectives from across B.C., and to reflect a wide range of insights from various water sectors and interests. Those contributing insights to this research include federal, provincial, First Nations, and local governments; professional water managers; the private sector; experts and researchers; and stewardship and other

non-governmental actors working at various levels across the province. The information and insights for this project was collected through:

- 1) Eight interviews with expert informants
- 2) A First Nations Roundtable
- 3) An electronic survey completed by 439 participants across the freshwater community from around the province

KEY FINDINGS AND CRITICAL INSIGHTS

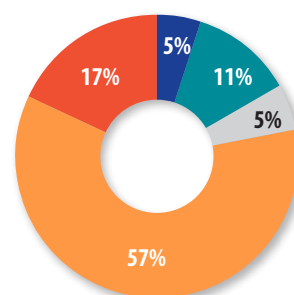
#1 The current system is not working ...

SUBSTANTIAL APPETITE EXISTS FOR A CONCERTED MOVE TOWARDS WATERSHED GOVERNANCE

Study respondents expressed widespread dissatisfaction with current approaches to water management and governance, specifically noting that existing approaches are poorly suited to modern day needs and growing water pressures.

- First Nations express a concern of being excluded from the current governance system.
- The Province is seen to be retreating from its role in safeguarding aquatic ecosystems and providing effective and balanced decisions.
- Communities feel ill prepared to respond to serious threats to their local watersheds.

The study revealed that a large proportion of respondents would like to be actively engaged in watershed governance. Many are prepared to take on leadership roles, and others seek opportunities to provide input to local watershed decisions, or wish to be engaged in a province-wide dialogue on how best to enable watershed governance.



How well is B.C.'s fresh water currently being managed to ensure its protection? "Based on what you know, how well is fresh water currently being managed to ensure its protection in B.C.?"

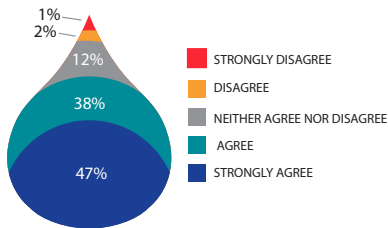
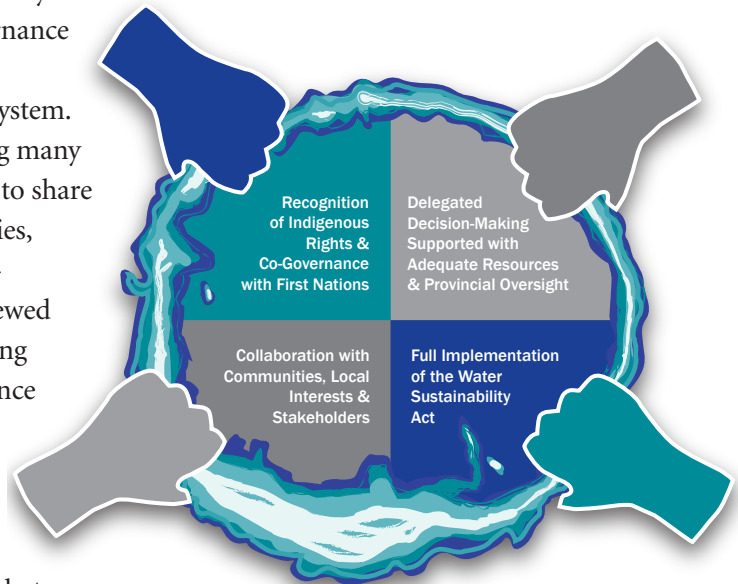


#2 Collaborative watershed governance is the future ...

COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES ARE SEEN AS CRITICAL FOR BETTER DECISION MAKING

A clear consensus exists among study participants that watershed governance needs to be undertaken more collaboratively than the current system. Collaboration is seen as providing many benefits, including opportunities to share knowledge, leverage local capacities, and expand access to resources—human and financial. It is also viewed as a critical platform for developing trust and support for co-governance arrangements between First Nations, the Province and local communities.

The research findings deepen the collective understanding of what watershed governance could look like in B.C. and explore four key themes based on the input received from respondents ...



Percentage of survey respondents who agree that local watershed entities are needed to ensure B.C.'s *Water Sustainability Act* is implemented to its fullest potential

"We are not going to change the way we have been doing business, unless it's in a collaborative approach."

INTERVIEWEE
(ELECTED LEADERSHIP)

Stepping Stones of Watershed Governance



#3 In practice, watershed governance happens one step at a time ...

MULTIPLE STAGES TO COLLABORATIVE WATERSHED GOVERNANCE EXISTS

A key insight revealed by the study participants is that watershed governance is not a static process and no *one-size-fits-all* model exists. Watershed governance can take many forms ranging from informal collaboration around specific projects to enhance watershed health, to community-based visioning and planning. Over time, it may evolve into more formal entities or bodies capable of taking on significant planning and delegated decision-making authority as enabled in the new *Water Sustainability Act*.

#4 Numerous capacity gaps revealed ...

COMMUNITIES SEEKING HELP AND SUPPORT TO IMPLEMENT COLLABORATIVE WATERSHED GOVERNANCE

The study highlights key capacity gaps that will need to be addressed if B.C. is to fully harness the energy and enthusiasm for watershed governance and establish the conditions required for lasting success.

Respondents affirmed key conditions required to enable effective watershed governance, including an emphasis on:

- fully implementing the *Water Sustainability Act*
- the need for sustainable funding; and,
- new mechanisms for effective co-governance

#5 A catalyst is needed to spark action ...

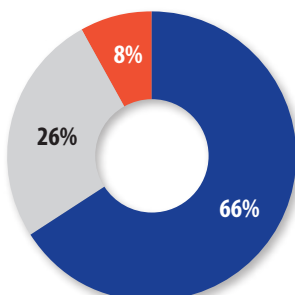
A POTENTIAL ROLE HAS EMERGED FOR A PROVINCE-WIDE CAPACITY BUILDER

The study reveals support for a province-wide *Capacity Builder* organization that could catalyze local watershed governance initiatives, help address capacity needs and strengthen existing collaborative efforts. Potential functions for such a *Capacity Builder* include:

- ✓ Hosting a **central repository** of information and best practices to support local initiatives
- ✓ Fostering a **community of practice** related to watershed governance and management
- ✓ Sharing **success stories** and **leveraging funding**
- ✓ Providing technical, legal and **watershed planning** support
- ✓ Assisting communities in identifying watershed governance **options and opportunities**
- ✓ **Convening and coordinating** learning networks and events
- ✓ **Acting as a champion** to advance a better balance between freshwater protection and sustainable resource development

CONDITIONS TO ENABLE WATERSHED GOVERNANCE

- Clear roles & responsibilities in delegated authority
- A commitment to co-governance with First Nations and effective government-to-government relationships
- Partnerships with local government
- Sustainable funding
- Legislative framework that protects ecological values
- Peer-to-peer learning
- Independent oversight & public reporting
- Monitoring, data availability & cumulative impact assessment
- Engaged & educated citizenry
- Meaningful watershed planning
- Courageous leadership



Support for a province-wide capacity-building organization: "Do you see value in a province-wide organization that could serve as a central capacity builder to promote, encourage and/or support watershed governance across B.C.?"

■ AGREE ■ UNSURE ■ DISAGREE

“...I don’t see them as a provincial arm, so much as a guidance group – a place to go to ask questions and see what’s going on in the rest of the province ...”

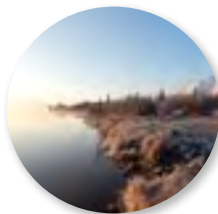
INTERVIEWEE
(LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

Respondents indicated that such a *Capacity Builder* should be enabled and given a mandate by the Province, but should be arms-length from government once established. First Nations participation and leadership in the entity were seen as critical for success. Important cautions also emerged from the research. In particular, ensuring that such a body does not create another layer of decision-making at the provincial scale, or undermine government-to-government dialogue between First Nations and the Province.

NEXT STEPS: UPCOMING OPTIONS PAPER

Building on this study, the research team is now developing an ‘*Enabling Watershed Governance*’ Options Paper. To be shared in 2016, this paper will identify a range of specific institutional and operational options—including a province-wide *Capacity Builder*—to address capacity gaps and develop new tools and resources for real progress on the ground.

B.C. has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make the shift to a truly world-class watershed governance regime. It is our hope that this study and the upcoming options paper will chart a path towards meaningful, practical actions that will accelerate this shift and capitalize on this important window of opportunity.





1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, fresh water issues have emerged as a major concern globally. Even in so-called water-rich regions, such as British Columbia, addressing water issues is becoming an increasing economic, social, and ecological priority.

In the summer of 2015, British Columbia faced severe drought conditions, evidenced by shrinking reservoirs, wildfires, water-use restrictions, and streams and aquifers running dry. Events like these—which are becoming ever more frequent with the changing climate—have increased public awareness of the importance of the decisions made around fresh water in the province. At the same time, a fundamental shift in the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the context of resource management is underway, and mounting demands for community engagement and local control have illuminated serious flaws in the existing system of decision-making concerning water and watersheds in B.C.

These increasing pressures and drivers for change have resulted in calls for new forms of watershed governance that respond to both the needs of the watersheds and the communities that live within them. Importantly, the B.C. government has recognized this priority and recently passed the new *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA or the *Act*), the first significant reform to British Columbia’s water laws in over 100 years. The *Act* has provisions that recognize the potential of new forms of governance and creates an enabling framework to support their development. The details of these provisions will be addressed during a regulatory development phase over coming years, which represents a critical opportunity to kick-start a truly modern and world-class water governance regime in the province.¹

In order to capitalize on this growing momentum for watershed governance, additional capacity and understanding around the concept and its application will be needed. This report summarizes an extensive investigation of the current knowledge and capacity related to watershed governance in British Columbia. Undertaken over almost a one year period commencing in December 2014, this research deepens our collective understanding of the elements needed to strengthen watershed governance

in B.C. and explores the real challenges facing the sectors and individuals affected by local water-based decisions. The critical parties include local government, First Nations, and the provincial government, and sectors such as stewardship groups, the business community, and water professionals.

In particular, the study enhances our understanding of the tools, resources, and support networks needed to advance watershed governance in the province. This report explicitly builds on ongoing work at the University of Victoria's POLIS Water Sustainability Project. It extends the learnings and insights developed in the 2013 report *The State of the Water Movement in British Columbia*² and at the *Watersheds 2014* solutions forum.ⁱ

As a follow-up to this current study, a complementing policy options paper will be released in 2016, providing specific options and recommendations on building capacity for watershed governance throughout B.C., and the best approaches to operationalizing this approach to governance. The broader intention is that findings from these two research reports will engage and inspire a suite of water leaders to champion the legal and institutional reforms that will be required to create a robust and innovative watershed governance system for British Columbia.

BOX 1: WHAT IS WATERSHED GOVERNANCE?

Governance is the process of decision-making and holding those decision-makers to account, primarily focused on the *ends* and “doing the right thing, the right way, with the right knowledge.” It concerns *who* has the power to make decisions and their jurisdiction, and fundamentally is the *who, how* and *what* of decision-making. Governance is distinguished from **management** which refers to ongoing, on-the-ground operational activities, primarily focused on the *means* and “doing things right.”

Watershed governance is an emerging concept that involves reorganizing and nesting our decision-making approaches to better align with ecological boundaries, and promote stewardship and protection of fresh water in its ecological context.

Successful models of watershed governance are influenced by local priorities, geography, history, culture, and economics. The ultimate goal is healthy functioning watersheds, and to ensure sufficient, clean fresh water now and into the future as the foundation of both resilient communities and a robust economy.

Adapted from Brandes, O.M., O’Riordan, J., O’Riordan, T., & Brandes, L. (2014, January). *A Blueprint for Watershed Governance in British Columbia*. Victoria, Canada: POLIS Project on Ecological Governance, University of Victoria. Retrieved from <http://poliswaterproject.org/blueprint>

i. The three-day forum *Watersheds 2014: Towards Watershed Governance in British Columbia and Beyond* was held on Cowichan Tribes territory in Duncan, British Columbia from January 27th to 29th, 2014. It attracted nearly 200 delegates, plus over 75 additional virtual participants via online events across the country. The delegates came together from a diversity of backgrounds including watershed groups, researchers, professional resource managers, and decision-makers at all levels of government, including First Nations—to re-envision the way we use, share, and respect our fresh water and watershed.

REPORT OVERVIEW

The purpose of this report is to illuminate perspectives around watershed governance in B.C., and draw out key insights that will guide and shape the activities of current and future water decision-makers. To achieve this, the report:

- 1) Explores perceptions of existing approaches to water management and governance, and outlines research participants' perspectives on what watershed governance *should* look like in B.C.;
- 2) Identifies key areas where greater capacity is needed to enable watershed governance;
- 3) Investigates whether support exists for a province-wide capacity building organization, and identifies potential benefits and challenges that might arise with such a “hub”.

The following section, *Why This Study? Why Now?*, provides further background context for the data collection, data analysis, findings, and conclusions in this report. It briefly overviews how public knowledge and attitudes towards fresh water are shifting. It also points to key water issues and conflicts emerging across B.C. This context demonstrates increasing momentum toward watershed governance, along with the need for improved approaches to decision-making.

Section 4, *Findings and Insights*, is the body of this report. It summarizes data collected through three primary means: interviews, e-survey, and a First Nations' Roundtable. Findings are grouped into four core theme areas:

- 1) The Current State of Watershed Governance in B.C.
- 2) What Should Watershed Governance Look Like?
- 3) Building Capacity to Move Forward
- 4) Does B.C. Need a Watershed Governance Hub?

Finally, Section 5, *Conclusions and Next Steps*, draws out key points and insights emerging from the data, and discusses how these perspectives contribute to supporting progress towards watershed governance in B.C.





2. Why This Study? Why Now?

2.1 AWAKENING TO OUR NEW WATER REALITY

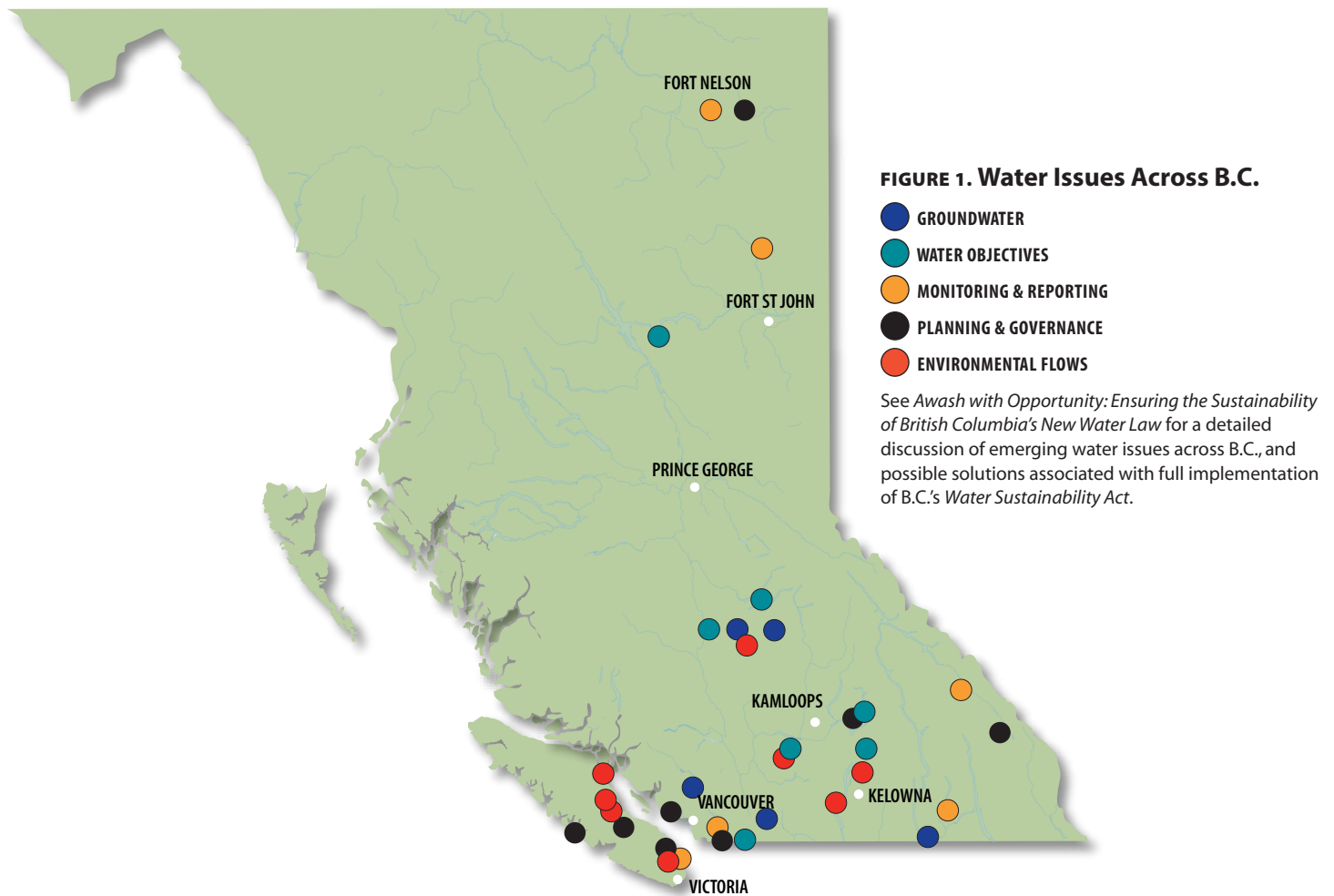
The summer of 2015 saw a drought of historic proportions in regions of British Columbia. Reduced snowpack in the winter, minimal precipitation in the spring, and hotter-than-usual conditions in the summer gave rise to increasingly serious water availability concerns in a number of watersheds across the province.³ This confluence of events is a potent reminder that British Columbia is not immune to freshwater management and governance challenges. Problems plague our neighbours to the south: California has been hobbled by a decade-long drought, and Washington State declared a state of drought emergency in 2015. The critical issues in these jurisdictions provide the punctuation to our urgency for action.

LURCHING FROM PROBLEM TO PROBLEM

2014-2015 was not the first year that B.C.'s watersheds have been under pressure. In the summer of 2006, Tofino's sole water reservoir almost ran dry, and the town lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue from the threat of business shutdown.⁴ Due to extreme low flows in the Cowichan River in 2012, spawning salmon had to be trucked up-river when sections of the river became too shallow for fish passage.⁵ In the Township of Langley, which relies on groundwater for roughly 80 per cent of its supply, aquifer levels have been dropping by as much as 30 cm per year for the past 30 years due to increasing demand and unchecked flowing of thousands of long-forgotten artesian wells.⁶ And in 2014, a breach in the tailings pond at the Mount Polley copper and gold mine sent a year's worth of toxic mining waste into multiple lakes and creeks in the Cariboo region of central B.C.⁷ All of these serious situations can be directly linked to needs for new forms of management and decision-making related to fresh water in B.C.

ECONOMIC RISKS

Increasing competition for water from a range of users, including agricultural producers, energy producers, growing municipalities, and resource development, is further



elevating B.C.'s water challenges. The private sector recognizes that fresh water availability and quality is now a key risk factor for business in the province, whether it's agricultural production, mining, hydro, tourism or manufacturing. Water is an input or throughput in virtually every economic activity in B.C. and our current lack of knowledge and planning for its future is becoming a serious concern to many businesses.⁸

PUBLIC ATTITUDES ARE SHIFTING

Long taken for granted, water is becoming a top-of-mind issue globally and across Canada and in B.C. Recent trends suggest water's fundamental importance cannot be denied and the need for better management and new rules to ensure protection and stewardship are urgently needed (see Figure 2: *Selected Recent Public Opinion Research on Fresh Water*).

A Provincial Policy Opportunity

In spring 2014, the British Columbia provincial government introduced Bill 18—*Water Sustainability Act* (WSA) into the provincial legislature. The WSA will come into full force when all the regulations are implemented. The first wave of regulations

Percentage of British Columbians Who...

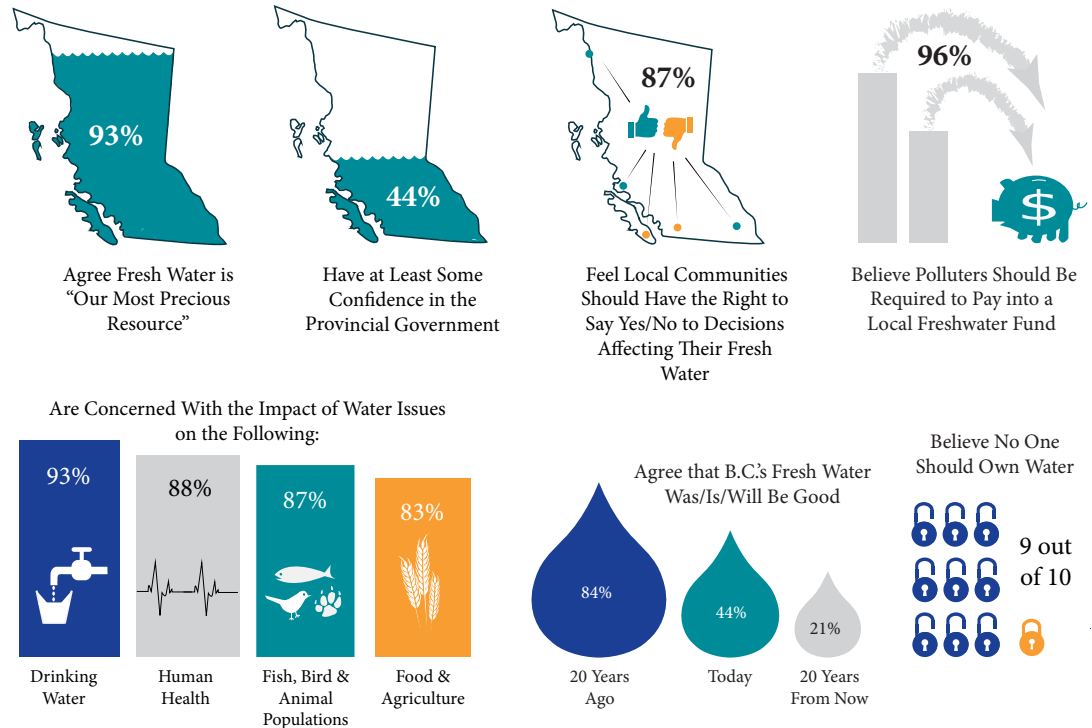


FIGURE 2. Selected Recent Public Opinion Research on Fresh Water.

INFOGRAPHIC BY MARCI JANECEK

McAllister Opinion Research. (2014). *Freshwater Insights 2013: A Survey of British Columbian Attitudes on Fresh Water*. Conducted May 2013, Final Report Released February 2014. Retrieved from: <http://www.refbc.com/sites/default/files/V1.02-PUBLIC-RELEASE-BC-WATER-POLL-2013-Final-Topline-Findings.pdf>.

will be enacted in early 2016, with the full suite of regulations expected to be in place by 2017. The new *WSA* represents the culmination of six years of consultation to modernize the previous *Water Act*, which was over 100 years old and sorely out of date. The *WSA* is a critical first step to ensuring better and regionally appropriate protection for environmental flows, water planning, groundwater licensing, and incentives for improving efficiency and promoting conservation. This new legislation has the potential to usher in a new and exciting era of water stewardship in B.C.—an era based upon partnership and shared responsibility, and fundamentally centred on the concept of protection rather than simply rules for resource extraction (see Box 2: Key Elements of the *Water Sustainability Act*).

Building Momentum for Watershed Governance

In addition to the specific window of opportunity offered by the new *WSA*, an emerging interest around the concept and potential of watershed governance from all levels of government and civil society is coalescing. A palpable sense of momentum behind watershed governance is evidenced through numerous recent policy documents and initiatives, as well as a number of focused research reports and conferences (a chronological timeline of key government releases and other drivers is outlined in Appendix 1).

Out of this dialogue, watershed governance is emerging as a desirable and feasible option for improving leadership and institutional capacity for freshwater protection across B.C., with the potential to clarify roles and responsibilities and, ultimately, enhance accountability around decision-making. However, despite a broad desire for progress, it remains clear that the skills, leadership, and resources required to improve decision-making are currently lacking.

BOX 2: KEY ELEMENTS OF THE WATER SUSTAINABILITY ACT

B.C.'s *Water Sustainability Act* creates a genuine window of opportunity for change. This new legislation is the cornerstone of the *Living Water Smart* provincial water policy. It seeks to fulfill the potential for a shared stewardship approach through better water management, improved planning, and delegated decision-making with those sectors and individuals most impacted by water-related decisions across the province. New planning and governance elements are of particular interest as they offer genuine opportunities to better share or delegate decision-making in the Act (for example, see s. 126 of the Act). These provisions offer significant potential to fundamentally shift B.C.'s approach to a partnership-based regime that emphasizes more local participation and influence.

A number of key elements define the new legislative regime, including:

- **Regulation of groundwater for the first time.** This will allow the Province to better manage surface and groundwater as one interconnected resource.
- **Improved protection of water flows for ecosystems and fish.** The *WSA* requires decision-makers to consider environmental flow needs when issuing new water licences and also includes provisions to ensure short-term critical flow and fish population protections.
- **A new comprehensive planning regime.** The *WSA* enables the creation of water sustainability plans. These plans will allow for customized regional solutions that can impose a variety of water-sharing arrangements or requirements on water users, which can be made binding through regulation. Alternatively, area-based regulations enable statutory decision-makers to make very generally-applied regulations under specific circumstances, without the need for an approved water sustainability plan.
- **The potential for delegated decision-making.** The *WSA* introduces the potential for the Minister to delegate certain decisions specific to the Act to other organizations or entities.
- **A new power to set water objectives to better integrate water into land-use decisions.** Water objectives can be set for the purposes of sustaining water quality, quantity, and aquatic ecosystems. Once established, they will require all decision-makers and local governments in a watershed to consider the impacts of their decisions on the stated water objectives.⁹





3. Methods for Determining What the Freshwater Community is Thinking

Research methods for this project were designed to gather perspectives from every watershed in B.C., and to reflect a wide range of insights from critical parties and several water sectors in the province. This includes federal, provincial, First Nations, and local governments; professional water managers; the private sector; researchers; water funders; stewardship and community watershed groups; and various non-governmental actors working across the province. Data were collected through three primary means:

- 1) interviews with key informants;
- 2) First Nations' Roundtable discussion; and,
- 3) an electronic survey.

The purpose and approach of each method is briefly summarized here. Appendix 3 contains a detailed breakdown of methodology and assumptions.

1) Interviews with Key Informants

Eight expert informant interviews were conducted with watershed governance thought-leaders who were selected by the Project Team to provide insights from seven key sectors. The purposes of the interviews were:

- To test and confirm the assumptions upon which this project was based and inform the creation of the e-survey (as outlined in Appendix 3);
- To deepen our collective understanding about the needs and challenges facing a broad range of key water sectors;
- To identify concrete tools, resources, and support networks that would advance watershed governance initiatives; and,
- To test whether there is a need for a province-wide capacity-building organization to provide capacity support for local watershed entities, and investigate what this might look like.

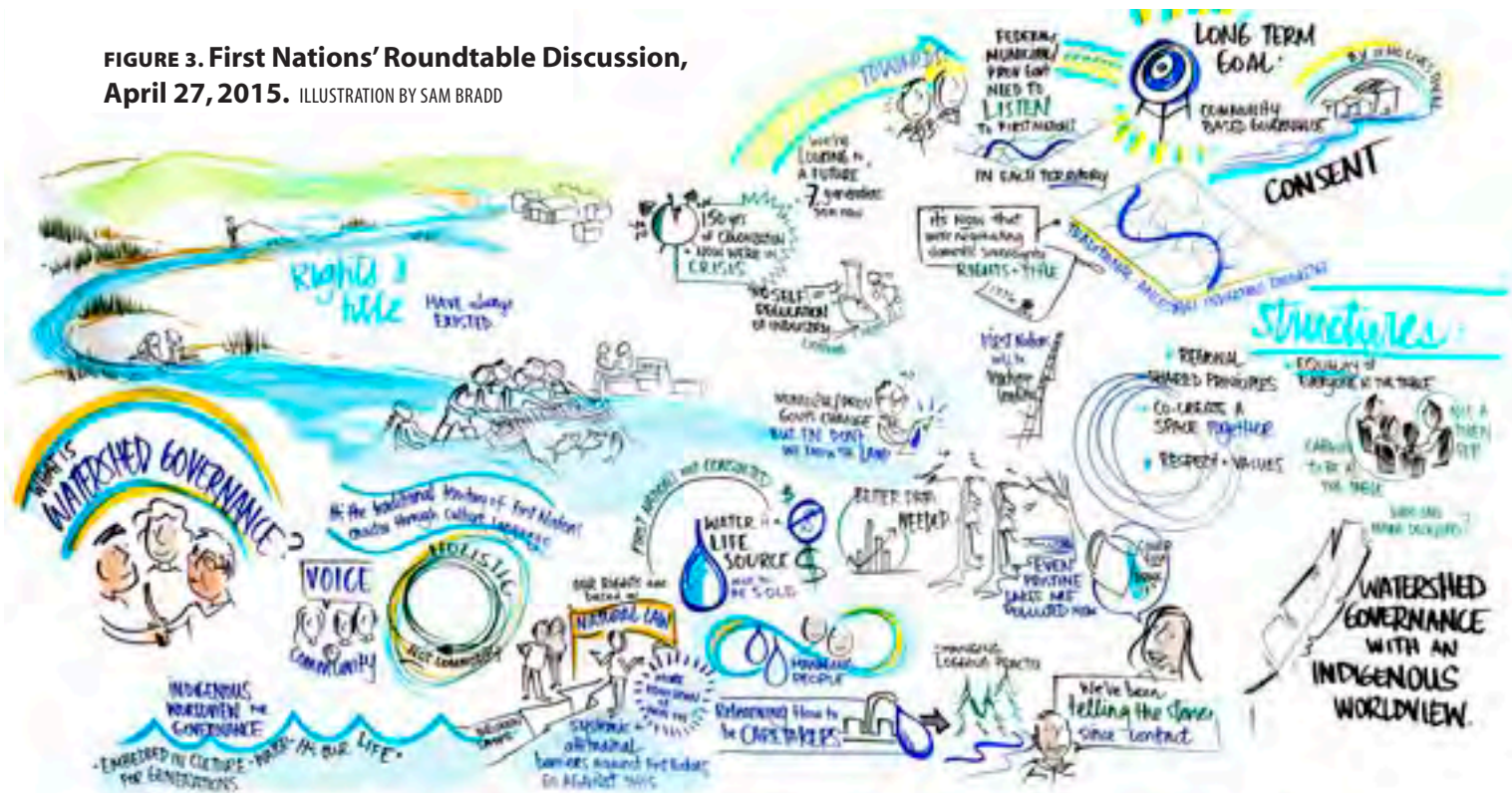
2) First Nations' Roundtable

A dialogue involving six First Nations water leaders was convened for a half-day roundtable discussion in Vancouver on April 27th, 2015. The participants were identified and invited by the First Nations Fisheries Council. Each participant was invited to participate as an individual because of their unique interest and expertise in this area, not as a representative of their community or organization. The objectives of the First Nations' Roundtable were:

- To better understand the needs and challenges being faced by First Nations with respect to strengthening and enhancing local watershed governance; and
- To enhance our collective understanding of the tools, resources, and support networks needed to help drive and better operationalize watershed governance throughout British Columbia.

Insights and themes from this dialogue were visually reproduced in two "infographics" (as shown subsequently, and in Appendix 3).

FIGURE 3. First Nations' Roundtable Discussion, April 27, 2015. ILLUSTRATION BY SAM BRADD

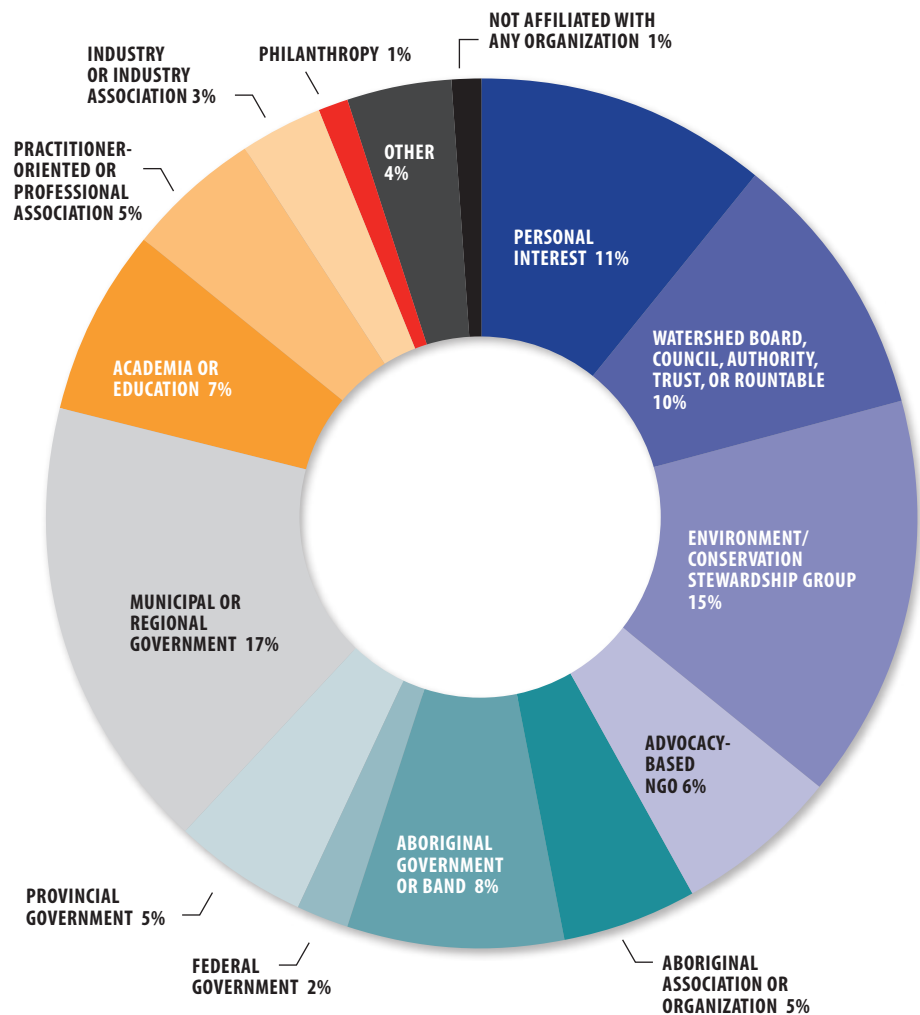


3) Electronic Survey

The findings in this report are also based on the largest survey of its kind on the subject of watershed governance in British Columbia. The survey was developed to gather information and opinions about the future of watershed governance in B.C. from a broad range of respondents working in freshwater management, stewardship, or decision-making. Questions focused on identifying current watershed governance challenges, capacity needs, and the perceived value of a province-wide capacity-building organization.

The survey was distributed to an estimated 4,000 recipients in B.C. using an online platform.ⁱⁱ In total, 439 individuals working in watersheds across the province completed the e-survey, including respondents from local government, First Nations, provincial government, federal government, stewardship groups, industry,ⁱⁱⁱ professional associations, foundations, advocacy organizations, and academia. A high level of supplementary commentary was associated with many of the e-survey questions: approximately 1,500 comments were provided in addition to the specific multiple-choice answers. The completion and response rate indicates substantial interest and engagement on the topic of watershed governance.

FIGURE 4.
Survey Participation
by Affiliation



ii Recipients included individuals in local government, First Nations, provincial government, federal government, stewardship groups, industry, professional associations, and the freshwater community in general. In addition, the e-survey was distributed to over 2,500 other recipients via eight partner organizations. The e-survey distribution partners were representatives from the B.C. Business Council, B.C. Ministry of Environment, Canadian Freshwater Alliance, Environment Canada's Ecosystem Partnerships Program, First Nations Fisheries Council, Partnership for Water Sustainability in B.C., Regional District of Nanaimo, and University of Victoria's Faculty of Law.

iii The e-survey used the term "industry" to encompass a broad range of sectors in B.C.'s business community, including both extractive sectors (such as forestry and mining) and non-extractive sectors (such as agriculture and tourism). Throughout this report, we also use the terms "business community" and "private sector" to refer to the mix of firms and businesses that are operating in B.C.'s watersheds.



4. Findings & Insights

Findings and insights gathered through the interviews, roundtable, and e-survey are organized in this chapter under the following key themes:

- **The Current State of Watershed Governance in B.C.** – explores perceptions of the existing approaches to water management and governance in B.C. Findings here emphasize the wide-ranging dissatisfaction with the status-quo approach to decision-making, and provide some of the solutions proposed by the participants.
- **What Should Watershed Governance Look Like?** – outlines participants’ perspectives on what watershed governance should look like in British Columbia. The data show patterns of strong consensus in some areas, such as the importance of collaboration between multiple actors, but less certainty or differences in opinion in other areas, such as the role of the private sector in watershed governance.
- **Building Capacity to Move Forward** – summarizes findings related to the capacity needs that participants identified as important for enabling watershed governance. This includes key insights on a series of “winning conditions” for watershed governance and the relationships, tools, and services that would be beneficial for making progress on these conditions.
- **Does B.C. Need a Watershed Governance Hub?** – presents participants’ perspectives on the idea of a province-wide capacity-building organization. The data reveal general support for such an organization, and provide insights about both its potential opportunities and challenges.

4.1 FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS: THE CURRENT STATE OF WATERSHED GOVERNANCE IN B.C.

Making Decisions in the Dark

A central theme in the interviews, First Nations' Roundtable discussion, and e-survey responses was an experience of frustration with the current system of centralized, "top-down" management and governance (led by senior governments). This system is viewed as incapable of dealing with the current realities of climate change, population growth, and resource development. The interviews revealed a commonly-held concern that decisions are currently being made in the dark.

"Because right now they're basically making decisions in the dark."

INTERVIEWEE (FIRST NATIONS)

"[T]o allow all of us to kind of wander in the darkness is just stupid talk because what's going to happen is, we're going to have another province-wide crisis and then there will be another outcry, but we'll be behind the game."

INTERVIEWEE (ELECTED LEADERSHIP)

"It's important to be proactive for the future and have an informed foundation upon which to make a decision, and not be shooting blindly in the dark."

INTERVIEWEE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

The e-survey responses provided an even clearer picture of dissatisfaction with the current approach to water governance. Only four per cent of participants agreed that the current approach to management and decision-making about water in B.C. is



FIGURE 5. Perspectives on current management approaches: "The current approach to management and decision-making about water in B.C. is fine as is."

■ AGREE ■ UNSURE ■ DISAGREE

fine as it is. Eighty-three per cent of e-survey respondents disagreed with this statement (and the remainder

were unsure). Similarly, three-quarters of respondents indicated that based on what they know, fresh water is currently being managed either poorly or very poorly in British Columbia.

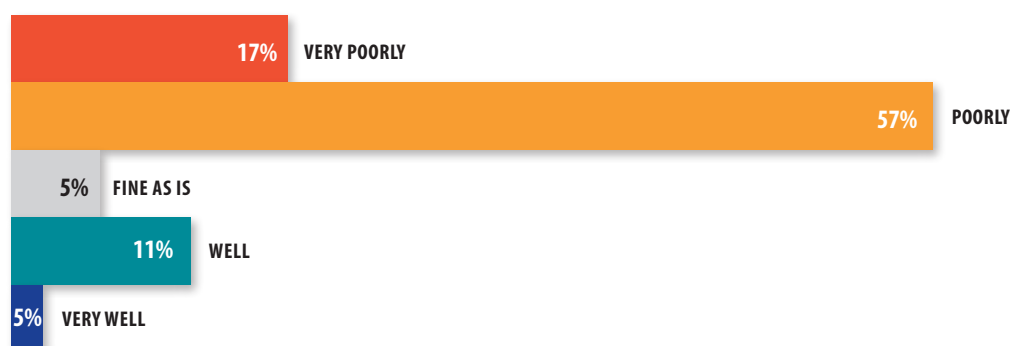
Insights on Failures of the Current System

The following themes drawn from the study data reveal a number of key insights related to the failures of the current system.

1) FIRST NATIONS EXCLUDED

In the First Nations' Roundtable, it was clear that participants believe First Nations are not part of the current system of governance. Roundtable participants emphasized that they feel the Crown is consistently failing to recognize and respect First Nations' laws, values, and traditional knowledge with respect to the land and water. The participants in the Roundtable also expressed frustration with the fact that the current system of governance treats water and other natural resources as commodities, which is inconsistent with First Nations' holistic view of water as a life source.

FIGURE 6. How well is B.C.'s fresh water currently being managed to ensure its protection? *"Based on what you know, how well is fresh water currently being managed to ensure its protection in B.C.?"*



"First Nations people of B.C. and Canada have gone through 150 years of colonialism and impacts of outside forces. Those forces didn't respect the people that were here, our laws, our culture, or our way of life. They just did everything they could to break it ... [The government] has done a terrible job. We're in a state of crisis today and now they are looking back at First Nations, going 'Well, what do you guys think?'"

FIRST NATIONS' ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

"The Creator gave us responsibilities—inherent responsibilities—towards the lands and the water. So really, it's the practice of ensuring that we are doing our teachings and the laws for Indigenous people. Right now if they are not recognized, then they are not being followed. [The current approach] is based on exploitation and treating water as a commodity, but we don't view it as that. We view water as a life source, a gift of life. Our views are very different and they are not being understood or recognized because they just want to sell it or to use it—like LNG—to take up so much water in their processes."

FIRST NATIONS' ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

2) THE SYSTEM IS OUT-DATED AND NOT SUITED TO THE MODERN CONTEXT

A common message emerging from the key informant interviews was that the existing system is no longer functioning and does not address modern concerns and needs related to watershed protection.

"Unfortunately, what we have been dealt over the last 150 years in British Columbia is an archaic system of governance based on multiple jurisdictions ... [I]t's a governance model that is not designed to respond to current changes and expectations."

INTERVIEWEE (ELECTED LEADERSHIP)

"... the political boundaries don't lend themselves to managing water appropriately."

INTERVIEWEE (PROFESSIONAL WATER MANAGER)

3) THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN RETREATING FROM ITS ROLE

One of the core challenges for watershed governance identified in previous literature is the recognition that senior governments no longer have the capacity to effectively manage water resources alone.¹⁰ The interviewees in this study echoed this conclusion.

“Because of their huge deficits, there’s recognition that both federal and provincial government are in general retreat. The traditional services that they used to provide are not being provided. They don’t have the resources to enforce their own regulations. And, with the absence of that historical governance and the retreat from that governance model, there’s been a void. I know our region and communities have recognized that void and are saying, ‘We can do better.’”

INTERVIEWEE (ELECTED LEADERSHIP)

“The Province is moving away from actually doing things. We’ve seen that over the last decade, 15 years, with downloading.”

INTERVIEWEE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

Reflecting the same concerns around provincial leadership and capacity, almost three-quarters of survey respondents agreed that: “The current approach to management and decision-making about water in B.C. would benefit from more provincial government involvement (and the necessary complementing resources such as staff and budgets).”



FIGURE 7. More provincial government involvement and resources needed:

“The current approach to management and decision-making about water in B.C. would benefit from more provincial government involvement (and necessary complementing resources, such as staff and budgets).”

■ AGREE ■ UNSURE ■ DISAGREE

4) COMMUNITIES ARE ILL-PREPARED AND SIMPLY REACTING TO PROBLEMS

Informants generally recognized past harms and current realities, such as climate change, are forcing communities to become reactive and lurch from problem to problem, and that this is unacceptable.

“Climate change is driving this agenda for us, but also population growth and poor land use practices. As we strive to grow our communities and generate wealth for our businesses and our families, we’ve done much harm, and there’s a growing realization that we have to do things differently if we’re going to have a place to enjoy for our children and our grandchildren.”

INTERVIEWEE (ELECTED LEADERSHIP)

“I think the perspective that many share—and that First Nations definitely share—and people may not see it, but, it’s almost too late. If we don’t move as strongly and as quickly as we can to deal with all of these huge issues, it’s going to be too late.”

INTERVIEWEE (WATERSHED BOARD & FIRST NATIONS)

Getting Out of the Dark: How Do We Turn on the Light?

Although participants in the study highlighted numerous problems with the existing system, they also shared constructive approaches to address these problems. This section highlights themes for moving forward with a modern governance framework.

1) ADOPT PROACTIVE COLLABORATIVE MODELS

For the majority of informants, “turning on the light” means adopting a proactive approach to decision-making based on a collaborative model driven by local interests and knowledge. It means exploring new forms of watershed governance and re-evaluating both who is making decisions about B.C.’s watersheds and how those decisions are being made.

“[Watershed governance is] important for making sound, proactive decisions for the future in terms of water sustainability. Whether it’s an allocation decision or a decision about protective measures, I think if the decision-making is founded on a collaborative process, and it’s locally driven and if it has a basis of science and knowledge, then it will be effective for the future.”

INTERVIEWEE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

“[I] don’t think B.C. has a choice.... I think the timing is really good to raise the issue and raise it loudly ... And I think that really looking at innovative ways to form partnerships that we might not have considered before is important—and maybe creating unlikely partnerships might be a possibility.”

INTERVIEWEE (FIRST NATIONS)

2) IMPLEMENT THE B.C. WATER SUSTAINABILITY ACT

Many in this study recognize that WSA implementation is a critical step in B.C.’s shift towards watershed governance, as it provides the potential for new watershed governance entities to assume more responsibility and decision-making authority. Findings demonstrate that progress towards a modern watershed governance framework is intertwined with the implementation of the WSA and will be an important barometer of the legislation’s ultimate success or failure.

“[T]he stepping stones have been put in place. The work on actually developing the Water Sustainability Act and moving from the Water Act into the new legislation is a really good first step. Once the regulations are actually implemented, then that’s when the effective governance models can be given authority and actually make some decisions in the new framework provided by the legislation. I think we’re ready. I think with anything new there are always things you don’t foresee about how it’s going to play out; so, it’ll be a learning curve. But I think now is the time, for sure, and we’ve been building towards it for a while.”

INTERVIEWEE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

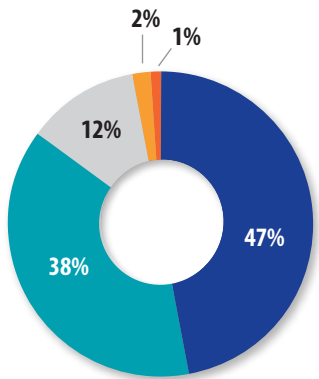


FIGURE 8. Local watershed entities needed: “Please say how much you agree that local watershed entities will be needed to ensure B.C.’s new Water Sustainability Act is implemented to its fullest potential.”



Interview informants also recognized that the creation of local watershed governance entities would be required to implement the WSA effectively (see Box 3: *What is a Watershed Entity?*). Eighty-five per cent of e-survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that local watershed entities will be needed to ensure the new *Water Sustainability Act* is implemented to its fullest potential (only three per cent disagreed with this statement).

“Watershed entities in addition to a variety of other organizations will be needed to ensure that implementation of the Act is successful.”

SURVEY COMMENT

3) RECOGNIZE INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

Many of the interviewees and First Nations’ Roundtable participants highlighted the importance of recognizing Indigenous rights associated with First Nations’ traditional territories, practices, and culture. In particular, the First Nations’ Roundtable discussion emphasized that Indigenous peoples in British Columbia hold inherent ownership of territorial lands and waters that include care-taking responsibilities and jurisdiction. Pursuing reconciliation is seen as an essential condition for effective watershed governance.

“The traditional territory of the First Nations has to be recognized and reconciled in terms of the holistic principles that First Nations, Indigenous people hold to the lands and the resources ... There are existing Aboriginal rights that need to be taken into consideration.”

FIRST NATIONS’ ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

“We should have done it 150 years ago.”

INTERVIEWEE (ELECTED LEADERSHIP)

4) IMPROVE MONITORING AND REPORTING ON WATER AND WATER MANAGEMENT

Near-consensus exists (98 per cent of e-survey respondents) that improved monitoring and reporting on water and water management will be necessary in the next 10



FIGURE 9. Improved monitoring and reporting on water is very necessary: “In the next 10 years, how much will each of the following be needed with respect to water management and decision-making in B.C.?”



years in B.C., with 79 per cent of respondents indicating that it will be very necessary.

Section Summary

Based on our findings, there is clear dissatisfaction with the current state of watershed governance in B.C. The existing approach is considered to be out-dated, poorly resourced, and disrespectful of Indigenous rights and knowledge. Moreover, the status-quo leaves communities ill-prepared to deal with the many threats facing their local watersheds.

Fortunately, the data revealed a number of clear pathways for developing a modern watershed governance framework, including adopting collaborative models for watershed governance, effective implementation of the *Water Sustainability Act*, full recognition of Indigenous rights, and improved monitoring and reporting on water and water management. These could be considered as foundational pillars for enabling new approaches to watershed governance, and for taking water management in British Columbia out of the dark ages and into the 21st Century.

The next section presents more specific findings about what watershed governance should look like in B.C., including who should be involved, who should make decisions, and at what scale.

4.2 FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS: WHAT SHOULD WATERSHED GOVERNANCE LOOK LIKE?

Who Needs to be Involved?

1) WATERSHED GOVERNANCE IS INHERENTLY COLLABORATIVE

One point of clear consensus is that watershed governance needs to be undertaken collaboratively and must involve multiple players, including senior governments, First Nations, local governments, citizens, NGOs, and the private sector (see Box 4: *Perspectives on Key Players in Collaborative Watershed Governance*).

“We are not going to change the way we have been doing business, unless it’s in a collaborative approach. There’s too much invested in so many different ways by so many different groups, that if we are going to create a model to provide a sustainable water resource, there is no other way but to do it together.”

INTERVIEWEE (ELECTED LEADERSHIP)

“For me, governance is decision-making and management, but it should include all of the people, not just the government. A lot of the time, government tends to think they have answers to everything and then they present it, roll it out, whether they include the input of community members or not. I am thinking generally, all community members, not just First Nations. A lot of the time, the community people that live within watershed don’t have a say or a place to have input.”

FIRST NATIONS’ ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

The informant interviews reiterated many of the benefits of collaborative decision-making that have been well-documented in previous studies and reports.¹¹ Two important insights that complement this existing understanding are the potential for collaborative initiatives to attract investment and support from a broad spectrum of funders, and to strengthen communities through respect for diverse knowledge systems.

BOX 3: WHAT IS A WATERSHED ENTITY?

In this report (and provided as context in the e-survey questions), the term “Watershed Entity” (WE) refers to the holistic organizations and governance arrangements that might exist at the watershed scale, and are generally seen to be necessary to move towards a new, more watershed-focused approach.

WEs might include authorities, boards, trusts, regional bodies, or other watershed partnerships or arrangements. WEs are characterized as having formal support and a recognized governing mandate, as well as identified roles and responsibilities relating to preserving and promoting watershed health and function, and sustaining the local economy and community well-being.

This notion of a Watershed Entity is also consistent with what is proposed in the *Water Sustainability Act*, which supports the possibility of formal role(s) for local “watershed governance arrangements” (people or agencies outside the provincial government) that might be involved in delegation or sharing of some watershed stewardship functions or decisions.

For more information and discussion on this concept, see: Brandes, O.M., O’Riordan, J., O’Riordan, T., & Brandes, L. (2014, January). *A Blueprint for Watershed Governance in British Columbia*. Victoria, Canada: POLIS Project on Ecological Governance, University of Victoria, p. 15–17. Available online: <http://poliswaterproject.org/blueprint>

- a) **Strength in Diversity:** A major theme expressed by several informants, including First Nations interviewees, is the critical need to recognize, respect, and value Indigenous knowledge and processes. One of the central benefits of collaborative decision-making is its potential to integrate many knowledge systems to ensure better information for decision-making.

“There are a number of factors that have to be keyed in, like there needs to be agreements on respecting knowledge. For example, traditional knowledge has to be equally considered with Western scientific knowledge ...

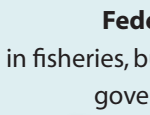
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BOX 4: PERSPECTIVES ON KEY PLAYERS IN COLLABORATIVE WATERSHED GOVERNANCE

Successful watershed governance depends on broad participation from a wide range of actors. These organizations, governments, and individuals contribute to decision-making in unique ways, and this research explored these different roles. The following summarizes these impressions:



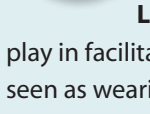
Provincial Government: While many interviewees and e-survey respondents noted that the provincial government is retreating from its traditional water management role, there was agreement that the Province has an integral role to play in setting standards and thresholds, enforcement, and promoting and enabling local watershed governance.



Federal Government: The federal government was only peripherally acknowledged for its role in fisheries, but some respondents did acknowledge that there is a Constitutional role for the federal government in ongoing water management and governance.



First Nations: All interviewees agreed that First Nations need to be involved in collaborative initiatives and most agreed that co-governance between First Nations and non-First Nations actors is essential.

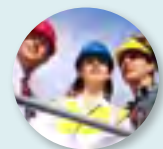


Local Government: Most respondents agreed that local government has a critical role to play in facilitating and coordinating local collaborative watershed governance. Local governments were seen as wearing many hats, including: convenor, facilitator, educator, coordinator, participant, planner, and regional decision-maker (for example, zoning, drinking water management, riparian protection). There was a particular emphasis on the importance and opportunity for regional districts to consider their roles in watershed governance, given their interconnectedness with different levels of government and roles in both regional and community-based planning and decision-making.



Citizens & NGOs: Regardless of the scale for watershed governance, respondents recognized the value of local citizens and NGOs in contributing to public education and information gathering. NGOs are considered “powerful advocates” that are able to push governments towards new forms of governance. Citizens and NGOs are seen as providing valuable oversight. They are also the “boots on the ground,” providing considerable human resources, local expertise, information gathering, and monitoring to inform decision-making. Citizens tend to be most engaged at the scale of their local watershed. As such, it is critical that watershed governance continues to engage and be relevant to communities and volunteers at the watershed level.

The Private Sector: Informants agreed that private sector representatives must be participants in local decision-making in order to be “part of the solution.” Business and industry should be acknowledged as members of the watershed and the community.



I think that you could do a lot of good by diversifying where you're getting your information, thereby making it stronger ... When everyone has a sense that they can relate to what you're doing, that's a really important part of community development in general ... and can create more connected community meetings between First Nations and non-First Nations."

INTERVIEWEE (FIRST NATIONS)

- b) Financial Sustainability:** An interviewee sharing the perspective of local government indicated that when a collaborative initiative can demonstrate the ability to successfully collaborate on projects and programs, its potential to attract *more* investment from government, funders, and other potential partners is likely to increase.

"Funders love nothing better than to see a group of people spreading the financial risk around."

INTERVIEWEE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

2) MORE LOCAL COMMUNITY INPUT DESIRED

There is strong agreement that decision-making around water should involve more local input than it does presently.

Ninety-two per cent of e-survey respondents indicated it would be very necessary or necessary to have more local community input into government decisions in the next 10 years.



This desire for local involvement is based on the belief that the communities that reside in a watershed have the greatest knowledge about what is happening in their area and the strongest investment in ensuring the watershed is protected.

"[F]rom my perspective, it is around effective and meaningful engagement of community—the people that live in that watershed [know] what is going on in their area, and need to know what decisions are being made and how—including the decision-making process and relevant policies."

INTERVIEWEE (FIRST NATIONS)

FIGURE 10. Agreement that more local input into decision-making is needed:

"More local community input into government decisions (i.e., municipal/regional, provincial, aboriginal government or band, or federal decisions) is needed."



3) CO-GOVERNANCE WITH FIRST NATIONS IS ESSENTIAL

In both the interviews and the First Nations' Roundtable, strong statements emphasized the importance of recognizing and supporting First Nations' leadership in watershed governance and moving towards co-governance with First Nations.^{iv}

"The missing link is co-governance and that's where we're headed next."

INTERVIEWEE (STEWARDSHIP)

^{iv} Aboriginal co-governance of water and watersheds was the topic of a December 2014 POLIS Water Sustainability Project webinar. Speakers from the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources, First Nations Fisheries Council, and the ICCA Consortium/POLIS Project describe successful examples, emerging opportunities for change, and what conditions or frameworks must be in place to ensure co-governance arrangements can thrive. The recording and summary are available online: <http://poliswaterproject.org/webinar/803>

“When I start thinking about governance seriously, I have to really look at what they’ve done in the Cowichan. A big part of it that I really like, and it seems to have worked nicely, is the leadership with First Nations. That’s what we need to do here. That’s what we all need to do.”

INTERVIEWEE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

“I mean, everybody understands we’re in a different, more positive world. [The Regional District] and, well, all the municipalities are working towards co-governance and moving very quickly to try and deal with the relationship issue. They know there’s going to be friction and they know that there’s going to be implications, but they’re still trying to move forward.”

INTERVIEWEE (WATERSHED BOARD & FIRST NATIONS)

Respondents also acknowledged the existing significant barriers and challenges to moving towards Indigenous-led approaches and co-governance. These include:

- a failure to value traditional knowledge in decisions;
- a lack of acknowledgement by the provincial government of First Nations’ rights and title;
- First Nations’ capacity;
- rigid and bureaucratic processes that are not co-created and generally amplify a feeling of mistrust, lack of respect, and a sense of tokenism; and,
- funding for existing watershed governance initiatives based on taxation that is used to justify the exclusion of First Nations from assuming decision-making authority.

The Roundtable discussions focused on these significant hurdles for moving towards true co-governance. Many of these barriers will not easily be removed, or might take many years to address. However, working together through meaningful watershed decision-making processes can be an important step towards the trust-building and reconciliation needed to begin addressing these identified concerns.

“It has to be an equal playing field. For instance, if your regional district has a water board and all of the local mayors are on that water board, but only one First Nations representative or Chief is on the board, but you have eight Chiefs in your Nation, then it’s not fair. We are also so over-stretched for capacity that the one person can hardly make all the board meetings, and they don’t represent every community, each of which has its own priorities.”

FIRST NATIONS’ ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

“What we need to do is understand what it is we want to achieve with First Nations. We talk about it in co-governance language, but we want to get that straight, where we want to go, before we jump into a structure that starts defining what it is ... that definition can only be dealt with First Nations’ input, and that input just doesn’t happen ... it just takes a lot of discussions and a fair amount of time to talk about what it is you’re trying to achieve and build trust, and build relationships.”

INTERVIEWEE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

“You need to have a governance model that is effective ... We’ve demonstrated that on a smaller scale with the Cowichan Watershed Board, because it’s a true partnership between Cowichan Tribes and local governments, a true partnership.... It’s a simple tool of co-chair and it’s interesting, we don’t have very many models of co-chairs elsewhere, but we took the same co-chair initiative with our health network (Cowichan Committee’s Health Network) ... A major part of that is that collaborative governance model with First Nations where we’re both equal at the table.”

INTERVIEWEE (ELECTED LEADERSHIP)

4) DIVIDED OPINIONS ON THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The e-survey revealed less agreement around the role of the private sector in decision-making around water. Half of the respondents indicated that it was very necessary or necessary to have more industry input into government decisions, with the remaining 49 per cent indicating they were uncertain or opposed to more input.

A recurring theme in e-survey and interview comments was that it is important for industry to provide input into decisions, but that this input should not be given priority over community interests.

“I think industry practices are an important input into informing how government decisions need to be made in terms of developing satisfactory regulatory and enforcement regimes. This implies, however, that industry inputs are not weighted more favourably over the interests of the public and First Nations.”

SURVEY COMMENT

“Industries should not be given a greater say in water management than local communities, however, involving them to forecast their needs going forward would be beneficial.”

SURVEY COMMENT

“I support industry but fear its short-sightedness and profit-orientation when it comes to preserving resources indefinitely. Industry input is necessary but must be assessed critically.”

SURVEY COMMENT

“If you think of it from a business person’s point of view, and they’re in community, they want to be part of that community. So it’s trying to find that really nuanced place where we don’t exist outside of community.”

INTERVIEWEE (BUSINESS COMMUNITY)

“I think we can operate with industry because we will ensure they have a social licence to be there.”

INTERVIEWEE (STEWARDSHIP)

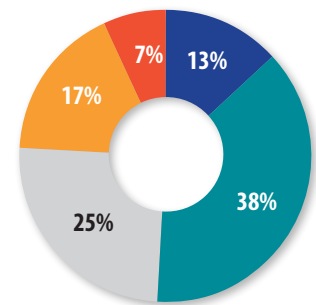


FIGURE 11. Disagreement around whether more industry input into government decision-making is needed: “In the next 10 years how much will more industry input into government decisions (i.e. municipal/regional, provincial, First Nations, federal) be needed with respect to water management and decision-making in B.C.?”

■ VERY NECESSARY
 ■ NECESSARY
 ■ NEITHER NEEDED/NOT NEEDED
 ■ UNNECESSARY
 ■ VERY UNNECESSARY

“[Industry] has to have the confidence and faith going forward that this new model is for the greater good and it’s not about harming industry and it’s not about punitive taxation. Industry employs our people, feeds our families, and helps build our communities, but somehow we have to find a greater balance.”

INTERVIEWEE (ELECTED LEADERSHIP)

Who Has Authority?

An important goal of the study was to test, and better understand, respondents’ perspectives on who should have authority for decision-making on water. The e-survey revealed a high level of agreement that delegated decision-making authority to local



FIGURE 12. Perspectives on a delegated decision-making framework: *“The current approach to management and decision-making around water in B.C. would benefit from a framework that shares and in some cases delegated decision-making responsibilities to more local entities.”*

■ AGREE ■ UNSURE ■ DISAGREE

watershed entities is a desirable goal of watershed governance. Seventy-nine per cent of respondents indicated that they strongly agreed that the current approach to management and decision-making around water in B.C. would benefit from a framework that shares and in some cases delegates decision-making responsibilities to more local entities. Twelve per cent were unsure, and nine percent disagreed.”

1) DELEGATING AUTHORITY SHOULD NOT BE AN EXCUSE FOR DOWNLOADING

Some e-survey comments add additional nuance to this finding, including caveats for when it makes most sense to delegate authority. Various respondents suggested that delegation may not be appropriate or possible in all areas and should not be an excuse for downloading responsibilities without the necessary resources or regulatory support.

“Local watershed entities won’t be possible in ALL cases (especially in some of the less populated areas) ... so there will need to be mechanisms to ensure that where local watershed entities don’t exist, that good decisions can still be made.”

SURVEY COMMENT

“In some areas more shared local control would work. In other areas, it may be that increased capacity at the provincial government level (and municipal) would suffice, or a First Nation in titled lands.”

SURVEY COMMENT

“I’d support a watershed board model, assuming that regulatory powers and responsibilities were supported by the Province.”

SURVEY COMMENT

“We should be careful not to download responsibilities to groups without adequate resources or labour power.”

SURVEY COMMENT

“Without capacity, nothing will be able to be managed. You can’t just expect local governments to take on this responsibility. The Province needs to set forth more direction and goals to protect water resources.”

SURVEY COMMENT

“First Nations’ rights and title issues also need to be addressed because without this it would only replicate existing scenarios where First Nations are being asked to participate in colonial water governance processes, rather than co-governance.”

SURVEY COMMENT

2) DELEGATING AUTHORITY REQUIRES PROVINCIAL OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Informants also highlighted the need for a provincial regulatory framework that will enable and provide a structure for delegation while ensuring strong provincial oversight and accountability.

“There are several challenges. First of all, one of the greatest challenges is the new regulations. The Water Sustainability Act has opened a door for us in terms of potential for the Province to actually recognize watershed authorities. The question is, will they develop the regulations that will allow us to take on some new authority? This means relinquishing of some Provincial regulatory authority to local authorities to better manage the resource.... And we need to have a government that is willing and open to do that.”

INTERVIEWEE (ELECTED LEADERSHIP)

“I think there needs to be some delegated authority ... having decisions come from the local insights of First Nations, local governments, municipalities, or stewardship groups. I know in the Water Sustainability Act there’s kind of a caveat that even when they delegate authority, the final say comes back to the Province. In some cases, I think it could be good to have that oversight and accountability in terms of locally informed decision-making, but having Provincial oversight provides a pretty well-laid out structure of regulatory processes, so that we have something to hang our hat on.... If strong regulatory guidance is put into place by the Province, that will result in a good tool box to help us achieve important actions based on local decisions and local vision for how we want to manage our water resources and our communities.”

INTERVIEWEE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

3) FIRST NATIONS’ ROLE IN DELEGATED DECISION-MAKING

Uncertainty was expressed around how local watershed boards would work with First Nations to make decisions. This reflects the need to ensure Indigenous rights are respected, and for First Nations to be at the forefront of the decision-making process.

“I don’t know how that would work. You really aren’t going to have the true power of having First Nations involved and helping guide without decision-making powers. It is not good enough to say, “We all need to work in this together, but we’re going to make the decisions and you just get to play.” We can’t do that. Having said that, I don’t know how we would make that work. Maybe it means that First Nations are part of our board.”

INTERVIEWEE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

“Along with having a place to have input, [watershed governance requires] an equal voice in decision-making and respecting all cultural, traditional values that everyone has.”

FIRST NATIONS’ ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

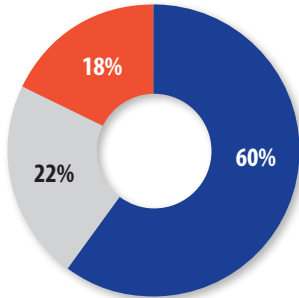


FIGURE 13. Business and professional perspectives on a delegated decision-making framework: Responses of individuals from industry and practitioner-oriented & professional associations: The current approach to management and decision-making about water in B.C. would benefit from a framework that shares and in some cases delegates decision-making.”

■ AGREE ■ UNSURE ■ DISAGREE

4) A BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE ON DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

The business community perspective was an exception to the general desire in the e-survey for delegated decision-making. One interviewee favoured more centralized decision-making and expressed concerns that delegating decision-making would lead to balkanization, uncertainty for the private sector, and increased fees paid by companies to fund regional bodies.

“[T]he business community doesn’t support delegated authority in a water governance model.... We want to maintain a very strong centralized decision-making authority.... business concerns are around a balkanized system. If you fully delegate that authority to a regional body, there are issues of uncertainty, and regions playing off regions ... a decentralized system has to be funded. The usual approach is to look to the business community. Government keeps adding more and more user fees, and less and less is allocated from general revenue. These fees and extra costs are usually paid for by industry. At some point, you are uncompetitive and there are negative economic effects. If you fully play out the decentralized model, it’s all based on user fees from a regional basis.”

INTERVIEWEE (BUSINESS COMMUNITY)

It should be noted that the business community representative supported collaboration at the watershed scale, but drew a distinction between collaborative decision-making by watershed entities and collaborative forums that simply *inform* decisions by senior governments—with the former being less desirable and the latter being an advisory role that “leads to better, informed decision-making.”

“... from a business perspective, [an appropriate and meaningful but advisory, not decision-making, role] would be the closest that I think we would get to supporting a watershed governance model where you have a collaborative table. You have a facilitated conversation about what your objectives are. You build information and knowledge, so that those tables, whatever they look like, have enough content themselves to make recommendations ... listening is key.”

INTERVIEWEE (BUSINESS COMMUNITY)

The business community representative commented that it might also be too soon to “jump” to a delegated governance model without having more practical experience of collaboration at the advisory level, although the survey responses from industry and water professionals do not necessarily support this sentiment.

“And maybe it’s an evolutionary thing. Maybe we’re trying to jump to an assumed governance model, which is delegated and regional, before we’ve gotten much experience at doing it practically. A useful example is the B.C. Hydro water use planning process.... if you could work out some logical and rational way for people to have a voice... Without being the decision-maker... a whole new governance structure requires money and capacity, and may not be something that can be sustained.”

INTERVIEWEE (BUSINESS COMMUNITY)

What’s the Best Scale?

While decision-making at the scale of the watershed might be desirable, some key informants suggested that it might not always be practical. One interviewee noted that with several thousand watersheds in B.C., it is not practical to have watershed governance for every sub-watershed. Rather, mid-sized, well-defined watersheds, such as the Cowichan^v or Okanagan Basin, might lend themselves to watershed governance. On the other hand, the Fraser River or Columbia River may not work for this governance model, given their large geographic size or trans-boundary nature.

“The choice of scale is really important. I don’t think there’s one answer to that question. But I think it’s a choice you make when you look at watershed governance. There are over 200,000 unique blue lines on the map of British Columbia.... I don’t think anyone’s thinking that we need 200,000 watershed governance models.”

INTERVIEWEE (PROFESSIONAL WATER MANAGER)

“The choice of scale will define how the governance model shapes itself.”

INTERVIEWEE (PROFESSIONAL WATER MANAGER)

A potential solution to this might involve a nested approach. Umbrella groups, like the Fraser Basin Council, Columbia Basin Trust, and the Gulf Islands Trust, could assist in capacity-building and coordination of smaller (nested) governance bodies in relevant sub-watersheds or in regions where various smaller coastal watersheds are clumped together (such as on the islands or along the coast).

However, the elected official interviewee asserted that governance at the watershed scale is critical to ensure that the public is effectively engaged and participating in watershed governance.

“[W]e have got this huge army of volunteers, I’m talking about a huge army of volunteers that are living in the Cowichan watershed, that are doing their part to make it a healthier watershed. We don’t want to lose that and so you still need that smaller governance ... watershed-sized governance model to harness that human resource that you wouldn’t get to the same degree if you had just strictly a regional model.”

INTERVIEWEE (ELECTED LEADERSHIP)

^v For further discussion about the Cowichan watershed, see Hunter, R. with Brandes, O.M., & Moore, M-L. (2014). *The Cowichan Watershed Board: An Evolution of Collaborative Watershed Governance*. Victoria, Canada: POLIS Project on Ecological Governance, University of Victoria. Available online: <http://poliswaterproject.org/publication/761>.

At the First Nations' Roundtable, it was suggested that the boundaries of traditional territories or the community level were the most appropriate scales for governance.

"I agree with the territory approach for today and the next five years, but I think the long-term goal would be that it is community based. It's that family that lives on that river and next to that lake who has generations of knowledge from their ancestors about what it used to be and what it is now and what they want for future generations. That's where we should be headed towards for who governs in the watersheds."

FIRST NATIONS' ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

In contrast, the business community representative expressed concern about allowing communities to make decisions that may not reflect the broader public interest or larger jurisdictions that are affected by their decisions.

"[I]n an era of lack of trust in government and capacity constraints in government, people naturally turn to 'my backyard' decision-making, but 'my backyard' decision-making or 'my community' decision-making doesn't consider the public interest trade-off that has to happen for jurisdiction that is larger than a community."

INTERVIEWEE (BUSINESS COMMUNITY)

Section Summary

There are many rich insights from the data that shed light on what watershed governance should like in British Columbia, including: clear consensus around the need for more collaborative approaches to watershed governance that engage local interests; strong support for co-governance approaches that facilitate shared decision-making with First Nations; and accompanying recognition of the significant barriers to enabling these approaches. Conversely, in some areas, the data was less clear. For instance, participants were unsure about the appropriate role of the private sector in watershed governance.

When it comes to decision-making authority, general support exists for the idea of delegating more authority to the local or watershed scale. Two important caveats emerging from this research are that:

- 1) this should not be used to justify downloading more responsibilities to local communities without sufficient resources; and,
- 2) there is the need for ongoing provincial oversight and accountability.

Uncertainties exist around how First Nations would engage in delegated decision-making, and perhaps a preference from a business perspective in maintaining centralized authority. With respect to the scale of decision-making, there is support for using the watershed scale but also recognition that this may not always be feasible depending on the size of the watershed. In some cases, more nested or integrated approaches may be needed.

While this research provides important insights and helps deepen our collective understanding of what watershed governance should look like in B.C.—including revealing areas that require more discussion—the actual implementation of watershed governance will require new capacities and tools. Identifying these capacity needs was a core goal of this study. Opportunities for building capacity to undertake watershed governance are presented in the next two sections.

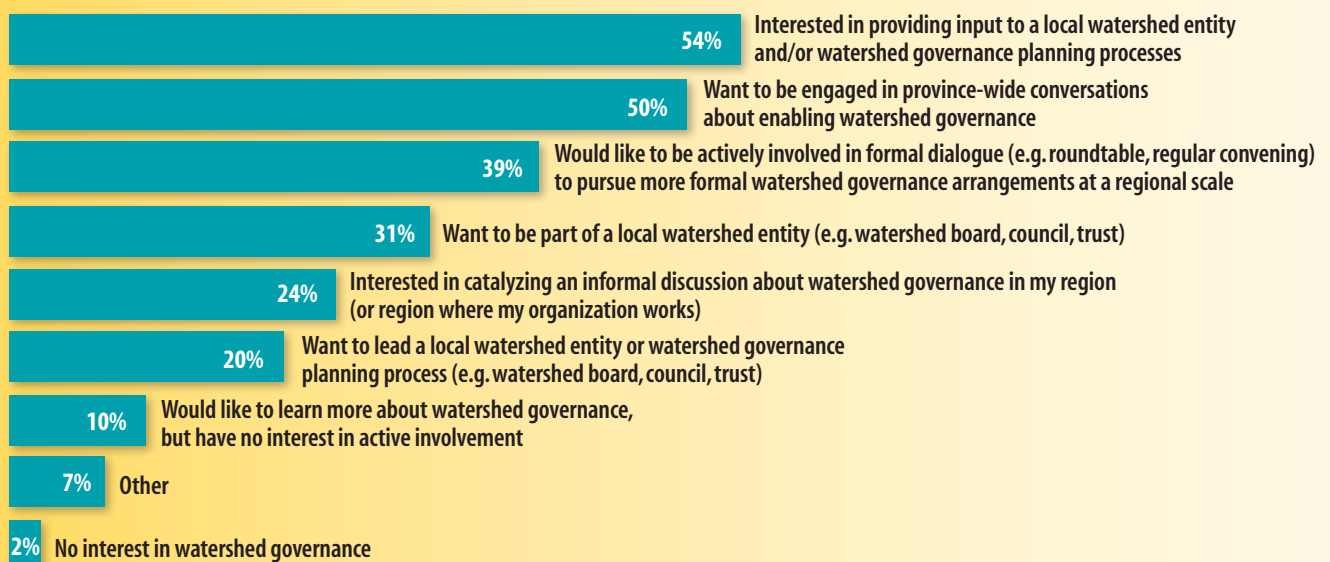
4.3 FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS: BUILDING CAPACITY TO MOVE FORWARD

Significant Appetite to be Involved in Watershed Governance

A large percentage of e-survey respondents revealed their interest in being actively involved in watershed governance. Twenty-four per cent of respondents indicated that they were interested in taking a *leadership role* in catalyzing discussions about watershed governance in their region; 39 per cent would like to be *actively involved* in a formal dialogue to pursue more formal watershed governance arrangements at a regional scale (e.g. roundtable, regular convening); more than half of the respondents (54 per cent) are interested in *providing input* to a local watershed entity (e.g. watershed board, council, trust); and 50 per cent want to be *engaged in province-wide conversations* about enabling watershed governance.

FIGURE 14. Significant appetite to be engaged in watershed governance:

“Select the statement(s) that most closely aligns with your or your organization’s/department’s desired level of activity in watershed governance.”



Challenges to Achieving Watershed Governance in B.C.

The key informants and First Nations' Roundtable collectively provided a long list of challenges, issues, and barriers to watershed governance, which have been categorized under six themes (see Box 5: *Challenges to Achieving Watershed Governance in B.C.*). Many of these themes echo the findings of earlier research reports.¹²

Conditions for Enabling Watershed Governance

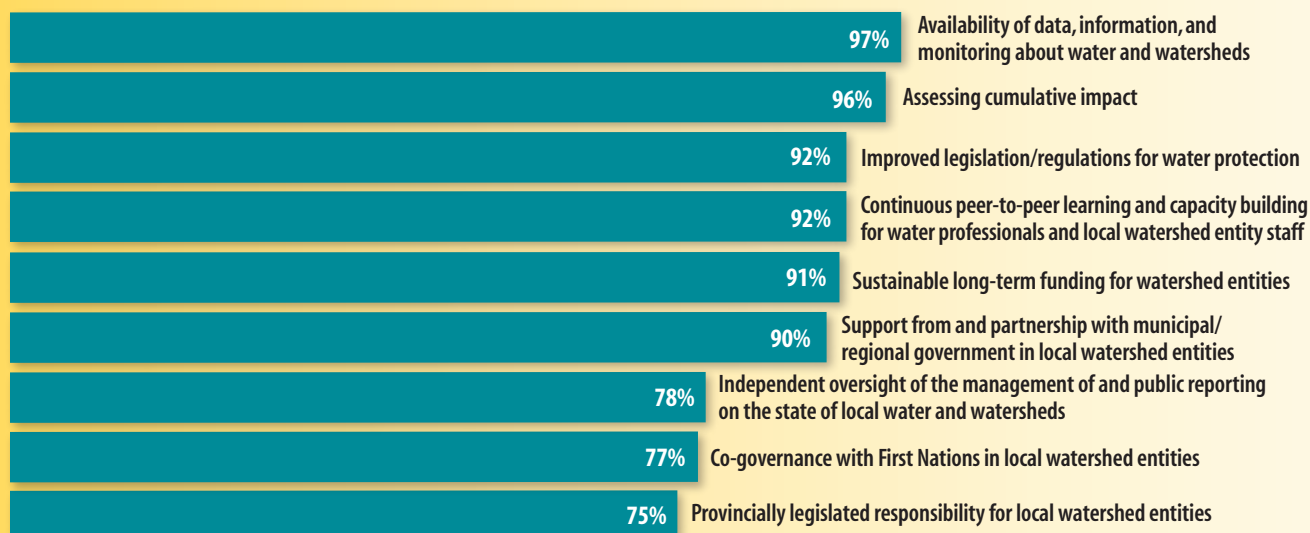
An important theme in all of the discussions related to the conditions required to enable effective watershed governance. This major topic has been explored in some detail in various recent research reports.¹³ A number of enabling conditions (referred to as “winning conditions”) have been identified in the general literature and are considered to be either “best practices” or “key principles” that together form the basis for a modern and effective watershed governance framework. In the e-survey, these winning conditions were tested to see if respondents agreed they are key priorities and whether additional conditions exist.

As outlined in Figure 15, there was high level of agreement with all of the practices and principles outlined in the survey question. There was proportionately less agreement for legislated responsibility for watershed entities, co-governance with First Nations, and independent oversight. This perhaps reflects some of the challenges, uncertainties, or concerns related to delegated authority noted in the previous chapter. However, more than three-quarters of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that these were effective elements of watershed governance.

BOX 5: CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING WATERSHED GOVERNANCE IN B.C.

VOID IN LEADERSHIP/LACK OF CLARITY IN ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	Questions remain around authority and capacity to lead watershed governance: Who pays? Who will share power and with whom? Is existing authority listening? Who is legitimate? Managing complex relationships: who do you bring together and how?
CAPACITY ISSUES	Insufficient or project-based funding; lack of capacity (time, human resources and money)
THE STATUS-QUO	Current governance structures are hard to break from (path dependency); there is currently an absence of an implemented regulatory framework to support ecological values
LACK OF UNDERSTANDING/ LACK OF CONTINUITY OF RELATIONSHIPS	Not enough public knowledge about water or human impacts on watershed health; lack of common language around water issues; lack of a shared purpose and vision; lack of continuity among key players and long-term interests
POLITICAL REALITIES	Existing political pressures and conflicting demands of politicians; slow pace of bureaucratic decision-making contrasted with short-term political pressures (both incompatible with collaborative processes)
FEARS	Fear of uncertainty; fear that undesired approach will be imposed

FIGURE 15: Confirming “winning conditions for effective watershed governance” established in previous research: “The following practices or principles of effective watershed governance have been identified in research. Please say how much you agree or disagree that each is an effective element of watershed governance.” ■ STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE



In the key informant interviews, several interviewees emphasized many of the same practices and principles outlined in the survey, including the need for: delegated authority, sustainable funding, engagement of local governments, a legislative framework that protects ecological values, peer-to-peer learning, and co-governance with First Nations.

In addition to these winning conditions, the key informants also indicated that the following conditions are needed to enable watershed governance in B.C.

1) EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIPS

Two interviewees emphasized the need for effective and meaningful relationships and respectful dialogue between all levels of government, including First Nations. This sentiment was also highlighted in the First Nations’ Roundtable discussions.

“[Provincial government and municipalities] need to support and listen to the First Nations and Indigenous governments and governance processes on the land, which means recognition. Because they don’t understand the water and the land like we do—inherent knowledge—inherent collective knowledge that we have had. They just need to make that space. Our law and who we are and their Crown law is different—so that’s where the problem is. With recognition—it is allowing us to be who we are but we have a big job to do to keep the water clean and keep the water healthy and keep the water flowing and keep that water cycle continuous. First Nations need to lead that process. They can’t manage it sitting in Ottawa or Victoria.”

FIRST NATIONS’ ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

2) IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT WATERSHED GOVERNANCE

The Professional Water Manager interviewee suggested that “we need better ways of communicating why this stuff is important,” including better ways to talk about watershed governance.

3) WATERSHED PLANNING

Several respondents stated that watershed planning was the starting point to proactive dialogue. In particular, the key informant representing a First Nations’ perspective suggested that Indigenous watershed planning is a critical first step for First Nations communities before they can productively contribute to co-governance discussions.

“I see this movement more as planning for how things are done as opposed to protesting against how things are done.”

INTERVIEWEE (STEWARDSHIP)

“[T]he beginning is water use plans.”

INTERVIEWEE (BUSINESS COMMUNITY)

“Being able to have that conversation is so key. And then, talk about co-governance, and then we’ll be able to say “Well, this is how we feel and this is what we want.” I’m sure at the end there’s going to be a lot of commonalities. But the local knowledge, and the traditional knowledge, will only enhance any process that’s developed, by making it more specific and respectful to that area.”

INTERVIEWEE (FIRST NATIONS)

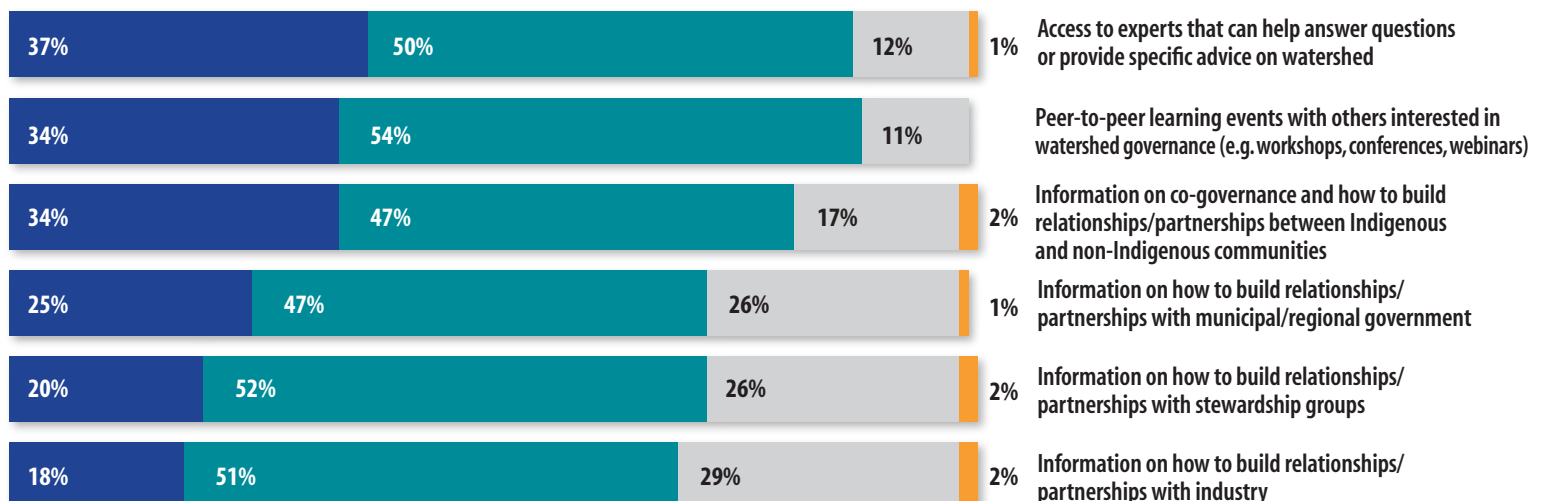
FIGURE 16. Exploring tools and services to support engagement in watershed governance:

“The following practices or principles of effective watershed governance have been identified in research. Please say how much you agree or disagree that each is an effective element of watershed governance.”

VERY HELPFUL HELPFUL
NEITHER UNHELPFUL

4) ENGAGED & EDUCATED CITIZENS

Several interviewees emphasized the need for people to actually value water and to give governments the mandate to engage in watershed governance initiatives.



5) COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP & CAPACITY

A number of interviewees highlighted the importance of strong leadership, as well as the capacity to support leaders with necessary tools and resources, such as skilled facilitation.

“We have to have the courage to do something different.... It will take a steady hand or hands at the table to take us from where we’re at to the future, and it takes a willingness to take great risk because we’re going to a place that we haven’t been before.”

INTERVIEWEE (ELECTED LEADERSHIP)

“What do I wish we had?” I wish we had the framework up-front, all the principles ... How to do objectives setting, what we mean by performance measures.... facilitators, skilled facilitation who have no stake in the outcome, is key. That’s really important. They have to be neutral.”

INTERVIEWEE (BUSINESS COMMUNITY)

Capacity Needs & Priorities

The e-survey revealed a broad range of capacity needs and priorities that respondents identified as beneficial to supporting their desired level of activity in watershed governance. These can be divided into 1) relationship-building needs, and 2) priority tools and services.

1) RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING NEEDS

The survey presented a range of different capacity opportunities related to relationship-building, including access to experts, peer-to-peer learning, and information on how to build relationships with Indigenous communities, governments and other key sectors. Although each of the items presented are generally seen as helpful, it is worth noting that more than 80 per cent of respondents identified access to experts, peer-to-peer learning events, and building relationships/partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities as either very helpful or helpful.

2) PRIORITY TOOLS & SERVICES

There is a high level of desire for a range of tools and services. More than 80 per cent of respondents identified information or guidance on sustainable funding, monitoring and cumulative impacts assessment, case studies of watershed governance examples in other regions, and education and coaching on principles or models of watershed governance, as either very helpful or helpful. These results reinforce that there is strong interest in involvement in watershed governance and access to practical tools and services that can support that involvement.

In addition to the e-survey responses, the interviews and First Nations’ Roundtable also revealed a number of specific needs, tools, and services that would support improved watershed governance in B.C. The research team collated over fifty ideas

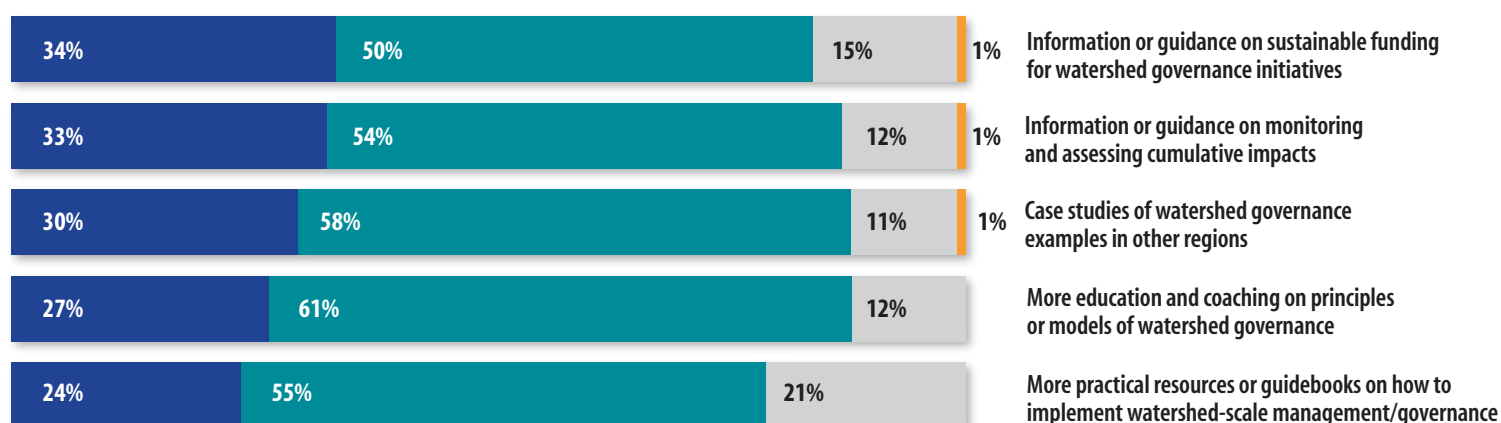


FIGURE 17. Additional priority tools and services to build capacity for watershed governance

■ VERY HELPFUL
 ■ HELPFUL
 ■ NEITHER
 ■ UNHELPFUL

that they heard from participants in a summary table (see Appendix 2). Suggestions ranged from ideas about how technical and scientific gaps could be addressed (such as open-access water data centres) to identification of planning and communication needs (such as community watershed planning tools). Altogether, these suggestions provide valuable insights into watershed governance capacity needs across the province that should assist capacity-building organizations, funders and governments as they consider how they might support watershed governance going forward.

Section Summary

This study has revealed a substantial appetite from a broad range of sectors for being involved in collaborative watershed governance. This interest ranges from playing a leadership role in a watershed governance process or entity, to coordinating informal discussions about watershed governance, to providing input to a local watershed authority or broader provincial discussions.

At the same time, it is clear that moving forward on watershed governance is not a simple task. This study highlighted a number of challenges along with a substantial list of pre-conditions for success. The data confirmed the importance of previously-identified winning conditions for watershed governance, but also pointed to a number of other conditions deemed necessary for successful watershed governance. Significant capacity needs will need to be addressed in order to meet these conditions and prepare various actors to effectively lead, participate in, and support watershed governance. These needs include building relationships between sectors, peer-to-peer learning and having access to expert advice, as well as a broad range of tools and services related to implementing and sustaining watershed governance.

The next section of this report builds on these findings by outlining the level of support for a province-wide capacity-building entity that could help address some of these capacity needs and build a community of practice. The section considers what such a watershed governance hub might look like and reveals insights into the potential challenges and opportunities that might arise with the creation of such an organization.

4.4 FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS: DOES B.C. NEED A WATERSHED GOVERNANCE HUB?

The data collected through this study deepens the understanding of capacity needs and potential services that have been identified more generally in previous studies. For instance, one of the main conclusions coming out of the 2013 *The State of the Water Movement in B.C.* report was the need for “institutional infrastructure” to help target and address these needs and services.^{vi} One of the goals of this study was to further test if there is interest in the creation of province-wide “infrastructure” to promote, encourage, and support the creation and implementation of watershed governance across B.C., and to scope what this “infrastructure” might look like.

General Support for a Province-wide Capacity-builder Hub

Two-thirds of e-survey respondents indicated that they did see value in a province-wide organization that could serve as a central capacity-builder for watershed governance. Only eight per cent indicated that they did not see any value in such an organization, and the remainder of respondents were uncertain or wanted to better understand what was being proposed.

The perceived value of a province-wide capacity-builder was consistent across sectors. For instance, 62 per cent of local government respondents and 68 per cent of industry respondents indicated they saw the value.

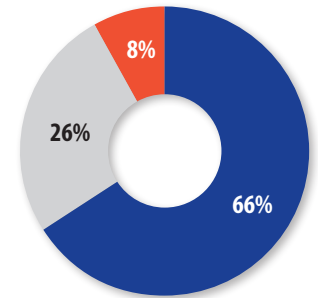
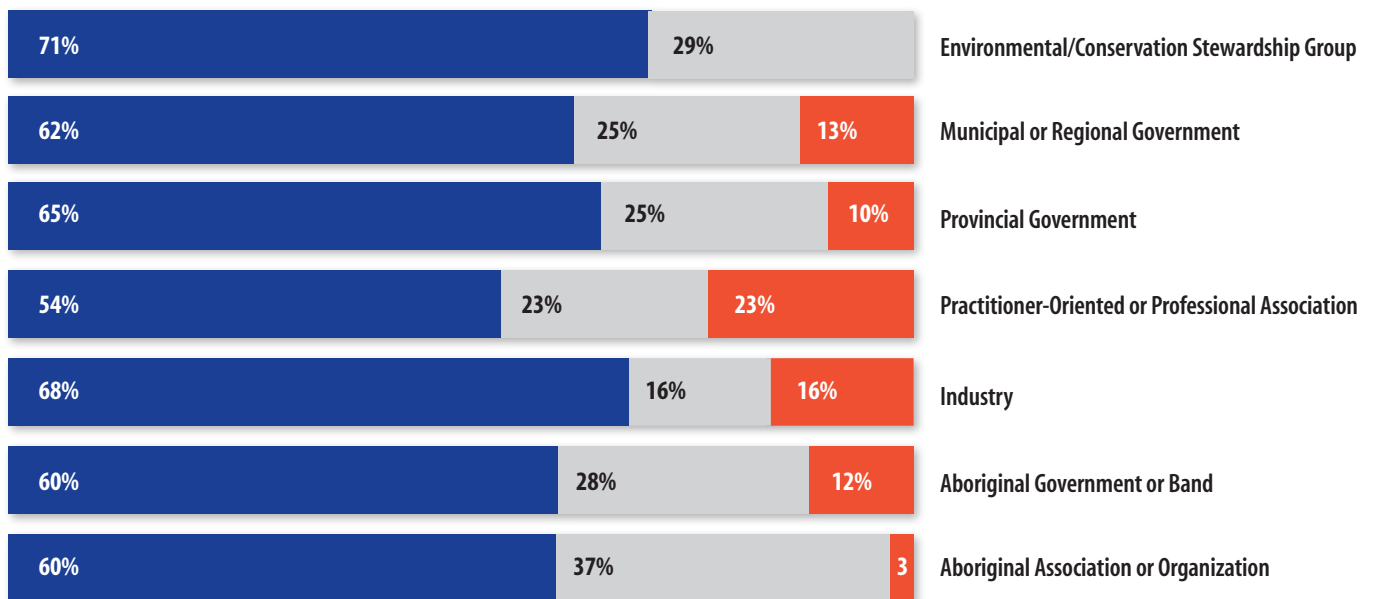


FIGURE 18. Support for a province-wide capacity-building organization: “Do you see value in a province-wide organization that could serve as a central capacity builder to promote, encourage and/or support watershed governance across B.C.?”

■ AGREE ■ UNSURE ■ DISAGREE

SECTORAL BREAKDOWNS



^{vi} *The State of the Water Movement* states (page 43): “This infrastructure should be designed to make it as easy as possible for organizations, especially those working locally or regionally, to come together, learn from one another, implement new capacities and collaborate around collective priorities.” See Morris, T. & Brandes, O.M. (2013). *The State of the Water Movement in British Columbia*. Victoria, Canada: POLIS Project on Ecological Governance, University of Victoria and B.C. Real Estate Foundation. Available online: <http://poliswaterproject.org/publication/561>.

Twenty-six per cent of respondents indicated “maybe” with regards to seeing value in a province-wide capacity-building organization, with very similar levels of support across all sectors. Numerous comments suggested that the value depended on a more detailed description about the organization, especially its mandate or operation. Some also indicated that they felt existing organizations were already playing this role or could easily broaden their current scope to assume this type of role.

General support for the idea of a province-wide capacity-building organization was also evident from the interviews.

“Certainly ... I think it’s needed, absolutely. Your question was, ‘Is it needed?’ The answer is ‘Yes, it is.’”

INTERVIEWEE (PROFESSIONAL WATER MANAGER)

“I think that’s a great idea. I think the Okanagan has stood in for that, in some respects, and I think it’s high time that it was actually an authentically provincial initiative.”

INTERVIEWEE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

FIGURE 19. Potential roles for a province-wide capacity-building organization:

“A bridge between senior government, local communities, and First Nations seeking to implement watershed governance; a province-wide voice for local watershed governance entities and proponents; an entity that could advocate for improved water management/governance on my or my organization’s behalf.”

VERY HELPFUL HELPFUL
NEITHER UNHELPFUL
VERY UNHELPFUL

What Would a Capacity-Building Organization Do?

In general, e-survey respondents were most supportive of the provincial organization being “a bridge between senior government, local communities, and First Nations seeking to implement watershed governance.” Three-quarters of respondents also thought that an entity that performed the function of a “province-wide voice for local watershed governance entities and proponents” would be either helpful or very helpful. Comparatively, there was less support for an advocacy role for such a body, although 56 per cent of respondents still indicated this would be helpful or very helpful.

One interviewee made a distinction between an *enabling* body and a new watershed management body.

“I see something there where you may even help build capacity with money that helps build planning as opposed to fixes things. And you may expect to orchestrate some of these other agencies that are there that are handing money out, but want them to be leveraged. I think you could do some really good things out there.”

INTERVIEWEE (STEWARDSHIP)

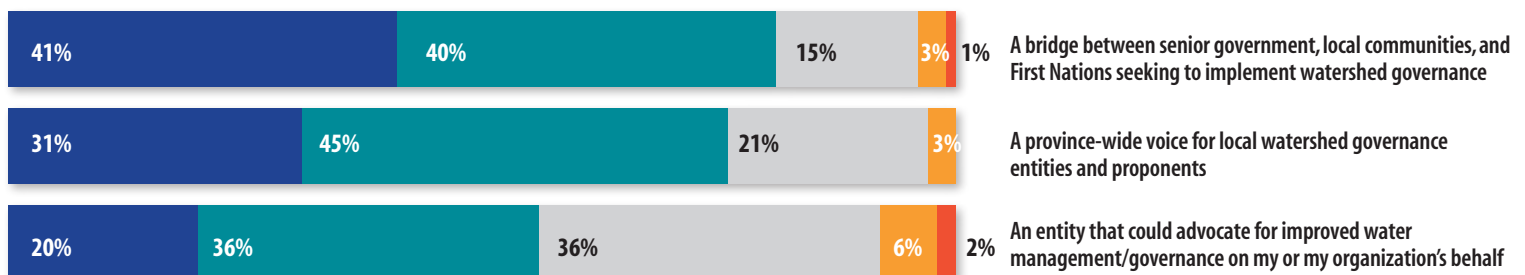
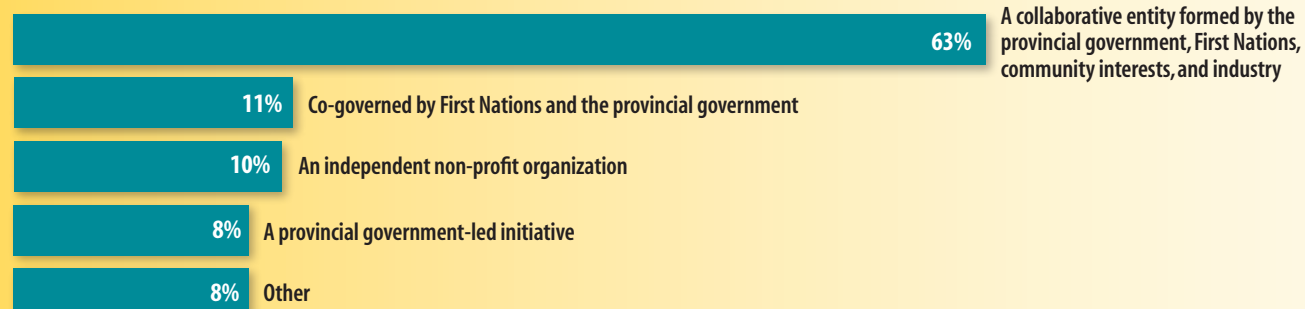


FIGURE 20. Leadership and structure of a province-wide

organization: “Please choose the statement that, in your opinion, best completes the following sentence: A central, province-wide capacity-building organization for watershed governance should be...”



A number of potential key functions for such an enabling body emerged from the informant interviews, including:

- a central repository to support local initiatives;
- an aid in collective learning about watershed governance; and
- a champion to advance freshwater protection.

In addition to these high-level functions, interviewees identified a broad range of tools and services such an entity could provide (see Box 6: *Possible Functions and Services Identified by Informants*).

BOX 6: POSSIBLE FUNCTIONS AND SERVICES FOR A PROVINCE-WIDE CAPACITY-BUILDING ORGANIZATION IDENTIFIED BY INFORMANTS

- Convening and coordinating function (e.g. annual watershed governance conference and capacity-building webinars)
- Central repository or library for resources, tools, best practices and lessons learned
- Evaluation of tools to support watershed governance
- Provincial representation of watershed governance entities/initiatives
- Education and communication (e.g. primers, curriculum)
- Collective learning, community of practice
- Technical and legal advice
- Supports for planning
- Leverages funding
- Provides models of collaboration and co-governance
- Shares success stories

Insights on Organizational Structure

The e-survey findings reveal strong support for a collaborative entity formed by the provincial government, First Nations, community interests, and industry. There was less support for a purely provincial-led initiative or an independent non-profit organization.

1) AN ARMS-LENGTH, PROVINCIALY-SUPPORTED ORGANIZATION

A number of e-survey comments recognized that such an organization could be enabled by the provincial government and would benefit from a Provincial mandate and resources, but emphasized that it should be arms-length from the Province.

“It does need to have some agency-level authority to it, but at arm’s reach of the Province.”

SURVEY COMMENT

“Co-governed by First Nations, water advocacy groups, and municipal/local governments; arm’s length from government (funded but not governed).”

SURVEY COMMENT

These comments were echoed by interviewees, who still recognized the critical role the provincial government would need to play.

“[W]e’ve always said, ‘Look, we don’t want the Province to disappear. We need them if we’re going to do this.’ ... We can’t each do it on our own, we need to have that central repository of scientific research and resources, both technical advice as well as legal advice, to help guide us.”

INTERVIEWEE (ELECTED LEADERSHIP)

One interviewee was less supportive of an arms-length entity and expressed concerns that an independent organization would create uncertainty that would impact business decisions.

“[I]t’s the idea of creating an entity that then needs to be funded makes the business community nervous.... Where does the money come from? What do they actually do in terms of decision-making? Who is it accountable to? Who makes the trade-offs and at what scale?”

INTERVIEWEE (BUSINESS COMMUNITY)

2) FIRST NATIONS’ PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP WILL BE CRITICAL INGREDIENTS FOR ULTIMATE AND LASTING SUCCESS

A number of key informant interviewees commented that they felt that First Nations should be involved from the outset to ensure that any new organization advances the principle of co-governance and fosters trust between First Nations and

non-Indigenous communities. It was suggested that it would be helpful to bring together a group of First Nations water leaders from around the province to provide guidance around how a province-wide organization should be structured, and to identify what is needed to make it effective in building capacity.

3) SHOULD IT HAVE ANY AUTHORITY OR DECISION-MAKING RESPONSIBILITIES?

The e-survey and interviews also explored whether a central, province-wide capacity-building organization should potentially hold some decision-making responsibilities regarding water management in B.C. Sixty-five per cent of e-survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that, yes, the organization should potentially hold some decision-making responsibilities. However, both e-survey comments and interviewees revealed a number of concerns with such an entity having decision-making power. These concerns are identified in the following “potential challenges” section.

What are the Potential Benefits and Challenges?

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Potential benefits of a capacity-building hub organization included the possibility for greater coordination and efficiency, and the creation of a vehicle to help promote learning and understanding of how to build effective local watershed governance initiatives. These benefits were articulated by interviewees and First Nations’ Roundtable participants.

“That sounds like an excellent idea. It coordinates the efforts, it ensures the efforts are going in the right direction.”

INTERVIEWEE (STEWARDSHIP)

“It could include wider scope, to help understand and learn what’s happening in other regions ... in terms of data, but also in terms of the structures, how are things working in other regions, with regards to water management decisions. I think the Province could definitely spearhead that.”

INTERVIEWEE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

“[T]hat would bring a certain amount of efficiency to the process, that’s for sure. There’s going to be a large degree of all of us doing our own thing. But there’s no reason we shouldn’t be able to collectively come up with some approaches. And you can’t really do that without somebody who’s in place to carry that out, on topic and continually working on it. So yes, having a group that would coalesce ideas, promote discussion, makes sense.”

INTERVIEWEE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

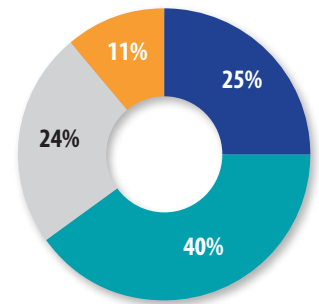


FIGURE 21. Should a province-wide capacity-building organization potentially hold some decision-making responsibilities?

“Please state how much you agree or disagree that such a central, province-wide capacity-building organization should potentially hold some decision-making responsibilities regarding water management in B.C.”



POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

A number of potential challenges and issues related to a province-wide organization were raised by interviewees and First Nations' Roundtable participants.

1) IMPACT ON GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT DIALOGUE

Participants at the Roundtable were concerned about how such an entity would impact government-to-government dialogue between First Nations and the provincial government. It was also raised that the entity could be used by the Province as a mechanism to avoid its full responsibilities of consultation and accommodation. There was, however, greater comfort at the Roundtable around the idea of an organization that was performing an educational and information-providing role, as long as it did not have a political purpose.

“Concern that [such a provincial body] would be a way for the Province to avoid its consultation duties ...”

FIRST NATIONS ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

“If it is an educational tool that would help us move some initiatives forward. Each sub-regional group within B.C. could have its own website. First Nations Fisheries Council has one that is province-wide ... If it's for decision-making and politics and whatnot then we have to go to the leadership to make sure they make the right decisions, but for the help of getting knowledge about what's happening in B.C.—what's successful or not successful—I think it's valid.”

FIRST NATIONS' ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

2) TENSION WITH DUTY TO CONSULT

The First Nations' Roundtable also revealed serious reservations around a province-wide organization conflicting with the Province's fiduciary duty to consult.

“I think we all recognize the autonomy and the entity of each of the First Nations. One of the challenges that we have with any organization is that federal and provincial governments will go to that hub and then make decisions without collaborating with the First Nation.... I wouldn't want the hub to start negotiating on behalf of First Nations. That's what takes place. That's the challenge that we have.”

FIRST NATIONS' ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

3) DIVERT FUNDING

Participants at the First Nations' Roundtable also shared concerns about how such an entity would be funded. If funded by the provincial government, there was concern that the Province would consider this adequate resourcing for First Nations and delegate funding responsibility to that entity. There was also concern that the organization would divert scarce resources from existing or potential First Nations activities.

“The Province will resource a hub and create a one-stop-shop for access to information and resources and then they will say, ‘We resourced the hub, you have to go through there.’”

FIRST NATIONS’ ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

“A First Nation wants to apply for fiscal resources to build its capacity in their community, they will run up against the hub.”

FIRST NATIONS’ ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

4) CONCERNS WITH CREATING A PROVINCE-WIDE DECISION-MAKING ORGANIZATION

Concerns were also raised about the implications of the province-wide organization exercising decision-making authority. Although there was support (65 per cent) for the notion that a province-wide capacity-building organization should potentially hold some decision-making responsibilities, e-survey comments revealed that there were a number of concerns with this approach. These included creating another layer of bureaucracy; causing confusion about who is making decisions; undermining the idea of local decision-making; and raising questions of democratic accountability. A number of respondents drew a distinction between the role of a capacity-builder, which they saw as important and necessary, and a decision-maker, which was seen as less desirable.

“Capacity-building is different from having legislated decision-making responsibilities. Seems like a departure from local decision-making that has been lauded as a big fix to the current governance issues.”

SURVEY COMMENT

“This should be a support/stakeholder group acting in an advisory/ educational/cooperative capacity, but should have some clout to be listened to by various government jurisdictions.”

SURVEY COMMENT

“The organization should be focused on developing capacity, governance and assist in creating processes for gathering sound, rigorous data that then goes to decision-makers. There is a risk that the organization may be seen as fettering decisions, which could compromise the integrity of the organization.”

SURVEY COMMENT

The interviews also revealed concerns with such an organization taking on decision-making or specific management powers.

“I don’t favour creating another level of management.”

INTERVIEWEE (PROFESSIONAL WATER MANAGER)

“If anything is too top-heavy, it’s just simply not going to work, especially on the local level.”

INTERVIEWEE (WATERSHED BOARD & FIRST NATIONS)

“I don’t think the regulatory piece would be a good thing. I don’t see them as a provincial arm, so much as a guidance group, if you like—just to give us a place to go to ask questions and see what’s going on in the rest of the province, and get some assistance with contacts.”

INTERVIEWEE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

“A non-profit organization with some kind of authority to direct resource management? That’s not going to get any support.”

INTERVIEWEE (BUSINESS COMMUNITY)

“Do you need to form something that has an institutional name with people and all of that? Businesses are concerned about the cost, duplication and efficiency of yet another organization.”

INTERVIEWEE (BUSINESS COMMUNITY)

Section Summary

We found that general support exists for a province-wide capacity-building organization. Data revealed a number of the potential ways in which a province-wide organization could enhance the work being undertaken in collaborative watershed governance initiatives across B.C. E-survey respondents, interviewees, and participants in the First Nations’ Roundtable also flagged potential concerns and challenges that might arise with a province-wide organization.



5. Conclusions & Next Steps

Research of this type will never provide total clarity; however, a number of key themes have revealed themselves through this study. In particular, analysis of the responses and insights and perspectives from this study demonstrates significant areas of common interest and consensus, and also some areas of divergence. We have distilled these themes into the following five core findings:

- Appetite exists for new approaches to watershed governance
- Collaborative approaches are seen as critical for better decision-making
- There are multiple stages to collaborative watershed governance
- The provision of key capacities and tools will increase the likelihood of success
- A potential role has emerged for a province-wide capacity-builder

1) Appetite Exists for New Approaches to Watershed Governance

Interest in new approaches to watershed governance stems largely from the belief, shared across all sectors, that the current approach to both management and governance of fresh water is unsatisfactory. Provincial and federal governments are seen to be retreating from their traditional monitoring, research, and enforcement roles, while communities are being left “in the dark”, only able to react to growing threats to their watersheds. The findings reveal that civil society, First Nations, water professionals, and communities have significant interest in playing more active roles in key decisions that affect local waters, and participating in new forms of watershed governance.

2) Collaborative Approaches are seen as Critical for Better Decision-making

Collaboration is seen as bringing many benefits. These include: integration of diverse knowledge sources, facilitating innovative funding partnerships, unleashing local expertise and on-the-ground knowledge, and harnessing the human resource

capacities residing in local volunteers and citizens. For collaboration initiatives to be effective and meaningful, participants indicated they must be strongly supported by First Nations, either as partners, or through explicit co-governance arrangements. Importantly, participants felt the provincial government should be part of such collaborative initiatives. There is recognition that more government involvement and leadership is required to enable effective collaborative models (see Appendix 2 for a specific listing of capacity needs).

3) There are Multiple Stages to Collaborative Watershed Governance

Based on the input received, it is clear that there is not one right or single governance model or scale of governance that is going to be applicable across the province. The most appropriate level and scale for decision-making will likely depend on the interplay of a variety of factors and contexts, including the interests of local actors; population and geographic realities; the maturity of existing collaboration and collaborative platforms; the role, leadership, and capacity of provincial, First Nations, and local governments; and the type of decisions that need to be made.

Notwithstanding these contextual factors, an important insight from this study is that a series of common stages for watershed governance exists. Collaborative watershed governance is an evolving and organic process and “stepping stones” lead towards more formal models of engagement and authority. These stepping stones are outlined here and show how collaborative watershed governance may evolve from a nascent stage, based on informal collaboration around projects, to a more formal and mature stage, reflected in an entity that is capable of taking on delegated decision-making authority.

- 1) **Project-Based Collaboration** – collaboration around projects such as restoration or water quality monitoring can allow local participants to develop relationships, build trust, and discover a common appreciation for their watershed.
- 2) **Shared Visioning** – once relationships are established and there is common understanding of some of the challenges and opportunities in the watershed, local partners are better placed to co-create a shared vision for their watershed. This is also an opportunity to engage additional actors.
- 3) **Collaborative Watershed Planning** – developing a shared vision can provide the impetus to develop a watershed plan that outlines the milestones and actions required to meet that vision.
- 4) **Delegated Decision-Making** – with a broad base of support and legitimacy, a track-record of achieving substantive work, and a clear watershed plan, a collaborative entity is well-placed to seek more formal agreements regarding shared decision-making powers, authority, and financial responsibilities.

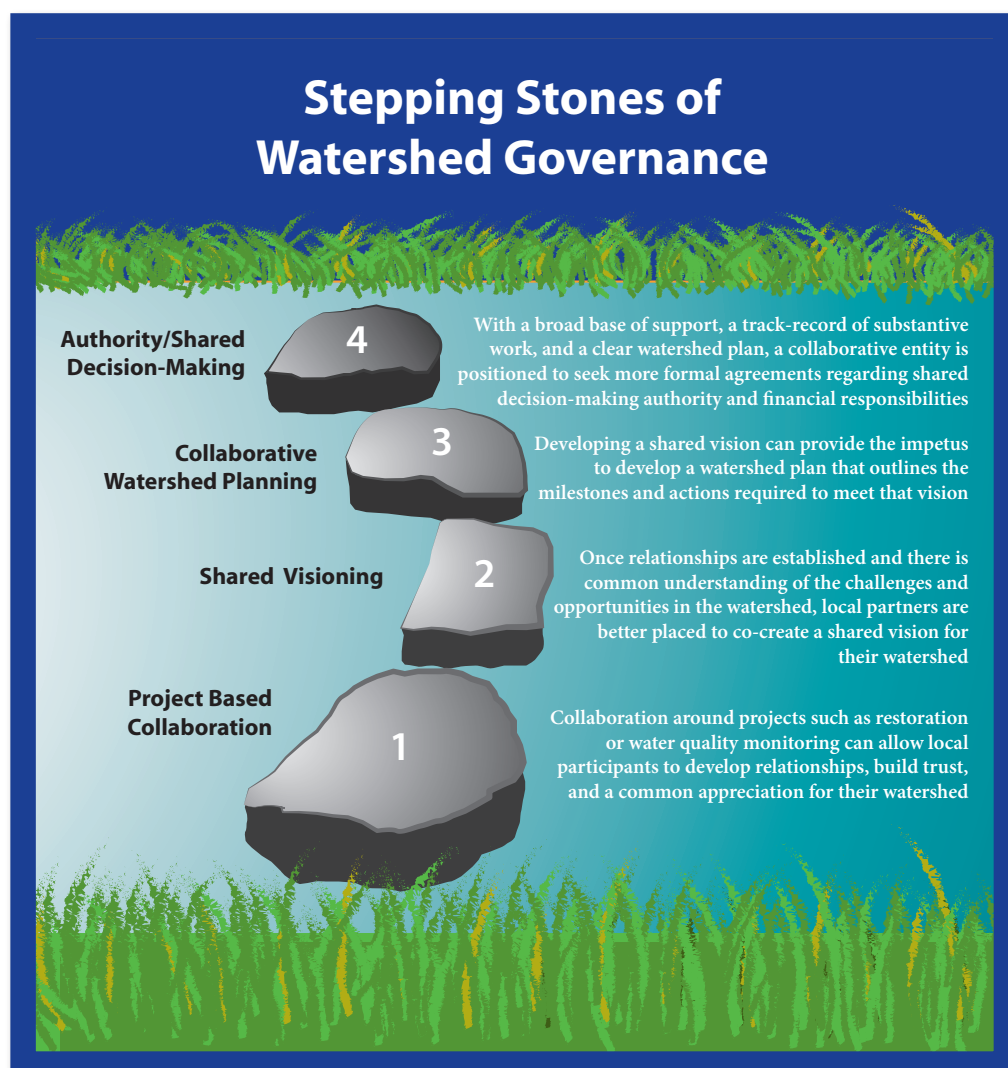


FIGURE 22. Stepping Stones Approach to Watershed Governance.

INFOGRAPHIC BY MARCI JANECEK

4) The Provision of Key Capacities and Tools will Increase the Likelihood of Success

The findings from this study confirm an assumption that there are significant capacity needs and gaps that will need to be addressed in order to harness the energy and enthusiasm for watershed governance while overcoming challenges and establishing the conditions required for success. These needs include relationship-building between different sectors and with experts and knowledge-holders, as well as services and tools that can support capacity development in areas such as sustainable funding, monitoring, watershed planning and communications. One of the key outcomes of this project has been the rich inventory of capacity needs related to watershed governance. This inventory provides concrete guidance on what is needed for the freshwater community to be successful in these new approaches (See Appendix 2).

5) A Potential Role has Emerged for a Province-wide Capacity-builder

This research explored whether there might be a role for a province-wide capacity-building organization to help address capacity gaps and provide leadership on watershed governance. The study revealed general support for such a province-wide capacity-building body, and identified potential benefits and challenges. Of particular importance are the concerns raised by First Nations' Roundtable participants, including the issue of how such a body would be resourced, and the need to limit its role in government-to-government negotiations between First Nations and the Province. Interviewees also emphasized that a province-wide organization should focus on capacity-building and supporting local watershed governance initiatives, and should not necessarily be a decision-making institution.

NEXT STEPS: UPCOMING OPTIONS PAPER

In addition to this detailed analysis, this research provides the foundation for a complementary options paper. Findings from this study emphasize that further discussion and exploration of how watershed governance can operate practically in B.C. is urgently needed. The options paper will identify specific institutional and operational possibilities for better enabling watershed governance going forward. The watershed governance options paper will identify potential roles and responsibilities for key actors including First Nations, all levels of government, civil society, the business community, water professionals, and experts. It will be a resource for water leaders and champions to engage with and to help accelerate the necessary institution building required for effective watershed governance in B.C. This options paper will be tested and refined at a series of workshops and public presentations, culminating in a refined document to be released in 2016.

APPENDIX 1: TIMELINE OF KEY WATERSHED GOVERNANCE RESEARCH AND EVENTS IN B.C.

2007–2010

2005	At a Watershed: Ecological Governance and Sustainable Water Management in Canada ¹	The POLIS Project on Ecological Governance
2007	Delegated Water Governance: Issues and Challenges in the B.C. Context ²	University of British Columbia, Program on Water Governance
2008	Living Water Smart Policy ³	British Columbia Ministry of Environment
2008	Collaborative Watershed Governance Initiative Workshop Series ⁴	Fraser Basin Council (lead, on behalf of the B.C. Water Governance Project)
2008	Going with the Flow? Evolving Water Allocations and the Potential and Limits of Water Markets in Canada ⁵	Conference Board of Canada
2009	British Columbia's <i>Water Act</i> Modernization Discussion Paper ⁶	British Columbia Ministry of Environment
2009	Setting a New Course in British Columbia—Water Governance Reform Options and Opportunities: Discussion Paper ⁷	The POLIS Project on Ecological Governance
2009	The Sustainable Management of Groundwater in Canada: The Expert Panel on Groundwater ⁸	Council of Canadian Academies
2010	An Audit of the Management of Groundwater Resources in British Columbia ⁹	Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia

2011–2013

2011	Governance Toolkit: Water, Part 1, Section 3.31 ¹⁰	B.C. Assembly of First Nations
2011	First Nations Integrated Watershed Planning Guidebooks ¹¹	Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources
2011	Canada's Rivers At Risk: Environmental Flows and Canada's Freshwater Future ¹²	WWF-Canada
2011	Climate Change Adaptation and Water Governance ¹³	Simon Fraser University (Adaptation to Climate Change Team)



2012	A Water Gathering: Collaborative Watershed Governance in B.C. and Beyond—Solutions Forum ¹⁴	Co-hosted by: British Columbia Ministry of Environment; Fraser Basin Council; Living Lakes Canada; Okanagan Basin Water Board; The POLIS Project on Ecological Governance; The Summit Group; Water, Policy and Governance Group; Wildsight
2012	A Collaborative Watershed Governance Accord for B.C. ¹⁵	Fraser Basin Council
2012	National First Nations Water Rights Strategy ¹⁶	Assembly of First Nations
2013	A Water Sustainability Act for B.C. Legislative Proposal ¹⁷	Province of British Columbia
2013	The State of the Water Movement in British Columbia ^{18,27}	The POLIS Project on Ecological Governance and B.C. Real Estate Foundation
2013	The Blue Paper: Water Co-Governance in Canada ¹⁹	Forum for Leadership on Water (FLOW)

2014–2015

2014	A Blueprint for Watershed Governance in British Columbia ²⁰	The POLIS Project on Ecological Governance
2014	Water for Fish Brochure: a Framework for Effective Water Management ²¹	First Nations Fisheries Council
2014	Community Watersheds: from Objectives to Results on the Ground ²²	Forest Practices Board
2014	Living Waters Rally and “Statement for Freshwater Protection” ²³	Canadian Freshwater Alliance
2014	Watersheds 2014: Towards Watershed Governance in British Columbia and Beyond ²⁴	The POLIS Project on Ecological Governance, Cowichan Tribes, and Partners
2015	California’s Oranges and B.C.’s Apples? Lessons for B.C. from California Groundwater Reform ²⁵	The POLIS Project on Ecological Governance and Ecojustice
2015	Advancing Watershed Sustainability in B.C. ²⁶	Fraser Basin Council and B.C. Wildlife Federation project (2013-2015)

APPENDIX 2: TOOLS AND SERVICES TO BUILD CAPACITY FOR WATERSHED GOVERNANCE IN B.C.

This table is based on a collation of the data and provides a summary of tools and services to build capacity for watershed governance in B.C. These needs were also captured in an infographic (see below).

CAPACITY NEEDS	EXAMPLES OF TOOLS AND SERVICES ARISING FROM THE DATA
TOOLKITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory options • Sustainable funding toolkit • Data collection and monitoring options • Policies and by-laws toolkit • Terms of reference, operating rules, principles (framework) • How to do objectives/target setting and performance measure
GUIDES, EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES & TEACHING TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community watershed planning tools and resources (e.g. principles, objective setting, evaluation, and metrics) • Community engagement and resources for volunteers • Governance structures • Process-oriented resources (not outcome-oriented) • Charrette-style training for collaborative problem-solving • Watershed planning guidebooks • Plain language educational tools • Teaching tools for community regarding water conservation, watershed health, community monitoring • Teaching tools for municipalities and non-First Nations regarding First Nations history, values, principles, and laws regarding watershed protection as well as First Nations contributions to the economy • Informational tool or map about all First Nations and their territories • Guides for the private sector (e.g. agriculture, mining, ATV recreation) • Youth leadership programs • First Nations Elder and youth forums
COMMUNICATIONS GUIDANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication of issues • Common language • Communication tools for youth (e.g. social media) • Communication tools geared for different audiences (e.g. community, neighbouring communities, municipalities, private sector, government)



CAPACITY NEEDS	EXAMPLES OF TOOLS AND SERVICES ARISING FROM THE DATA
BEST PRACTICES & LESSONS LEARNED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative frameworks and watershed governance models • Evaluation of tools and resources • Made-in-B.C. best practices for business communities (e.g. agriculture, forestry, domestic water use) • Winning conditions of co-governance • Case studies and examples from other communities—both success stories and lessons learned from past mistakes
MODELS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydrologic modeling • Scenario modeling
LAWS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal analysis of cases regarding water in B.C. and Canada
PROCESSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful processes for decision-making around cumulative impacts • Information regarding memoranda of understanding and protocol agreements between First Nations and non-First Nations
EXPERTS & FACILITATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches, advisors, consultants, champions, academics • Skilled neutral facilitators to help build bridges between communities • Experts: engineers, biologists, and economists who understand water • Independent experts to help translate technical information into plain language
PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular convening on watershed governance • Webinars and forums to further co-governance conversation • Internal discussion and peer-to-peer learning among First Nations communities
DATA & INFORMATION ABOUT WATERSHED HEALTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-access water data centres (i.e. water-use reporting tools, hydrometric data, water quality information) • More monitoring stations • Information exchange with municipalities • Reports on issues like bio-solids within watersheds • A user-friendly tool to see information and permits on watershed (e.g. Northeast Water Tool)
CENTRAL REPOSITORY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A place to house tools and resources
FUNDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to create First Nations water boards, training staff, and developing watershed plans • Sustainable funding mechanisms, tools, and resources

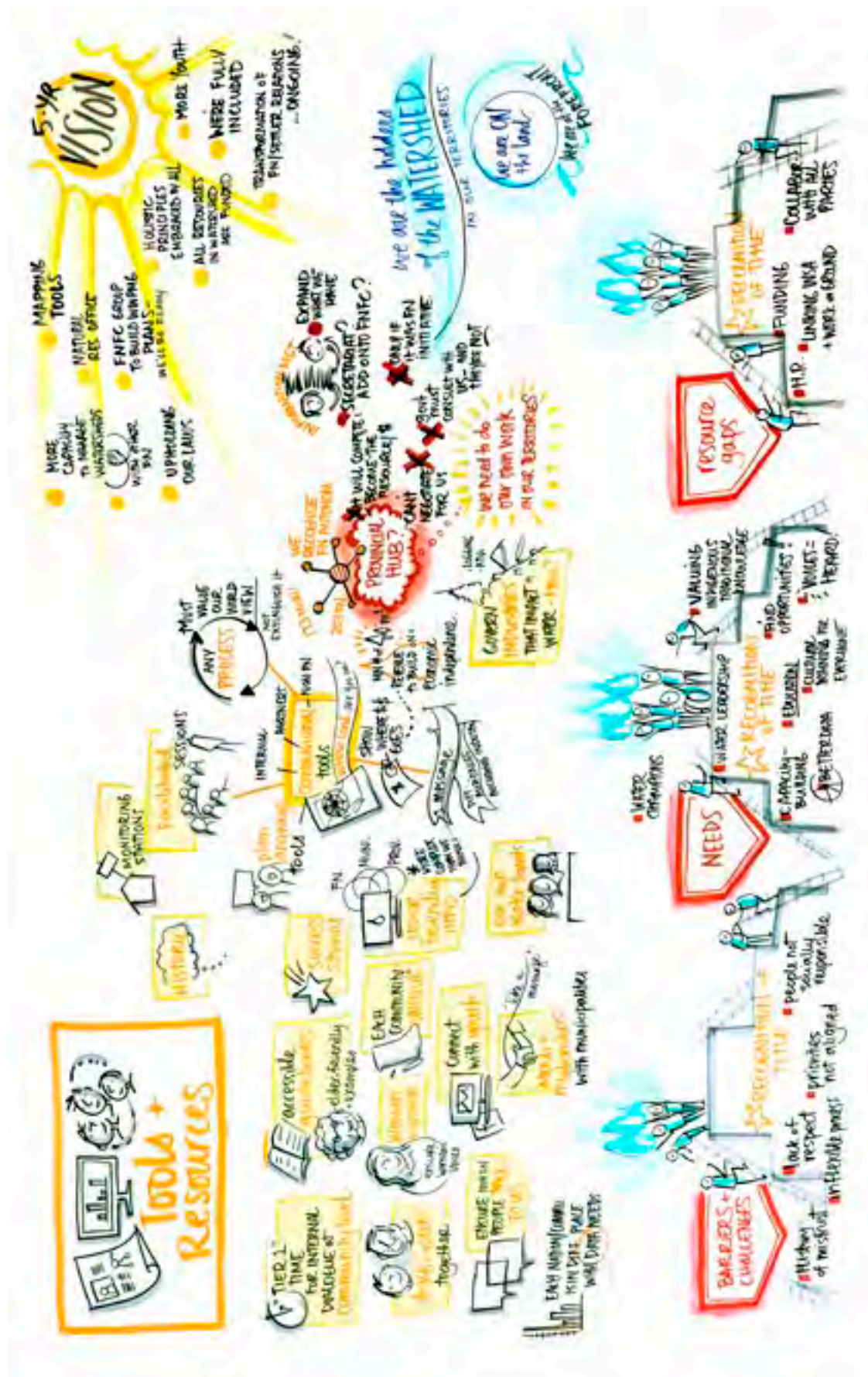


FIGURE 23. Tools & Resources. ILLUSTRATION BY SAM BRADD

APPENDIX 3: DETAILED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

What We Were Thinking

With any study of this type, it is important to acknowledge the assumptions that guided the framework of the research and types of questions asked. Below are some of the core assumptions we sought to test through this process, all of which have been informed by our previous studies and engagement with practitioners:

1. There is a broad range of governments, organizations, and sectors working on water and watersheds in B.C. that fulfill different roles and work at different geographies and scales.
2. There is a need for new forms of delegated watershed governance to move key aspects of decision-making around water to more local watershed scales. This will ensure better protection of the necessary watershed health and better align with First Nations and community values.
3. There are a number of organizations in different regions that have self-organized at the watershed scale to engage in watershed-based decision-making/governance, but most remain in early phases of development and rely on more informal influence rather than direct decision-making powers.
4. There is a need for greater citizen engagement and political awareness regarding water issues. A nascent appetite for citizens and communities to be more meaningfully engaged is emerging.
5. B.C. has a window of opportunity to move forward with the new provincial water policy (and law reform) that could enable new forms of watershed governance.
6. Water organizations working at local, regional, and provincial scales are not well-connected and there is currently limited peer-to-peer sharing of knowledge or resources. Yet, most groups have similar needs and indicated priorities to build capacity and increase their effectiveness. Opportunities for economies of scale and scope related to these common challenges are emerging.
7. There is a need for greater coordination, peer learning, and alignment of interests amongst water organizations and other organizations that have an interest in fresh water. To address this need, a focused effort is needed to identify the organization(s) and/or mechanisms and/or set of activities that can support this function.
8. Governments at all levels have an essential role in watershed protection and must remain key players in working with civil society and water users to foster

watershed governance. However, it is important to recognize that government has critical capacity challenges that are worth acknowledging in order to identify areas of maximum impact.

9. Functioning watershed governance entities (or bodies), which require First Nations' participation in design and leadership, will support implementation of the WSA (and other complementing water laws and local watershed plans).

Methods for Finding Out What the Freshwater Community is Thinking

We used the following research methods to test our assumptions and gather data and insight from the broader community of interests that operate in the space of freshwater management, use, and stewardship.

1. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Eight informant interviews were conducted with watershed governance thought leaders who were selected by the Project Team to provide insights from seven key sectors. The purpose of the interviews was:

- i) To test and confirm the assumptions upon which this project was based (as outlined above);
- ii) To deepen our collective understanding about the needs and challenges facing local government, First Nations, provincial governments, stewardship groups, industry and professional associations, and the freshwater community in general with respect to strengthening local watershed governance;
- iii) To identify the concrete tools, resources and support networks needed to support watershed governance initiatives; and
- iv) To test whether there is a need for a province-wide capacity-building organization to coordinate and amplify the activities of local watershed entities.

Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Two were conducted in person and the remainder were conducted by phone. In advance of each interview, each informant was sent an Interview Guide, which outlined the purpose of the research project and included several questions organized by theme (see Appendix A: Interview Discussion Guide Template). All interviews were recorded and the interviewer reviewed the transcripts in the process of creating this report. Data was then coded to establish key themes. Throughout this report, a number of quotes from these conversations have been included to provide insight and depth from the informants' various perspectives.

Collectively, the information gathered from this set of interviews, coupled with feedback and conclusions from *The State of the Water Movement in British Columbia* report,²⁷ provided valuable insights and gave us a strong foundation to create the detailed survey that followed.

TABLE 1: INTERVIEWEES^{vii}

SECTOR/ PERSPECTIVE	INTERVIEWEE	POSITION/ORGANIZATION	DATE INTERVIEWED
STEWARDSHIP	Wayne Salewski	Chair, Murray Creek Stream Restoration group and founding Director of the Nechako Environment and Water Stewardship Society (NEWSS); former Alderman, Vanderhoof; former Habitat Sustainability Chair for the B.C. Wildlife Federation	Dec 4, 2014
PROFESSIONAL WATER MANAGERS	Jim Mattison	President, BCWWA; Former B.C. Comptroller of Water Rights	Dec 5, 2014
BUSINESS COMMUNITY	Denise Mullen	Director, Environment & Sustainability, Business Council of B.C.	Dec 8, 2014
WATERSHED BOARD & FIRST NATIONS	Tim Kulchyski	Natural Resources Consultant, Cowichan Watershed Board (Cowichan Tribes)	Dec 11, 2014 (In Person)
ELECTED LEADERSHIP	Rob Hutchins	Councillor, Ladysmith, Former Chair, Cowichan Valley Regional District, Former Co-Chair, Cowichan Watershed Board	Dec 11, 2014 (In Person)
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	Mike Donnelly (1)	Manager of Water & Utility Services at Regional District of Nanaimo	Jan 2, 2015
	Julie Pisani (2)	Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program Coordinator at Regional District of Nanaimo	Dec 12, 2014
FIRST NATIONS	Carrie Terbasket	Syilx Special Project Liaison, Okanagan Nation Alliance	Jan 9, 2015

2. FIRST NATIONS' ROUNDTABLE

A dialogue involving six First Nations water leaders was convened for a half-day roundtable discussion in Vancouver on April 27th, 2015. The participants were identified and invited by the First Nations Fisheries Council based on their experience with water issues. Each participant was invited to participate as an individual because of their unique interest and expertise in this area, not as a representative of their community or organization. The participants were:

- Thomas Alexis;
- Cora McIntosh;
- Dan Smith;
- Tessa Terbasket;
- Chief Judy Wilson; and
- Tracy Wimbush.

vii All of the informants interviewed for this project were familiar with *The State of the Water Movement* report (July 2013) and all but two had attended the *Watersheds 2014* forum in Duncan, B.C. in January 2014. Several, but not all, of the interviewees were also familiar with the POLIS publication *A Blueprint for Watershed Governance in British Columbia* (January 2014; see <http://poliswaterproject.org/blueprint>).

The objectives of the First Nations' Roundtable were:

- To better understand the needs and challenges being faced by First Nations with respect to strengthening and enhancing local watershed governance; and
- To enhance our collective understanding of the tools, resources, and support networks needed to help drive and better operationalize watershed governance throughout British Columbia.

The session was recorded and the roundtable organizer reviewed the transcript in the process of creating this report. All quotations and reporting on the roundtable have been confirmed with the participants. Similar to the informant interviews, a number of quotes associated with the roundtable are used throughout the report to offer further insight and depth into the topics explored.

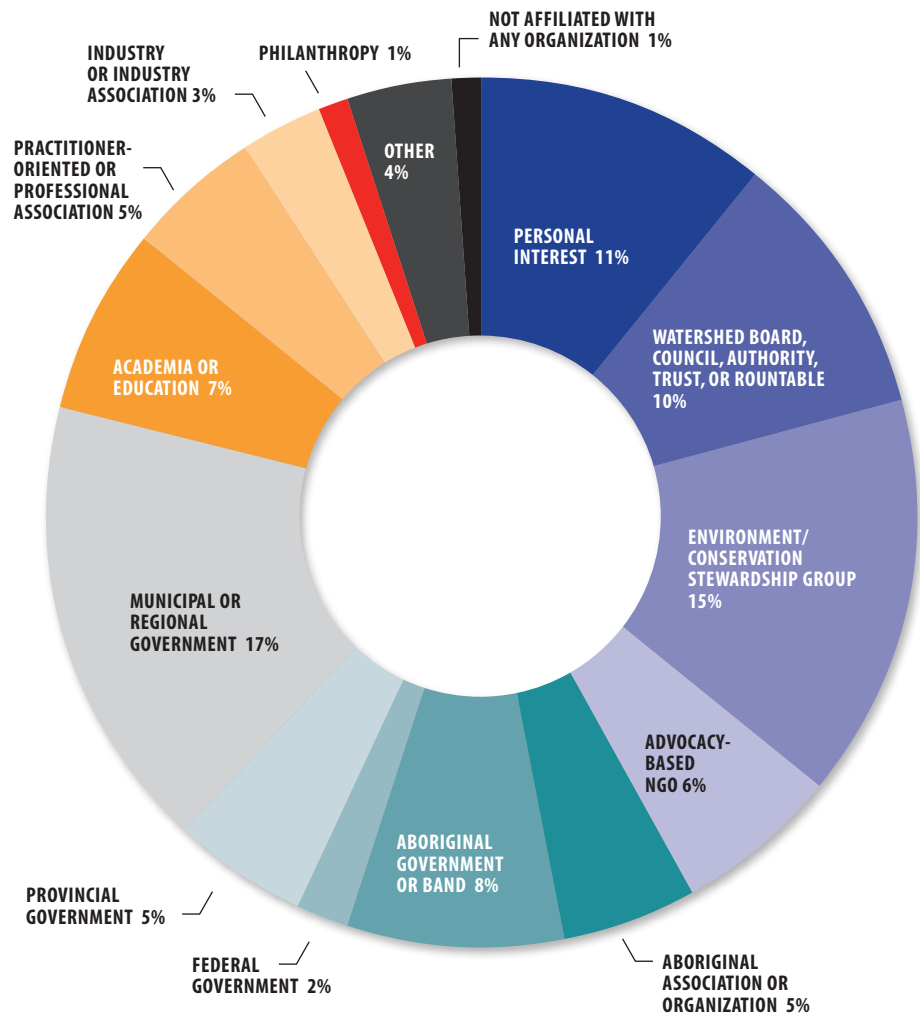
3. ELECTRONIC SURVEY

Using the online survey platform SMP Survey, a detailed electronic survey (e-survey) was distributed to an estimated 1,500 recipients working in freshwater management, stewardship, or decision-making across British Columbia. This included over 900 unique recipients chosen from a diversity of backgrounds based on their previous experience in freshwater management, governance, or stewardship. Recipients included individuals in local government, First Nations, provincial government, federal government, stewardship groups, industry, professional associations, and the freshwater community in general. In addition, the e-survey was distributed to over 2,500 other recipients via eight partner “distribution hubs.”^{viii} These distribution hubs included organizations, associations, and networks that circulated the e-survey to their memberships through outlets such as e-newsletters, list-serves, Facebook, or mass emails.

The e-survey was made available for approximately one month, from March to April 2015. In total, 439 individuals working in watersheds all across the province completed the e-survey (an 11% response rate). This completion and response rate indicated a high level of general interest in the topic, which was further demonstrated by the high level of additional supplemental commentary associated with many of the e-survey questions. A total of approximately 1,500 comments were provided, in addition to the specific multiple-choice answers.

^{viii} The e-survey distribution partners were representatives from the B.C. Business Council, B.C. Ministry of Environment, Canadian Freshwater Alliance, Environment Canada's Ecosystem Partnerships Program, First Nations Fisheries Council, Partnership for Water Sustainability in B.C., Regional District of Nanaimo, and the University of Victoria's Faculty of Law.

FIGURE 24.
Survey Participation
by Affiliation



Interview Discussion Guide Template

WATERSHED GOVERNANCE LEADERS INTERVIEW DISCUSSION GUIDE

This interview is being done by the **POLIS Project on Ecological Governance at the University of Victoria (POLIS Project)** as part of a larger, practical exploration of the possibilities and opportunities related to **Watershed Governance in British Columbia**. This project intends to build off *The State of the Water Movement* (2013) and is being supported through a grant from the **Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC)**.

BACKGROUND

In British Columbia, it is increasingly clear that watershed governance is a desirable and feasible option for improving leadership and institutional capacity for freshwater protection across the province. This opportunity for improving governance has been articulated in a range of recent publications and events including British Columbia's *Living Water Smart* Provincial Water Policy (2008)^{ix}, *The State of the Water Movement in British Columbia* report (2013)^x and the three-day national forum *Watersheds 2014: Towards Watershed Governance in British Columbia and Beyond* (January 2014)^{xi}.

Functioning governance bodies at the watershed scale will also improve opportunities to implement B.C.'s new *Water Sustainability Act*. Despite recognition from all levels of government and across sectors that watershed governance will be an inevitable part of the B.C. landscape in the future, there are relatively few instances of robust watershed governance examples in operation currently in the province.

OBJECTIVES

The goal of this project is to identify some of the practical considerations of what is needed to ensure better decisions at the watershed scale. We want to bring to light the specific needs of and challenges being faced by local government, First Nations, provincial government, stewardship groups, industry and professional associations, and the freshwater community in general with respect to strengthening and enhancing local watershed governance in the context of more sustainable management of B.C. waters. In particular, we want to enhance understanding of the tools, resources, and support networks needed to help drive and better operationalize watershed governance throughout British Columbia.

OUTCOMES

Given your expertise and particular experience regarding watershed governance, we believe you can offer a unique perspective to this work. Your insights will help us to identify and frame those issues and challenges that must be addressed. Out of this project, we imagine a practical set of recommendations for a potential path forward that will enable, catalyze, and drive watershed governance across B.C. The results of this project will be helpful to all groups working on B.C. water issues. As such, we are committed to making the report publicly available. It will be widely disseminated and you will receive a copy in your inbox as soon as it is available.

ix See <http://www.livingwatersmart.ca/>

x See <http://poliswaterproject.org/publication/561>

xi See <http://poliswaterproject.org/watersheds2014>

The questions below are intended to guide our scheduled interview, which will take about one hour to complete. More information about the project and how your input will be used will be provided at the start of the interview.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Watershed Governance:** What are the defining features of watershed governance? Why is it important? Do you think B.C. is ready for this type of governance?
2. **Collaborative Decision-Making:** Watershed governance emphasizes collaboration across and within sectors and better engages citizens, First Nations, civil society, business, industry and practitioners in the goal of maintaining healthy watersheds. What are the benefits of cooperative watershed management? What are the challenges?
3. **Identifying Issues, Gaps & Barriers:** What are 3 barriers or challenges that arise in trying to move from a vision of watershed governance to actual watershed governance boards? What would you say are the most pressing needs for groups working at the watershed level to be more effective in moving towards watershed governance? Where are the biggest resource gaps in terms of catalyzing and enabling the formation of watershed governance organizations where none currently exist?
4. **Enabling Environment:** What mechanisms need to be put in place to address these challenges? Who needs to drive and enable watershed governance in B.C.? What concrete things could be done on a province-wide scale to catalyze and drive local watershed governance throughout the province?
5. **Tools & Resources:** While every watershed governance initiative is necessarily place-based and shaped by its local context, can you think of any tools, resources, or networks provincially that could be developed that could help local initiatives? What are the top 2-3 tools/resources you think would help right now in your region (either locally or provincially developed)?
6. **Institutional Capacity:** Does the institutional capacity currently exist to enable and catalyze watershed governance across the province? If yes, which organizations are able to take that on and what role can they play? If no, what type of organization would be needed to catalyze watershed governance? What role would it play? What features would it have?
7. **5 Year Vision:** Where do you think B.C. needs to be in 5 years to say it is a world leader in watershed governance? What needs to be in place in order for watershed governance to be successful?
8. **Water Sustainability Act:** What role do you see the *Water Sustainability Act* playing in the realization of this long term vision of watershed governance?
9. **Who else must we talk to?** What other governance models would be useful to look at?

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POLIS Project on Ecological Governance

Created in 2000, the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance is a research-based organization that is part of the Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria. Researchers who are also community activists work to make ecological thinking and practice a core value in all aspects of society and dismantle the notion that the environment is merely another sector. Among the many research centres investigating and promoting sustainability worldwide, POLIS represents a unique blend of multidisciplinary academic research and community action.
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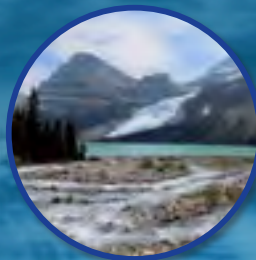
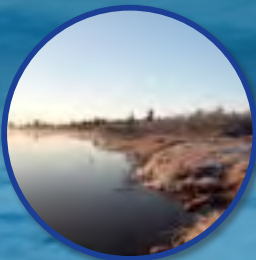
The POLIS Water Sustainability Project (WSP) is an action-based research group that recognizes water scarcity is a social dilemma that cannot be addressed by technical solutions alone. The project focuses on four themes crucial to a sustainable water future:

- Water Conservation and the Water Soft Path;
- The Water-Energy Nexus;
- Watershed Governance; and
- Water Law and Policy.

The WSP works with industry, government, civil society, environmental not-for-profits, and individuals to develop and embed water conservation strategies that benefit the economy, communities, and the environment. The WSP is an initiative of the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance at the Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria. poliswaterproject.org

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