



Towards a Healthy Nechako:
Nechako Watershed Strategy
Summary Report

Prepared by the Fraser Basin Council for the Nechako Watershed
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NECHAKO WATERSHED STRATEGY - SUMMARY REPORT

The health of the Nechako watershed is critical to the long-term social, economic, environmental and cultural well being of all its residents. Yet, this system faces a number of significant challenges. The changing climate has contributed to the mountain pine beetle epidemic and other adverse impacts; the iconic Nechako White Sturgeon have become an endangered species; creeks and streams throughout the watershed have degraded; and the diversion of water out of the Nechako River system continues to impact many aspects of watershed health. Many projects and initiatives are underway to address these issues; however, there is a need for improved coordination and more effective sharing of knowledge and other resources. The Nechako Watershed Roundtable (NWR) was established in 2015 to address this need for collaboration and to develop a strategy to further advance the vision of a healthy Nechako.

The Nechako Watershed Strategy builds on the findings of a Nechako Watershed Health Report and online atlas – completed in 2015¹ - which compiled and analyzed available information to characterize the state of the watershed. The Strategy aims to identify priority issues and actions needed to advance watershed health, highlight activities and initiatives already underway, support enhanced coordination of current activities and propose further actions to address the issues and concerns raised by communities and stakeholders.

The Strategy summarizes priority issues and concerns in the watershed that were identified by a series of research projects, input received from community and stakeholder meetings and input from technical experts and researchers. Priority issues and concerns have been organized within eight categories:

1. Water Quantity
2. Water Quality
3. Fish and Wildlife
4. Ecosystems
5. Resource Development and Use
6. Current Water Management Approaches
7. Data Gaps
8. Public Engagement and Education

The Strategy also highlights the context of watershed planning, management and stewardship within the Nechako watershed. This context includes emerging agreements and initiatives; current projects underway; as well as existing plans, strategies and decision processes. Examples of the current context include new agreements and policies of First Nations, a wide range of stewardship and restoration projects, and a multitude of plans and decisions that are the responsibility of many different jurisdictions and organizations.

The key content of the Strategy focuses on proposed actions to protect and improve the health of the Nechako watershed. To address numerous water and

¹ Fraser Basin Council. (2015). Nechako Watershed Health Report. Accessed online Feb. 2016. http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/Library/Water_BCWF/Nechako-Mar31-2015_FINAL.pdf

watershed issues and concerns, technical advisors, watershed practitioners, community groups, and concerned citizens proposed several actions. Although specific commitments, resources, lead organizations and timelines have not yet been established, examples of potential partners are provided in the Strategy. This does not intend to be prescriptive but to illustrate how existing jurisdictions and interests could align with many of the proposed actions. The Nechako Watershed Roundtable and many potential partners are well positioned to implement the Strategy.

The key actions proposed include three distinct types including:

1. Strengthen Education, Engagement, and Capacity of Decision-Makers, Stakeholders and the Public;
2. Strengthen Data, Information and Knowledge; and,
3. Strengthen Planning, Stewardship and Beneficial Management Practices

Specific actions are defined to address the following water and watershed issues:

- Water Quality and Quantity
- Lakes and Wetlands
- Invasive Species
- Multiple Water and Watershed Issues (e.g. water, fish and wildlife, habitat, overall watershed health, community and stakeholder capacity, planning and governance, etc.)

The next phase of the Strategy process will focus on implementation. The Roundtable and many potential partners will explore opportunities to identify where there is interest in aligning efforts and resources to collaborate on specific proposed actions. Through this dialogue, priorities will be identified and commitments will be confirmed to implement priority actions to advance the health of the Nechako watershed.



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