

Research reveals B.C.'s watershed sector is a jobs powerhouse

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The full economic impact of B.C.'s watershed sector has been mapped for the first time, revealing that the sector currently contributes 47,900 jobs and \$5 billion annually to the B.C. economy.

The new [Working for Watersheds](#) report maps the current strength of B.C.'s watershed sector. From entry-level to skilled, seasonal to permanent, technical to policy, and urban to rural, the watershed sector already supports British Columbians at all career stages and specialization levels. Working for Watersheds shows how B.C. can grow a world-class watershed sector built around securing, restoring, maintaining, and improving the health of B.C.'s watersheds.

"The watershed sector in B.C. is already a significant driver of employment and economic activity in every corner of the province," said Tim Morris, director of the B.C. Freshwater Legacy Initiative. "But, more than that, healthy and sustainable watersheds are also the foundation of all economic activity in B.C., from forestry to hydroelectric to agriculture. Nothing works or grows without water. Growing the watershed sector is about creating good jobs that strengthen B.C.'s long-term security and prosperity."



The study highlights more than 100 new jobs created in 2020 alone by the B.C. Wildlife Federation's Wetlands Workforce projects. "This is B.C.'s watershed sector in action," said Neil Fletcher, director of conservation stewardship at the B.C. Wildlife Federation. "Our projects are employing people across B.C., with a focus on creating jobs for some of the workers most affected by COVID-related economic impacts, including women, people under 30, and First Nations. The need is great, and from training to restoration, making these investments in people and watersheds now will pay B.C. dividends for generations."

"We also looked specifically at funding barriers and inequities that currently constrain Indigenous-led initiatives and employment," added Rosie Simms, project manager at the University of Victoria's POLIS Water Sustainability Project and lead author of the report. "One key action to address these barriers is a shift from short-term, one-off funding programs to stable, dedicated resourcing that allows Indigenous nations to direct funds where they are needed most, in line with community goals and priorities."

The study also confirms the need for a sustainably-funded provincial

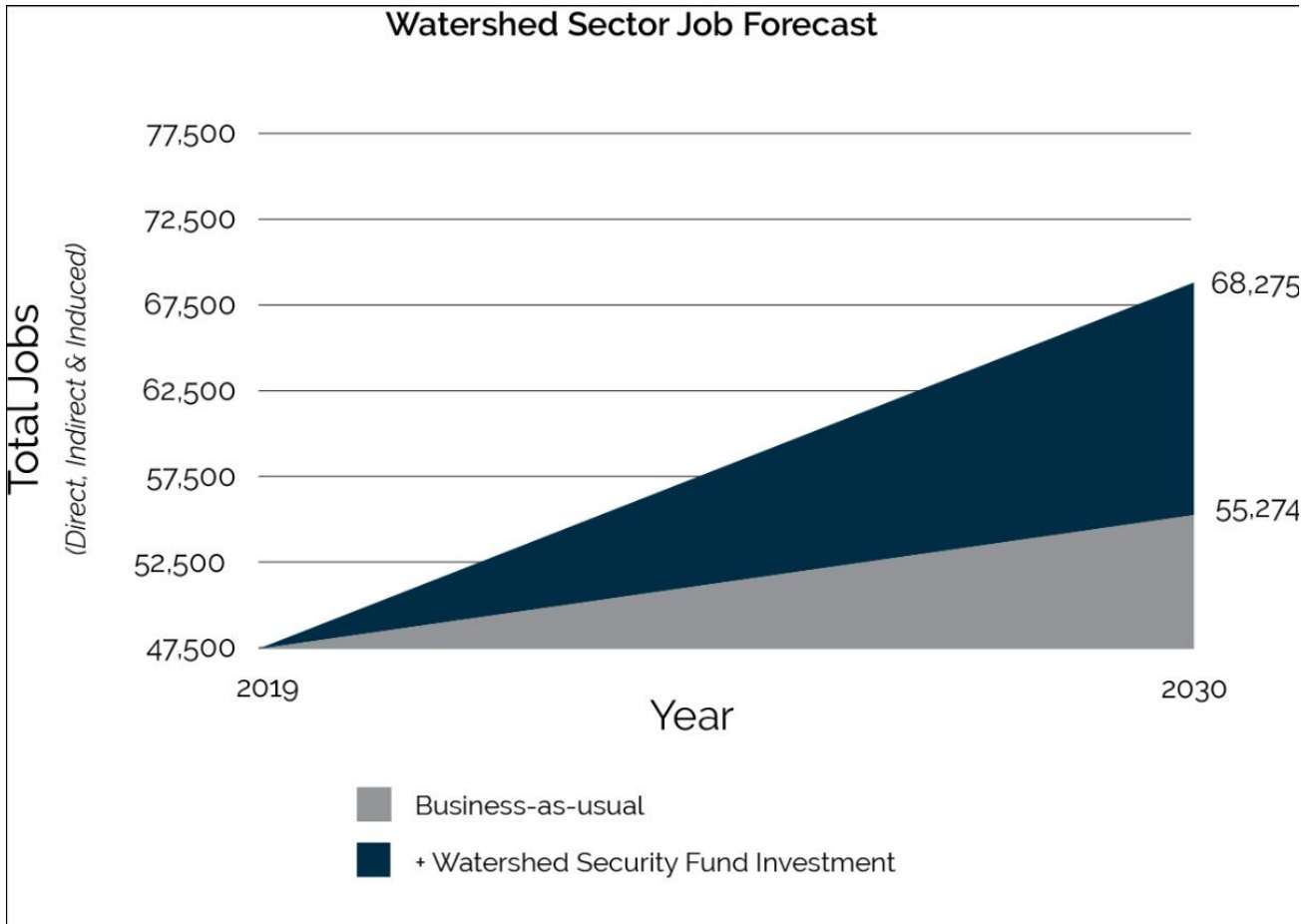


Image Credit: POLIS Water Sustainability Project.

Watershed Security Fund. It will be pivotal in supporting growth in the watershed sector and attracting other investments. It will also be pivotal in achieving B.C.'s commitments to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, rural economic recovery, salmon habitat restoration, and climate mitigation and adaptation.

"The Watershed Security Fund will be a critical catalyst to accelerate the sector's growth, leverage additional investments, and multiply impacts," said Ben Clark from The Delphi Group. "The forecasted benefits of a \$100 million/year investment over the next decade are significant: approximately 13,000 more jobs and an increase of \$1.3 billion to provincial GDP."

The objective for this research was to profile the current economic and employment contribution of B.C.'s watershed sector, as well as its potential for growth. The study is a product of collaboration between industry, government, Indigenous communities, and several non-profit organizations working to protect and restore healthy watersheds across British Columbia.

[Working for Watersheds](#) was published by The Delphi Group and commissioned by the BC Water Funders Collaborative, the BC Freshwater Legacy Initiative, and the POLIS Water Sustainability Project. POLIS was a core partner, providing strategic direction on the project and authoring the final report.

Header image credit: POLIS Water Sustainability Project