



**Watershed Security Strategy
and Fund Discussion Paper:**

What We Heard



Ministry of
Land, Water and
Resource Stewardship

November 2022

Executive summary

Between Jan. 25 and March 18, 2022, the Province engaged with the public to gather feedback on the ideas presented in the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund discussion paper. The discussion paper was supplemented with posts on the *Water Sustainability Act* blog and primers on water governance, drinking water, and watershed policy and management in B.C.

This What We Heard Report summarizes key themes captured during the engagement process. Over 1,500 submissions were received from across the province from individuals, environmental non-governmental organizations, local government, business, forestry, agriculture, partnership organizations, water purveyors, academia, mining, oil and gas, the federal government, professional organizations and health care. Indigenous engagement was conducted through a separate, parallel process, the results of which are included in a separate, forthcoming report.

The engagement process uncovered the following key themes emphasizing the importance of:

- ▶ Reconciliation, climate change and governance
- ▶ Creating a culture of *one water*: Encompassing cultural, social, economic and environmental systems
- ▶ Understanding water and watersheds, including watershed assessment and risk, adaptive management and knowledge systems
- ▶ Working together on watershed governance: The need for local approaches, integration across sectors, policy and legislation, and compliance and enforcement
- ▶ Stewarding watersheds: The importance of source water protection, land water links, water for agriculture, water conservation, watershed restoration, fish and healthy aquatic ecosystems
- ▶ Building capacity and funding watersheds: Developing internal and external resourcing capacity and providing funding for watersheds

The next step for the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund is the release of an Intentions Paper, which will be informed by the public engagement to date and will include proposed actions for the Watershed Security Strategy. These actions will be developed in collaboration with the B.C.-First Nations Water Table and Treaty Nations, as committed to in the Declaration Act Action Plan. Public engagement on the Intentions Paper will take place in early 2023, and work on the Watershed Security Fund will follow the development of the strategy.

Message from the Honourable Josie Osborne

Minister of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship and Minister Responsible for Fisheries



Water is the foundation of life. It sustains all living things—the plants, forests and animals that form our biosphere—and it sustains human communities, economies and cultures. For Indigenous Peoples, water cannot be separated from the interconnected nature of our world. It is a life vein that brings food and spiritual nourishment. It is a relative that must be respected and cared for, so it is sustained for multiple generations into the future.

Healthy watersheds are vital to ensuring we have good quality water for healthy ecosystems and communities. Healthy watersheds are critically important for reducing the risks and impacts of floods, droughts and wildfires, and for increasing resilience in a changing climate. As we respond to the cumulative impacts of development over time and continue to face extreme weather, watershed security is imperative.

To address this need, our government is co-developing a Watershed Security Strategy and Fund with First Nations in B.C., as part of our commitment to the Declaration Act Action Plan. Together, we will collaborate with communities, stakeholders and the public to bring a holistic approach to stewarding watersheds that will sustain communities, businesses, industry and people well into the future.

In April 2022, the Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship was established to create a new vision for land, water and resource management with First Nations to improve decision-making about how we use the land to benefit all British Columbians. Everything we do aligns with three key goals: reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, environmental sustainability and supporting thriving economies. A key step in achieving these overarching goals is strengthening the health and resilience of B.C.'s watersheds.

Early in my career, working as a fisheries biologist for the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, I began to understand the full meaning of how everything is connected—the land, the waters and all living things. Everything is one. To illustrate this concept in action, our ministry has three key strategies underway that support healthy water and watersheds: the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund, B.C.'s first-ever Coastal Marine Strategy, and the Wild Salmon Strategy. Each of these is a priority stand-alone strategy, but together they generate a powerful integrated approach to protecting aquatic, wetland and riparian ecosystems across the province.

Between January and March 2022, we reached out to the public for their input on a draft discussion paper and to learn what mattered to them in a future Watershed Security Strategy and Fund. We collected feedback from a wide range of perspectives from Indigenous stakeholders and the public, and this report explains in detail what they shared with us. Indigenous Peoples told us about the importance of Indigenous knowledge and shared decision-making in water-related decisions, and they told us that a Watershed Security Strategy must result in real change “on the ground.” We also heard from British Columbians who told us they are deeply connected to the natural environment and that they want B.C.'s watersheds to be managed effectively and inclusively. They told us that a fund to support watershed security would be an important support for First Nations, communities and organizations who are working to ensure the long-term health of watersheds.

Water is not simply a resource—it is at the very heart of the cultural and spiritual teachings of many Indigenous communities. Every lake, river, creek, stream and ocean is connected, and we all share the responsibility to care for and preserve them for future generations of British Columbians. We are taking what we heard from this outreach and continuing to work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and in collaboration with local governments and interest groups. We will ensure we're managing these precious watersheds and moving towards greater shared decision-making with First Nations as we co-develop this Strategy and Fund.

I thank everyone who shared their thoughts and contributed to our work towards a stronger foundation for the social, environmental and economic systems that support B.C. This feedback will inform our upcoming Intentions Paper on watershed security.

Sincerely,

Josie Osborne

Minister of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship and Minister Responsible for Fisheries

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Part 1: Watershed Security Strategy overview

1.1 Introduction

Healthy watersheds are at the forefront of climate resiliency and are the foundation of all social, environmental and economic systems. Today, many watersheds in B.C. are facing water supply challenges that will require new management approaches to help ensure they remain sustainable for future generations. Failing to act now and into the future will make these watersheds more vulnerable to impacts from climate change.

The Government of B.C. is committed to protecting water. The Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship has a mandate focused on reconciliation, economic recovery and environmental sustainability. This includes a mandate letter commitment for the ministry to establish a Watershed Security Strategy (Strategy) and a Watershed Security Fund (Fund). The 2022 *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act) Action Plan commits the Province to co-development of the Watershed Security Strategy with First Nations.

In January 2022, a discussion paper on the Strategy and Fund was released for public engagement. The discussion paper was designed to encourage dialogue on potential water policy options for a Strategy and highlighted the following important considerations:

1. The relationship between the provincial government and Indigenous Peoples, particularly First Nations, creates distinct legal obligations for the Province to co-develop the Strategy
2. People who live in and do business in a watershed are most directly affected when issues with water arise, such as water scarcity or drought, flooding, pollution or degraded aquatic and riparian ecosystems
3. Residents of a watershed play an important role in managing water and many communities are already working to protect and restore their local watersheds

The discussion paper also noted that several ongoing initiatives within the provincial government will inform the development of the Strategy, including:

- ▶ The development of related strategies such as the Coastal Marine Strategy, Source to Tap Strategy, Flood Strategy, and Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy, as well as ongoing work under the Wild Salmon Strategy already in action
- ▶ Work to implement the recommendations of the Auditor General's report on improving drinking water management and source water protection
- ▶ Ongoing efforts to modernize land use planning and consider cumulative effects
- ▶ Ongoing projects focused on governance and managing watersheds, including those in the Koksilah, Nicola Valley, Upper Bulkley, Morice River and Hullcar Valley

1.2 What We Heard Report intention

The discussion paper highlighted some of the possible outcomes and opportunities for the future Strategy. It was supplemented with background documents on water governance, drinking water, and watershed policy and management in B.C.

The purpose of the discussion paper engagement process was to stimulate conversation and gather feedback on a future Strategy and Fund. Engagement on the discussion paper took place from Jan. 25 to March 18, 2022.

This report summarizes the key themes captured during public engagement on the discussion paper. The Province will use this report to inform options for developing and implementing the Strategy and Fund.

Following this report, an Intentions Paper will be released for discussion in early 2023.

Part 2: Methodology

Water policy advisors and subject matter experts systematically analyzed all engagement feedback to identify common themes in relation to watershed security. Data was collected through the EngageBC website and email and mail-in submissions.

2.1 Engagement opportunities

Indigenous Peoples, representatives of all levels of government, the public and stakeholders were invited to respond to the discussion paper. During the engagement period, government shared information on:

- ▶ Water and reconciliation
- ▶ Governance, management and policy
- ▶ Watershed knowledge and data
- ▶ Re-setting the water supply and demand relationship
- ▶ Water reallocation
- ▶ Healthy aquatic ecosystems

Respondents were asked to share ideas related to the 10 outcomes outlined within the discussion paper and provide feedback on:

- ▶ The engagement approach and how to be involved in the future
- ▶ Questions posed in the proposed outcomes and opportunities section
- ▶ Issues or concerns the Province should be aware of
- ▶ Ideas or solutions
- ▶ Anything else related to the topic of how watershed security can be achieved in B.C.

2.2 Proposed outcomes and opportunities

The proposed outcomes and opportunities within the discussion paper were informed by what the Province has heard in the past from Indigenous Peoples, internal experts, opinion leaders, industrial water users and members of the public. Each proposed outcome included a series of questions to guide responses. These questions were available on EngageBC and in the discussion paper (and are listed in Appendix A).

The 10 proposed outcome areas are:

- ▶ Support and enable watershed governance
- ▶ Enhance our understanding of watersheds and the risks they face
- ▶ Progress reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples using new and improved mechanisms for collaboration on provincial water priorities
- ▶ Achieve healthy water for everyone

- ▶ Integrate water more efficiently and effectively into land use planning
- ▶ Reset the water supply and demand relationship
- ▶ Improve habitats for aquatic ecosystems
- ▶ Integrate Indigenous knowledge into decision-making and management
- ▶ Strengthen education and outreach about managing water in B.C.
- ▶ Create a Watershed Security Fund

2.3 Public engagement

2.3.1 ENGAGEBC

During the engagement period, there were 8,367 visits to the EngageBC site. Of those, 411 resulted in completed feedback forms.

2.3.2 EMAIL AND WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

As of March 18, 2022, there were 1,148 emails received. Of these, 941 were mail-in campaign-based shared-format emails, which were counted as one organizational response. Although feedback via email continues to be submitted, it is not included in this report.

Five additional written submissions were received by postal mail during the engagement period.

2.4 Public participation by numbers

Responses were received from across the province and from multiple sectors, including individuals, environmental non-governmental organizations, local government, business, forestry, agriculture, partnership organizations, water purveyors, academia, mining, oil and gas, the federal government, professional organizations and health care. Figure 1 shows the responses received by these sectors and Figure 2 shows the number of responses received from each geographic region of the province.

Figure 1: Sector breakdown of responses

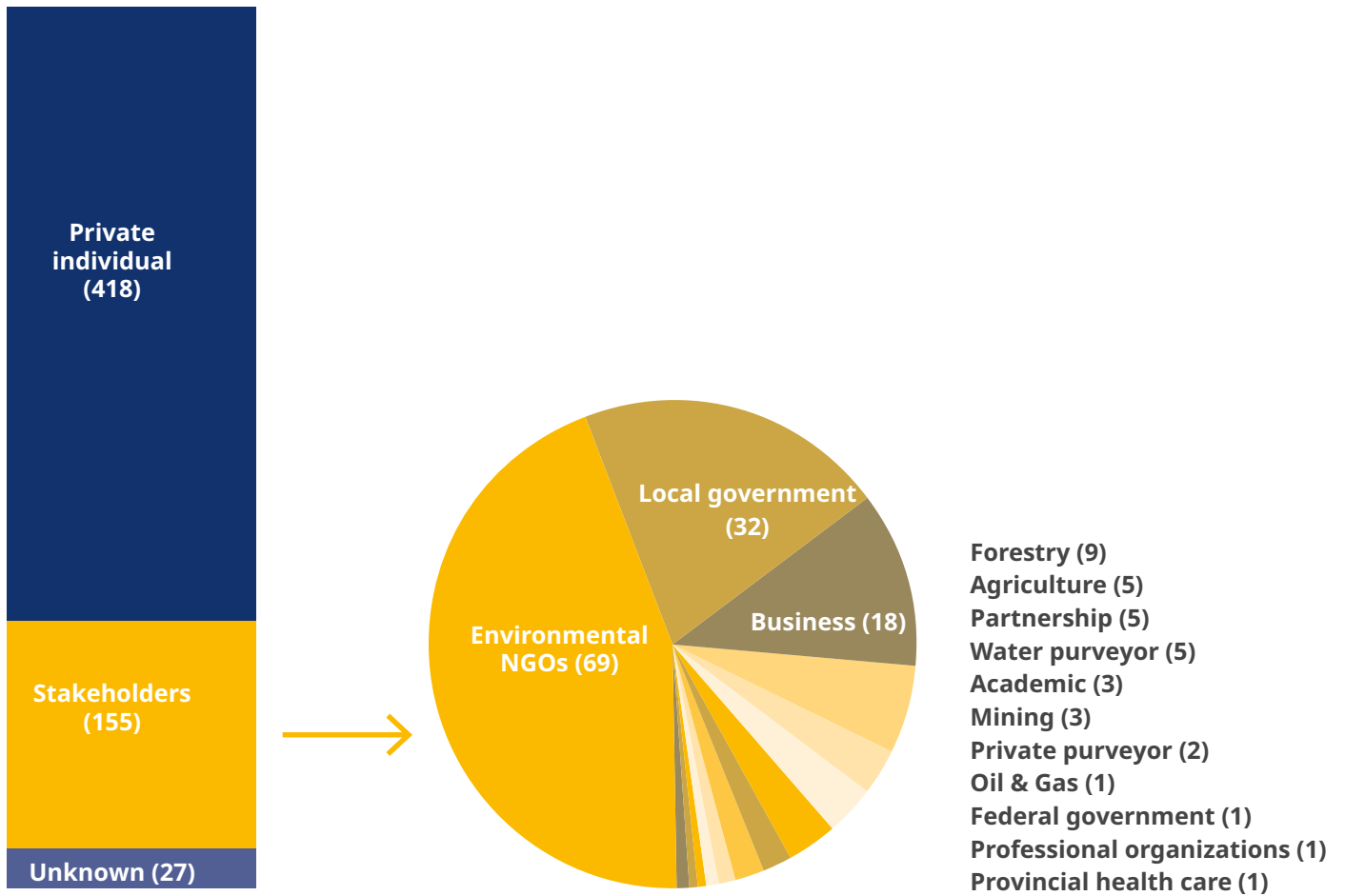
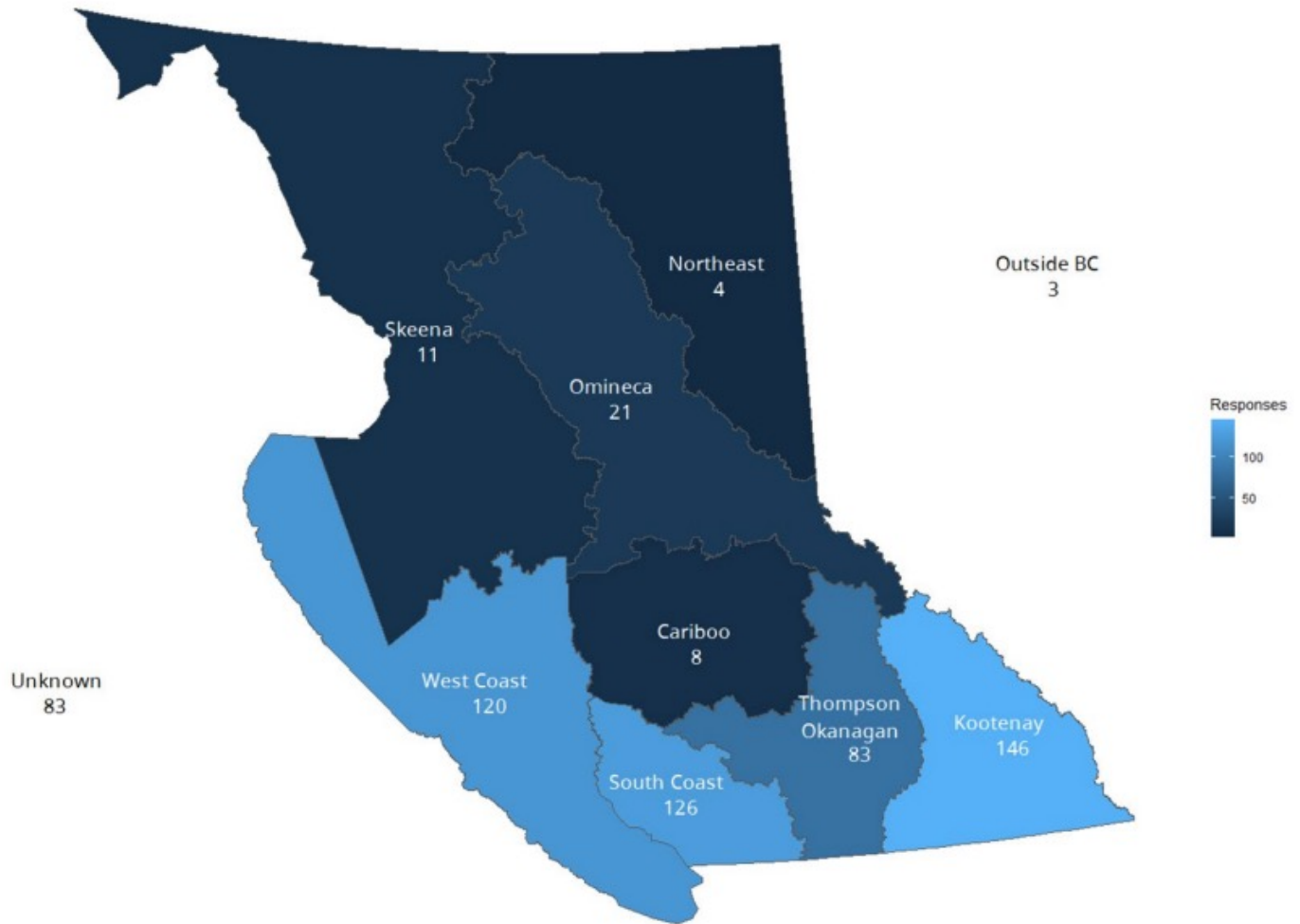


Figure 2: Geographic distribution of responses

2.5 Indigenous engagement

The Province used multiple pathways to foster early and sustained dialogue with Indigenous Peoples, including:

- ▶ Direct engagement and the creation of the B.C.-First Nations Water Table
- ▶ Direct correspondence to all 204 Nations with the discussion paper
- ▶ One-to-one meetings between Indigenous Peoples and the Province
- ▶ Invitations to existing government-to-government forums
- ▶ Two facilitated sessions on Feb. 10 and 16, 2022

A separate report on Indigenous engagement is forthcoming. As committed to in the Declaration Act Action Plan, the draft Strategy will be co-developed with First Nations in B.C.

2.6 Other engagement

2.6.1 INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

Internal engagement on the discussion paper included:

- ▶ 46 meetings to obtain internal provincial government feedback
- ▶ 3 webinars for internal staff that were attended by 124 people
- ▶ 25 written submissions received from key ministries

2.6.2 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Province held 17 meetings with key stakeholders during the engagement period.

A virtual two-day policy conference was also held on March 14 and 15, 2022. The conference covered the material contained within the discussion paper and was attended by approximately 100 community, business, professional association, and local and provincial government representatives. Appendix B summarizes the feedback from this conference.

2.7 How public input was managed

Data from EngageBC, emails and written submissions was compiled into a database to manage and track all information generated by the engagement process. All data was reviewed and classified according to:

- ▶ Outcome areas in the discussion paper
- ▶ Comments and concerns within each outcome area

In addition, input was organized by the following sectors:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ▶ Agriculture | ▶ Mining |
| ▶ Local governments | ▶ Energy, oil and gas |
| ▶ Professional organizations | ▶ Private purveyors |
| ▶ Academia | ▶ Partnership organizations |
| ▶ Forestry | ▶ First Nations individuals |
| ▶ Business | ▶ Other individuals |

Part 4 of this report synthesizes this sector-based feedback.

It is important to recognize the limitations of the analysis:

- ▶ Results are intended to illustrate broad trends, preferences and themes
- ▶ Some submissions were made by representative organizations or associations on behalf of many individuals or companies, and this data was not weighted based on the size or membership of the organization
- ▶ Some respondents may have provided both EngageBC forum and written letter feedback without identifying that they had done so
- ▶ Mail-in campaign content was only counted as one submission representing the organizing body
- ▶ The counts received for valuing different topics in the discussion paper may be skewed because not all respondents replied to all questions of the discussion paper and not all sections of the EngageBC survey allowed for written responses

Part 3: What we heard

Respondents provided input on each of the 10 outcome areas of the discussion paper. They also provided input on the definition of watershed security. This section of the report summarizes their feedback.

3.1 Watershed security definition

In the discussion paper, watershed security was defined as “the availability of good quality water for healthy ecosystems and communities”. The discussion paper acknowledged that watershed security may differ from watershed to watershed and may be defined differently based on user group. Elements of watershed security that may be included in localized definitions were suggested in the discussion paper as:

- ▶ Safe drinking water for all
- ▶ Healthy and resilient aquatic, riparian, wetland and watershed ecosystems
- ▶ Sufficient water to support food security, recreation, jobs and local economies
- ▶ Sufficient, safe and acceptable water for all
- ▶ First Nations’ values and uses
- ▶ Reduced risks from water-related hazards such as flooding and drought

The feedback from the public engagement process generated additional suggestions to consider in B.C.’s definition of watershed security. These were:

- ▶ Including access to water infrastructure and water treatment
- ▶ Strengthening preservation and protection
- ▶ Developing a provincial vision for watershed protection underpinned by democratic values and rights for nature
- ▶ Acknowledging trade-offs and prioritizing some values (e.g., drinking water, biodiversity)
- ▶ Ensuring equitable access to drinking water and aquatic ecosystems for diverse populations and future generations
- ▶ Minimizing risks to water quality and quantity
- ▶ Promoting water-centric management of cumulative and climate change impacts
- ▶ Acknowledging water for economic uses
- ▶ Clarifying and planning for Aboriginal rights and title for water
- ▶ Directly referencing the role of groundwater and aquifers

3.2 Outcome One: Support and enable watershed governance

Determining the ideal organizational structures, people to involve and methods to approach different water management problems is an essential part of identifying what good watershed governance looks like in B.C.

Through the public engagement process, 264 respondents commented on the outcome of supporting and enabling watershed governance, and Table 1 shows their top 10 comments. Please note that the percentages shown in Table 1 are based on the 264 responses that commented on Outcome One.

Table 1: Top 10 comments on watershed governance

Comments on Outcome One: Support and enable watershed governance	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Include local voices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responses ranged from suggestions for local advisory opportunities to creating regional governance bodies responsible for some statutory decision-making in a watershed. ▶ Respondents had varying opinions about who should represent watershed residents, with some wanting local voices to be represented in decision-making through local and First Nations governments, and others wanting all water users to be included. ▶ Some respondents cautioned about sharing statutory decision-making powers and noted that local interests might not always be oriented toward watershed security. ▶ All sectors supported increasing local voices in decision-making; however, the extent of local participation and responsibility sharing varied across and within sectors. 	160 (60%)
<p><i>Increase governance capacity and support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Some respondents identified a current lack of capacity for governments and stakeholders to undertake watershed governance and suggested that this could be addressed through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support for Indigenous, local government and watershed-based non-government organizations to increase their capacity to participate in governance activities in their local watershed • Increasing the capacity of provincial staff to participate in and provide expertise and support for watershed governance activities 	101 (38%)
<p><i>Enhance and enable watershed security legislation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents saw opportunities to enhance the use of watershed protection measures in existing provincial and federal legislation, including the <i>Water Sustainability Act</i>, <i>Drinking Water Protection Act</i>, <i>Forest and Range Practices Act</i>, <i>Environment and Land Use Act</i>, <i>Fisheries Act</i> and <i>Canadian Navigable Waters Act</i>. ▶ Comments included requests for protection measures such as increasing water rental rates for water use, vesting all water under the Province, enhancing watershed vulnerability assessments for new water authorizations and using <i>Water Sustainability Act</i> tools. 	88 (33%)

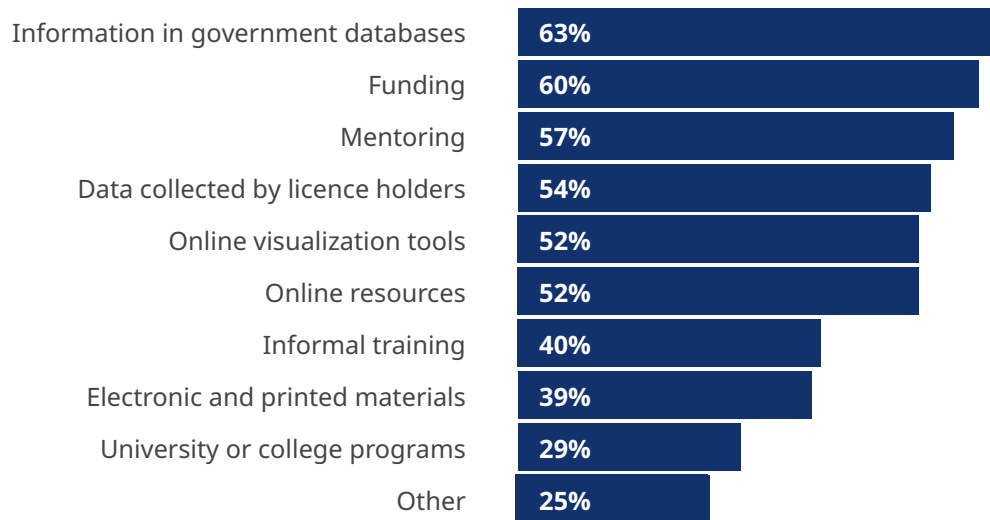
Comments on Outcome One: Support and enable watershed governance	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Clarify roles and responsibilities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All sectors, especially business and industry, saw value in creating guidelines that clearly explain roles and responsibilities for all levels of government and stakeholders regarding processes related to varying resource uses, authorizations and water stewardship responsibilities. ▶ Responses primarily focused on calls for greater transparency and accountability of the Province's roles to reduce regulatory complexity across the multiple ministries responsible for water management. 	69 (26%)
<p><i>Recognize reconciliation as a part of governance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responses from all sectors recognized the importance of reconciliation and the need to respect First Nations rights and Indigenous knowledge. ▶ Comments included calls to prioritize co-governance in watersheds, ensure effective delivery of the Declaration Act, include Indigenous knowledge in decisions and create opportunities for First Nations-led stewardship and conservation programs where data is integrated into decision-making. ▶ Comments also emphasized the importance of co-developing the Strategy and Fund with Indigenous Peoples. 	67 (25%)
<p><i>Co-ordinate all levels of government</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All sectors expressed concerns about governments acting in silos while also navigating overlapping jurisdictions as issues that inhibit effective source water protection. ▶ Responses supported a governance framework and decisions stemming from the Strategy based on co-operation and knowledge sharing across all levels of government (provincial, First Nations, local and federal) and stated that Fisheries and Oceans Canada should be a collaborator on the Strategy for fisheries governance decisions. 	50 (19%)
<p><i>Unify provincial governance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents identified the need to better co-ordinate cross-ministry policy and legislation. ▶ Comments ranged from suggestions for improved integration of provincial staff interactions across natural resource sectors to calls for a unified single water-focused ministry or office that would consolidate all watershed-focused legislation and provide leadership and oversight on source water protection. 	49 (19%)

Comments on Outcome One: Support and enable watershed governance	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Use evidence-based decision-making</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents want decision-making to be guided by data from western science, Indigenous knowledge and local input. ▶ All sectors supported evidence-based decision-making, with suggestions ranging from using water budgets to guide water licence decisions to requesting enhanced data and technical assistance from the Province to help guide decisions. ▶ Of note were requests for greater flexibility to use updated evidence given the uncertain nature of hydrologic systems and climate change; new science and modelling need to be integrated over time to inform how decisions are made to protect water. 	40 (15%)
<p><i>Strengthen compliance and enforcement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents called for a stronger compliance and enforcement response by the Province through existing regulations and authorizations, such as water withdrawals and groundwater licensing. ▶ Some respondents, particularly individuals and those from environmental non-governmental organizations, also called for additional oversight beyond the professional reliance model and for more stringent fines and repercussions. 	35 (13%)
<p><i>Value all water uses/users</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is a desire across all sectors to value a range of water uses and users when making watershed decisions, with; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business and industry respondents requesting that economic values be considered in decisions • Individuals and environmental non-governmental organizations calling for recognition of youth, future generations, recreational users and the inherent rights of water, the environment and wildlife • Agriculture respondents emphasizing the importance of valuing varying geographic and sub-sector needs for food security and water supply 	35 (13%)

3.3 Outcome Two: Enhance our understanding of watersheds and the risks they face

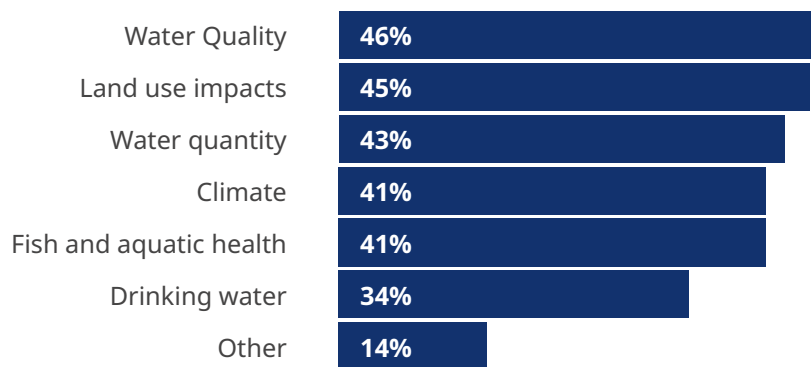
Data on watershed health can inform decisions to improve the health of groundwater and surface water in B.C. Figure 3 shows the data that respondents said they need to improve their understanding of watersheds and the risks they face, and Figure 4 shows how respondents and/or their organizations use watershed characterizations.

Figure 3: Data needed by respondents to better understand watersheds



Total number of responses = 392

Figure 4: How respondents and/or their organizations use watershed characterizations



Total number of responses = 392

Through this public engagement, 392 respondents commented on the outcome of enhancing our understanding of watersheds and the risks they face, and Table 2 shows their top 10 comments on this outcome. Note that the stated percentages reported in Table 2 are based on the 392 responses that commented on Outcome Two.

Table 2: Top 10 comments on understanding watersheds

Comments on Outcome Two: Enhance our understanding of watersheds and the risks they face	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Improve access to government, industry or other data</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Public access to water-related data collected by industry, particularly data collected on private forest lands, is inadequate. ▶ Improving public access to information about private water use is a desired priority by respondents. ▶ The Province should provide a central database and data portals to store and provide public access to data. 	58 (15%)
<p><i>Encourage the government to take action to regulate industry and land development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Province should take action to protect watersheds through additional industry regulations and restrictions on land development. Suggested actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase enforcement of existing regulations • Develop <i>Water Sustainability Act</i> regulations • Develop additional regulations to manage the forest industry ▶ Respondents had a lack of trust in the willingness of the Province or local government to take action. 	55 (14%)
<p><i>Map and monitor data deficiencies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Deficiencies exist in provincial base mapping, baseline data and information about the current state of water values and risks. ▶ A wide range of datasets need improvement; in particular, respondents requested additional investments in LiDAR data collection. 	54 (14%)
<p><i>Enhance water planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is a need to better integrate water information and assessment in planning exercises. ▶ Respondents expressed concern over planning for potential future needs or uses such as population growth, as well as for current planning approaches that evaluate specific resource activities in isolation, leading to an underestimation of impacts. 	38 (10%)
<p><i>Increase public education or engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Many respondents want to be engaged in local watershed activities or decisions in their watershed. ▶ Some responses from urban areas indicate concern about urban watershed health and the public's lack of understanding of, or connection with, nature. 	34 (9%)

Comments on Outcome Two: Enhance our understanding of watersheds and the risks they face	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Expand the availability of scientific studies or decision support tools that evaluate or assess risks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is a need for analysis or decision support tools to evaluate the state of water values, the change from baseline conditions and the impacts of watershed risks. ▶ There is a need for studies that bring together multiple data sources and integrate information about groundwater, surface water and aquatic life. The results of these studies need to be connected to planning and decision-making. 	31 (8%)
<p><i>Boost funding for non-governmental organizations or citizens</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responses highlighted the benefits of collaborative, community-led citizen science and indicated that local groups and non-governmental organizations could collect water data if the Province provides additional funding. ▶ Several responses suggested that funding should be delivered in a way that minimizes the need for detailed annual funding applications. 	22 (6%)
<p><i>Connect science with decision-making</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Several comments related to the need for adaptive management and iterative re-evaluation as additional information becomes available within a science-based approach. ▶ Many respondents from industry and those with expertise in water management are strongly in favour of decision-making and planning based on scientific evidence. ▶ Some industry responses indicated a willingness to work with the Province to improve information sharing with the public to support this goal. 	21 (5%)
<p><i>Improve Provincial and local government capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Several local government and non-governmental organizations indicated that the Province does not currently have the capacity to effectively evaluate risks, identify the state of watershed values or participate in planning for current or future needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of specific areas lacking provincial capacity include community monitoring, implementing groundwater licensing, managing compliance, operating sufficient water monitoring networks and developing guidance ▶ Some comments from local government representatives expressed concern that they lack the capacity to understand the state of their local watersheds, participate in collaborative water planning or implement local water metering. 	18 (5%)

Comments on Outcome Two: Enhance our understanding of watersheds and the risks they face	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Assess and manage cumulative effects and climate change impacts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Comments stressed the importance of evaluating the impacts of upstream activities on groundwater and surface water sources. ▶ Many comments focused on the impacts of forestry activities on aquatic ecosystems, water sources and fish, often describing personal observations of impacts within local watersheds. ▶ Respondents noted the importance of including groundwater and wetlands in assessments. 	9 (2%)

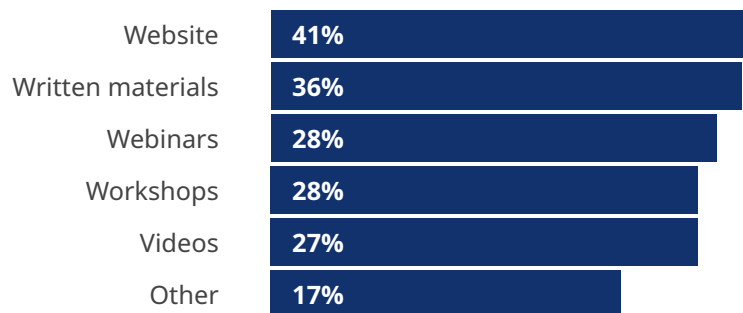
3.4 Outcome Three: Progress reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples using new and improved mechanisms for collaboration on provincial water priorities

This section summarizes perspectives shared by non-Indigenous respondents on the topic of reconciliation. A summary of feedback from Indigenous individuals and representatives of First Nations and First Nations organizations is provided in a forthcoming What We Heard report on Indigenous engagement.

Figure 5 illustrates respondents' preferred ways to learn more about the Province's obligations to Indigenous Peoples related to water policy.

Through this public engagement, 481 respondents commented on the outcome of progressing reconciliation, and Table 3 reflects the top 10 comments received related to this outcome. Please note that the stated percentages reported in Table 3 are based on the 481 responses that commented on Outcome Three.

Figure 5: Preferred methods for understanding the Province's obligations to Indigenous Peoples



Total number of responses = 481

Table 3: Top 10 comments on reconciliation

Comments on Outcome Three: Progress reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples using new and improved mechanisms for collaboration on provincial water priorities	Number and percentage of submissions
<p><i>Orient local watershed governance towards reconciliation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents supported aligning the Strategy and water and watershed planning, management, governance and policy with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). ▶ For some respondents, alignment with UNDRIP will be achieved by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritizing resilience to climate change in watershed governance • Taking the time needed, especially as processes commence, to foster trusting relationships and identify shared values among the parties engaged in local watershed governance • Accommodating the diversity across watersheds in recognition that this diversity has different implications for Indigenous Peoples • Listening to, learning from and, most importantly, acting based on the knowledge shared by Indigenous Peoples • Recognizing Indigenous rights and jurisdictions related to water and sharing authority with Indigenous Peoples 	47 (10%)
<p><i>Build capacity across sectors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responses recognized that the Province has a responsibility to support Indigenous Peoples, and that local organizations and local governments are burdened with overwhelming engagement demands. Respondents suggested capacity-building actions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing funding to train and hire staff • Facilitating relationship building at the local level • Integrating provincial engagement initiatives internally and with those by other governments so that people do not have to repeatedly provide the same information • Creating processes that enable people and groups in watersheds to vet and prioritize engagements • Establishing stable funding programs and streamlining funding application and reporting requirements • Some responses called for the Province to ensure its ministries with water-related responsibilities are also adequately funded to achieve water security and foster meaningful local watershed governance 	31 (6%)

Comments on Outcome Three: Progress reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples using new and improved mechanisms for collaboration on provincial water priorities

Number and percentage of submissions

Support reconciliation

25 (5%)

- ▶ All sectors expressed support for the Province's reconciliation efforts given that much can be learned about sustainability from Indigenous Peoples' respectful relationship with water. Some comments suggested that reconciliation and UNDRIP can be realized by respecting water and that watershed security and reconciliation are mutually reinforcing.
- ▶ Some responses cautioned that as the Province continues to ramp up its reconciliation efforts, it needs to find ways to unify Indigenous and non-Indigenous people throughout B.C.
- ▶ Some responses noted a need to ensure rural populations do not feel marginalized and forgotten while relationships between the provincial government and Indigenous Peoples are strengthened.

Support local watershed governance

23 (5%)

- ▶ Perspectives on implementing a local watershed governance approach involving Indigenous Peoples varied from calls to use shared decision-making provisions in the Declaration Act to establishing new mechanisms for collaborating with Indigenous Peoples.
- ▶ Many comments supported local watershed governance and the view that bringing together diverse perspectives and knowledges will foster creative and strengthened water stewardship.
- ▶ Many responses that support local approaches expressed a desire that the Province remains an active partner in watershed governance to support local and Indigenous governments and organizations when implementing *Water Sustainability Act* tools and UNDRIP.
- ▶ A few comments recognized that all parties involved in watershed governance—including Indigenous, local and provincial governments—are accountable for ensuring that locally based collaboration is a success.
- ▶ Priority topics for collaboration identified include salmon; emergency planning and response to fire, flood and drought; drinking water and source water protection; water storage projects; and water and watershed monitoring and restoration.

Comments on Outcome Three: Progress reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples using new and improved mechanisms for collaboration on provincial water priorities

Number and percentage of submissions

Address educational needs

17 (4%)

- ▶ To help ensure that a shift to local watershed governance approaches involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and organizations is successful, respondents recommended that the Province provide a range of learning opportunities to improve understanding of:
 - The Crown's reconciliation commitments and consultation obligations
 - Indigenous, Aboriginal and treaty rights
 - The use of Indigenous knowledge in decision-making to respect Indigenous values
- ▶ Some local government respondents expressed the need for co-learning between the Province and local governments on how the Province's obligations and commitments to Indigenous Peoples align with local governments' responsibilities for delivering water.
- ▶ Wherever possible, respondents recommended that Indigenous Peoples develop and deliver training, or at least partner in the development and delivery of learning opportunities, on matters about them.

Prioritize Indigenous-led initiatives

17 (4%)

- ▶ Some respondents described the leadership of many Indigenous Peoples in watershed management and restoration and stated that the Province needs to recognize this leadership in local watershed governance by making it a priority to fund and support Indigenous-led initiatives.

Address uncertainties limiting successful local watershed governance

12 (2%)

- ▶ Responses identified multiple uncertainties that must be addressed to build successful cross-cultural local watershed governance. These include navigating:
 - Working with elected and hereditary leaders
 - The overlap of Indigenous territories within watersheds
 - The jurisdictional complexity amongst Crown and local governments
 - The differences in Indigenous, local, provincial and federal perspectives on UNDRIP and Indigenous rights
 - The demand for specialized expertise at local governance tables

Support economic self-sufficiency

8 (2%)

- ▶ For some respondents, supporting Indigenous Peoples' pursuit of economic development opportunities is a critical enabler of self-determination and should be a goal of local watershed governance.
- ▶ Some respondents recommended that the *Water Sustainability Act's* First in Time, First in Right be modernized to create economic development opportunities for Indigenous Peoples.

Comments on Outcome Three: Progress reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples using new and improved mechanisms for collaboration on provincial water priorities	Number and percentage of submissions
<p><i>Co-develop the Strategy among the Province and Indigenous Peoples</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Suggestions focused on moving beyond legal consultation with Indigenous Peoples to co-developing the Strategy and Fund with capacity funding. 	7 (1%)
<p><i>Support provincial-federal collaboration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Some respondents would like the provincial and federal governments to collaborate on water-related intersecting responsibilities so that the governments can provide integrated support to Indigenous Peoples. 	4 (1%)

3.5 Outcome Four: Achieve healthy water for everyone

A clean, safe and reliable supply of water is important for human health, communities and ecosystems and is an integral part of watershed security.

Through this public engagement, 605 respondents commented on the outcome of achieving healthy water for everyone, and Table 4 reflects the top 10 comments received related to this outcome. Note that the stated percentages reported in Table 4 are based on the 605 responses that commented on Outcome Four.

Table 4: Top 10 comments on healthy water for everyone

Comments on Outcome Four: Achieve healthy water for everyone	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Recognize the principles of source-to-tap protection</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is general awareness and appreciation of the importance of clean drinking water to protect public health. Respondents are in favour of risk-based, proactive and locally driven source protection assessments and planning processes. Several responses supported the implementation of recommendations from the 2018 Hullcar (Clcahl) Aquifer Response Plan Report and Office of the Auditor General 2019 report The Protection of Drinking Water. ▶ There is a need to protect private and small water systems, especially in rural areas. Respondents mentioned the challenges of small water treatment systems and the inability to control what happens upstream. ▶ Respondents voiced concerns about source water impacts from harmful algae blooms, pesticides, forestry, agriculture, pathogens and septic systems. There is general agreement that more needs to be done to protect source water. However, some voiced concern about protecting source water above other values such as economic development and job creation. 	59 (10%)

Comments on Outcome Four: Achieve healthy water for everyone	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Favour local governance approaches to protect drinking water</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents voiced strong support for regional, local and community-scale governance approaches to protect drinking water using collaborative and co-governance approaches among partners and with First Nations. ▶ Capacity and funding constraints were highlighted as a barrier for local and Indigenous involvement. ▶ Respondents identified that multiple, overlapping and competing jurisdictions over drinking water is a barrier to good governance and requested stronger accountability mechanisms between jurisdictions. 	33 (5%)
<p><i>Protect drinking water through watershed planning and management tools</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents highlighted the principles of integrated watershed planning and management as ways to protect the quality and supply of drinking water. In general, there is support for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term protection and planning • Restoration of watersheds • Improved stormwater management through green infrastructure and natural asset planning • Accounting for cumulative impacts from land uses such as forestry, mining, urban development and agriculture • Climate change considerations such as flood mitigation 	29 (5%)
<p><i>Protect ecosystems to protect drinking water</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents recognized the interconnectivity between healthy ecosystems and healthy drinking water and the importance of preserving aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems for fish and wildlife and human health. ▶ There was strong support for protecting wetland and riparian areas in recognition of their importance for ecosystem health. 	14 (2%)
<p><i>Recognize that climate change underpins all work related to water</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents recognized that the changing climate will have an impact on drinking water and that planning for unprecedented and extreme events such as wildfires, floods and droughts will be important for protecting drinking water systems. 	13 (2%)

Comments on Outcome Four: Achieve healthy water for everyone	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Improve policy for drinking water</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Numerous respondents mentioned gaps in legislation and the need to review key legislation that overlaps with drinking water, including the <i>Drinking Water Protection Act</i>, <i>Forest and Range Practices Act</i>, <i>Water Sustainability Act</i> and <i>Environmental Management Act</i>. ▶ There are concerns that current legislation and policies are competing across jurisdictional boundaries and creating barriers for protecting drinking water. 	11 (2%)
<p><i>Prioritize good, reliable and accessible data to make good decisions to protect drinking water</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Many respondents felt that the lack of reliable and accessible data on drinking water is a barrier for decision-making, with the main concerns being the location of drinking water sources and groundwater and flood plain mapping. ▶ In general, there is agreement that monitoring water quality and quantity across the province would better protect drinking water sources. 	10 (2%)
<p><i>Enhance compliance and enforcement activities to protect drinking water</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Clear communication from the Province is needed about regulatory requirements so people understand and are aware of their obligation to comply with waste discharge regulations. ▶ There is support for monitoring and reporting compliance activities and for stronger enforcement of waste discharges. ▶ Several responses stated the need for effective financial penalties. 	10 (2%)
<p><i>Recognize Indigenous rights, perspectives and involvement in protecting drinking water</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents recognized the importance of reconciliation and the commitments under the Declaration Act with respect to drinking water. Indigenous principles, the values of reciprocity and viewing water as a living entity that is a unifying landscape feature should be incorporated into a co-governance structure. ▶ Responses noted that the lack of access to safe drinking water occurs almost exclusively in rural and remote Indigenous communities. 	7 (1%)

Comments on Outcome Four: Achieve healthy water for everyone	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Respect and appreciate many water values</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents recognized the broad spectrum of water values outside of drinking water. There were calls to recognize and prioritize water as a human right that is essential for all life, and to recognize recreational, cultural and spiritual water values that impact mental well-being and physical health. ▶ Some expressed concern over the commodification of water and noted that drinking water is a social justice issue. Access to safe drinking water should be equitable and not based on financial status or means. ▶ Respondents also recognized that water is valued for food security, and that protecting wild fish stocks, such as salmon, and making water available for agriculture are important for local food production and supply. 	7 (1%)

3.6 Outcome Five: Integrate water more efficiently and effectively into land use planning

Water and land use planning need to connect to protect watershed values. Figure 6 shows how EngageBC respondents ranked what they value most about water in their watershed. This is shown as the percentage of respondents that ranked each value first through eighth. The key on the right-hand side shows which colour represents each rank. For example, yellow represents a value being ranked first. Water for drinking has the highest proportion of yellow in its bar, which means that most people ranked water for drinking as their top value. Likewise, habitat for aquatic species has the largest proportion of orange in its bar, which means that it was ranked as respondents' second-most important value. The value that fewest people ranked first was water for business or industrial water purposes.

Figure 6: How respondents ranked water-related values

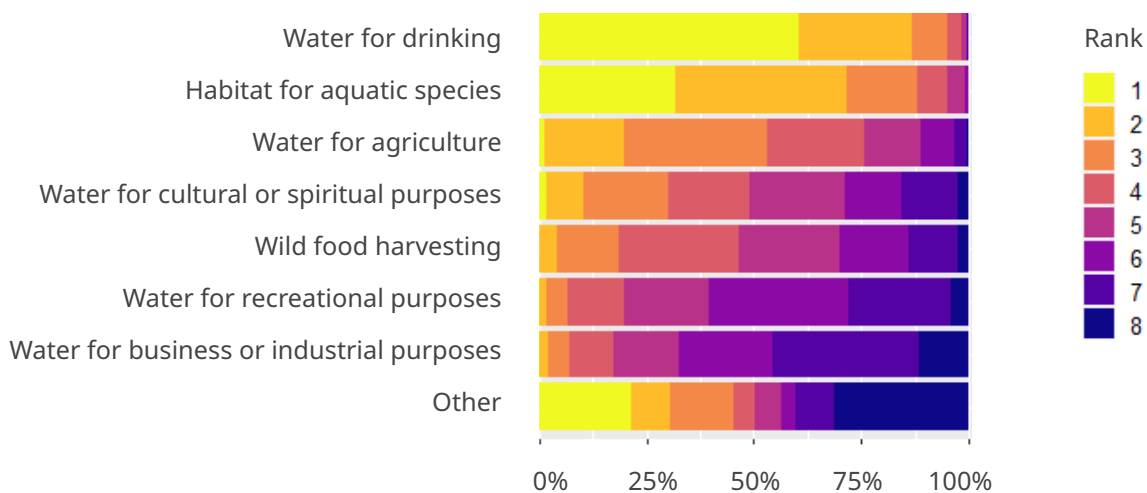


Figure 7 illustrates that the vast majority of EngageBC respondents (approximately 80 per cent) believe the water-related values they identified as important are being threatened in their watershed.

Through the public engagement process, 530 respondents commented on the outcome of integrating water more efficiently and effectively into land use planning, and Table 5 shows their top 10 comments on this outcome. Please note that the stated percentages reported in Table 5 are based on the 530 responses that commented on Outcome Five.

Figure 7: Number of respondents who believe there are threats facing their watershed

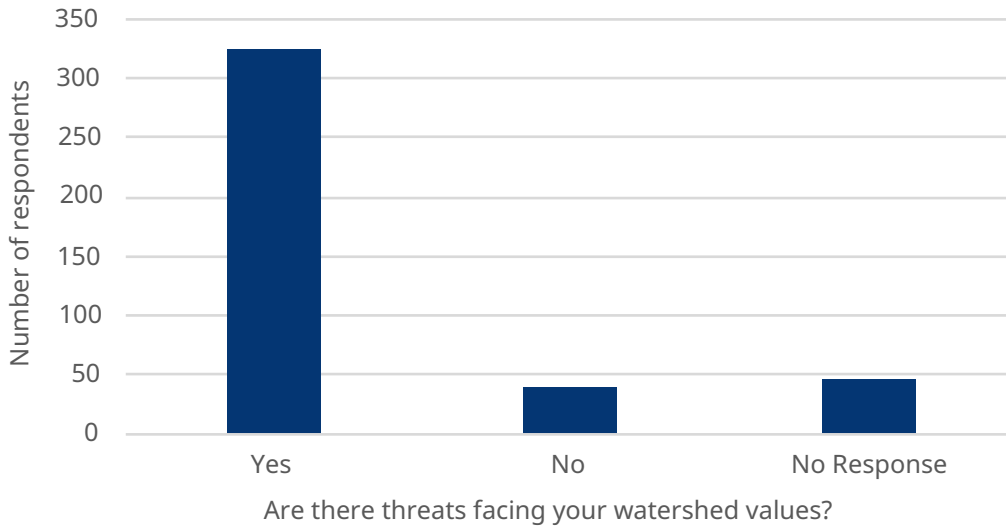


Table 5: Top 10 comments on integrating water in land use planning

Outcome Five: Integrate water more efficiently and effectively into land use planning	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Prioritize water in planning and decision-making</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Water and watersheds should be prioritized in all planning and decision-making, across all program areas and at all levels of government. Respondents noted the need to prioritize watershed health in plan development, especially in Land Use Plans, Drinking Water Protection Plans, Water Sustainability Plans and Official Community Plans. ▶ If a rationale was provided for prioritizing water in planning and decision-making, it was most often the positive benefits that would result for communities (drinking water) and ecosystems (habitat). 	171 (32%)
<p><i>Mitigate, and where possible, prevent, the impact of forestry on watersheds</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents expressed concern about the impacts of logging on community drinking water sources and on ecosystems within watersheds. Many called for an end to logging (on both private and public land) in B.C. watersheds. ▶ Though much fewer in number, some respondents commented on the benefits of forestry in B.C. watersheds, particularly for the employment opportunities the sector provides, the management practices that are employed in sensitive watersheds, and the role that forestry plays in mitigating the impact of forest fires. 	169 (32%)

Outcome Five: Integrate water more efficiently and effectively into land use planning	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Protect and conserve watersheds</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Many responses supported greater protection and conservation of riparian areas, wetlands and other sensitive ecosystems within watersheds during planning processes. 	100 (19%)
<p><i>Include communities in watershed governance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents largely expressed a desire for communities and other local groups to be at the table and have a say in the kinds of activities that can take place in their watershed. This particularly focused on the need for inclusive decision-making processes to ensure the representation of local values, interests and priorities. 	86 (16%)
<p><i>Undertake planning at the watershed scale</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There was broad support for watershed-scale planning and governance, with the recognition that given the diversity of watersheds across B.C., a “one size fits all” approach is not appropriate. ▶ Some suggested the need for overarching provincial goals/objectives to support watershed-scale planning and governance to ensure alignment between initiatives. ▶ Responses also highlighted the need to integrate different planning processes that may be ongoing simultaneously by different community groups or levels of government. This would require improving co-ordination between different levels of government, agencies and programs. It could also result in nesting strategies, plans and actions based on the identified issues and geographic scale. ▶ Another frequent comment was the need to accelerate the development and implementation of area-based <i>Water Sustainability Act</i> tools (e.g., Water Sustainability Plans). 	60 (11%)
<p><i>Mitigate, and where possible, prevent, the impact of urban development on watersheds</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There was concern about the rate of urban development occurring in watersheds. ▶ One driver of this concern is the lack of knowledge that communities have about the amount of growth that the water supply can sustain. Another is the impact of stormwater runoff (particularly due to road building, increased impermeable surface area, etc.) on watershed ecosystems. 	59 (11%)
<p><i>Mitigate, and where possible, prevent, the impact of industry on watersheds</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents expressed concern about the land and water use impacts of water bottling and the oil, gas and mining industries through the construction of roads and works, water use and effluent discharge. ▶ Respondents called for actions to prevent and counteract industry impacts, such as restoring aquatic ecosystems and using inclusive planning processes. 	48 (9%)

Outcome Five: Integrate water more efficiently and effectively into land use planning	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Improve knowledge and data associated with land use impacts on water</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responses mostly supported increased data and knowledge gathering within watersheds. There is a desire to expand data monitoring, collection and analysis to increase understanding of cumulative effects in watersheds. ▶ Respondents identified the need for additional data and knowledge development to inform beneficial and adaptive management practices, as well as the uptake of a monitoring and reporting policy that could be linked to stronger compliance and enforcement practices. 	46 (9%)
<p><i>Strengthen capacity building and education efforts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents emphasized that capacity building for land use planning includes strengthening the financial and human capacity to participate in planning processes and actions across the watershed. ▶ Suggested forms of capacity building include outreach and education to communities on the impact of land use, and providing tools for improving watershed stewardship/ planning. ▶ Many responses commented that community member participation and partnerships in planning initiatives require funding from the Province. 	31 (6%)
<p><i>Mitigate, and where possible, prevent, cumulative impacts on watersheds</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents expressed concern about the cumulative impacts of land uses (particularly forestry, industry and urban development) and climate change (especially wildfires, flooding and drought). ▶ Some respondents felt that economic growth should take priority in land use decision-making over watershed health. 	29 (5%)

3.7 Outcome Six: Reset the water supply and demand relationship

Watershed security involves the assurance of water supply as well as managing demand, including identifying new sources of water (e.g., enhancing storage opportunities, collecting rainwater and reclaiming wastewater) and reducing the amount of water used.

Through this public engagement, 413 respondents commented on the outcome of resetting the water supply and demand relationship, and Table 6 summarizes their top 10 comments on this outcome. Please note that the stated percentages of submissions received in Table 6 are based on the total number of responses that commented on Outcome Six.

Table 6: Top 10 comments on resetting the water supply and demand relationship

Comments on Outcome Six: Reset the water supply and demand relationship	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Promote water conservation through education and outreach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents called for public education and outreach, such as through greater emphasis on conservation in the school curriculum, educational seminars, household mailers, advertising and a water footprint calculator. ▶ Respondents supported information programs on efficient water use/conservation technology to improve citizen education and promote new relationships with water based on respect, caring and stewardship. 	86 (21%)
<p><i>Increase compliance and enforcement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responses urged improved use of existing regulatory powers to enforce water authorization conditions or requirements. ▶ Respondents asked the Province to appoint a provincial watershed security officer and local water stewards for monitoring, reporting and metering to help with compliance and enforcement. 	21 (5%)
<p><i>Establish alternative water rationing systems</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ During times of scarcity and drought, respondents advocate that the Province enable more local decision-making and aim for greater voluntary reductions in water use rather than compulsory reductions. ▶ Several responses argued in favour of alternative water rationing schemes to B.C.'s current First in Time, First in Right scheme, including prioritizing certain uses over others, voluntary proportional reduction systems and temporary water trading. ▶ Several respondents noted that water scarcity is not a challenge in all regions and that in water-scarce regions local demand management programs are often already in place. These responses cautioned against "one-size-fits-all" solutions. 	20 (5%)
<p><i>Introduce incentives for water use efficiency</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There are calls for incentives to increase water use efficiency, particularly by agricultural producers and industry. Suggestions for measures include installing efficient irrigation systems, planting drought-tolerant crops, enhancing soil for water retention and providing incentives to agriculture and industry to reduce water use. ▶ Comments also included requests for subsidized water-efficient technologies (e.g., rebates on low-flow appliances). 	15 (4%)

Comments on Outcome Six: Reset the water supply and demand relationship	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Align efforts with climate preparedness and adaptation strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responses advocated for rainwater, greywater and effluent use for agriculture and constructing separate drinking water and agricultural water supply systems to enhance water supply. ▶ Requests were made to increase water storage and permeable infrastructure surfaces for groundwater recharge, and to maintain forest cover. ▶ Suggestions also included calls to buy back existing water rights to make more water available for aquatic ecosystems and to secure land and restore hydrology in upland portions of watersheds to protect quantity and quality. 	13 (3%)
<p><i>Amend water allocation policy and practice</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents advocated for water allocation decision-making to be guided by supply and demand studies and the determination of environmental flow needs. ▶ Respondents called for prioritizing water for drinking and fish and wildlife over business and industry. 	13 (3%)
<p><i>Accelerate Water Sustainability Act implementation and use of new tools</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There was support for improving the Province's use of existing regulatory powers, including accelerating the implementation of the <i>Water Sustainability Act</i> and making use of its tools. 	12 (3%)
<p><i>Improve forest management to protect water</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There were requests that the forest sector change its harvest practices to slow rates of snowpack melt and the resulting runoff flow. 	12 (3%)
<p><i>Support water conservation actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Suggestions for individuals and households: install low-flow fixtures, plant drought-tolerant gardens, fix leaks, install rain barrels and take steps such as turning off taps when brushing teeth or rinsing dishes, and washing only full loads of laundry. ▶ Suggestions for local water providers: meter water use by customers, tier billing structures, restrict use during dry summer periods and fix leaks in water infrastructure. ▶ Suggestions for the Province: revise the BC Building Code to facilitate use of rainwater and recycled water. 	9 (2%)
<p><i>Revise water licence fees and rentals for industry and foreign landowners</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents called for an increase in <i>Water Sustainability Act</i> fee and rental rates to help incentivize reduced water use. ▶ Suggestions were made that a licence term limit of 10 years be imposed on foreign entities. 	8 (2%)

3.8 Outcome Seven: Improve habitats for aquatic ecosystems

Aquatic ecosystems depend on adequate water quality and quantity. Healthy aquatic ecosystems will also result in improved community well-being, for example, by building resiliency to climate change impacts. Figure 8, below, shows respondents' support for a various actions to restore, rehabilitate and improve water and aquatic habitats.

Through this public engagement process, 443 respondents commented on the outcome of improving habitats for aquatic ecosystems, and Table 7 shows their top 10 comments on this outcome. Please note that the stated percentages reported in Table 7 are based on the 443 responses that commented on Outcome Seven.

Figure 8: Respondents' support for actions to restore, rehabilitate and improve water and aquatic habitats

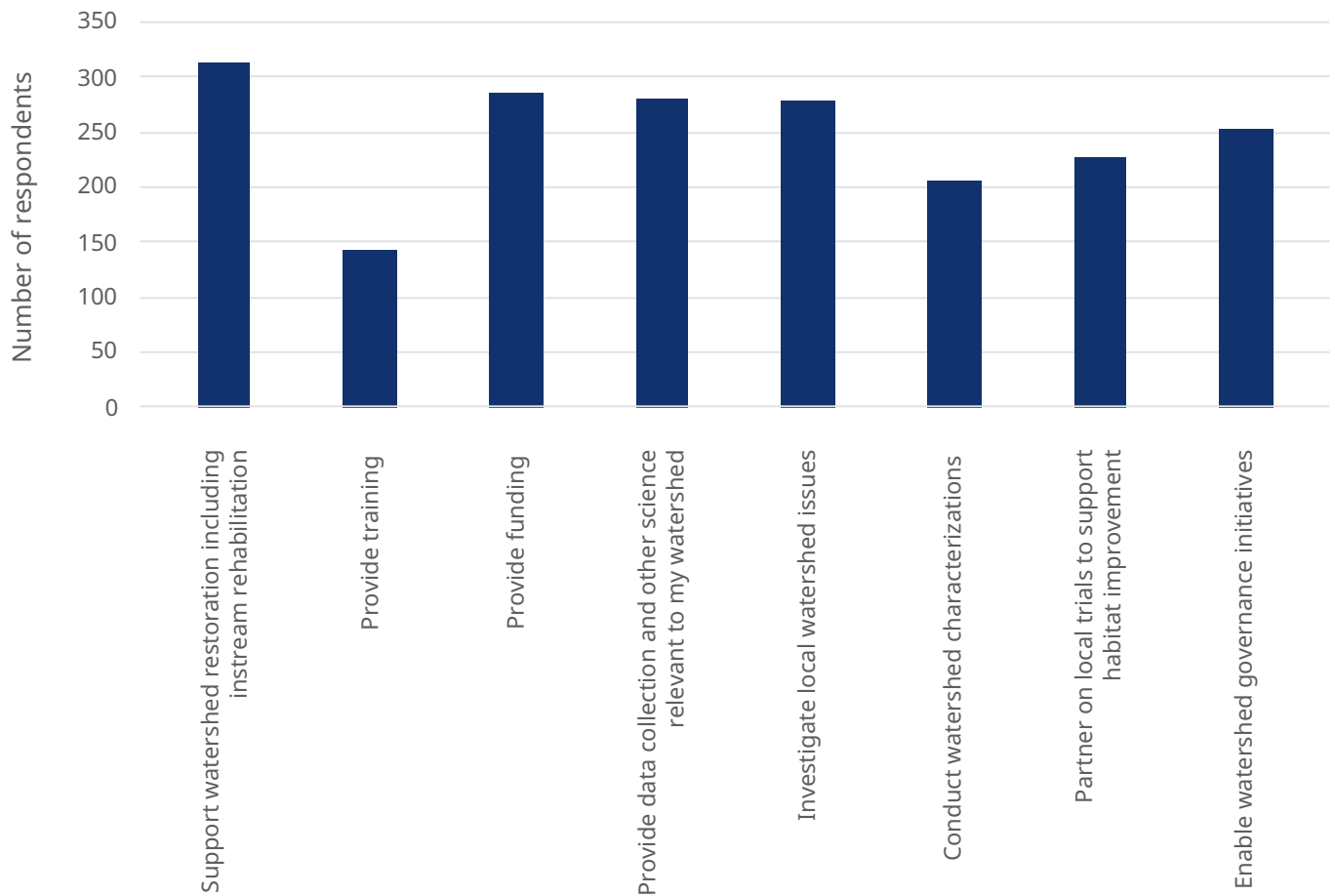


Table 7: Top 10 comments on improving habitats for aquatic ecosystems

Outcome Seven: Improve habitats for aquatic ecosystems	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Strengthen capacity building and education</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is a need for capacity building within First Nations, local governments and community groups to enable monitoring and restoration. ▶ Respondents emphasized that the sharing or transfer of any responsibilities related to ecosystem restoration and/or protection with other levels of government require an additional need for capacity building. ▶ Other comments included the need for capacity building within the provincial government to deliver on any supported actions contained within the Strategy and Fund. 	61 (14%)
<p><i>Undertake watershed restoration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is a need to restore watersheds—including riparian areas, in-stream and the surrounding environment—that have been impacted by land use. ▶ There is a recognition that restoration of both terrestrial and aquatic environments is needed as water is inseparable from ecosystems within a watershed. ▶ Respondents called for support in terms of both funding and training from the Province to enable watershed restoration, emphasizing that support would have multiple benefits, including source water protection, climate resilience and sustenance of wild foods. 	42 (9%)
<p><i>Prioritize watershed protection</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents called for the protection of watersheds, including riparian areas, wetlands, streams and the surrounding terrestrial environment through initiatives that could include securing priority areas in privately owned watersheds and expanding existing protected areas. 	36 (8%)
<p><i>Improve knowledge and data related to ecosystems that depend on healthy watersheds</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There was agreement that increasing mapping, knowledge and data collection, and watershed monitoring are needed to understand the stressors and drivers impacting watershed ecosystems. ▶ Respondents expressed support for knowledge and data collection in collaboration with communities and groups to produce state of watershed reports (and to prioritize these reports for watersheds under stress). These reports could then help inform decision-making and planning processes. ▶ Respondents noted specific knowledge and data gaps for cumulative effects assessment, water storage volumes, in-stream flow requirements for fish, and baseline data for aquatic ecosystems. 	21 (5%)

Outcome Seven: Improve habitats for aquatic ecosystems	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Mitigate, and where possible, prevent, land use impacts on ecosystems within watersheds</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents expressed concern about the impacts that land uses on private and public land are having on ecosystems within watersheds. ▶ There was concern about the impacts from new residential and industrial development, as well as the legacy impacts of past land use disturbances (e.g., forestry and logging road construction) and cumulative effects. ▶ Some of the impacts that were cited included habitat destruction (in particular, in wetlands and riparian areas) and species decline and displacement. Other impacts included water quality decline from stormwater. 	19 (4%)
<p><i>Improve co-ordination and collaboration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There were calls to increase co-ordination among different levels of government and partners in watersheds to achieve the best outcomes for aquatic ecosystem health. This includes working across sectors to achieve positive outcomes for the environment. 	15 (3%)
<p><i>Value aquatic ecosystems for the services they provide</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents recognized that restoring and protecting aquatic ecosystems is critical to climate change adaptation and mitigation. 	15 (3%)
<p><i>Restore and protect salmon and salmon habitat</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ While the protection and restoration of fish habitat generally featured prominently in responses, salmon and salmon habitat were cited as particularly important habitat to protect and restore. 	13 (3%)
<p><i>Promote nature-based solutions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents supported using or building natural features like rain gardens or wetlands (constructed or natural) to help address the impacts on watershed ecosystems. They emphasized the need for provincial government support for leadership, education, guidance and funding to promote these approaches. 	12 (3%)
<p><i>Restore and protect wetlands</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Wetlands are the habitat most cited as being important to restore and protect because of their role as both a refuge for many species and their importance for climate change mitigation and adaptation. ▶ Respondents called for the Province to develop guidelines and policies for protecting wetlands and other priority ecosystems 	12 (3%)

3.9 Outcome Eight: Integrate Indigenous knowledge into decision-making and management

Through the Declaration Act, the Province is committed to implement UNDRIP as the framework for reconciliation within B.C. Part of implementing UNDRIP includes incorporating Indigenous knowledge into watershed stewardship and decision-making.

Through this public engagement process, 263 respondents commented on the outcome of integrating Indigenous knowledge into decision-making and management, and Table 8 shows their top 10 comments on this outcome. Please note that the stated percentages reported in Table 8 are based on the 263 responses that commented on Outcome Eight.

Table 8: Top 10 comments on integrating Indigenous knowledge into decision-making and management

Comments on Outcome Eight: Integrating Indigenous knowledge into decision-making and management	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Collaborate respectfully</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responses described a mistrust that some Indigenous people feel towards the provincial government from ongoing colonization; there is a need to take the time to build long-term and sincere relationships, and to listen with the intent of learning and taking action. ▶ Respondents recognized the importance of respecting Indigenous protocols associated with honouring knowledge keepers, demonstrating humility and practising gratitude to create spaces in which Indigenous Peoples are comfortable sharing their knowledge. ▶ There was acknowledgement that Indigenous Peoples are free to choose how, when and what knowledge to share at any given time. ▶ Respondents called for governments and local organizations to remain responsive to all opportunities to collaborate with Indigenous Peoples and continue to work together to create new opportunities. ▶ There is a need for the provincial government to support local people and community organizations in their efforts to collaborate with Indigenous Peoples by providing funding, expertise and facilitation services. 	81 (31%)

Comments on Outcome Eight: Integrating Indigenous knowledge into decision-making and management	Number & percentage of submissions
<p data-bbox="154 384 954 415"><i>Use education to build capacity within non-Indigenous communities</i></p> <ul data-bbox="175 432 1235 873" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="175 432 1235 531">▶ Many non-Indigenous respondents indicated that they are uncertain about how to use Indigenous knowledge. A subset of these respondents indicated that training is needed to overcome this uncertainty. <li data-bbox="175 548 1235 680">▶ Training opportunities identified by respondents range from learning by reading online resources and books to taking courses and pursuing other formal training. A subset of these respondents indicated that Indigenous Peoples should develop and deliver the training. <li data-bbox="175 697 1235 762">▶ Comments included requests that school curricula should include modules aimed at raising awareness of Indigenous histories, laws, worldviews and knowledge. <li data-bbox="175 779 1235 873">▶ Some respondents suggested that provincial funding should be provided for local organizations and people to participate in opportunities to learn more about Indigenous knowledge and reconciliation. 	76 (29%)
<p data-bbox="154 921 461 953"><i>Braid knowledge together</i></p> <ul data-bbox="175 970 1235 1482" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="175 970 1235 1102">▶ It is critical that Indigenous knowledge be used early in and throughout decision-making processes, especially for addressing complex issues. A subset of respondents indicated that decision-making that acts on Indigenous knowledge operationalizes the Declaration Act and UNDRIP. <li data-bbox="175 1119 1235 1218">▶ Respondents suggested that the responsibility for ensuring the respectful use of Indigenous knowledge lies with the provincial and federal governments, which in turn necessitates innovative leadership. <li data-bbox="175 1234 1235 1436">▶ Some comments suggested that to encourage the use of Indigenous knowledge in decision-making, efforts should be made to recognize the similarities between Indigenous knowledge and science (e.g., similarities in long-term environmental observations). Note, however, that some comments expressed a lack of support for the (prioritized) use of Indigenous knowledge because it is perceived as being anecdotal rather than based on empirical measurements. <li data-bbox="175 1453 1235 1482">▶ Local knowledge should also be included when using Indigenous knowledge. 	43 (16%)
<p data-bbox="154 1526 699 1558"><i>Build capacity within Indigenous communities</i></p> <ul data-bbox="175 1575 1235 1902" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="175 1575 1235 1673">▶ Respondents commented that inquiries and invitations to Indigenous organizations go unanswered, with many recognizing that the failure to respond is likely due to capacity limits. <li data-bbox="175 1690 1235 1789">▶ To increase capacity, some respondents recommended that the Province fund Indigenous organizations to hire additional staff, fund training in watershed science and fund participation in engagement initiatives. <li data-bbox="175 1806 1235 1902">▶ Respondents suggested that the Province fund internships and positions within government at junior, senior and executive levels targeted to Indigenous candidates based on their lived experiences. 	41 (16%)

Comments on Outcome Eight: Integrating Indigenous knowledge into decision-making and management	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Learn from local experiences</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The provincial government should leverage learnings from existing long-term local opportunities to collaborate with Indigenous Peoples when designing local approaches to watershed governance. 	15 (6%)
<p><i>Support inclusion with policy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Indigenous knowledge and the recognition of Indigenous rights need to be recognized in organizational mandates, policies and legislation to ensure respectful inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and knowledge holders in watershed governance. ▶ Some respondents recommended that Indigenous knowledge use guidelines be prepared by Indigenous Peoples with the support of the Province to help Government overcome uncertainty in respectfully using Indigenous knowledge. 	14 (5%)
<p><i>Support Indigenous-led initiatives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents recognized that the most effective way to use Indigenous knowledge is to give space to Indigenous Peoples to lead the development of management plans and other water and watershed initiatives. 	10 (4%)
<p><i>Increase environmental protections</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ According to some, listening to Indigenous knowledge is important but insufficient if the Province does not also increase environmental protections that respect Indigenous Peoples' intimate relationships with waterscapes. 	9 (3%)
<p><i>Learn from Indigenous worldviews</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents emphasized that collaboration with Indigenous Peoples can improve water management by having decision-makers learn and act on Indigenous worldviews. 	6 (2%)
<p><i>Preserve Indigenous knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ In certain circumstances, using or accessing Indigenous knowledge can be difficult due to Elders passing on, language and land loss, and intergenerational trauma contributing to Indigenous knowledge loss. ▶ Respondents called for immediate action to preserve Indigenous knowledge for future generations. 	4 (2%)

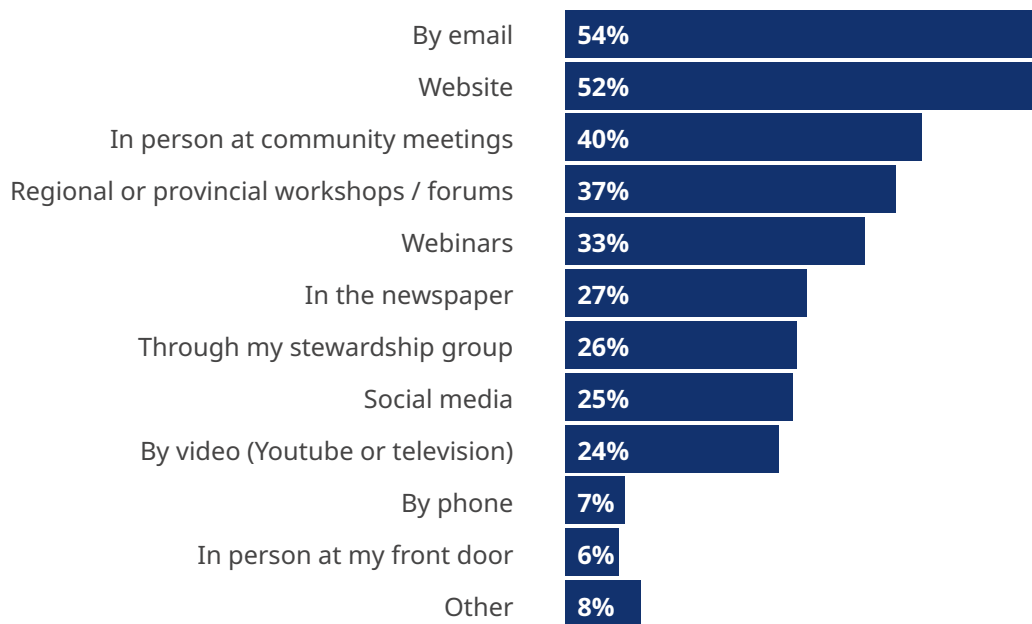
3.10 Outcome Nine: Strengthen education and outreach about managing water in B.C.

Education and outreach activities can contribute to watershed security by altering human stewardship behaviours and building relationships between diverse water knowledge-holders in watersheds.

Figure 9 illustrates that self-directed learning materials obtained through email and websites are the preferred methods for receiving and sharing information, followed by more interactive approaches, including in-person community meetings and regional or provincial workshops and forums.

Through this public engagement process, 448 respondents commented on the outcome of strengthening education and outreach, and Table 9 shows their top 10 comments on this outcome. Please note that the stated percentages reported in Table 9 are based on the 448 responses that commented on Outcome Nine.

Figure 9: Responses to closed questions on preferred methods for receiving or sharing information



Total Number of Responses = 448

Table 9: Top 10 comments on strengthening education and outreach about managing water in B.C.

Comments on Outcome Nine: Strengthen education and outreach about managing water in B.C.	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Build capacity through centralized and accessible data storage</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is a need for enhanced data sharing via accessible provincial databases, which will enable learning about the status of local watersheds. These databases should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological, hydrological and geomorphological data for individual watersheds • Groundwater and aquifer data • Water allocations and actual volumes used for individual waterbodies • Land and water use activities, including existing interests on the land base (e.g., tenures) ▶ Database design should be for cumulative effects assessments and include the indicators of watershed health that are used to prioritize work related to watershed security. 	49 (11%)
<p><i>Focus on enhanced watershed health</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents reported the need for hands-on training in water and habitat data collection methods; water and watershed restoration techniques; and communications that effect change so that they can better prepare to meaningfully participate in collaborative watershed governance forums. ▶ Respondents recommended that resiliency to drought and flood be an outcome of the Strategy and should include education opportunities led by the Province. ▶ Suggestions were given for specific educational opportunities, including information on climate change impacts to water quantity, quality and flows; landscape and building design considerations and green technology; and water conservation best practices for residential and agricultural water users. ▶ There is a need for enhanced understanding of the water-related jurisdiction of all levels of government, environmental and water laws and rights, and how to implement the <i>Water Sustainability Act</i> tools. ▶ Respondents requested forums in which to share success stories related to enhancing watershed security to foster learning between watersheds. 	47 (10%)

Comments on Outcome Nine: Strengthen education and outreach about managing water in B.C.

Number & percentage of submissions

Deliver education and outreach through multiple pathways

28 (6%)

- ▶ Respondents had a range of preferences for the types of formats used to deliver education and outreach.
- ▶ Multiple pathways should be used to deliver education and outreach programs, including short self-directed plain language formats (e.g., online library of resources; social media posts) and interactive formats with structured trainer-led learning activities (e.g., webinars; community-based workshops).
- ▶ Visual formats, including online mapping and imagery tools, are the preferred self-directed formats.

Co-ordinate and centralize delivery

28 (6%)

- ▶ Responses indicated a preference for education and outreach program development to rest with the Province to support centralized co-ordination and a single point of contact for information and support for local organizations.
- ▶ Respondents recommended that a provincial education and outreach team publicly report on Strategy implementation progress and the health of each watershed.
- ▶ A key function of the provincial education and outreach team should be identifying funding opportunities and providing guidance on preparing funding applications.

Establish a quality education and outreach program

27 (6%)

- ▶ Respondents described how all levels of government (provincial, local and Indigenous), environmental and social advocacy groups, professional organizations and people, water users, and the public will benefit from education and outreach as no single organization or group holds all water-related knowledge.
- ▶ A high-quality education and outreach program should aim to create inclusive and collaborative networks of people and organizations at the local level by:
 - Enabling multidirectional and mutual learning across all sectors through open and accessible dialogue
 - Respecting the co-existence of multiple knowledge systems and using diverse knowledge in local governance forums
 - Being purposeful and lasting throughout all watershed planning and policy processes
- ▶ Some responses indicated that no new education and outreach activities are needed because existing resources, information and materials available on government websites are sufficient.

Comments on Outcome Nine: Strengthen education and outreach about managing water in B.C.	Number & percentage of submissions
<p><i>Deliver education and outreach in partnership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents requested that the provincial government leverage the experience of local governments, First Nations, businesses and local organizations (e.g., recreation organizations) when developing and delivering education and outreach programs by establishing formal partnerships with them. 	18 (4%)
<p><i>Work in cross-cultural governance forums</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents recommended that cross-sectoral education be delivered in partnership with Indigenous Peoples as it increases understanding of Indigenous Peoples' traditional land management practices, laws, values and knowledge to help people participate in cross-cultural watershed governance. ▶ Databases of First Nations' territories and place names should be publicly available to help raise awareness that First Nations that have rights in individual watersheds. 	10 (2%)
<p><i>Educate youth</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ We need to teach people from an early age to foster watershed stewardship. Elementary and secondary school curricula should include classroom- and experiential-based learning in watershed science, caring for rural and urban watersheds, and learning the implications of, and how to adapt to, climate change. ▶ Young adults could build their capacity for water and watershed stewardship by participating in professional development internship programs established in partnerships between Indigenous Peoples, post-secondary institutions and the provincial government. 	9 (2%)
<p><i>Promote the benefits of an education and outreach program</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Education and outreach can help overcome distrust in the provincial government when these activities raise cross-sectoral understanding of what is happening in watersheds, watershed science and the implications of land and water use activities on water and watershed health. ▶ For some respondents, education and outreach foster equitable relationships between diverse people through knowledge sharing, which in turn better enables their collective water-related knowledge to be brought forward for more informed decision-making about water and watersheds. ▶ Through multidirectional education on water conservation measures, residential, agricultural and industrial water users can become "part of the solution" rather than threats to watershed security. 	7 (2%)
<p><i>Acknowledge the limitations of education and outreach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Respondents observed that while education and outreach are helpful, they are insufficient for behavioural change; incentives and a strong regulatory and enforcement program are also needed for water users to conserve water. 	5 (1%)

3.11 Outcome Ten: Create a Watershed Security Fund

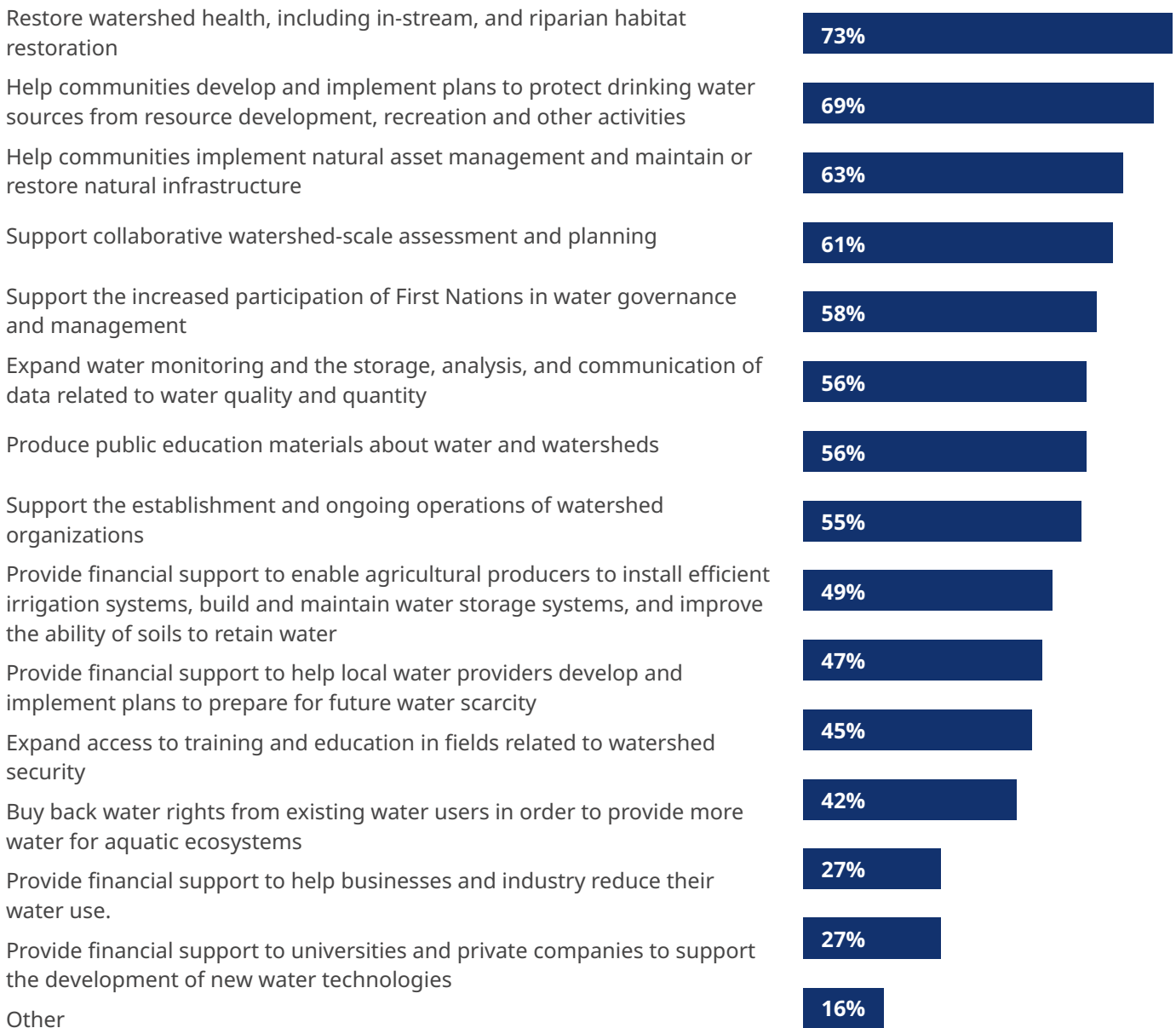
A proposed new Watershed Security Fund could complement existing funding programs and help support work such as watershed governance arrangements and activities that contribute to watershed security.

Figure 10 shows the top responses shared on EngageBC about what opportunities or priorities a Watershed Security Fund could focus on. Respondents also provided written submissions on the proposed fund, with the bulk of these submissions outlining fund spending priorities. These priorities generally align with feedback received via the EngageBC system, with the most frequent being:

- ▶ Watershed restoration and conservation
- ▶ Environmental assessment and monitoring
- ▶ Procurement of land and resource rights
- ▶ Support for planning processes
- ▶ Grants for First Nations or stewardship groups

Some respondents expressed the view that the fund should be co-developed and co-administered with First Nation partners and/or other non-governmental parties.

Figure 10: How respondents answered the question: “What opportunities and priorities do you think a Watershed Security Fund could focus on?”



Total number of responses = 412

Part 4: What we heard: Sector-level reports

Below is a summary of the key comments on the Strategy and Fund discussion paper, organized by sector.

4.1 Agriculture

- ▶ Stated that more information is needed before changing B.C.'s governance framework.
- ▶ Noted that the participation of the agriculture sector in governance cannot be grouped with industry or represented by one body due to varied sub-interests and geographic differences.
- ▶ Concerned about water availability because of scarcity and upstream forest conditions.

4.2 Forestry

- ▶ Cautioned against new governance systems that have the potential to bias certain perspectives and harm economic development; instead, recommended leveraging existing planning frameworks and already established regional collaboration.
- ▶ Requested clarification on the scale of watersheds and communities, and the types of water resources that will be focused on in the Strategy.
- ▶ Concerned about the risk that First Nations will not be able to engage in new processes.

4.3 Business

- ▶ Cautioned that decentralizing governance and focusing on source water protection may outweigh a broader B.C. public and economic focus.
- ▶ Noted the challenges of collaborating with Indigenous Peoples, particularly with unresolved overlapping Indigenous territories.
- ▶ Expressed concern about agricultural and septic inputs on vulnerable aquifers.
- ▶ Asked for adaptation support to prepare for disasters.

4.4 Local government

- ▶ Noted the lack of provincial capacity and funding for the successful implementation of the Strategy.
- ▶ Concern about the potential for inequitable distribution of the Watershed Security Fund.
- ▶ Noted challenges facing the sector regarding insufficient watershed protection and compliance and enforcement of polluters and unauthorized water users.
- ▶ Emphasized that ongoing climate change, urban and industrial growth, legacy land use, and cumulative effect issues are impacting watershed health and water quality.
- ▶ Called to increase the use of *Drinking Water Protection Act* governance tools and regulation and for guidance on how this Act intersects with other statutes and regulation.
- ▶ Concerned about the limited technical and legal expertise and human resource capacity within local governments to implement the Declaration Act and ensure Indigenous worldviews and principles are respected.
- ▶ Expressed worries about the limited capacity of First Nations to work with local governments.
- ▶ Cautioned against downloading governance and management responsibilities without providing resources or evaluating existing local government and community efforts and impacts.

4.5 Energy, oil and gas

- ▶ Cautioned against using inequitable user fees as a revenue source for the Strategy and Fund.
- ▶ Concerned about the insufficiency of watershed science on how to integrate water into land use planning.
- ▶ Concerned that if governance is localized there may be inconsistency in decision-making and bias against economic development across watersheds.
- ▶ Requested for clarity regarding the Rights of Indigenous Peoples concerning water.

4.6 Mining

- ▶ Concerned the Strategy may:
 - Impact jobs and economic development due to governance changes
 - Create inconsistencies and fairness issues about water authorizations, watershed planning and the application of the Declaration Act due to decentralized decision-making
- ▶ Cautioned that there may be ad hoc planning changes if the Strategy does not guide land use planning.
- ▶ Expressed desire for provincial-federal collaboration to align Declaration Act responsibilities.
- ▶ Stated that challenges facing the sector include overlapping Indigenous territory claims and their impact on efficient governance co-ordination.

4.7 Environmental non-government organizations

- ▶ Main concerns about watershed security include:
 - The cumulative impacts of development, including legacy infrastructure challenges in watersheds and climate change, on watersheds (fish and fish habitat)
 - The favouring of economic growth over the environment in land use decision-making
 - Current water monitoring concentration in urban areas does not adequately evaluate resource development impacts, particularly in northern B.C.
 - Social justice and equity issues due to water availability and its quality
- ▶ Concerned about the delivery of the Strategy and Fund:
 - That the diversity of water users and the time required for collaboration is not sufficiently recognized
 - Delayed Fund implementation and inadequate provincial government resources and staff capacity will not be able to support watershed security needs

4.8 Private water purveyors

- ▶ Expressed watershed security concerns about:
 - Inadequate data to make informed land use and water licensing decisions
 - The expense of drinking water treatment and water storage in large urban growth areas
 - The impact of invasive species

4.9 Partnerships (organizations with mixed sector representation)

- ▶ Concerned about the threats from land use (industrial and agricultural contamination) and climate change (flooding and drought).
- ▶ Appealed for senior leadership support for the Strategy.

4.10 Professional organizations, academia

- ▶ Cautioned about the need for provincial government staff capacity to complement and support local watershed security efforts.
- ▶ Called to ensure that the Strategy is a whole-of-government strategy.
- ▶ Concerned about:
 - Conflicts between land and water use
 - Impacts of a growing population and climate change on ecosystems
 - The lack of data available for decision-making

4.11 Private individuals (First Nations and non-First Nations)

- ▶ Shared concerns about watershed security that include:
 - “Ad hoc” water licensing and permitting of changes in and about streams
 - The lack of monitoring, compliance and enforcement by the Province, especially for closed watersheds
 - Downloading of responsibilities to local governments that lack capacity
 - The lack of data transparency from the provincial government and industry
 - Water scarcity
 - Bulk water export
 - Emerging threats (e.g., blue-green algae, invasive species)
 - The need for data to characterize risks and to assess cumulative impacts of industry or development and a lack of training/resources to evaluate available data
 - The cumulative impacts of logging on both private and public land, as well as the impact of other industries such as water bottling, oil, gas and mining; concerns over the use of pesticides, increased urbanization, densification of development and climate change impacts
- ▶ Shared concerns about the Strategy and Fund that include:
 - Worry about a lack of provincial government capacity to deliver watershed security and carry out existing *Water Sustainability Act* initiatives (livestock watering; existing use groundwater) let alone take on more
 - The risk of Fund allocation to interest-based groups that may have political influence
 - Confusion about Fund implementation due to multiple existing funds
- ▶ Emphasized the lack of public trust in the provincial government, the lack of political will to deliver the Strategy and the inefficient use of resources for watershed security.
- ▶ Some did not support allocating tax dollars for a Strategy or Fund.
- ▶ Questioned about how to engage Indigenous hereditary and/or elected leaders.
- ▶ Cautioned that water management, planning and funding processes often need First Nations to fit their work into requirements that do not align with their Indigenous knowledge and laws.

Part 5: Conclusion

This report summarizes the feedback received during a public engagement process, which included almost 1,600 submissions received from respondents across the province. It reflects the provincial government's commitment to be accountable to the B.C. public by reporting back on what we heard from our engagement on the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund discussion paper.

There was majority support across respondents from all sectors that the Strategy and Fund should include the following:

- ▶ A strong provincial governance structure with human resource capacity to implement existing legislation and regulations
- ▶ Watershed-based collaborative governance entities that provide a meaningful participatory and advisory role for local communities and that are nested and supported by a provincial governance framework
- ▶ Clearer roles for all levels of government regarding responsibilities for watershed security
- ▶ Enhanced provincial compliance and enforcement mechanisms
- ▶ Further co-ordination and alignment of regulations, policies, strategies and ministries on watershed security
- ▶ Development of collaborative evidence-based decision-making that brings together Indigenous knowledge, professional practice and science at the watershed scale
- ▶ Improved accounting of cumulative effects in decision-making through the enhanced use of tools such as water budgeting
- ▶ Provincial guidance and support for watershed data collection, the standardization of data formats, comprehensive mapping, database development and data access
- ▶ Improved public education and outreach about water and watersheds
- ▶ Water supply and demand improvements through conservation and water efficiency programming

There was also general support across respondents for using the Watershed Security Fund for:

- ▶ Collaborative watershed assessment and planning, watershed restoration and drinking water source protection
- ▶ Increased monitoring and reporting of water quality and quantity
- ▶ Long-term, stable funding for Indigenous nations, local governments, rural communities, local stewardship groups and water users to collaborate and build capacity
- ▶ Public education, demand management and conservation programs

Thank you to all who engaged with the ministry for your valuable input on the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund. It will be used to inform policy options and develop a draft strategy. The ministry sincerely appreciates all the time and effort that went into providing feedback on this important initiative.

Appendix A: Discussion paper engagement questions

- ▶ Outcome One: Support and enable watershed governance.
 - What could the Province provide to better enable watershed governance initiatives?
 - How can the Province facilitate and support government-to-government arrangements that help improve watershed health and security and advance reconciliation?
 - How can watershed governance protect provincial, regional, Indigenous and local values?
- ▶ Outcome Two: Enhance our understanding of watersheds and the risks they face.
 - What does your organization, government or community need to be successful to access, collect and share water data?
 - Do you use watershed characterizations to help understand the status, drivers and stressors in your watershed? If so, what do you use watershed characterizations to understand (e.g., land use pressures, climate and climate change, status of fish and aquatic health, etc.)?
 - What is preventing you from characterizing the status and risks to water in your local watershed and what can be done to fix this?
- ▶ Outcome Three: Progress reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples using new and improved mechanisms for collaboration on provincial water priorities.
 - How can engagement fatigue be addressed for provincial water policy development?
 - How would you or your organization like to be engaged in provincial scale water policy and legislation development?
 - What is needed to help ensure Indigenous-led water initiatives are successful?
 - What would be helpful for your organization to better understand the Province's obligations to Indigenous Peoples for water policy development (e.g., written materials, webinars, videos)?
- ▶ Outcome Four: Achieve healthy water for everyone.
 - Which principles do you think should underlie source water protection?
 - How can communities, all levels of government (local, provincial, federal and First Nation), as well as industrial water users work together better to protect drinking water for human health and well being, for now and in the future?
- ▶ Outcome Five: Integrate water more efficiently and effectively into Land Use Planning.
 - What do you value most about your watershed (e.g., water for drinking, water for aquatic species, water for recreation, water for business, wild food harvesting, etc.)? Are any of these values threatened by development in your watershed? If so, how could the Watershed Security Strategy help people in your watershed protect those values?
 - What is the best way to communicate information about *Water Sustainability Act* tools with you (e.g., written materials, webinars, videos, etc.)?
 - How do you think that water should be considered in land use planning?
- ▶ Outcome Six: Reset the water supply and demand relationship.
 - What can water users in your watershed do to reduce the amount of water they use?

- How could the Watershed Security Strategy help implement these solutions?
- ▶ Outcome Seven: Improve habitats for aquatic ecosystems.
- In your opinion, what actions would best support the restoration, rehabilitation and improvement of water and aquatic habitats in your local watershed? Please provide more details on your answers and include examples where possible (e.g., if you included “provide training”, please discuss what support for this would look like and the types of training or subject areas that would be most useful.)
- ▶ Outcome Eight: Respect the integrity of Indigenous knowledge systems.
- What is needed to help ensure Indigenous-led efforts related to Indigenous Knowledge are successful?
 - How can the Province support the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous knowledge in water management decisions?
- ▶ Outcome Nine: Strengthen education and outreach about managing water in B.C.
- What is the best method for you, your community or organization to receive and share information?
 - Please list what additional watershed knowledge and/or tools would be most useful to you.
- ▶ Outcome Ten: Create a Watershed Security Fund.
- How would you prioritize investments in watershed security if more funding is directed toward supporting a Watershed Security Strategy?
 - What do you see as the main benefit(s) British Columbians would obtain through government investment in watershed security?
 - What opportunities and priorities do you think a Watershed Security Fund could focus on?

Appendix B: Summary of what was heard during the Strategy and Fund Policy Conference, Spring 2022

Watershed governance needs to be clearly defined and include capacity support

- ▶ Participants generally supported co-governance at the watershed scale; this included support for a central provincial hub with regional representation.
- ▶ Participants requested descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of groups currently involved in watershed management.
- ▶ Participants noted that governance arrangements could help resolve conflicts over water use.
- ▶ Some participants noted that the provincial government must ensure it has the capacity to follow through—one suggestion to achieve this was focusing on a more limited scope for the Strategy as a whole.

Watershed planning needs to be collaborative and aligned with other planning initiatives

- ▶ Many participants expressed the need for financial and human capacity at the local level to carry out planning initiatives.
- ▶ Participants noted that engagement with local and Indigenous governments, the community and other watershed users (e.g., industry) is necessary for successful planning.
- ▶ There was a general agreement that planning should be informed by climate change projections.
- ▶ Participants stressed the need to align watershed planning with other priorities—including salmon, biodiversity, forest landscape planning and habitat protection—for a more holistic approach.
- ▶ Like the above, participants wish to see co-ordination and integration (where appropriate) of planning tools (e.g., Water Sustainability Plans, Drinking Water Protection Plans, Forest Landscape Plans, Land Use Plans).
- ▶ Participants suggested reviewing lessons learned from past planning processes and investigating any barriers to implementation for future initiatives.
- ▶ There was general support for beginning to pilot different watershed planning approaches.
- ▶ Participants noted the importance of including analysis of cumulative effects during planning.

Food security cannot be seen independently of watershed security

- ▶ Participants from the agriculture sector stressed that water for food security is a critical component of watershed security.
- ▶ Agriculture participants wish to see the use of water reserves and studies into water quality/nutrient runoff in agricultural areas.
- ▶ There was general support amongst participants for the greater use of water storage for food.

Source water protection is critical for the health of communities and ecosystems

- ▶ Some participants noted that guidance is needed for source water protection planning.
- ▶ Participants noted that source water protection should be part of any planning initiative.
- ▶ Some participants suggested broadening the community watershed program.
- ▶ There was support for public education/awareness campaigns about source water protection.
- ▶ Some participants suggested investing in innovation and new technologies to improve source water protection and drinking water.

- ▶ Some participants would like the Province to work with federal and Indigenous governments to end boil water advisories.

New and improved practices for data and information collection will contribute to watershed security

- ▶ Participants stated that there is a need to identify current knowledge gaps.
- ▶ Some participants agreed that it is important to have access to research undertaken by industry (e.g., collected as part of permitting) to inform water management.
- ▶ Some participants suggested synthesizing and summarizing existing reports.
- ▶ Participants support the development of a framework that includes best practices for collecting and sharing data to ensure data is current, accessible and comparable.
- ▶ There was general recognition of the need to incorporate local and Indigenous knowledge.
- ▶ Some participants suggested introducing water use reporting and summary of actual water use within watersheds (e.g., water budget, supply and demand studies).
- ▶ Many participants supported an expanded mapping and monitoring program for water sources.
- ▶ Participants were interested in establishing common indicators for watershed characterization.

Ecosystems must be considered and valued through the Watershed Security Strategy

- ▶ Participants noted that processes for identifying risks to aquatic ecosystems must improve.
- ▶ Some participants supported incentives for habitat enhancement and conservation.
- ▶ Some participants suggested including ecosystem services consideration in water authorization.
- ▶ Respondents supported restoring legacy impacts to watersheds.
- ▶ Some respondents supported improving natural asset management to protect aquatic ecosystems and drinking water sources.
- ▶ Some participants thought a cost-benefit approach to account for ecosystem services provided by watersheds would be useful.

Reconciliation underpins the development and implementation of the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund

- ▶ Participants saw the importance of ensuring the Strategy and Fund support reconciliation.
- ▶ Participants emphasized the need to honour the spirit and intent of UNDRIP and the Declaration Act in achieving watershed security.
- ▶ Some participants suggested re-evaluating the *Water Sustainability Act's* First in Time, First in Right to recognize Indigenous water rights.

Compliance and enforcement need to be strengthened

- ▶ Some participants expressed a need to improve compliance and enforcement to protect watersheds, including the need for more Conservation Officers/Natural Resource Officers.

Alternative measures must be taken to address water scarcity

- ▶ Participants suggested advancing the use of grey water and rainwater to combat scarcity.
- ▶ Some participants supported reassessing fully allocated watersheds.
- ▶ Some participants expressed interest in reviewing whether water rental rates should increase, decrease or remain unchanged (e.g., large water users pay more, incentives for efficiency).