

Study proposes new way to make decisions about BC's freshwater resources

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A new model for BC's fresh-water management and policies, including improved accountability for decision-makers, is proposed in a report released today by the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance at the University of Victoria.

"A Blueprint for Watershed Governance in British Columbia" comes at a critical time as BC prepares to replace its outdated Water Act with new legislation in the 2014 spring session.

Over the past few years, the provincial government has led significant discussions about water management and policy reforms. This report takes the discussion a step further by addressing the complex details of who makes the decisions, and how decision-makers can be held to account for the benefit of BC's fresh water.

"This could be a real opportunity for positive change—particularly when it comes to engaging local communities in critical watershed decisions. It has the potential to ensure basic ecological health, such as minimum flows in rivers to keep fish alive and thriving," says the report's co-author Oliver M. Brandes, co-director of POLIS.

The report proposes that [water-management](#) decision-making be aligned with the ecological boundaries of watersheds, instead of political lines on a map as the best way to achieve positive, long-term ecological, social and economic outcomes in BC.

"The transformation in governance proposed in our blueprint will likely take a decade, at a minimum, but with these changes B.C. could have the potential to become a national, and even global, leader in freshwater protection and sustainability," says Brandes.

The POLIS report draws on leading examples of watershed governance from across Canada, and around the globe, and applies them to the BC context.

"The blueprint sets out a strategic 10-year program and proposes nine winning conditions to ensure success," says co-author Dr. Jon O'Riordan, POLIS advisor and former deputy minister of BC's Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management. "Recognizing the unique institutional, legal, cultural, and geographic challenges of BC, we provide a clear timeline for successfully moving toward watershed governance to improve ecological resilience across the province."

More information: A copy of the report is available at poliswaterproject.org/blueprint

Provided by University of Victoria

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