

# BUILDING CAPACITY FOR SUCCESS: TOWARDS WATERSHED GOVERNANCE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA AND BEYOND

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## KEY MESSAGES FOR DECISION MAKERS

1. Initiating and supporting watershed governance pilot projects is critical.
2. In B.C., the Province must engage with public groups to inform development of the regulations for its new Water Sustainability Act.
3. To implement watershed governance, funding models must be aligned from traditional (e.g. local water license revenues) and non-traditional (e.g. habitat banking, social investment) sources.
4. Holding an annual forum for watershed groups and governments will continue to build capacity and knowledge for improving watershed-based decision-making.
5. Focusing on whole-system approaches is crucial for better addressing cumulative effects within watersheds.

## WHO IS THIS INFORMATION RELEVANT FOR?

- watershed groups
- industry
- researchers
- professional resource managers
- formal decision-makers, including First Nations

## WHAT WAS THE RESEARCH FOCUS?

With increasing pressures of population growth, pollution, and a changing climate, fresh water must be governed in new ways. Governments are responding by implementing new decision-making arrangements, and collaborative watershed governance is one model. It involves reorganizing decision-making to align with the ecological boundaries of watersheds,

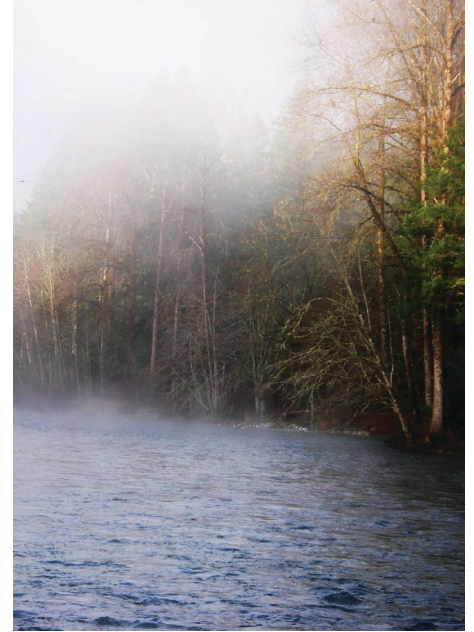
rather than political borders. Yet, practitioners have indicated they often have insufficient skills and capacity to widely adopt watershed governance. This project focused on both identifying and beginning to address the key needs of government, rights holders, and stakeholders to help support the implementation of watershed-based decision-making across the country.

## WHAT WAS THE RESEARCH METHOD?

In Phase 1 the team identified the capacity, needs, and priorities of the freshwater community in B.C. and Canada. This included publishing research and hosting a resilience analysis workshop. Phase 2 brought together nearly 200 delegates (plus over 75 online participants) at a three-day watershed governance forum to learn from experts and each other, and to re-envision the way we use, share, and respect our watershed resources. Phase 3 is focused on supporting watershed governance pilot projects across the country in regions looking to undertake new governance practices and processes.

## WHAT WERE THE RESEARCH RESULTS?

The priority need for collaborative governance at the watershed scale has been reinforced. Watershed groups and formal decision-makers, including First Nations, have developed skills and knowledge and have advanced their ability to better collaborate and implement watershed governance. Through the Phase 3 watershed governance pilot projects, we expect to see a genuine shift toward watershed-based decision-making, rooted in ecological principles and supported by local action.



## WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR DECISION MAKERS?

Key implications for decision-makers include the importance of collaboration—within and across levels of government, including First Nations, and with a diversity of stakeholders; a better understanding of changes to existing governance regimes; and an awareness and improved ability to integrate ecological and social considerations into decision-making frameworks.

**MORE INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT: [POLISWATERPROJECT.ORG/WATERSHEDS2014](http://POLISWATERPROJECT.ORG/WATERSHEDS2014) OR CONTACT [COMMUNICATIONS@POLISPROJECT.ORG](mailto:COMMUNICATIONS@POLISPROJECT.ORG)**