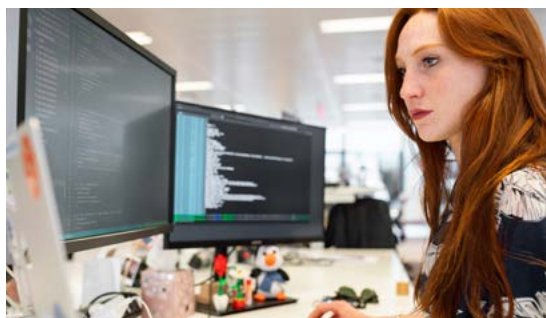
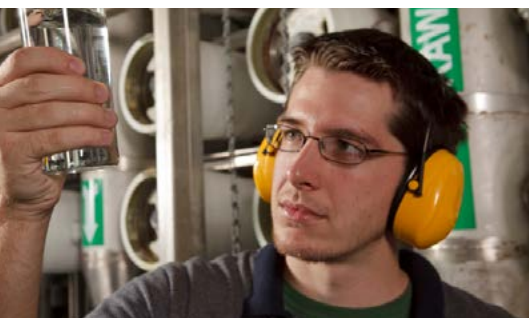




# AN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY TO GROW BC'S WATERSHED SECTOR





Province of BC

# 1. WHY BC NEEDS A WATERSHEDS WORKFORCE

Watersheds are the lifeblood of our economy. BC’s network of rivers, lakes, and aquifers support drinking water, food production, and wild salmon runs. Every economic sector in the province relies on access to fresh water, from agriculture and fisheries, to tourism and recreation, to mining and oil and gas.

Consecutive years of drought, floods, and fires have revealed the true costs of our changing climate. Healthy, functioning watersheds provide safeguards against these devastating impacts, saving money, sustaining economic activity, and improving lives.

Unfortunately, decades of degradation have weakened the services provided by our watersheds. Watershed insecurity has now become a major economic risk to communities, businesses and local economies.

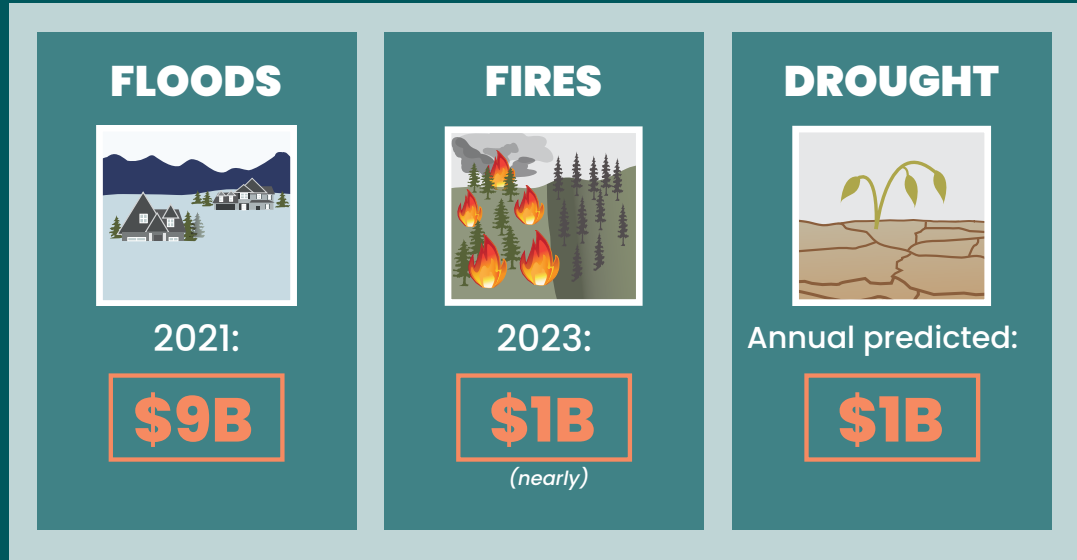
Now is the time to turn the corner. Now is the time for public and private sectors to come together to rebuild our watersheds, strengthen community resilience, and contribute to strong, local economies.

**Now is the time to work for our watersheds.**

*The Working for Watersheds initiative is a collaboration between industry, government, Indigenous communities, and non-profit organizations working to protect and restore healthy watersheds across BC.*

# 2. THE ECONOMIC COSTS OF WATERSHED INSECURITY

Climate-fueled water disasters have cost British Columbians multiple billions of dollars in the last three years, from the devastating floods in southern BC in 2021, to the fires in 2023, and the cumulative costs of multi-year drought between 2021 and 2024.



Drought in 2023 severely impacted agricultural production, shut down businesses and industries, including oil and gas production in BC’s northeast, and reduced the province’s output of hydroelectric power, resulting in costs \$450 million to import power from outside the province.

A 2022 assessment of water risk to the Canadian economy by GHD has projected that droughts, floods and storms could result in a total loss of \$108 billion to Canadian GDP between 2022 and 2050.



PROVINCE OF BC



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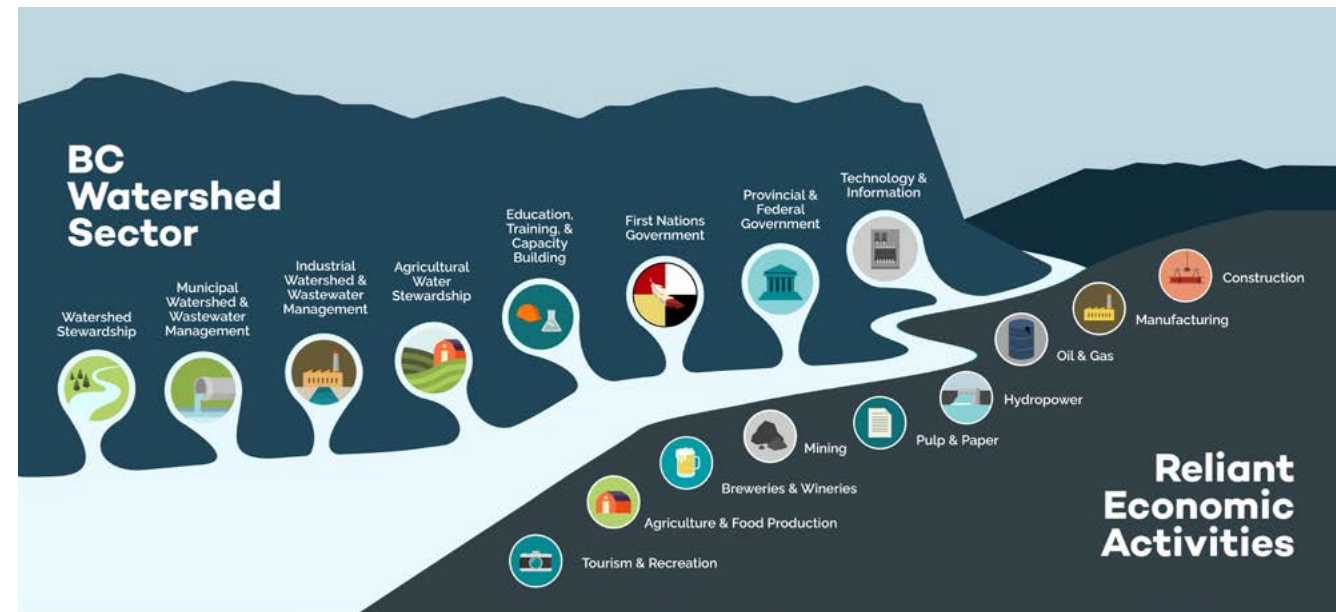


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### 3. An Economic Opportunity: Growing BC's Watershed Sector

#### What is the Watershed Sector?

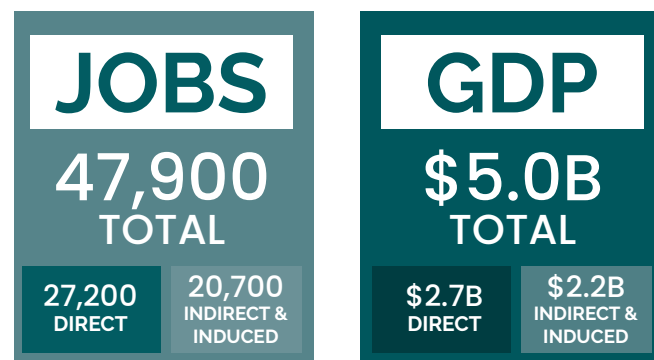
BC's watershed sector encompasses activities that directly support the maintenance, restoration, or improvement of healthy watersheds, which in turn support the diverse economic activities across the province that rely on clean, fresh water.



#### BC's Watershed Sector is Already a Major Employer

BC's watershed sector is already a major employer, supporting 47,900 direct and indirect jobs, and contributing \$5 billion to the province's GDP.

This sector supports British Columbians at all career stages and specialization levels so they can stay in their home communities and provide family-sustaining jobs.



#### Who Is Working for Our Watersheds?

The watershed sector supports employment and economic activity across a diversity of professions and sectors. For example:

A **high school grad's** first job getting their feet wet restoring a wetland.

A **heavy equipment operator** decommissioning a logging road.

An **engineer** installing greywater recycling.

An **Indigenous Guardian** monitoring water quality.

A **software designer** creating a water data app.

An **entrepreneur** developing new technologies for mine waste reclamation.



These jobs are all united by one mission:

**Working for Watersheds**



Department of Fisheries & Oceans

BCWF Wetlands Program

#### BC's Watershed Sector is Primed for Growth

The watershed sector supports a diverse spectrum of jobs in rural and urban areas, from entry-level to skilled, seasonal to permanent, technical to policy.

This work enables a broad range of economic activities that depend on healthy watersheds, such as growing food, generating hydropower, mining critical minerals, building new housing, and supporting BC's world-renowned recreation and tourism opportunities.

As watershed challenges increase globally and at home, and the demands for water solutions rise, BC's watershed sector is primed for growth over the next decade.

### 3. A VISION FOR BC'S WATERSHED SECTOR

#### 2030 Vision for BC's Watershed Sector:

BC's watershed sector is sustaining healthy, resilient watersheds and supporting prosperous local, Indigenous, and rural economies.

Key components of this vision:

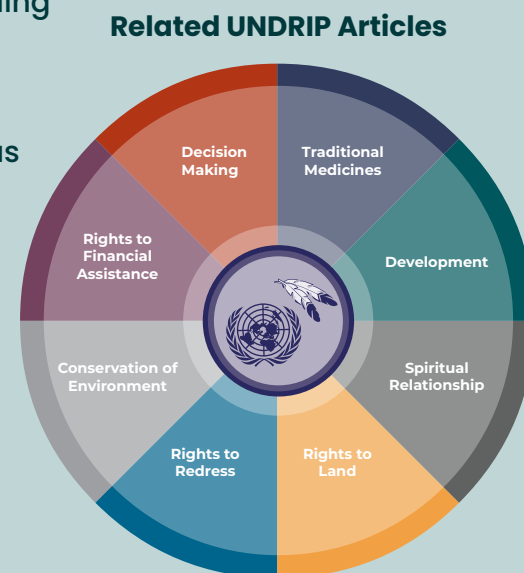
- 1 Culture shift:** water and watersheds are recognized as fundamental to a healthy economy, communities, and all living things.
- 2 Essential workforce:** those dedicated to the stewardship and improvement of watersheds are respected as a crucial part of a sustainable economy.
- 3 Indigenous leadership:** First Nations are leading the sector and watershed jobs are supporting Indigenous economic development.
- 4 Integrated businesses:** enterprises at all scales are prioritizing water risk, driving innovation and new employment in the sector.
- 5 Sustainable impact:** BC's watershed sector is visible, valued, well-resourced, embedded across government mandates, and highly effective in 2030

#### The Role of the Watershed Sector in Advancing UNDRIP

UNDRIP identifies the minimum standards for upholding Indigenous systems, legal orders, knowledge, and informed consent related to activities that could impact watersheds. It also reinforces the need for meaningful inclusion and collaboration of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making processes involving watershed management.

The BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act "aims to create a path forward that respects the human rights of Indigenous Peoples while introducing better transparency and predictability in the work we do together."

The development of BC's watershed sector can be instrumental in advancing numerous articles in the UN Declaration.



### 4. THE WORKING FOR WATERSHEDS ROADMAP: STREAMS OF ACTION

The Working for Watersheds Initiative led a Dialogue Series engaging 100+ individuals and organizations across British Columbia to identify near-term innovation and economic development opportunities. This effort resulted in five actionable streams to advance the watershed sector towards a thriving, regenerative economy in the next decade.

<p><b>STREAM 1</b></p> <p><b>BUILD SECTOR PROFILE &amp; AWARENESS</b></p> <p>Engage partners and raise the profile of the watershed sector</p>	<p><b>STREAM 2</b></p> <p><b>DEVELOP THE WATERSHED WORKFORCE</b></p> <p>Develop a thriving skills training ecosystem and support existing and transitioning workers</p>	<p><b>STREAM 3</b></p> <p><b>GROW BC'S WATERSHED INNOVATION CAPACITY</b></p> <p>Support technology development, commercialization, and deployment of solutions</p>	<p><b>STREAM 4</b></p> <p><b>SECURE SUSTAINABLE FUNDING</b></p> <p>Maintain adequate and consistent funding directed at the watershed sector</p>	<p><b>STREAM 5</b></p> <p><b>IMPLEMENT WATERSHED POLICY &amp; GOVERNANCE</b></p> <p>Create policy and governance mechanisms that enable collaboration across different sectors and levels of government</p>
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#### BC's Watershed Security Fund



Province of BC

The BC Watershed Security Fund provides a unique opportunity for British Columbia to position itself as a global leader in securing healthy watersheds. A \$100 million/year investment over 10 years in the BC Watershed

Security Fund would create an estimated 13,000 jobs and contribute \$1.3 billion more to provincial GDP by 2030 than under a business-as-usual scenario.

*"For less cost than building one major bridge, the provincial government can create a legacy of long-term employment and healthy watersheds throughout the province of British Columbia."*



## GET INVOLVED

The Working for Watersheds Initiative is a call to action for people, organizations, and water users across the sector to work together to realize the vision of healthy and resilient watersheds. Water is vital to our economy and society, and watershed security is a critical piece of the climate imperative.

## JOIN US!

We are actively seeking new partners and collaborators.

**#Working4Watersheds**

To learn more, get updates and news, visit:

**[www.workingforwatersheds.ca](http://www.workingforwatersheds.ca)**

