



For Immediate Release – September 17, 2020

**\$27 million investment in BC watershed jobs will make our province stronger, healthier and more secure**

VICTORIA (traditional territory of the Lekwungen people) – In the face of record low salmon returns on the Fraser, wildfire, drought, erosion, water quality issues and the effects of climate change on our water today the B.C. government announced an investment of \$27 million in watershed initiatives and wetland projects across the province. This is a much needed first step in protecting our watersheds, and the fish, wildlife and people who rely on them, while putting people back to work to accelerate our economic recovery.

Coree Tull, co-chair of the Watershed Security Coalition acknowledged the significance of today's investment in watershed security to support those most heavily impacted by COVID-19:

“This is a critical investment in both BC’s watershed security and in our economic recovery, said Tull. “ Several studies show that a \$1 million investment in watershed restoration can create between 13 and 32 jobs and \$2.2 and \$3.4 million in economic activity. Watershed restoration will put people to work in a COVID-safe manner, while both improving the health of our watersheds and stimulating our economy.”

British Columbia’s watersheds are facing ever-increasing pressures with climate change destabilizing freshwater sources, adding droughts, fires and floods to the existing threats of contamination and cumulative impacts on the land. In particular, these impacts are having profound consequences for BC’s indigenous communities.

“Water is sacred, alive and the lifeblood of First Nations’ traditional territories. Access to healthy freshwater is essential to the continued survival of fish and other aquatic species, and to the protection of Aboriginal Title and Rights and Treaty Rights” said Hugh Braker, president of the First Nations Fisheries Council. “This investment in watershed security is a critical opportunity to enable communities to withstand and avoid future crises”.

First Nations, local governments, and community organizations across BC are already taking responsibility to triage water problems but they lack the necessary resources to meet the scale of the challenges facing our watersheds.

“We work with literally hundreds of local groups and stewards – and we hear from them that water is critical in their communities, but insufficient resources are available to conserve or restore this asset,” said Neil Fletcher, Manager of Conservation Stewardship with B.C. Wildlife Federation. “Directing stimulus dollars towards enhancement of our watersheds will serve as a win-win. We can get people back to work and create more vibrant and healthy waterways that can better service our communities, both wildlife and people benefit”.

While the Watershed Coalition is pleased with today’s announcement, Tull emphasizes the importance of a long-term funding investment in BC’s watershed security.

“Investment in our watersheds will generate thousands of good long-term jobs and ensure British Columbians have access to safe, clean, flowing water, said Tull. “This investment can be supported through a dedicated Watershed Security Fund supported by the water rentals paid by the largest commercial and industrial users of freshwater.”

“We commend the Province on this important first step and look forward to working with the provincial government to ensure generations of British Columbians continue to enjoy the benefits of our amazing watersheds.”

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About the BC Watershed Security Coalition:

The BC Watershed Security Coalition is a non-partisan, diverse coalition of 27 organizations representing 250,000 British Columbians from all walks of life. We have come together out of the recognition that, in every region of this province, healthy watersheds are fundamental to human health, security, prosperity and reconciliation.

The core members of the B.C. Watershed Security Coalition include: BC Wildlife Federation, B. Outdoor Recreation Council, Watershed Watch Salmon Society, Canadian Freshwater Alliance, Watersheds BC, Rivershed Society of BC, BC Freshwater legacy Initiative, POLIS Water Sustainability Project, and Pacific Salmon Foundation.

To learn more about the coalition visit: [www.watershedsecurity.ca](http://www.watershedsecurity.ca)

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