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# Who are BC's water leaders?

By *Megan*

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Freshwater sustainability is one of our core focus areas at the Real Estate Foundation of BC. That's why we joined with the [POLIS Project on Ecological Governance](#) <sup>[1]</sup> at the University of Victoria to publish a new report, "[The State of the Water Movement in British Columbia: A Waterscape Scan & Needs Assessment of the BC NGO Sector](#)" <sup>[2]</sup>" The report compiled data from interviews with 11 freshwater leaders and an online survey completed by 61 non-governmental organizations working on water issues across BC.

But just who are the people and organizations that make up BC's water community? They are a dedicated – and diverse – lot.

Many groups approach freshwater protection starting at the local watershed level. These tend to be made up of local community members, and include organizations that:

- **Focus on restoration, general education and/or children's programs.** For example, look at the many Streamkeeper groups in BC.
- **Seek to influence decision making but don't want to take on decision-making powers themselves.** Examples include [One Cowichan](#) <sup>[3]</sup> and [Fraser Basin Council](#) <sup>[4]</sup>.
- **Seek to influence decision making and are interested in having a direct role in decision making for their local watershed.** The [Cowichan Watershed Board](#) <sup>[5]</sup> and [Lake Windermere Ambassadors](#) <sup>[6]</sup> are exploring what local watershed governance might look like in their region.
- **Play some type of decision-making role for their local watershed.** Few organizations currently fall into this category. The [Okanagan Basin Water Board](#) <sup>[7]</sup> and [Columbia Basin Trust](#) <sup>[8]</sup> rely mostly on incentive power (through infrastructure or program funding), their ability to undertake research, and their role in working with local governments or acting as a conduit between local interests and senior governments.

In contrast, other organizations take a regional, provincial or national perspective regarding freshwater protection. Among these water leaders are national, provincial and regional groups that:

- Have a core mandate related to freshwater protection and are permanently active around water issues. This includes organizations that:



- Seek to influence decision making, such as Watershed Watch Salmon Society [9];
  - Support restoration efforts, such as Pacific Salmon Foundation [10]; or
  - Provide capacity and training support to other groups, as do Living Lakes Canada [11] and Canadian Freshwater Alliance [12].
- Have ongoing programmatic interests in fresh water in BC, and are recognized as having specific expertise in support of freshwater protection, research or community mobilization. Examples include the POLIS Project [1], WWF-Canada [13] and Wildsight [14].

There are also a number of First Nations organizations with a core interest in freshwater protection, including the recognition of indigenous water rights. First Nation initiatives related to water include the Okanagan Nation Alliance [15], the First Nations Fisheries Council [16], Cowichan Tribes [17] and the Taku River Tlingit First Nation.

Needless to say, there are also countless individuals who don't work exclusively for water organizations, but who are nonetheless regarded as water leaders.

In the coming weeks, the Real Estate Foundation of BC is showcasing some of the water leaders mentioned here, as well as several of BC's beautiful freshwater areas. In fact, we've already begun! Keep an eye on our Facebook [18] page and Twitter [19] feed for highlights.

**Source URL:** <http://www.refbc.com/who-are-bcs-water-leaders>

**Links:**

- [1] <http://www.polisproject.org/>
- [2] [http://69.89.31.205/~refbccom/userfiles/StateofWaterMovement\\_LowRes.pdf](http://69.89.31.205/~refbccom/userfiles/StateofWaterMovement_LowRes.pdf)
- [3] <http://www.onecowichan.ca/>
- [4] <http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/>
- [5] <http://www.cowichanwatershedboard.ca/>
- [6] <http://www.lakeambassadors.ca/>
- [7] <http://www.obwb.ca/>
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- [9] <http://www.watershed-watch.org/>
- [10] <http://www.psf.ca/>
- [11] <http://www.livinglakes.ca/>
- [12] <http://tidescanada.org/support/canadian-freshwater-alliance/>
- [13] <http://www.wwf.ca/>
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- [15] <http://www.syilx.org/>
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