

**Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship**

**2022/23
Annual Service Plan Report**

August 2023



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Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship 2022/23 Annual Service Plan Report compares the Ministry's actual results to the expected results identified in the 2022/23 – 2024/25 Service Plan published in 2022. I am accountable for those results as reported.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nathan Cullen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Honourable Nathan Cullen
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
August 11, 2023

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Letter from the Minister

I am pleased to present the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Annual Service Plan Report. The achievements outlined demonstrate this Ministry's many efforts to meet key priorities and commitments that support the people of British Columbia.

One of the most important roles any government has is its responsibility to manage its land and resources in a manner that values ecosystem health and biodiversity. Our relationship with First Nations governments continues as the Ministry works together with rights and title holders towards modernizing land-use planning, helping to achieve government's goal of protecting 30% of land and marine environments by 2030 and bringing certainty to the land base on where natural resource activity can and should take place. A key step in effectively stewarding the land is to ensure we are planning and adapting for climate change, addressing cumulative impacts, and ensuring we sustainably manage B.C.'s ecosystems, rivers, lakes, watersheds, and forests. The Ministry is providing leadership in the co-development of an ecosystem health and biodiversity framework as part of implementing the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review. Working with our natural resource ministry partners, my Ministry led efforts that saw the Province and Treaty 8 First Nations sign historic agreements that will transform how the Province and First Nations steward land, water, and resources together in the northeast.

Having places and space to convene is at the heart of this Ministry. Building on the successful work of the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums, long-term funding was secured to ensure core land and resource management functions such as those provided by First Nations guardians to monitor and assess are supported.

To ensure that in collaboration with First Nations habitats are protected for wildlife and species at risk, the Ministry entered a unique tripartite negotiation with Canada and the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) on a Nature Agreement to support species at risk. I am proud of initiating restoration of critical habitat and investment in stewardship initiatives in land and aquatic environments. On land, these include continued Stads K'un (coastal northern goshawk) recovery in Haida Gwaii and continuing the implementation of the Trilateral Partnership Agreement for the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou. In the water, the Ministry is working with First Nations organizations and various levels of government to protect wild salmon and restore salmon habitat.

Our province has a magnificent coastline and watersheds. The coast is home to First Nations and is important to British Columbians. For this reason, my Ministry released the Coastal Marine Strategy Intentions Paper that will provide a base to develop the province's first-ever Coastal Marine Strategy. With water being a central and basic need for people and the environment, the Ministry is working to ensure safe and clean water is available to communities throughout B.C. for generations. The Ministry laid significant groundwork by establishing the first-ever B.C.- First Nations Water Table to collaboratively work on water issues, including the co-development of the Watershed Security Strategy and an initial investment of \$100 Million to establish the fund.

We accomplished a great deal in 2022/23, including taking on the lead to transform the natural resources permitting regime with a key focus in year one on housing-related provincial permitting. None of this work would be possible without the professional and dedicated staff of the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship and I want to thank them for their ongoing and unwavering dedication to the citizens of British Columbia.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nathan Cullen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Honourable Nathan Cullen
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
August 11, 2023

Purpose of the Annual Service Plan Report

This annual service plan report has been developed to meet the requirements of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act (BTAA), which sets out the legislative framework for planning, reporting and accountability for Government organizations. Under the BTAA, the Minister is required to report on the actual results of the Ministry's performance related to the forecasted targets stated in the service plan for the reported year.

Strategic Direction

The strategic direction set by Government in 2020 and Minister Josie Osborne's 2022 [Mandate Letter](#) shaped the goals, objectives, performance measures and financial plan outlined in the [Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship 2022/23 – 2024/25 Service Plan](#) and the actual results reported on in this annual report.

Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (the Ministry) works with other natural resource sector ministries to achieve British Columbia's goals of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, economic development, and environmental sustainability.

The Ministry is directly responsible for the effective development of water, land and marine use policy and planning as well as biodiversity and ecosystem health, including species at risk policy and program management. The Ministry is also responsible for developing a new vision for water, land and resource management with First Nations that embraces shared decision-making as part of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in B.C. In addition, the Ministry directs work across natural resource ministries to develop solutions to sector-wide challenges and to advance dedicated sector-wide policy, including managing for cumulative effects, improving permitting and authorizations, as well as providing dedicated secretariat support for effective governance of the natural resource sector.

To do this work, the Ministry is accountable for all or key parts of the [Environment and Land Use Act](#), [Flathead Watershed Area Conservation Act](#), [Forest and Range Practices Act](#), [Land Act](#), [Ministry of Environment Act](#), [Ministry of Forests and Range Act](#), [Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Act](#), [Skagit Environmental Enhancement Act](#), [Water Protection Act](#), [Water Sustainability Act](#), and [Wildlife Act](#).

Operating Environment

B.C. is one of the most biologically diverse areas in Canada. Many species are found nowhere else in Canada, and several are found nowhere else in the world. Natural resource stewardship activities are confronted by challenges that include the intensification of environmental and social pressures, increasing global competition, regulatory uncertainty, including complex permitting processes, and the impacts of climate change. B.C. has committed to new international targets of protecting 30% of BC's land base and waters by 2030. Stewardship is undergoing changes in response to growing jurisdictional complexity commensurate with the recognition of the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Province's commitment to reconciliation, which is why B.C.'s target will include Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.

B.C.'s land and ecosystems provide essential "services" that people rely on: clean water and air, food, waste treatment, climate regulation, protection from flooding and erosion, and many other functions, as well as economic opportunities like mineral development and timber production. Human activities have degraded, fragmented, and even eliminated some ecosystems in B.C., making it more important than ever to establish and effectively protect and conserve areas and sustainably manage development activities. This means that leading the co-development of a policy framework on ecosystem health and biodiversity as part of implementing the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review will be critical for B.C.

Water is the foundation of life. It sustains all living things—the plants, forests and animals that form our biosphere—and it sustains human communities, economies, and cultures. For Indigenous Peoples, water cannot be separated from the interconnected nature of our world. Healthy watersheds are at the forefront of climate resiliency and are the foundation of all social, environmental, and economic systems. However, B.C.'s watersheds are becoming less resilient over time due to threats from the cumulative effects of development, unsustainable land use practices, invasive species, and population growth. Climate change will amplify each of these problems, making ecosystems and communities more vulnerable to acute disasters like the recent floods and wildfires, and chronic stressors, like drought and water scarcity. Additionally, working to improve housing supply in B.C. puts added pressure on water supply in areas where people want to live.

Consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and affirmed in B.C. through the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, work to advance Ministry mandates must be undertaken in consultation and cooperation with First Nations. In addition, all existing core public service business and new mandates require the active involvement and partnership of First Nations to ensure meaningful and lasting reconciliation can be advanced through this work. Approaches are being developed in partnership with First Nations, in recognition of their rights and title interests.

The authorization or permitting of activities on the land base and in marine environments is key to effectively managing the land and resources. The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship is leading efforts across the sector to transform the permitting regime. The objectives of this work are to: 1) transform the transactional relationship with First Nations to one that supports the collaborative, effective stewardship of land and water resources, 2)

address the backlog of permitting, 3) accelerate permitting required for government's key priorities including housing, connectivity and the transition to a green economy (critical minerals, electrification) and 4) ensure public confidence standards are being met through transparent permitting processes and reporting. The initial focus for the Permitting Solutions Team has been housing and connectivity.

The Ministry provides Natural Resource Information and Digital Services to all natural resource ministries. These centralized accountabilities include the maintenance of current information technology applications, data, and infrastructure as well as the development of new applications and infrastructure. Ongoing investment in existing and future applications and infrastructure is an essential component to all natural resource ministries' ability to deliver on their respective mandates.

Economic Statement

After rebounding rapidly in 2021, British Columbia's economy saw slower yet strong growth in 2022. B.C.'s real GDP growth of 3.6 per cent last year was the fourth highest among provinces (tied with Ontario) and grew at the same pace as the national average, following growth of 6.2 per cent in 2021. Growth in B.C.'s real GDP was mostly supported by service-producing industries such as transportation and warehousing, accommodation and food services, and professional, scientific, and technical services. Goods-producing industries also experienced growth led by construction.

While B.C.'s recovery broadened in 2022, it remained uneven as sectors such as transportation and warehousing; accommodation and food services; and arts, entertainment and recreation have yet to fully recover to pre-pandemic levels. B.C.'s labour market continued to grow in 2022, with employment growth of 3.2 per cent and an average unemployment rate of 4.6 per cent, while wages and salaries increased by 10.8 per cent. Consumer spending on goods grew slowly after a rapid expansion at the beginning of the recovery and nominal retail sales posted overall growth of 3.1 per cent. Last year, prices rose dramatically as strong demand for goods and services was met with lingering supply-chain challenges and high prices for global commodities following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In 2022, B.C.'s inflation rate averaged 6.9 per cent, the fastest annual rate since 1982, and up from 2.8 per cent in 2021. B.C. housing starts totalled 46,721 units in 2022, down 1.9 per cent compared to the previous year. Despite the decline, housing starts in 2022 were the second highest on record. Home sales fell sharply in 2022 as they adjusted to higher mortgage rates not seen since 2008. B.C. MLS home sales decreased by 35.2 per cent in 2022 compared to 2021. Meanwhile the MLS average home sale price rose by 7.4 per cent in 2022 because of strength early in the year, despite monthly declines in 9 of the last 10 months of the year.

On the external front, B.C.'s international merchandise exports grew by 20.4 per cent, boosted by strong commodity prices in the first half of 2022.

Report on Performance: Goals, Objectives, and Results

Goal 1: Co-develop a Vision for Natural Resources Co-management and Shared Decision Making with First Nations

Objective 1.1: Strengthen Partnerships and Advance Engagement with First Nations in the Stewardship of B.C.s Natural Resource Values

The Ministry will work with First Nations to build a vision for co-management on the land base that embraces shared decision-making and builds an approach for co-management of land and natural resources that will ensure effective management now and in the future.

Key results

- Established three new Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums (Forums) in the Province; one in the northeast region, and two in the southeast.
- Transitioned the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (CISF) from a pilot to a long-term, funded program that includes an expanded Cumulative Effects Framework (CEF) and support for First Nations advancing guardians' activities. There are approximately 124 Nations participating in Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Forums, which cover over 80% of the Provincial land base.
- Established a framework to co-develop over the next three years through the B.C. Future Ready Plan, a Guardians and Stewardship Training Initiative and engage with First Nations on an approach to supporting guardians' activities in B.C. Guardians and collaborative stewardship work support a partnership approach to co-management of lands, water, and resources with Indigenous partners in an integrated way.
- The Province and Treaty 8 First Nations signed agreements that will transform how the Province and First Nations steward land, water, and resources together in the northeast. The initiatives set out in the Blueberry River First Nations Implementation Agreement and the agreements with Fort Nelson, Saulteau, Halfway River, Doig River, Prophet River, and West Moberly First Nations and McLeod Lake Indian Band build a path that meets the Crown's obligations to uphold the constitutionally protected rights of Treaty 8 First Nations, restore the environment and support responsible resource development and economic activity in the northeast.

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

Agreements signed with Treaty 8 Nations include significant investment in First Nations' led restoration initiatives, to heal the land and heal the people from the cumulative impacts of industrial development on their treaty rights. Restoration will be advanced concurrent to new operational and strategic land use planning efforts to confirm where and under what circumstances resource development activities can occur, based on the shared planning efforts of the Province and Treaty 8 Nations. Other measures include investment in wildlife co-management and new revenue sharing opportunities with the Nations, and the commitment to build a cumulative effects management system together, based on shared and trusted information.

The Ministry, through the CISF program, hosted a Forums Gathering that celebrated the new mandate for the CISF as a long-term, funded program and advanced work planning for the implementation of five recommendations co-developed with the CISF Indigenous partners. Joint performance evaluation (Recommendation 4) is a commitment to: a) incorporate First Nation objectives into performance measures, b) prevent and avoid 'perfunctory' and 'vanity' metrics in evaluating success and, c) co-develop performance measures at the individual forum level (including the community level) and the broader CISF program level. Proposed actions for the short term (1-2 years) and longer term (5+ years) were created and development of a work plan was initiated. The Ministry progressed the effort of walking trusted data to trusted decisions, including CISF-generated data and associated decision-support tools, systems, and processes. This is achieved through an integrated approach that supports Indigenous stewardship and guardian activities, including training and expanding the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework.

In 2022/23, the Ministry also advanced the continued implementation of the CEF and furthered collaborative delivery of cumulative effects with First Nations through the CISF model, including the development of 3 new web applications for the use of cumulative effects information and the publishing of 3 current condition reports (with 13 reports undergoing drafting, internal reviews and engagement with Nation partners, stakeholders). The Ministry further advanced work to support the application of cumulative effects to operational decision-making (e.g., authorizations), including the development of three new decision-support guidance documents.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2021/22 Baseline	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
1.1 Number of Forum partnerships that support trusted integrated resource management ¹	9	N/A	12

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

¹PM [1.1] There was no performance measure for this objective in the 2022/23 Service Plan, however one was developed over the course of the 2022/23 fiscal period. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

The CISF program currently has 12 active Forums throughout the province, representing a partnership approach to shared stewardship at the regional level. CISF is advancing its mandate, and collaborating with Nations to establish new Forums where there is willingness and a need to further advance towards co-management at the regional level. The Ministry is working with our First Nations partners to co-develop relevant, culturally specific measures of success that reflect Indigenous perspectives. Therefore, this performance measure may change in future Service Plans as the Ministry continues to work with our First Nations partners, and to be informed and guided by their knowledge and insight.

Goal 2: Improve Stewardship of Land and Water for Reconciliation, Environmental Protection and Economic Development

Objective 2.1: Improve Wildlife Management, Protect Wildlife Habitat, and Support the Recovery of Species at Risk

The Ministry identifies opportunities to conserve, manage and protect land and water to improve the health of provincial ecosystems. These efforts result in improved habitat for wildlife and fish, while also realizing additional co-benefits including the restoration of forests impacted by wildfire and pests and increased carbon sequestration, to name a few. This measure highlights the effectiveness of Ministry management activity to conserve, maintain and restore wildlife and fish populations and habitat. The Ministry will collaborate with internal and external partners to develop and improve relationships, agreements, and strategies that enhance wildlife stewardship and biodiversity outcomes.

Key results

- Established 32 Wildlife Habitat Areas under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* and *Oil and Gas Activities Act*, with a total area of 6,792 hectares (Ha). In 2022-2023, six Wildlife Habitat Features (WHF) were reported by Industry. To these, the province also added several hundred WHF based on past incidental observations and occurrence reports which until now had no mechanism for protection. Taken together, this will help ensure these important habitat components are not rendered ineffective.
- Designated new non-administered Conservation Lands under the Land Act section 16 and 17, with a total area of 5,836 Ha, in Kootenay Boundary and Omineca regions, supporting ungulate winter range, wetlands, and freshwater lake conservation. Supported the purchase, through the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund, of approximately 300 Ha of private land in partnership with the Nature Trust of B.C. and Nature Conservancy of Canada; the land is part of the approximately 2,000 Ha Meteor Lake Wetland, a proposed Wildlife Management Area along the Fraser River east of Prince George.

- In August 2022, supported the first-ever release of captive-bred spotted owls into the wild. The three owls were raised in the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program in Langley and were released into protected forests in the Anderson Wildlife Habitat Area and the Spuzzum Wildlife Habitat Area in the Fraser Valley in partnership with Spuzzum First Nations. With the support of for the Ministry of Forests, extended the deferral of logging in these two Fraser Canyon watersheds specifically to help protect an additional 32,671 Ha of spotted owl habitat.

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

The Ministry continued to co-develop strategic policy to support the implementation of the Together for Wildlife (T4W) Strategy with guidance from the Minister's Wildlife Advisory council. In partnership with the Ministry of Forests, the Ministry also began co-development of the *Wildlife Act* policy intentions paper with the First Nations - B.C. Wildlife Stewardship and Habitat Conservation Forum. This first step towards proposed revisions to the *Wildlife Act* paves the way for targeted engagement with rights and title holders and others in the Fall of 2023.

The Ministry also continued implementation of the Trilateral Partnership Agreement for the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou, including the development of shared recommendations and advice on permit applications under the Caribou Recovery Committee joint working group. As part of these commitments, the Province worked collaboratively across Ministries to prepare extensions of Orders in Council to exclude resource activity in agreed-upon zones prior to their expiration in summer 2023.

The province initiated tripartite negotiations with Canada and the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) on a Nature Agreement to support species at risk. The Ministry also initiated restoration of critical habitat and investment in stewardship initiatives and continued support and participation in a joint working group with the Council of the Haida Nation for Stads K'un (coastal northern goshawk) recovery in Haida Gwaii.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
2.1 Increase the amount of effective area-based conservation of lands, inland waters, and marine areas that contribute to 30% of international conservation target by 2030. ¹	19.5%	N/A	19.6%

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

¹PM [2.1] There was no performance measure for this objective in the 2022/23 Service Plan, however one was developed over the course of the 2022/23 fiscal period. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

This Performance Measure (PM) is currently under development as there are many challenges to reporting it. The 30% target is guided by international advice to consider areas established as protected areas (primary purpose is conservation) and "other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)" (areas established for other reasons but resulting in effective conservation).

The initial assessment was based on the federal assessment approach (the Decision Support Tool, or DST). The DST provides consideration for OECM identification, but key challenges remain using the DST approach alone. These include the fact that B.C. needs to build an assessment approach in partnership with First Nations as per our commitment to jointly developed policy, and the fact that B.C.'s land designations and nuances include considerations not fully represented in the DST approach. The Ministry will progress policy direction for OECM identification in partnership with First Nations, and through opportunities to work with environmental non-government organizations as appropriate. Provincial OECM policy will not be resolved in time for this reporting period, therefore the number is still fluid and may change in future. As the Ministry develops a consistent formula for calculation, it will continue to ensure protection is effective and oversight is maintained. It is anticipated that it will take until fiscal year 2023/24 to determine the correct and appropriate representation of this PM.

Objective 2.2: Advance Modernized Land Use Planning

Land use planning (LUP) sets the strategic direction to guide sustainable resource stewardship and management of provincial public land and waters that meets economic, environmental, social, and cultural objectives. Modernized land use planning is led by the B.C. government in partnership with First Nations and includes engagement of communities, local governments, industry, and other stakeholders such as tourism and recreation.

Key results

- Advanced several new land use plans with Treaty 8 Nations as a result of the recently negotiated agreements with the Blueberry River First Nations and other Treaty 8 Nations.
- Engaged with key stakeholders and Indigenous groups on program and policy development, including draft policy guidance on how to consider climate change, indigenous knowledge, collaborative governance, and overarching program principles in LUP.
- Advanced the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act's (DRIPA) Action Plan and the commitment to a co-management approach on the land base through the 14 active land use planning projects currently being undertaken in partnership with First Nations.

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

The collaboration on the development of LUP guidance and the creation and circulation of communication materials to Indigenous organizations have strengthened the understanding of LUP program development activities. Regional teams continue to advance readiness conversations with Indigenous communities on their planning interests to support a co-management approach on the land. Further, public and stakeholder engagement on active planning projects has increased awareness and understanding of current planning activities and has assisted in achieving transparency and openness in the planning process.

The Ministry focused on advanced government-to-government relationships with a partnership approach to planning and the Cumulative Effects Framework (CEF) supported eight planning tables, including three forest landscape planning tables, in the development and potential use of cumulative effects information.

The Ministry also collaborated with the Ministry of Forests on forest landscape planning activities, supporting three active projects that have overlapping interests with LUP.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
2.2 Number of LUPs underway ¹	N/A	N/A	14

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

¹PM [2.2] There was no performance measure for this objective in the 2022/23 Service Plan, however one was developed over the course of the 2022/23 fiscal period. In service plan 2023/24 – 2025/26, this PM is listed under objective 1.2. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

Performance measures as identified in the 22/23 Service Plan have been modified to reflect projects advancing in partnership. The number of First Nations participating in planning continues to grow in LUP and other related planning activities such as forest landscape planning and water sustainability planning. Currently there are 33 First Nations actively participating in LUP projects across the province and up to 49 First Nations engaged in marine spatial planning on the South Coast.

Performance measures associated with land use planning are still being evaluated to determine the most appropriate measure of success and may change in future Service Plans as the Ministry continues to work with First Nations to advance modernized land use planning.

Objective 2.3: Improve Water Stewardship from Source to Tap

British Columbians depend on water for drinking, washing, cooking, growing our food, and recreation. Small businesses and industries also rely on water to support economic opportunities. Water is essential for aquatic life and sustaining our world class fisheries. Importantly, water has cultural and spiritual significance for Indigenous Peoples. The Ministry works with Indigenous governments, stakeholders, and partners to plan and set objectives that guide water stewardship.

Key results

- Released the [Watershed Security Strategy Intentions Paper](#) for Indigenous, stakeholder and public review and engagement. The Intentions Paper sets out five policy intentions that indicate areas of priority for the Strategy, including watershed governance, legislative change, watershed science and knowledge, holistic water management and ecosystem protection, and balancing water supply and demand.
- Invested \$100.000M to establish a Watershed Security Fund that will be co-developed with First Nations and an external partner. This unprecedented

investment will support healthy watersheds and watershed security in B.C and is intended to grow as other partners contribute.

- Established the first-ever B.C. - First Nations Water Table to collaboratively work together on water issues, including the co-development of the Watershed Security Strategy.

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

In addition to the work on the Water Security Strategy and Fund highlighted above, the Ministry advanced watershed co-governance and water sustainability planning throughout the province by working with First Nations partners in seven different watersheds. Highlights of this work were developing a government-to-government agreement (signed on May 12, 2023), and the process to support the water sustainability plan development in the Koksilah (Xwulqw'selu) River Watershed with the Cowichan Tribes (still in progress; expected to be finalized in 2023/24).

The Ministry continued to implement the *Water Sustainability Act* by supporting the development of new policy approaches to authorizations in Treaty 8 territory and developing additional policies to support water use across the province. The Ministry also updated the [BC Drought and Water Scarcity Response Plan](#) and developed a multi-agency Water Accountabilities Matrix.

The Ministry established accountabilities across the Ministries of WLRS and Health and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer to respond to drinking water issues of concern and provided a progress report to the Office of the Auditor General in response to the recommendations made during the Protection of Drinking Water audit. The Ministry defined the drinking water protection areas in the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen in partnership with the Interior Health Authority, Okanagan Basin Water Board, and the Ministry of Health (HLTH). This work informed initial efforts on a provincial drinking water source assessment framework that will be continued in 2023/24.

The Ministry updated an additional twelve water quality objectives for the [Burrard Inlet](#) (in collaboration with the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, to inform future water management decisions in the Burrard Inlet), and released water quality objectives for the Shuswap Lake (in collaboration with the Pespesellkwe te Secwepemc). To support the continued implementation of the *Water Sustainability Act*, the Ministry completed several groundwater science projects including aquifer mapping and studies to understand groundwater and surface water interactions in priority areas.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
2.3 Improve watershed security and health throughout the province by developing and implementing the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund (WSS+F) ¹	N/A	Watershed Security Strategy & Fund intention paper released.	Watershed Security Strategy Intentions Paper released. \$100.000M investment in a Watershed Security Fund.

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

¹PM [2.3] There was no performance measure for this objective in the 2022/23 Service Plan, however one was developed over the course of the 2022/23 fiscal period. In service plan 2023/24 – 2025/26, this PM is listed under objective 2.2. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

On March 6th, 2023 government announced the release of the [Watershed Security Strategy Intentions paper](#) for comment, the \$100.000M investment in a Watershed Security Fund, and the creation of the BC – First Nations Water Table.

The release of the Watershed Security Strategy Intentions paper is a significant milestone in the development of the Strategy itself. It reflects the input received on the discussion paper and identifies the province's five key intentions for the Strategy and the subsequent engagement will allow the Province to refine the intentions into a final Strategy to best meet the needs of First Nations and all other British Columbians.

The investment in the Watershed Security Fund exceeds the listed performance measure. The \$100.000M is an unprecedented investment. The Watershed Security Fund will provide sustainable funding to help improve B.C.'s watersheds. It builds on the Budget 2022 \$30.000M commitment and on the success the 2020 \$27.000M Healthy Watersheds Initiative ([HWI](#)) initiated under the StrongerBC economic plan. Supported and referenced by many First Nations across B.C., the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia (REFBC) led HWI which concluded earlier in 2023 and engaged a broad range of partners – including First Nations – in its work. REFBC will co-develop the Fund with First Nations.

Goal 3: Stewardship of Marine and Coastal Values for Environmental Protection, Economic Development, and Reconciliation

Objective 3.1: Address Fish Species Declines

Wild Pacific Salmon are iconic in British Columbia due to their importance to our culture, ecology, and economy. However, many stocks have become increasingly threatened and are in decline. The Ministry will work to reinvigorate provincial programs that address wild salmon and

other fish species declines, as well as coastal fisheries economies. Investments will align with recommendations from B.C.'s Wild Salmon Advisory Council and other fisheries reviews and work to leverage funds where viable.

Key results

- Invested \$42.850M, doubling B.C.'s contribution to the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) resulting in a total combined Canada-BC program of \$285.000M to support projects that protect wild salmon and restore salmon habitat.
- Integrated wild salmon protection and revitalization in the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund so that a comprehensive approach can be taken to wild salmon protection and revitalization.
- Strengthened partnerships through a renewed Memorandum of Understanding with FNFC that reflects the role of the Minister of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship and provides a broader scope of work that includes salmon, watershed, and the coastal marine environment.

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

The government of British Columbia is actively working with Indigenous organizations and various orders of government to protect and restore wild salmon. In 2022/23 the Province committed to double its BCSRIF contribution by an additional \$42.850M. To date, this fund has supported the physical restoration or provided access to over 3,358,500 m² of fish habitat. Additionally, the fund has created over 1048 jobs and trained over 848 people.

The Province has been working to ensure that a "salmon lens" is applied to infrastructure projects such as Highway 8, the Coastal Marine Strategy, and the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund. This work has been assisted by establishing a provincial "home" for wild salmon work in 2022 with the creation of the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. The Province also continues to work with the federal government on decisions that impact wild salmon and participates in international processes to ensure provincial interests are considered.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
Aquatic Habitat restored or enhanced through Ministry activities ¹	1,167,160 m ²	N/A	1,705,503 m ²

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

¹PM [3.1] There was no performance measure for this objective in the 2022/23 Service Plan, however one was developed over the course of the 2022/23 fiscal period. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

In 2022/2023 BCSRIF continues to contribute to aquatic habitat restoration and enhancement. Over 3,358,500 m² have been restored or provided access to date. The positive variance noted in the table above is a result of new BCSRIF projects and existing projects increasing the size and

number of restored aquatic areas. This data is tracked by the BCSRIF secretariate and reported annually. Data is provided to the secretariate directly from BCSRIF participants.

Objective 3.2: Develop a Coastal Marine Strategy

The Province has committed to developing a new Coastal Marine Strategy, in cooperation with the federal government, Indigenous Peoples, and coastal communities, to provide a blueprint for future stewardship, economic resilience and management of our coastal waters. This complements work on a network of Marine Protected Areas in the Northern Shelf Bioregion and continued implementation of the integrated marine plans developed under the Marine Plan Partnership.

Key results

- Developed and released an [Intentions Paper](#) in collaboration with First Nations, outlining the proposed policy direction for the Coastal Marine Strategy.
- In partnership with federal and First Nations governments, completed the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network Action Plan for the Northern Shelf Bioregion and announced it at the 5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) in Vancouver, BC, on February 5, 2023.

Summary of progress made in 2022/23

The Ministry held extensive engagement with First Nations and stakeholders. This ensured that all coastal First Nations, 160+ stakeholder groups, and federal and local governments received information about the development of the Coastal Marine Strategy. A Coastal Marine Strategy Policy Forum was held in Vancouver on March 7 to 8, 2023, with 64 stakeholders and 10 local governments. An Indigenous Youth and Young Professionals Summit was held concurrently.

The Coastal Marine Strategy Intentions Paper was released for public feedback on December 15, 2022. The Ministry received close to 1000 submissions (106 written submissions, 845 surveys), which will be used to inform the next steps in Strategy development. Working together with First Nations and federal partners, public feedback was also sought on the draft Marine Protected Area Network Action Plan for the Northern Shelf Bioregion, from September 6, 2022 to November 25, 2022. During this period, the Ministry and partners co-led: 6 webinars, attended by over 150 public participants and stakeholder representatives; 6 open houses (Campbell River, Prince Rupert, Kitimat, Masset, Daajing Giids, and Bella Coola), attended by 280 coastal community members; and 12 bilateral meetings with stakeholder groups. Through this process, the partners received 550 email submissions, 566 general survey responses, and 20 map-based survey responses, which were used to finalize the Network Action Plan and will help to support future steps in implementation.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Actual
3.2 Provincial Coastal Marine Strategy developed. ¹	N/A	Complete and release Coastal Marine Strategy Intentions Paper for public engagement.	Released Coastal Marine Strategy Intentions Paper for public engagement

Data source: Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

¹PM [3.2] There was no performance measure for this objective in the 2022/23 Service Plan, however one was developed over the course of the 2022/23 fiscal period. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2023/24 – 2025/26, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

This performance measure is expected to be completed in 2023/24. In 2022/23, a significant milestone was achieved, with the completion and release of the [Intentions Paper](#) for broad feedback. Once the Coastal Marine Strategy is developed, the Ministry will co-develop new performance measures in partnership with First nations and in consultation with stakeholders that most appropriately reflect measures of success.

Financial Report

Financial Summary

	Estimated (\$000)	Other Authoriz- ations ¹ (\$000)	Total Estimated (\$000)	Actual (\$000)	Variance (\$000)
Operating Expenses					
Land Use Policy and Planning and Terrestrial Ecosystems	43,063	1,070	44,133	43,436	697
Watershed, Aquatic Ecosystems, Fisheries and Coastal Policy and Planning	6,831	177,176	184,007	185,135	(1,128)
Information, Innovation and Technology	21,921	807	22,728	19,653	3,075
Reconciliation and Natural Resource Sector Policy	1,835	115,654	117,489	117,646	(157)
Natural Resource Sector Secretariat	5,333	71,358	76,691	77,446	(755)
Executive and Support Services	13,025	6,385	19,410	21,142	(1,732)
Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual ²	0	0	0	(4)	(4)
Total	92,008	372,450	464,458	464,454	4
Ministry Capital Expenditures					
Executive and Support Services	245	0	245	189	56
Total	245	0	245	189	56

¹ "Other Authorizations" include Supplementary Estimates, Statutory Appropriations and Contingencies. Amounts in this column are not related to the "estimated amount" under sections 5(1) and 6(1) of the Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act for ministerial accountability for operating expenses under the Act.

² The Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual of \$4,000 is a reversal of accruals in the previous year.

Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations

As of March 31, 2023, the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship is responsible and accountable for the following organizations:

Mackenzie River Basin Board

Established to implement the Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement (between the Government of Canada, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon and Northwest Territories), which is a non-binding, process-focused Board. The Board publishes the State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report (SOAER) for the Mackenzie River Basin.

Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board

Created through legislation (Muskwa-Kechika Management Act and regulation), the M-KAB provides advice and feedback on emerging Government policies that may impact the M-KMA and on potential management activities in the area. The M-KAB reports out to the Premier and the public annually as well as monitoring activities, including resource development activities.

Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission

Created through legislation (Skagit Environmental Enhancement Act) the Commission administers the Skagit Environmental Endowment Fund. The Commission reviews, selects and funds projects which provide or maintain environmental values and recreational facilities in the Skagit watershed south of Hope, B.C.

Wildlife Advisory Council

Formed in 2020, the mandate of the Council is to work together to support the implementation of the Together for Wildlife Strategy, as well as to advise the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship and the Minister of Forests on province-wide wildlife and habitat issues on an ongoing basis.

Appendix B: Progress on Mandate Letter Priorities

The following is a summary of progress made on priorities as stated in Minister Josie Osborne's 2022 Mandate Letter.

2022 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a path forward with First Nations to build a co-managed land and resource management regime that will ensure natural resources are managed effectively now and in the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to objective 1.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the modernization of land use planning for ecosystems, rivers, lakes, forests, land, and waters by involving First Nations, local communities, and industry confirming social choice on the land base through inclusive processes. Increase the Province's capacity to manage for cumulative effects through integration of science-based land, aquatic, resource, geographic data and Indigenous knowledge so evidence-informed policy and decisions can be made by statutory decision makers. Work with the Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport to ensure the tourism, cultural, recreational, and economic benefits from heritage and historic places, mountain resorts, and adventure tourism are integrated into modernized land-use policy and planning. Work with the Minister of Forests to support the implementation of the recommendations of the Old Growth Strategic Review in collaboration with First Nations, labour, industry, and environmental groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to objective 2.2

2022 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead the Together for Wildlife Strategy, with the support of the Parliamentary Secretary for Environment, and with neighbouring jurisdictions, to cooperatively develop and invest in new strategies aimed at better protecting our shared wildlife and habitat corridors. Continue to work with partners to protect species at risk and work collaboratively with other ministries to protect and enhance BC's biodiversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to objective 2.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide provincial leadership on water policy and strategies including the coordination of government's source to tap strategy to protect drinking water. Ensure our water and watersheds are respected and valued, through the development of the Watershed Security Strategy and Watershed Security Fund with support from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to objective 2.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead the development of the Coastal Marine Strategy – in partnership with First Nations and federal and local governments – to better protect coastal habitat while growing coastal economies with support from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to objective 3.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the implementation of the Wild Salmon Strategy including working with the federal government to double the Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to objective 3.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure alignment between transportation and land-use planning, support the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, and work with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, on the implementation of the Integrated Transportation and Development Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to objective 2.2