

---

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2021ENV0020-000463  
March 15, 2021

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

### **Watershed, wetland projects create jobs, protect environment**

VICTORIA – A new economic recovery investment will create 750 jobs to restore watersheds and wetlands throughout the province.

Healthy watersheds mean healthy communities and a robust environment. Through StrongerBC: BC's Economic Recovery Plan, \$27 million have been dedicated to about 70 watershed and wetland initiatives to ensure B.C.'s water stays healthy and resilient in a changing climate.

“Investing in watersheds is vital to the continued health of our land and rivers by ensuring our soil is protected and that our fish populations remain healthy,” said George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. “Through Nation-to-Nation consultation, we’re moving forward together on watershed rehabilitation and protection initiatives across the province that support people and build a cleaner, more sustainable future.”

Scheduled for completion by December 2021, the projects will take place in or near rural, urban and Indigenous communities hit hard by COVID-19. The projects include:

- supporting the recovery of healthy and abundant fish stocks by restoring spawning and rearing habitats and improving fish passage in critical areas;
- strengthening natural carbon sinks by restoring wetlands throughout the province;
- restoring watersheds to improve the ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change; and
- providing natural flood management and prevention by restoring riparian areas and stabilizing riverbanks.

The projects were identified by Watersheds BC in collaboration with partners throughout the province. Many projects are either being led by or implemented in partnership with Indigenous communities.

“Dłaxsiwè (Klux-see-we) is an origin and historic village site for Kwakiutł. Today, it is the location of our campground and resort, and is regularly used for cultural purposes, including healing and ceremony,” said Sherri Labour, lands and resources manager for the Kwakiutł First Nation. “The lower reaches of Dłaxsiwè have been severely impacted by forestry and other development, and, as a result, are extremely unstable. This funding will address emergency ocean incursion and erosion issues that have the potential to destroy the critical and unique saltwater marsh habitat that this site represents.”

This initiative is part of B.C.'s \$10-billion COVID-19 response, which includes StrongerBC — a plan that protects people's health and livelihoods while supporting businesses and communities.

“Our StrongerBC plan is creating jobs and helping communities in all regions of the province recover from the pandemic,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation. “These projects are vital, not only because they provide good-paying jobs to help people emerge from the pandemic on a stronger footing, but because they also strengthen our crucial watersheds and wetlands for future generations.”

To deliver the funding and manage the projects, the Province has partnered with the Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC) to create the Healthy Watersheds Initiative. REFBC is a philanthropic organization working to support land use and real estate practices that contribute to thriving, resilient communities and natural environments.

“Through the Healthy Watersheds Initiative, we have an opportunity to demonstrate the economic, ecological, cultural and community benefits that come from investing in B.C.’s watersheds,” said Mark Gifford, CEO, REFBC. “For decades, the foundation has supported research, conservation and education on freshwater health. This investment builds on this commitment, providing critical support for a green and blue economic recovery.”

**Learn More:**

For more information about StrongerBC, visit: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/>

For more information about the Real Estate Foundation of BC, visit: <https://www.refbc.com/>

A backgrounder follows.

**Contact:**

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change  
Strategy  
Media Relations  
250 953-3834

---

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: [news.gov.bc.ca/connect](https://news.gov.bc.ca/connect)

---

## BACKGROUND

For Immediate Release  
2021ENV0020-000463  
March 15, 2021

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

### **B.C. watershed and wetland initiatives**

To help communities adapt to the effects of climate change and protect the environment, approximately 70 watershed and wetland initiatives are taking place throughout the province this year.

Some of the projects include:

#### **Wetlands workforce**

Wetlands have a tremendous amount of value in B.C., including water filtration, providing a habitat for a variety of species and buffering communities from extreme weather events through flood control. The BC Wildlife Federation's Wetlands Workforce Project will employ more than 100 people to conserve and restore more than 70 wetlands by enhancing riparian areas, stabilizing shorelines through weed management, protecting trees and planting native species. The project will also support provincewide monitoring initiatives to improve wetland management.

#### **Restoration of Kwakiutl Cluxewe River and estuary**

Located near Port McNeill on northern Vancouver Island, the Cluxewe River and estuary is home to several species of fish and hundreds of waterfowl, and was once considered a world-class fly-fishing river. It also has significant historical and cultural values for the Kwakiutl First Nation. The Cluxewe River will be the focus of channel restoration initiatives, especially in the lower river and estuary where active erosion has affected fish habitat. Instream work includes bank stabilization, riparian restoration and other potential methods to assist with stabilizing the channel to restore spawning and rearing areas.

#### **Community-based water monitoring and restoration in the Columbia Basin**

The Columbia Basin is an essential part of life for people living in southeastern B.C., but a changing climate is having an impact on the region's lakes, streams, rivers, wetlands, groundwater and glaciers. Living Lakes Canada will train 25 people to professionally monitor and collect data for water deficit areas of the Columbia Basin. The data will provide a better understanding of diminished water resources, droughts and flood events to help communities make decisions about water resources and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

#### **Managing water levels on the Endako River**

Every year in late summer, hundreds of chinook salmon and kokanee make their way to the Endako River in the northwest central interior of B.C. to spawn. Portions of the river, which flows into the Stellako River near Fraser Lake, have become increasingly low during the

summer months, making it difficult for fish to access suitable spawning habitat. To increase water levels during low flows, the Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance and Carrier Sekani First Nation will work with the Province, local governments and communities to build a weir on the Endako River's outlet from Burns Lake.

### **Elk River Watershed community-based monitoring**

The tributaries of the Elk River in southeastern B.C. provide important habitat for wildlife and fish, including the west slope cutthroat trout, which draws anglers to the region every year. The Elk River Alliance's community-based watershed monitoring initiative focuses on volunteers collecting samples and data from key Elk River tributaries to identify trends in ecosystem health. Volunteers will also assist with community outreach to promote the importance of healthy watersheds.

To view more projects, visit: <https://www.refbc.com/healthy-watersheds-initiative>

#### **Contact:**

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change  
Strategy  
Media Relations  
250 953-3834

---

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: [news.gov.bc.ca/connect](https://news.gov.bc.ca/connect)