



BC
WATERSHED
SECURITY
COALITION

THE CASE FOR INVESTING IN BC'S WATERSHEDS

Rich and abundant watersheds such as the Fraser, Skeena, Peace, Columbia and Cowichan bring life, health, and prosperity to communities in every corner of BC. Our rivers and lakes are the cornerstone of our local economies, our forests, our fish & wildlife, our food crops, our quality of life and survival itself.

Our watersheds provide critical natural defences to floods, droughts and fires, but are increasingly degraded in many parts of the province.

With climate disasters on the rise, the BC Watershed Security Fund provides a powerful opportunity for the BC and Federal governments to partner with First Nations to rebuild watershed health, strengthen community resilience, and advance the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

\$1 Billion

The **BC Watershed Security Fund** was kick-started with a \$100 million Endowment by the BC government in Spring 2023. Additional investments by BC and Canada are needed to scale the Fund and achieve tangible outcomes in our watersheds.

WHAT IS WATERSHED SECURITY?

Watershed security is about two things:

- 1** Our watersheds provide essential benefits that underpin our economy, health and well-being—clean drinking water, thriving salmon runs, water for growing food, and natural protections against climate disasters.
- 2** The stewardship and actions we take to keep our watersheds healthy, strong and productive so that they continue to provide these services.



WHY WE CAN'T AFFORD TO WAIT

Consecutive years of water disasters have provided a devastating reminder of the costs of our changing climate and increasingly severe floods, droughts and forest fires. Poorly planned development over the past 20 years has compounded these impacts and caused other problems—polluted drinking water, reduced food security, destruction of salmon habitat, and loss of cultural and spiritual values.

As climate change intensifies year on year, the costs of inaction will continue to grow:



FIRES
\$2.4B
cost of fires 2017-2022



DROUGHTS
\$1B
predicted economic loss
from drought per BC
climate risk assessment



FLOODS
\$9B
Cost of 2021 Floods

THE PATH TO WATERSHED SECURITY

What Will a \$1 Billion Watershed Security Fund Achieve?

A conservative estimate of the funding needed for watershed security in BC is \$3 Billion over the next 10 years. A \$1 Billion Watershed Security Fund is a strategic and cost-effective investment that will catalyze additional funds and local capacity to meet the needs on the ground and achieve three core outcomes.



REBUILD NATURAL DEFENCES

Healthy watersheds provide critical natural defences against the climate crisis: wetlands intercept flood waters and provide natural storage during summer droughts; natural streambanks filter polluted run-off and provide shade to spawning salmon; mature forests hold back snow and rain in the winter and release it when it's needed most.



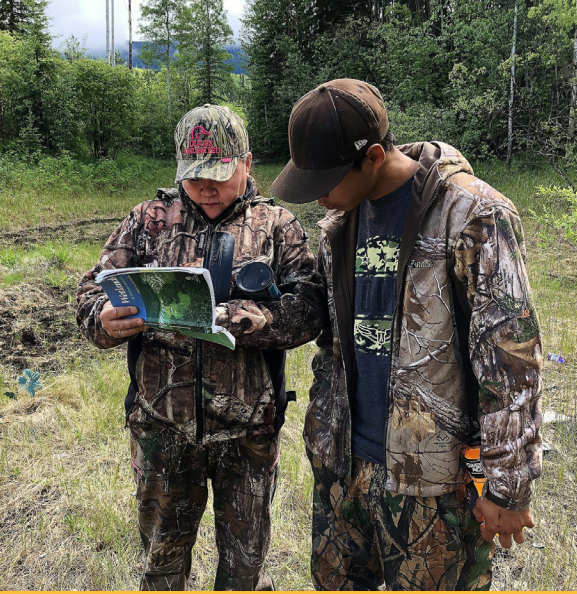
STRENGTHEN WATERSHED GOVERNANCE

Local watershed boards and collaborative watershed plans build common understanding, support difficult conversations, bridge cultures, and drive proactive solutions. This is relationship building in a deep way, between Crown and First Nations, and between communities and the core values supported by our watersheds.



BOLSTER COLLABORATIVE MONITORING

We can't effectively manage what we don't measure. Collaborative watershed monitoring grounded in both Indigenous knowledge and Western science is the only way to ensure we are making the right decisions, at the right time, and investing where we need it the most.



WORKING FOR WATERSHEDS JOBS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BC's existing watershed sector supports 27,000 jobs across a diversity of professions from planners, to heavy machinery operators, from Indigenous guardians to industry technologists, from ecologists to software developers. Investing in watershed work supports community economic development, creates Indigenous and youth employment, and increases revenue for local businesses and contractors.

The Fund will catalyze public, private and philanthropic partnerships to invest in the people, ideas and actions that can rebuild our watershed security. The growth in BC's watershed sector will make a vital contribution to the economic future of the province.



THE BENEFITS OF HEALTHY WATERSHEDS

British Columbians are feeling the stress and insecurity from compounding water crises and the ever-increasing onslaught of droughts, fires and floods.

By investing in watershed security now, the BC and Federal governments can strategically align their resources to strengthen our communities and save billions of dollars in future climate-related expenditures.

Working together, and alongside First Nations, the BC and Federal governments can achieve a brighter, healthier and more secure future for our watersheds and all that they support.

The social and economic benefits of investing in watersheds are substantial:

CLIMATE RESILIENCE

The natural infrastructure of a watershed (eg. wetlands, forests and streambanks) provide the same protection as built infrastructure *at half the cost.*

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

Investing in watershed security will strengthen Indigenous governance, contribute to Nation re-building, and support Indigenous economic development.

LESS CONFLICT

Funding for collaborative governance and forward planning reduces conflict, improves decision-making, and increases social cohesion.

JOB CREATION

Economists estimate the Fund could add 13,000+ new jobs over the next 10 years. 1,200 jobs were created in a single year (2021) through \$27 million in economic stimulus.

For every \$1 invested by the Fund in watershed projects, another \$4 will be leveraged

This funding will catalyze investments from other sources, including federal, municipal, philanthropic and private sector contributions.



INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

Meeting these four Indicators of Success will ensure a truly impactful Fund that will garner broad support across the province.



SCALED FOR IMPACT

Allocating sufficient funding is necessary to make a difference. An annual allocation of at least \$75 million is required.



SUSTAINABLE

Restoration, governance and monitoring require sustained funding over time to have impact. Long-term funding is essential for Indigenous Nation re-building in watershed stewardship.



INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

The Fund should be co-governed with First Nations, advance Indigenous rights and principles, and ensure explicit roles for First Nations in the governance and leadership structure.



FLEXIBLE TO REGIONAL NEEDS

The Fund should be structured to respond to the priorities of different regions. These priorities could be defined by existing collaborative initiatives or new watershed based tables.

SUPPORT FOR WATERSHED SECURITY FUND

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL — “As this new Watershed Security Fund is co-created with Rights and Titleholders, it is imperative that the Federal Government works with First Nations and the Province of British Columbia by matching or exceeding this investment to ensure that our waters are protected now and into the future.”

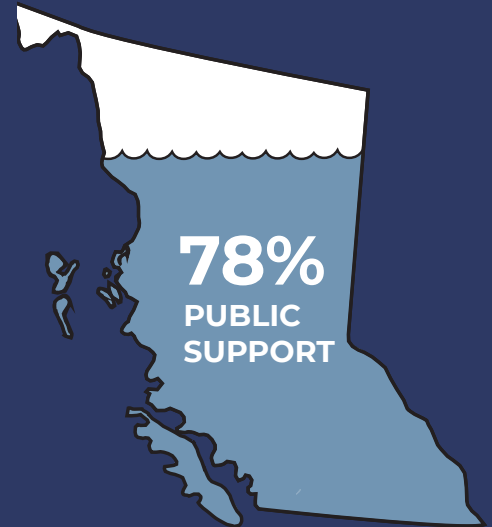
FNLC Press Release, March 2023

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — “UBCM requests that the Province of BC create a dedicated, sustainable, annual funding source for the Watershed Security Fund that provides \$75 million annually for community driven watershed security initiatives.”

Union of BC Municipalities Resolution, Sept 2021

PUBLIC SUPPORT — “78% of British Columbians hold the view that BC needs to make major investments in watershed security to protect fresh water in this province.”

McAllister Opinion Research, Sept 2021



BC WATERSHED SECURITY COALITION

We are a non-partisan, diverse coalition, of 44 organizations including farmers, hunters and anglers, Indigenous peoples, local governments, businesses, and conservationists, representing 255,000 British Columbians from all walks of life. The Coalition focuses on advancing modern-day solutions that increase community resilience and security.

PHOTO CREDITS:

Lillooet BC. Title page. Photo by Marci Janecek, Marsupial Design.

Old growth forest. Pg 2. (Top). Photo by Province of British Columbia, flickr.com

Fisheries staff collect baseline inventory throughout Haisla territory on species including salmon, eulachon, and crab. Pg. 2 (Top left). Photo by Mike Jacobs, Haisla Fisheries Commission. Courtesy Coast Funds.

Okanagan Lake, from Naramata Bench. Pg. 2 (Top right). Photo by Becks, Commons.Wikimedia.org.

BC fruit, Summerland BC. Pg. 2 (Bottom left). Photo by Adam Foster, Flickr.com.

Pair of sockeye salmon. Pg. 2 (Bottom right). Photo by iStock.com.

Drought in the North Arm of the Cowichan River. Pg. 3 (Top left). Photo by Parker Jefferson, Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable.

Firefighter fighting forest fire in BC. Pg. 3. (Top right). Photo by Province of British Columbia, flickr.com

Flooding in Abbotsford. Pg 3 (Bottom). Photo by Province of British Columbia. flickr.com

Kwadacha Nation Wetland Training. Pg. 5 (Top left). Photo credit: BCWF Wetlands Education Program

Watertech researcher. Pg. 5 (Top middle). Photo credit pexels.com

Khaylish Fraser, Aquatics Program Coordinator of Central Kootenay Invasive Species Society, Workshop in Salmo, B.C. Pg. 5 (Top right). Photo credit BCWF Wetlands Education Program

Water testing technician. Pg.5 (Middle left). Photo credit iStock.com

Indigenous Central Westcoast Forest Society: Training youth, Clayoquot. Pg 5. (Middle right.) Photo by Lora Tryon

Field training participants. Pg 5 (Bottom left). Photo by BCWF Wetlands Education Program.

Forest Ministry staff and BCWF field training for Forest and Range Evaluation Program, Fort St James, B.C. Pg. 5. (Bottom right). Photo by BCWF Wetlands Education Program.