



Statement of Concern

October 19, 2018

The Nechako Watershed Roundtable (NWR) is a collaborative initiative underway since 2015 to protect and improve the health of the Nechako watershed for present and future generations. The Nechako is the 2nd largest watershed in the Fraser River Basin, with the combined Stuart-Nechako system draining a landscape of ~52,000km², (an area approximately the size of Switzerland¹). The NWR includes participation of Local, Provincial, Federal and First Nations governments as well as community organizations, university researchers, the private sector and concerned citizens.

The NWR Core Committee has grave concerns for the health of the Nechako Watershed following a decade of unprecedented wildfire, and other changes, in our watershed. The combination of the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic, salvage logging, and major wildfires, has created a series of threats within the watershed, with severe implications for runoff and flood risk, erosion, water quality, and habitat, and related community impacts and concerns.

Adding to the cumulative impacts of past change, the 2018 wildfire season included eight major wildfires totaling close to an additional 450,000 hectares burnt. This area is equivalent to BC's entire lower mainland, and comprises almost 11.5% of the entire watershed, significantly impacting the territories of several of the 14 First Nations in the area.

We have entered an unprecedented time in history where changes to our environment are leading to increasingly catastrophic events that pose threats to the future of our communities, the health of our citizens, and serious concerns over the state of the ecosystems and economies upon which we depend.

We strongly urge all levels of government to enter into dialogue that will examine current and past land and water management practices and legislative policies that may be impacting and exacerbating these issues. We call for urgent consideration of proactive measures that minimize the long-term adverse impacts of disaster-response activities such as fireguards, and also optimise concerted, coordinated efforts to reduce future fire and flood risks.

In particular we request you immediately implement **recommendation 104** of the Abbott and Chapman report entitled *21st Century Disaster Management in British Columbia*:

104. Following wildfire events, promptly undertake timber supply reviews to enable industry response and adaptation to a new annual allowable cut, and to allow BC to better understand and respond to impacts on habitat, fibre availability and community stability.

This recommendation would lead to better landscape level planning (watershed level planning) and ensure that we are looking at and conserving all values of the land base.

The Nechako Watershed Roundtable would like to be a part of this important conversation and we look forward to opportunities to facilitate and/or support activities to protect and improve watershed health in the face of wildfire, flood, and related concerns.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Frenkel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and larger than the others.

Brian Frenkel, NWR Co-Chair

ⁱ Picketts, I. M., Parkes, M. W., & Déry, S. J. (2016). Climate change and resource development impacts in watersheds: Insights from the Nechako River Basin, Canada. *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe Canadien*, 61(2), 196–211.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12327>