

Watershed Security Strategy and Fund Intentions Paper



Ministry of
Water, Land and
Resource Stewardship

March 2023

Message from the Minister



Healthy watersheds are not only essential for our individual health and wellbeing, but they also ensure that ecosystems, economies, and communities throughout B.C. can flourish. Healthy watersheds are vital for climate change resiliency and reducing the impacts and costs related to floods, droughts and wildfires brought on by changing climate and extreme weather events.

For many Indigenous communities, water is woven into the fabric of many cultural and spiritual teachings that have been passed down for millennia.

In early 2022, we asked British Columbians for their thoughts on the planned Watershed Security Strategy and Fund. I would like to thank all of you who provided your feedback as we work towards the protection and revitalization of our watersheds. This feedback was published in the “What We Heard” report in November 2022 and is reflected in this Intentions Paper.

Protecting B.C.’s water and watersheds is a top priority for our government. As part of my mandate as Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, and our commitment to the Declaration Act Action Plan, we are collaborating on a Watershed Security Strategy with Indigenous Peoples, including co-development of the actions detailed in the Intentions Paper, through the first-ever B.C.–First Nations Water Table.

The Watershed Security Strategy and Fund will build on and complement the work currently taking place across government and in communities throughout the Province to support healthy watersheds in B.C.

We are working with local governments, interest groups and industry to take a holistic approach to stewarding B.C.’s watersheds and ensuring that they are healthy and resilient for the long term.

Your input is invaluable and continues to help guide our work. Everything we’ve learned so far has informed this Intentions Paper. I once again invite all British Columbians to share their comments and perspectives with us to inform our final Watershed Security Strategy, which we intend to release in winter 2023–24.

We all share a responsibility to protect and care for every lake, river, creek, stream, and ocean to ensure watershed security for future generations of British Columbians.

Sincerely,

Nathan Cullen

Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Message from the B.C.-First Nations Water Table

We all rely on water for sustenance and life. Healthy watersheds can help protect our communities against the impacts of floods and droughts from a changing climate. In the face of these and growing pressures, we must do everything we can to support and restore resilient, adaptable watersheds.

Water crosses watersheds, territories, jurisdictions and borders: First Nations and the Province need to work collaboratively to achieve watershed security for all. First Nations in British Columbia and the provincial government of B.C. each have goals related to water and watershed security that provide for the current generation, while also protecting for future generations.

The B.C.-First Nations Water Table is a new collaborative structure that supports the Province of B.C. and First Nations to identify, discuss and make consensus-based, co-developed recommendations to provincial and First Nations' decision-makers about matters of mutual interest. The Water Table will uphold the *Declaration Act on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (Declaration Act) reconciliation objectives and apply the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) as the framework for reconciliation in B.C. through all its activities.

First Nations in B.C. have the inherent right of self-determination, which includes an inextricable link to the lands, territories and resources traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired by First Nations. First Nations also have responsibilities under their laws to care for water and uphold the rights of water and those that cannot speak for themselves.

The Province of B.C. has responsibilities to develop and implement legislation, policies and strategies in support of the Declaration Act Action Plan. It also has scientific, ecological, social, health and well-being, and economic interests in water and watershed security and in alignment with a whole-of-government approach to implement the Declaration Act.

This Intentions Paper is a stepping stone towards a co-developed Watershed Security Strategy for British Columbia. It marks a new path for First Nations in B.C. and the provincial government, it has the potential to set a new standard for reconciliation going forward.

As water issues and disasters become more prominent, it will be increasingly important for First Nations and the Province to collaborate and focus on solutions. The Water Table and this Intentions Paper are the beginning of a new collaborative process that will help pave the way for healthy watersheds for all and a strong and resilient future for B.C.

We are stronger when we work together.

Chief Lydia Hwitsum
Water Table Co-Chair

Assistant Deputy Minister James Mack
Water Table Co-Chair

Policy intentions at a glance

Policy intention 1: Enable new approaches to watershed governance through inclusion, capacity building and collaboration.

- ▶ Enhance local watershed governance
- ▶ Support the development of governance structures founded upon principles of mutual recognition, respect, sharing, flexibility, accountability and responsibility with Indigenous Peoples
- ▶ Enhance coordination, leadership and accountability across different levels of government to align decision-making for watersheds

Policy intention 2: Pursue legislative change, policy development and alignment of laws and policy to be consistent with the UN Declaration.

- ▶ Align the *Watershed Sustainability Act* and new and related policies with the UN Declaration
- ▶ Identify opportunities to collaborate with Indigenous Peoples and co-develop policies and procedures about the use of Indigenous knowledge
- ▶ Consider legislative change and policy development to improve outcomes for watersheds

Policy intention 3: Build a strong foundation of watershed science and knowledge that is accessible for use by Indigenous Peoples, local governments and communities.

- ▶ Strengthen existing water data and information tools and address gaps in current systems
- ▶ Improve understanding of water and watershed use, ecosystem needs and related cumulative effects
- ▶ Enhance monitoring and assessment of watershed health to support watershed governance arrangements

Policy intention 4: Apply holistic approaches to watershed management and ecosystem protection.

- ▶ Increase the leadership role of Indigenous Peoples in watershed stewardship and restoration
- ▶ Strengthen regulations, standards and policy to protect and prioritize water values in decision-making
- ▶ Enhance communication, education and outreach to cultivate a shared understanding of the values and issues that exist within watersheds
- ▶ Adopt wild salmon recovery as a key value in watershed planning

Policy intention 5: Balance water supply and demand (quality and quantity) at the watershed scale to address the needs of people, the environment and the economy.

- ▶ Proactively consider and address existing and/or emerging regional pressures and risks
- ▶ Develop policy and guidance to promote incentives for water conservation and reallocation
- ▶ Develop approaches to meet existing and future demands for humans and requirements for ecosystem health

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Introduction

In early 2022, the Province embarked on an engagement process following the publication of the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund (“Strategy” and “Fund”) [discussion paper](#). The Province heard from respondents that water and watersheds are central to the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of society. However, unsustainable water and land use, cumulative impacts of developments, invasive species and population growth are threatening these values. Climate change is intensifying threats to our watersheds, making ecosystems and communities more vulnerable to disasters like flood and drought.

As we move towards an increasingly uncertain future, managing water and watersheds must be done differently. Partnering with local people – including members of local governments, Indigenous Peoples, farmers, business owners and members of environmental groups – will be central to this effort. Collectively, we must embrace:

- ▶ Modernizing and strengthening standards and regulations that impact aquatic values
- ▶ Initiating opportunities for collaborative watershed governance
- ▶ Adopting new water and watershed management approaches
- ▶ Improving the way we develop, share and communicate data and knowledge
- ▶ Seeking opportunities for new, innovative, low-carbon economic growth
- ▶ Managing climate change risks from increasing frequency of drought and flood

These actions will contribute to a future for B.C. where watersheds are resilient, fish and wildlife have healthy habitats, and water is safe for drinking and spiritual uses. They will also support sustainable, affordable housing development, food security, community health and economic prosperity for all. Each watershed is different, and collaboration, good science and knowledge, and effective resourcing will be critical to the Strategy’s success.

Watersheds

Watersheds are areas of land where rain, snow and glacier runoff flow into rivers, lakes, streams or aquifers. They are homes to an incredible number of species, including wild salmon, provide water for drinking and growing our food, support jobs and work for people, and have important cultural and spiritual value for local communities.

Wild salmon

Wild salmon are central to many Indigenous cultures and are critical to many of British Columbia’s ecosystems. Wild salmon populations are increasingly impacted by changes within both marine and freshwater environments. Changes to the land within watersheds have magnified the impacts of climate change on salmon. Any improvements to watershed management will support B.C.’s work to restore wild salmon populations.

While the Watershed Security Strategy will be a comprehensive approach that addresses a wide range of watershed security issues, it must act in concert with the broad range of work ongoing across government and with Indigenous Peoples. The figure below shows the relationship between the water-related provincial strategies currently under way and planned. More information on this work can be found below.



About this paper

This Intentions Paper is the midway point in the development of the Strategy and Fund. We have taken what we heard during our first period of engagement in early 2022 on the discussion paper and refined the scope and actions to be considered.

The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship invites you to contribute your knowledge and ideas to the development of the Strategy and Fund.

All the information you need on how to respond to this Intentions Paper can be found at: www.gov.bc.ca/water. Submissions received by April 17, 2023, at 4:00 p.m. will be included in the next What We Heard report. We welcome submissions after this deadline, but please note that they may not be reflected in the What We Heard report.



How we got here

Between January 25, 2022, and March 18, 2022, the Province undertook engagement on a [discussion paper](#). A range of approaches was used to support broad discussion about the discussion paper, and the public, stakeholders and Indigenous Peoples shared their feedback with us. The What We Heard reports can be found here: www.gov.bc.ca/water.

Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples

The Declaration Act establishes the UN Declaration as the Province's framework for reconciliation. Implementing this framework involves taking a distinctions-based approach that acknowledges the specific rights, interests, priorities and concerns of First Nations, Métis and Inuit as Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Accordingly, early engagement with Indigenous Peoples has informed this Intentions Paper and their voices are respected and incorporated throughout the document.

Shaping the process and scope of Strategy development are actions 2.6, 2.7 and 2.9 in the Declaration Act Action Plan.

Action 2.6

Co-develop strategic-level policies, programs and initiatives to advance collaborative stewardship of the environment, land and resources, that address cumulative effects and respect Indigenous knowledge. This will be achieved through collaborative stewardship forums, Guardian programs, land use planning initiatives, and other innovative and evolving partnerships that support integrated land and resource management.

Action 2.6 addresses many of the priority themes being explored as part of achieving watershed security, including Indigenous knowledge systems, cumulative effects and stewardship activities, and an integrated approach to land and water management and planning. Action 2.6 further emphasizes the need for collaborative and innovative partnerships around land and resources.

Action 2.7

Collaborate with First Nations to develop and implement strategies, plans and initiatives for sustainable water management, and to identify policy or legislative reforms supporting Indigenous water stewardship, including shared decision-making. Co-develop the Watershed Security Strategy with First Nations and initiate implementation of the Strategy at a local watershed scale.

Action 2.7 explicitly addresses the Watershed Security Strategy and commits the Province to supporting Indigenous water stewardship, co-developing the Watershed Security Strategy with First Nations and locally implementing the Watershed Security Strategy. Action 2.7 also opens the possibility of policy and legislative reform to enable support for Indigenous water stewardship and shared decision-making with First Nations.

Action 2.9

Develop new strategies to protect and revitalize wild salmon populations in B.C. with First Nations and the federal government, including the development and implementation of a cohesive B.C. Wild Pacific Salmon Strategy.

Action 2.9 addresses the provincial Wild Salmon Strategy work that has been ongoing since 2019. A key action to implement the Wild Salmon Strategy is ensuring that wild salmon recovery is incorporated in the Watershed Security Strategy (see strategic theme 4.4 below).

As part of these commitments, the Province recognizes that the process is as important as the product. The relationships we build together now will set the foundation for developing and implementing the Watershed Security Strategy and Wild Salmon Strategy into the future.

First Nations

Water is integral to First Nations' hearts, spirits, bodies and minds, and healthy watersheds and ecological integrity are central to this relationship. As such, First Nations have responsibilities to care for water and uphold the rights of water and those that cannot speak for themselves.

First Nations in B.C. each have unique perspectives grounded in their respective laws and legal systems about their title and rights in and to the waters, lands, territories and resources that they have traditionally owned, occupied, or otherwise used or acquired. They have the inherent right of self-determination, which includes the ability to form their own governments, laws and stewardship practices. Recognizing First Nations' inherent right of self-determination is the starting point to achieving coexisting federal, provincial and First Nations jurisdictions, laws and legal systems.

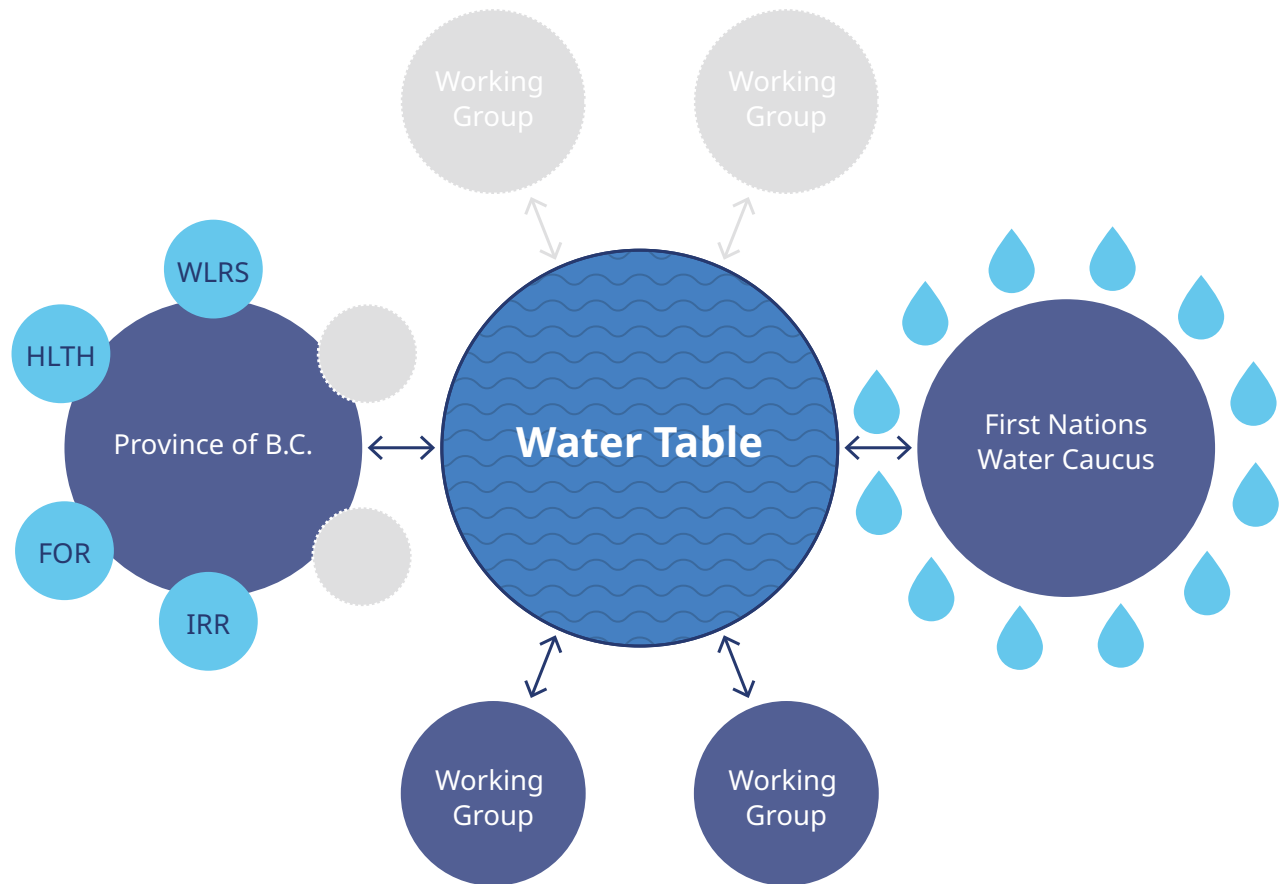
As the original occupants of the land, First Nations have certain legal rights (Aboriginal, treaty, inherent) that other British Columbians do not have. Because of this, First Nations and the Province have unique government-to-government relationships that recognize First Nations as rightsholders, not stakeholders.

The Watershed Security Strategy is an opportunity to work together with First Nations to improve outcomes for watersheds and watershed security. First Nations in B.C. and the Province each have goals related to water and watershed security that provide for the current generation while protecting watersheds for future generations. Achieving these goals will be most effective when the work of watershed security crosses Nations, ministries, government jurisdictions, territories and watersheds.

The Province will continue engaging First Nations across B.C. to develop the Strategy while building enduring forums for collaboration and co-development through the B.C.-First Nations Water Table and through approaches to be co-developed with Modern Treaty Nations.

The B.C.-First Nations Water Table: A new way forward together

The B.C.-First Nations Water Table is a new collaborative and enduring structure that was convened in June 2022. The Water Table addresses water and watershed security issues of concern between First Nations in B.C. and the Province through co-development and consensus. It is made up of representatives from the Province (including the ministries of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship; Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation; Forests; and Health) and delegates from First Nations across B.C. (these First Nations delegates form a Water Caucus). The structure of the Water Table is illustrated in the following figure.



The Water Table seeks to:

- ▶ Uphold the UN Declaration and Declaration Act reconciliation objectives
- ▶ Support the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations in B.C. as a foundation for First Nations water and watershed security, including through informing reforms to legislation and regulations; land, water and watershed planning; and policies, programs, practices and strategies that facilitate shared decision-making and support self-determination and water governance
- ▶ Ensure that the foundation of watershed security is delivered within the context of implementing the Declaration Act, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, and the [Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples](#)

Modern Treaty Nations

Early in 2022, the Province heard from Modern Treaty Nations about how their relationships with the Province around water are distinct and need to reflect their established rights and responsibilities as treaty partners. Modern Treaty Nations also emphasized the importance of collaboration between provincial ministries with responsibilities related to water and in implementing treaties. In keeping with the [Shared Priorities](#) Framework, the Province will work with Modern Treaty Nations to establish a co-development approach for the Strategy.

Métis Nation British Columbia

In early 2022, the Province heard from Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) about their desire to strengthen relations with the Province, in part because of the knowledge Métis citizens hold through their connections with lands and waters. These conversations need to continue through a collaborative approach to preparing the Strategy between MNBC and the Province. This collaboration will respect Métis self-determination as described in the [October 27, 2021, Letter of Intent](#) between MNBC and the Province.

A framework for achieving watershed security

A vision and set of principles will be co-developed with the Water Table and informed by engagement to offer an overarching framework for the Strategy.

Policy intentions for a Watershed Security Strategy

Five key policy intentions will guide the development of the final Strategy. Each policy intention is listed in this section, along with a series of strategic themes and key actions being considered for the final Strategy.

The strategic themes are priority areas that government must address to achieve the policy intention and, by extension, the vision of the Strategy. The final Strategy will provide a comprehensive list of actions under each policy intention and strategic theme. An implementation plan will support the final Strategy and provide further detail.

What is a policy intention?

A policy intention is a statement that expresses what government intends to do through its policies (or in this case, strategy). The statement sets out an intended outcome or set of outcomes the policy (or strategy) was designed for.

Policy intention 1: Enable new approaches to watershed governance through inclusion, capacity building and collaboration.

For watershed governance to be effective, all levels of government and partners with communities and watershed interests (such as local agricultural, business and industrial sectors) must work together in a meaningful way. The final Strategy will build a watershed governance framework that provides both consistency and flexibility, identifies opportunities for capacity building and shared decision-making with First Nations, ensures transparency and accountability, and suggests roles and responsibilities for partners. The table below shows examples of the current roles and responsibilities across all levels of government.

Examples of roles and responsibilities related to watershed governance in B.C.

Indigenous governments	Federal government	Local government	Provincial government
<p>Exercise systems of governance and stewardship practices on traditional, treaty and inherited lands and waters, including through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Indigenous law ▶ Indigenous knowledge ▶ Treaties ▶ <i>Constitution Act, Section 35</i> ▶ Transboundary watershed management ▶ Ethics and values ▶ Science, research and monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Oversees water on federal lands, including First Nations reserves ▶ Transboundary water management, including the International Joint Commission ▶ Federal legislation (e.g., <i>Canada Water Act, Fisheries Act, Species at Risk Act</i>) ▶ Marine and intertidal fishing (including salmon harvesting) ▶ Fishing ▶ Shipping and navigation ▶ Environmental assessment ▶ Science, research and monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Purveys water to residents (e.g., for drinking, irrigation) ▶ Sanitary and wastewater services ▶ Planning (e.g., official community plans, regional growth strategies) ▶ Zoning and bylaws ▶ Development permit areas ▶ Stormwater management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Sustainable use and quality of water in B.C. ▶ Provincial legislation (e.g., <i>Water Sustainability Act, Water Protection Act, Fish and Seafood Act, Environmental Management Act</i>) ▶ Authorizing and permitting (e.g., water licensing, changes to instream habitat) ▶ Flood management ▶ Environmental assessments ▶ Protected areas ▶ Science, research and monitoring ▶ Water and land use planning ▶ Managing freshwater habitat (including for wild salmon) ▶ Addressing sources of pollution in the environment

To make progress on reconciliation, it is essential to maintain a distinctions-based approach when affirming and developing relationships with Indigenous Peoples and organizations (e.g., Indigenous governing bodies). Watershed governance processes need to enable Indigenous Peoples to be fully involved partners with recognition of their rights, needs, values and worldviews

in watershed governance arrangements, including through shared decision-making. Relationships with First Nations must be based on free, prior and informed consent, trust and respect for self-determination.

Local governments also play an essential role in watershed governance and have identified they may need to build their capacity for actions, such as implementing the UN Declaration, to ensure Indigenous worldviews and principles are respected. The final Strategy will not download governance and management responsibilities without providing support or understanding existing local initiatives.

To be successful, all governance structures and partnerships will need to collaborate across sectors and recognize each other's interests, as well as the interests of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, and share knowledge and resources to achieve the best outcomes for watersheds.

Strategic theme 1.1: Enhance local watershed governance by:

- ▶ Establishing collaborative processes that involve Indigenous Peoples, local governments, quasi-government entities (e.g., Crown corporations), other interested parties and the Province
- ▶ Accelerating a watershed-level program that supports the use of governance tools for watershed security (e.g., water sustainability plans, *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA) objectives and local advisory boards)
- ▶ Considering agricultural water needs, particularly on agricultural land reserve lands where a corresponding reserve of water has not been identified
- ▶ Building and strengthening partnerships and leadership within and across sectors to promote watershed security
- ▶ Exploring dispute resolution mechanisms for watershed governance arrangements

Strategic theme 1.2: Support the development of governance structures founded upon principles of mutual recognition, respect, sharing, flexibility, accountability and responsibility with Indigenous Peoples by:

- ▶ Incorporating specific roles in watershed co-governance and management for Indigenous Peoples and organizations, communities and organizations, and including Indigenous governing bodies as described under sections 6 and 7 of the Declaration Act
- ▶ Incorporating, empowering and enhancing First Nations decision-making in provincial or joint processes through mechanisms based on free, prior and informed consent
- ▶ Integrating provincial governance structures (e.g., Collaborative Stewardship Framework, Environmental Stewardship Initiative) with existing and emerging Indigenous governance structures focused on water
- ▶ Supporting the implementation of area-based governance approaches using watershed assessments informed by science and Indigenous knowledge systems
- ▶ Supporting intergenerational knowledge transmission by engaging Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth in water-related engagements and decision-making

Strategic theme 1.3: Enhance coordination, leadership and accountability across different levels of government to align decision-making for watersheds by:

- ▶ Establishing roles and responsibilities for different types of governance structures
- ▶ Building on provincial, local government and existing and emerging Indigenous planning tools to develop an integrated land and water planning framework
- ▶ Promoting integrated decision-making and bringing land and resource development into balance with available water quality and quantity through planning
- ▶ Supporting federal initiatives related to watersheds and aquatic habitat, such as the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative's Integrated Planning for Salmon Ecosystems being led by Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- ▶ Building on the current work of governments to better manage transboundary water and watersheds

Policy intention 2: Pursue legislative change, policy development and alignment of laws and policy to be consistent with the UN Declaration.

Following the Declaration Act, the Province is committed to ensuring all provincial laws are consistent with the UN Declaration. The development and implementation of the Strategy will honour the spirit and intent of the UN Declaration in whole, and specific articles that are particularly relevant to this work are identified in Appendix A.

The Strategy will explore legislative changes to the WSA and other water-related legislation, policy and programs. In addition to undertaking the alignment work needed to achieve consistency with the UN Declaration and the Declaration Act, the intent of these changes is to improve stewardship and outcomes for watersheds, support Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination, and enhance community health and prosperity. New policy, training, outreach and extension materials may be developed to support learning and provide guidance and best management practices in areas where none yet exists.

Strategic theme 2.1: Align the WSA and new and related policies with the UN Declaration by:

- ▶ Reviewing provincial statutes in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, starting with the WSA, to ensure consistency with the UN Declaration and the Declaration Act (Section 3)
- ▶ Recognizing First Nations as first water users and affirming Aboriginal and treaty rights to water as priority rights
- ▶ Ensuring First Nations have meaningful roles in water governance and management by advancing policy and legislative proposals, in line with the [Interim Approach to Implementing the Requirements of Section 3 of the Declaration Act](#)
- ▶ Identifying options and expectations for joint and/or consent-based decision-making in statutory decisions, following Declaration Act section 7

- ▶ Requiring free, prior and informed consent or joint decision-making where agreed to and appropriate in WSA decisions that impact on territory and rights
- ▶ Recognizing First Nations legal orders, institutions, laws, land codes, plans, strategies and decisions in decision-making contexts
- ▶ With First Nations, co-designing models and approaches for bringing Indigenous laws and provincial laws together in water-related policy and decision-making
- ▶ Including Indigenous knowledge in decision-making and empowering its inclusion by decision-makers at all levels of government
- ▶ Continuing to implement the [Commitment Document](#) in the context of watershed security

Strategic theme 2.2: Identify opportunities to collaborate with Indigenous Peoples and co-develop policies and procedures about the use of Indigenous knowledge by:

- ▶ Co-developing a framework and scope of a provincial environmental flows regulation that includes social and cultural values for ecological health and protection of core rights, such as fishing, hunting and ceremonial water uses
- ▶ Co-developing models and approaches for how Indigenous Peoples and the Province share water-related information, data and knowledge in support of engagements and decision-making under the WSA
- ▶ Exploring the application of the 2019 *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* amendments to decision-making and engagement under the WSA and the potential need for creating stand-alone Indigenous knowledge protection legislation to be applied across natural resource sectors

Strategic theme 2.3: Consider legislative change and policy development to improve outcomes for watersheds by:

- ▶ Addressing statutory gaps and inconsistencies related to water quality and quantity by reviewing the WSA, *Drinking Water Protection Act*, *Environmental Management Act* and *Forest and Range Practices Act*, as well as other statutes and associated regulations
- ▶ Strengthening groundwater protections by developing regulatory options under the WSA, including by expanding well classes requiring submission under the Groundwater Protection Regulation
- ▶ Strengthening surface water protections by reviewing and leveraging existing and emerging science to inform allocation and decision-making processes
- ▶ Improving application of open data principles and transparency by reviewing current monitoring programs and assessments required under the *Forest and Range Practices Act*, *Private Managed Forest Land Act* and other statutes
- ▶ Mapping and communicating the alignment of policies, legislation and programs that affect aquatic ecosystems, watersheds and watershed security

Policy intention 3: Build a strong foundation of watershed science and knowledge that is accessible for use by Indigenous Peoples, local governments and communities.

Provincial leadership is needed to support collecting watershed data and mapping across B.C. and improving provincial water databases. Expanding these information sources could inform the development and coordination of watershed assessments and support the adaptive management of watersheds.

Indigenous Peoples also hold a tremendous amount of wisdom and knowledge. The First Nations principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession ([OCAP®](#)) assert that First Nations have control over data collection processes, and that they control how this information can be used. Therefore, while Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous-owned data and information cannot be used without permission, the Province may support First Nations to build their data collection, knowledge systems and policies in line with OCAP® principles. Indigenous knowledge systems, together with Indigenous and non-Indigenous science and data, can be interpreted and applied to inform decision-making within watersheds.

Strategic theme 3.1: Strengthen existing water data and information tools and address gaps in current systems by:

- ▶ Investing in updates and enhancements to provincial mapping of streams, wetlands, landforms and aquifers
- ▶ Facilitating open, full and timely public access to and clear communication of provincial water quality and quantity data and analysis information by investing in digital service delivery systems and tools
- ▶ Continuing to improve [GWELLS](#) to manage additional data and support implementation activities related to the WSA Groundwater Protection Regulation
- ▶ Improving resourcing to support Indigenous communities and local stakeholders to access and understand water information
- ▶ Improving linkages between knowledge sharing and decision-making to support more informed decisions on water and watershed management
- ▶ Developing baseline water data sets in areas where future resource development is contemplated or increased risks to water values are anticipated
- ▶ Improving understanding of water quantity and quality guidelines and the benchmarks needed to support resilient ecosystems and cultural values

Strategic theme 3.2: Improve understanding of water and watershed use, ecosystem needs and related cumulative effects by:

- ▶ Developing a water use measuring and reporting regulation
- ▶ Developing guidance and information resources to help water users measure their water use
- ▶ Creating an online reporting tool that enables water licence holders to report water use and monitoring information required under the terms of their licence and by regulation

- ▶ Supporting First Nations to use the results of the online reporting tool, as well as their own data collection, to inform decision-making and water management in their territories
- ▶ Expediting mitigation activities to address the effects of past and present development and climate change influences on watersheds
- ▶ Developing methods to estimate the hydrological changes within watersheds due to changes in land use such as development, forestry and agriculture
- ▶ Linking water and watershed use data with ecosystem needs and function to inform decision-making
- ▶ Understanding changes in watersheds over time by analyzing provincial monitoring information on streamflow, groundwater, overland flow and aquatic ecosystem health
- ▶ Conducting assessments of connectivity and potential barriers to fish and wildlife passage (e.g., wild salmon migration) within watersheds

Strategic theme 3.3: Enhance monitoring and assessment of watershed health to support watershed governance arrangements by:

- ▶ Developing guidance for water and watershed risk characterization and assessment
- ▶ Supporting governance arrangements in priority areas using risk characterization and assessments
- ▶ Working with communities to monitor and assess the quality of drinking water sources to support watershed stewardship and communication about issues
- ▶ Understanding relative risks to water and watersheds by integrating social, human health and environmental values in thresholds and indexes
- ▶ Creating clear roles and responsibilities for community watershed groups to undertake restoration work
- ▶ Developing and maintaining an inventory of localized watershed and aquatic restoration projects (e.g., Healthy Watersheds Initiative, British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund, Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation) to inform decision-making

Policy intention 4: Apply holistic approaches to watershed management and ecosystem protection.

Integrating the full range of cultural, spiritual, economic, environmental, political and social values that relate to water and watershed health is required to steward watersheds in a holistic way. Current data and knowledge show that past and present human activities – including forestry, industrial and urban development, nutrient application and population growth – are negatively impacting water quality and quantity. Climate change is both compounding these impacts and intensifying natural hazards such as flood and drought.

Using ecosystem-based approaches that focus on the interconnectedness of water and land and learning from Indigenous Peoples about watershed stewardship is key. As we move forward, land use planning, restoration planning and water management must be informed by local and

Indigenous priorities, knowledge, values and wisdom. The Strategy will leverage existing data and knowledge to identify ways to improve watershed stewardship together. Where needed, restoring and rehabilitating watersheds and considering economic trade-offs are within the scope of the Strategy.

Strategic theme 4.1: Increase the leadership role of Indigenous Peoples in watershed stewardship and restoration by:

- ▶ Empowering Indigenous Peoples to lead watershed and restoration planning and initiatives
- ▶ Empowering Indigenous Peoples to trigger relevant water and watershed management tools, such as fish population protection orders under the WSA
- ▶ Creating a more integrated approach to the application of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous laws across the natural resource sector
- ▶ Addressing the effects of legacy natural resource activities to advance reconciliation and provide economic opportunities for Indigenous communities in watershed restoration, including economic benefits related to the lands and resources in Indigenous territories
- ▶ Including biocultural restoration approaches in watershed restoration
- ▶ Supporting intergenerational knowledge transmission and youth involvement in Indigenous Guardians and stewardship functions through strategy co-development and co-implementation
- ▶ Co-developing, with Indigenous Peoples, an integrated province-wide approach to Indigenous Guardians and stewardship functions and training

Strategic theme 4.2: Strengthen regulations, standards and policy to protect and prioritize water values in decision-making by:

- ▶ Modernizing the standards and regulations that affect aquatic values throughout watersheds informed by existing and emerging data and knowledge
- ▶ Identifying and evaluating the trade-offs inherent in past and ongoing water and land use decisions to support future decision-making
- ▶ Developing guidance for decision makers about managing cumulative effects in watersheds and complementary knowledge and information for other users
- ▶ Addressing legacy impacts to drinking water sources in land- and water-based decisions through restoration
- ▶ Strengthening rural sanitary and water services
- ▶ Improving stormwater management (water quality and quantity) and related watershed, land use, infrastructure and land use planning in partnership with local governments and Indigenous Peoples
- ▶ Evaluating attainment of local stream flow, fish habitat and water quality objectives through monitoring and reporting

- ▶ Supporting the Provincial Wetlands Project, which aims to improve the province's wetland inventory and data, establish wetland policy and objectives, and deliver education and outreach to improve wetland stewardship, management and carbon sequestration

Strategic theme 4.3: Enhance communication, education and outreach to cultivate a shared understanding of the values and issues that exist within watersheds by:

- ▶ Developing guidance on how watershed information, including Indigenous knowledge systems, can inform policy actions and decision-making
- ▶ Educating local governments, First Nations and communities about what tools exist under the WSA to support watershed security
- ▶ Using community monitoring and Indigenous knowledge systems to engage with communities about evidence-based decision-making and, where appropriate, traditional knowledge
- ▶ Ensuring contractors are aware of potential impacts and current best management practices when working in and around aquatic environments
- ▶ Providing guidance and support to First Nations and local governments seeking to identify, protect and restore natural assets that help mitigate extreme events and secure drinking water sources

Strategic theme 4.4: Adopt wild salmon recovery as a key value in watershed planning by:

- ▶ Ensuring watershed and water use decisions are made in consideration of First Nation's inherent and legal rights to and reliance on healthy wild salmon stocks for economic, food, social and ceremonial purposes
- ▶ Ensuring a "wild salmon lens" is applied when considering watershed management and water use allocations
- ▶ Considering the long-term impacts to – and goals for – wild salmon recovery through watershed security initiatives
- ▶ Taking a lead role in the federal Integrated Planning for Salmon Ecosystems pillar of the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative from Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Policy intention 5: Balance water supply and demand (quality and quantity) at the watershed scale to address the needs of people, the environment and the economy.

Water availability varies across the province. In some watersheds, water supply is insufficient to meet existing and new instream and out of stream demands. In other watersheds, water quality concerns are limiting what that water can be used for. Climate change is expected to reduce rainfall and increase temperatures during summer months, which in turn is expected to make these supply and demand imbalances more acute. Reduced supply due to water quality or quantity issues will impact the survival of keystone species like wild salmon, hinder food security, degrade drinking water sources, and worsen existing social justice and equity issues.

Water allocation must respond to changing climatic, demographic and economic conditions by ensuring that water is available to sustain communities, ecosystems, wild and farmed food, and

the economy. Water allocation must promote resiliency and watershed health as well as adaptation and mitigation actions. The WSA enables several tools to help balance water supply and demand and improve climate resilience. Using the full suite of WSA tools – including water sustainability plans, WSA objectives, water reservations and water transfers – may provide additional incentives for water conservation and reallocation to existing and new uses where supply is constrained. These may be complemented by compliance, enforcement, new conservation and economic tools, and other planning processes such as Drinking Water Protection Plans, Forest Landscape Plans and Land Use Plans. To be successful, the use of any of these tools must be accompanied by working closely with local governments, Indigenous Peoples and partners who have an interest in watersheds.

Strategic theme 5.1: Proactively consider and address existing and/or emerging regional pressures and risks by:

- ▶ Addressing risks to aquatic habitat and drinking water sources
- ▶ Providing a foundation for and developing a Source to Tap Strategy
- ▶ Supporting all levels of government and their programs to prevent, detect, monitor and manage aquatic invasive species
- ▶ Developing water sustainability plans and WSA objectives that address existing and emerging regional pressures and risks (e.g., food security and the need for dedicated agricultural water, water for wild salmon during freshwater life stages)
- ▶ Including flexibility in water licence terms and conditions to make them more adaptable to changing conditions and uses
- ▶ Exploring opportunities to apply circular economy principles as they relate to water, including advancing innovation and initiatives across sectors (e.g., designing out water pollutants and recovering water and energy from waste)
- ▶ Evaluating new information on pollutants and their impact on watersheds
- ▶ Providing guidance and support at a watershed scale for local Indigenous Peoples, local governments and community groups to identify, protect and restore natural assets that help mitigate extreme events and secure drinking water sources
- ▶ Reducing the impacts of stormwater discharge on drinking water and ecosystems through local government planning
- ▶ Incentivising green infrastructure and low impact development to manage stormwater volumes and treat stormwater quality

Strategic theme 5.2: Develop policy and guidance to promote incentives for water conservation and reallocation by:

- ▶ Implementing adaptive water use practices in urban and agricultural sectors such as infrastructure improvements, capture and storage options, technological innovations and measuring and metering
- ▶ Encouraging conservation through water metering and other practices

- ▶ Reducing runoff and evaporative loss in the municipal and agricultural sectors using natural assets, green infrastructure, capture and storage options, and technological innovations
- ▶ Developing guidance for land use that reduces the impact on the hydrologic flow of water into streams
- ▶ Facilitating the voluntary transfer of water licences to adapt to changing conditions and meet new demands (e.g., for housing, food security) while protecting the environment and public interest
- ▶ Reallocating water to conservation and ecosystem function/health, such as through water sustainability plans
- ▶ Developing mechanisms to restore water to conservation through voluntary transfers, licence buy-back programs or other regulatory approaches
- ▶ Using economic tools for watershed security, including, but not limited to, water use and water reallocation, and placing economic values on ecosystem function
- ▶ Working with local governments and other water suppliers to develop guidance for drought management and conservation (e.g., water metering and pricing that incents conservation while ensuring equitable access to water)

Strategic theme 5.3: Develop approaches to meet existing and future demands for humans and requirements for ecosystem health by:

- ▶ Developing provincial water budget assessment guidance with changing climate and population scenarios that incorporate water use projection tools (e.g., Agriculture Water Demand Model) to inform decision-making
- ▶ Working with ministry partners and local governments to identify areas of greatest water stress and areas where water is available to support strategic housing development decisions
- ▶ Increasing awareness and conversations among ministry partners of the urgent water scarcity challenges and the need to make trade-offs in stressed watersheds
- ▶ Establishing environmental flow objectives that sustain water availability and aquatic ecosystems throughout the year and that consider the needs of wildlife and aquatic species (e.g., wild salmon) at different life stages
- ▶ Redefining beneficial use in the WSA to reflect current values and needs, including ecosystem function, wildlife and fish
- ▶ Addressing the impacts of stormwater by reviewing/updating regulations and other tools (e.g., building codes, health regulations)
- ▶ Incorporating adaptive management of stormwater into policy and guidelines so that mitigation measures and actions are effective over time and are implemented where needed most
- ▶ Exploring reclaimed water, water reuse or other innovative non-potable reuse to secure other sources of water for particular uses

Watershed Security Fund

The Province recognizes the importance of investing in B.C.'s watersheds for the long term. On March 6, 2023, the Province announced its plans to develop a permanent Watershed Security Fund.

The recipient of the funding will facilitate the co-development of a Watershed Security Fund with First Nations and the Province, and in collaboration with a range of watershed interests. The work ahead includes establishing an enduring co-governance body to oversee and manage the Fund. The Water Caucus (as noted, a partner in the Water Table) will be a key part of both the initial process to co-develop the Fund and the longer-term Fund co-governance.

Key outcomes the Fund will seek to achieve include:

- ▶ Restoring and maintaining ecosystem services and watershed health
- ▶ Supporting climate resiliency
- ▶ Supporting watershed governance and helping local organizations meet their mandates
- ▶ Providing economic stimulus through direct and indirect job creation
- ▶ Supporting reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and advancing the UN Declaration

The Province recognizes that investing in watershed health and nature-based solutions, and restoring natural assets, will result in economic development opportunities, help reduce costs incurred by the long-term impacts of climate change, and provide essential services at a far lower cost than engineered solutions and emergency response.

Since 2020, the provincial government has invested \$57 million in watershed security projects along with \$85.7 million in the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund to restore wild salmon. The momentum gained from this funding provides a foundation for taking a long-term view, enabling transformative change and securing the resiliency of watersheds and the longevity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous water values into the future.

Implementation and evaluation

The Watershed Security Strategy and its implementation are key to advancing the Province's priorities for water, in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples. Initial planning to put the Watershed Security Strategy into action will result in a 20-year Implementation Plan with short-, medium- and long-term actions that will be phased in over this period. A key focus will be the first five years of implementation.

The Implementation Plan will accompany the Strategy and operationalize the actions to achieve the vision of the Watershed Security Strategy, including:

- ▶ Identifying key actions needed, including the development of partnerships and the need for further engagement
- ▶ Identifying necessary resources
- ▶ Monitoring
- ▶ Evaluation
- ▶ Reporting activities

These actions will shape the future of water and watershed outcomes in B.C. and will continue to reaffirm the Province's leadership in watershed stewardship. Collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, local governments and across sectors through the Strategy is critically needed for ensuring freshwater is valued and respected within B.C.

Indigenous Peoples will be collaboratively involved in developing and implementing the Strategy according to a distinctions-based approach that respects their self-determination. Discussions with the Water Table, First Nations, Modern Treaty Nations and Métis Nation British Columbia will identify how they want to be meaningfully involved in these steps.

All levels of government, along with communities and stakeholders, will need to work together to achieve the strategic outcomes of the Watershed Security Strategy.

Active monitoring, evaluation and reporting will help the Province and its partners leverage the learnings emerging through implementation and adaptive management. Overarching commitments on the timing, frequency and indicators will be included in the Implementation Plan. Watershed Security Strategy actions may need to be sequenced to accommodate any dependencies between them, and the time needed to implement each action may vary.

Planning is under way to establish an approach to cross-sectoral collaboration involving other levels of governments, and interest and rightsholders.

Integration across government initiatives

While the Watershed Security Strategy will be a comprehensive strategy addressing a wide range of watershed security issues, it must act in concert with the broad range of work, both ongoing and planned, across a number of ministries. Several initiatives being led by the Province will strongly inform development of the Watershed Security Strategy, including, but not limited to:

- ▶ The [Coastal Marine Strategy](#)
- ▶ The [Wild Salmon Strategy](#)
- ▶ The [Flood Strategy](#)
- ▶ The Source to Tap Strategy

Additional provincial initiatives that will be considered include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ [Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy](#)
- ▶ [Together for Wildlife Strategy](#)
- ▶ Old Growth Strategic Review
- ▶ Provincial Wetlands Project
- ▶ Stewarding Agricultural Watercourses
- ▶ Public Interest Bonding Strategy

As healthy watersheds are also critical to a healthy provincial economy, the Watershed Security Strategy is anchored in the StrongerBC Economic Plan under “fostering innovation across our economy.” The Strategy will help enable economic innovation and growth by ensuring water is clean and available to sustain B.C.’s collective needs and values in perpetuity. It will support the goals of StrongerBC and CleanBC by promoting restoration and circular economies.

Actions within these strategies and other provincial initiatives will be aligned to work better together to improve overall watershed health and strengthen:

- ▶ Reconciliation, collaborative governance and shared decision-making
- ▶ Climate change resilience and mitigation
- ▶ Clean, safe and reliable drinking water
- ▶ Affordable housing with secure access to drinking water
- ▶ Sufficient quantity and quality of water for resilient ecosystems
- ▶ Recovery of wild salmon
- ▶ Wild and farmed food security
- ▶ Better data, information and knowledge sharing, including through Indigenous Guardians activities or functions
- ▶ The changing structure and needs of B.C.’s economy
- ▶ Putting people first and supporting diversity, equity and anti-racism

Conclusion and next steps

The Watershed Security Strategy will be co-developed with First Nations under a shared vision. A series of goals and actions to help meet provincial objectives will focus on localizing watershed governance and prioritizing watershed values.

Once engagement on the Intentions Paper has drawn to a close, all feedback will be analyzed and shared with Indigenous partners and other levels of government. This will be used to inform the development a draft Watershed Security Strategy, which will be recommended to the B.C. Government for approval.

The eventual Watershed Security Strategy will strengthen the Province's leadership in watershed stewardship alongside Indigenous Peoples, local governments, stakeholder sectors and all British Columbians.

The final strategy is expected in the winter of 2023/24.

Thank you.

Appendix A: The Watershed Security Strategy and UN Declaration

The development and implementation of the Strategy will honour the spirit and intent of the UN Declaration in whole, and specific articles that are particularly relevant to this work are listed below:

Article	Description
18	Indigenous Peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.
19	States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous Peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.
23	Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous Peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.
24-1	Indigenous Peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals. Indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services.
25	Indigenous Peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.
26	Indigenous Peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.
28	Indigenous Peoples have the right to redress, by means that can include restitution or, when that is not possible, just, fair and equitable compensation, for the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent.
29-1	Indigenous Peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for Indigenous Peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.

Article	Description
32-1	Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.
36	Indigenous Peoples, in particular those divided by international borders, have the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations, and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic and social purposes, with their own members as well as other peoples across borders.
39	Indigenous Peoples have the right to have access to financial and technical assistance from States and through international cooperation, for the enjoyment of the rights contained in this Declaration.

Appendix B: Glossary

Adaptive management – A systematic process for continually improving management policies and practices by learning from the outcomes of operational programs.

Aquifer – An underground layer of broken rock, gravel, sand or silt that contains groundwater that can be brought to the surface through a water well. Aquifers exist throughout British Columbia wherever saturated rock or sediment in which groundwater can move readily is present.

Best management practices – Guidelines that help development projects meet necessary legislation, regulations and policies.

Biodiversity – The variety of life. Biodiversity includes all forms of life such as bacteria, fungi, grasses, shrubs, trees, agricultural crops, insects, amphibians, reptiles, wild and domestic animals and humans. Biodiversity can be divided into three levels of organization: genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity.

Circular economy – A framework and approach to design out waste and pollution, keep products and materials in use, and regenerate natural systems.

Climate adaptation – Proactively understanding and preparing for the changing climate and reducing climate-related risks.

Climate change – Shifts in temperature and weather patterns over an extended period of time. These shifts may be natural or human caused.

Climate mitigation – A human intervention to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate resilience – The capacity of an ecosystem to recover from a hazardous event in a way that its essential function is maintained.

Cumulative effects – Changes to environmental, social and economic values caused by the combined effect of past, present and potential future human activities and natural processes.

Groundwater – Water found underground in soil, sediment and rocks. When rain or snow falls on the ground it can seep into soils down to underground aquifers that can store the water or transport the water to surface water bodies.

GWELLS – Groundwater Wells and Aquifers map.

Environmental flow needs – Defined in the *Water Sustainability Act* as the volume and timing of water flow required for the proper functioning of the aquatic ecosystem of a stream.

Indigenous knowledge systems – The understandings, skills and philosophies developed by Indigenous Nations with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. This local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. This knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual and spirituality. These unique

ways of knowing are important facets of the world's cultural diversity and provide a foundation for locally appropriate sustainable development.

Invasive species – Plants or animals that are not native to the province, or are outside of their natural distribution. Invasive species negatively impact British Columbia's environment, people and/or economy.

Living Water Smart – Established in 2008, Living Water Smart set a vision for sustainable water stewardship in B.C. and a direction for change to water management and use. While Living Water Smart is still relevant today, it will be replaced by the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund. The Strategy and Fund will build on work that began under Living Water Smart that was focused on water to advance stewardship of both water and watersheds into the future.

Natural assets – Ecosystem features (such as a lake, wetland, or forest) that provide or could be restored to provide a benefit or service to add value to support human or ecological systems.

Salmon – Refers to Pacific salmon species in B.C. including coho (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), chinook (*O. tshawytscha*), chum (*O. keta*), pink (*O. gorbuscha*), sockeye (*O. nerka*) and steelhead (*O. mykiss*).

Sector – Includes not only water users but other groups that benefit from healthy water (e.g., tourism, fisheries).

Stormwater – Rainwater, snowmelt and water from other sources that runs off impervious surfaces such as pavement and rooftops. Stormwater has implications for urban and rural planning, as it cannot infiltrate the ground and is typically channeled into storm sewers and watercourses.

Surface water – Water found in ponds, lakes, inland seas, streams, springs and rivers. Surface water can come from rain or snow, water flow over the land or groundwater flow.

Watershed – Watersheds are areas of land where rain, snow and glacier runoff flow into common rivers, lakes, streams or aquifers. They are homes to species, like wild salmon, give water for drinking and growing our food, support jobs and work for people, and have significant cultural and spiritual value for local communities.

Water budget – A tool (computer model) used to quantify the flow of water in and out of a defined area. It is an accounting of all the water stored and exchanged on the land surface (rivers, lakes), subsurface (groundwater) and atmosphere (precipitation, evaporation). By applying climate change and population growth scenarios to the model, a water budget can be used to assess the risk of increasing water demand both now and in the future.

Water conservation – Preservation of water supplies by employing methods, policies and technologies that reduce water consumption.

Water (use) efficiency – The practice of using water in a manner that achieves its maximum productivity with minimum wastage or overuse.

Water governance – Refers to the institutions (rules, practices, processes, decision-making bodies) through which water management decisions are made.

Water management – The process of applying rules, practices and processes in making water-related decisions and activities (e.g., monitoring, modelling, assessment, operation and maintenance, and evaluation).

Water monitoring – Work that we do to understand how watersheds function and how healthy they are. Monitoring activities could include taking water samples to understand how healthy the water is or conducting measurements to understand how water flows and much water is available. If these activities are carried out over time, we can understand how watersheds are changing and take action if the health of the watershed may be at risk.

Water quality – Measuring water quality helps us to understand if water is healthy for us to drink and use to grow food or for use by plants and animals. When we measure water quality, we look at the physical, chemical and biological properties of the water to understand how suitable it is for what we want to use it for. Not all water is naturally safe to drink. Water from many surface and groundwater sources requires treatment before it can be safely consumed. Contaminants can also be introduced to water sources from land development.

Water scarcity – The lack of freshwater resources to meet human and ecosystem needs.

Water stewardship – The practice of caretaking shared waters and watersheds through responsible actions with many interests and values.

Water reuse – Reclaiming water from a variety of sources and then treating and reusing it for beneficial purposes such as agriculture and irrigation, potable water supplies, groundwater replenishment, industrial processes and environmental restoration. Water reuse can provide alternatives to existing water supplies and be used to enhance water security, sustainability and resilience.

Watershed assessment – Bringing together water data like maps and water monitoring information, and talking to people in the area to understand the watershed. An assessment will bring together information to build a picture of how the watershed works and may identify the problems in the watershed that need to be solved. Assessments can also help us understand what we can do to help watersheds. Assessments can happen for many different reasons and at different scales depending on what our questions are and what we want to achieve. To fully address the problems that we have, we might need to do several different types of watershed assessments in an area.

Wetland – Lands saturated by water, permanently or intermittently, for a long enough time that the excess water and resulting low oxygen levels produce conditions where aquatic plants grow and other biological activity adapted to a wet environment occurs.

Wild salmon – Salmon are considered to be wild if they have spent their entire life cycle in the wild and originate from parents that were also produced by natural spawning and continuously lived in the wild, as defined in [Canada's Policy for Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon \(2005\)](#).