



For Immediate Release

\$7 Million Flowing to BC Communities for Watershed Security Projects

[June 11, 2025, Vancouver, BC / Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations] — The [Watershed Security Fund](#) (WSF or ‘the Fund’), a partnership between the First Nations Water Caucus (FNWC), the [First Nations Fisheries Council](#) (FNFC) and the [Real Estate Foundation of BC](#) (REFBC), is thrilled to announce the recipients of the second round of funding under the [WSF Grants Program](#). **Just under \$7 million is being distributed to 28 recipients across British Columbia.**

At a time when communities are working hard to respond to climate, economic and cultural pressures, this critical resourcing is a positive step forward. A granting budget of \$3-5 million is generated annually from interest earned on the initial \$100 million endowment from the Province. In 2024/25, the WSF was able to hold a second grants intake, supplemented by a \$7 million contribution from the Real Estate Foundation of BC. This second wave of funding builds on the success of the program’s inaugural intake of 26 projects in 2024, continuing to support initiatives that **prioritize the health of waterways, center First Nations rights and knowledge, and foster enduring relationships** grounded in reciprocity and respect.

Watershed security is a shared responsibility, requiring everyone within the watershed to actively contribute to its care and preservation. In its second application intake, the program received **161 applications, totalling over \$41 million in funding requests**—demonstrating both the immense need for funds and the deep commitment of communities to care for water and the natural world.

“These projects demonstrate a strong commitment to watersheds and building lasting partnerships within community. The large number of First Nation-led and First Nation-partnered applications highlight the importance of First Nations’ Rights and Title when doing work on watersheds. Protecting watersheds is no one person’s responsibility, we all have a mutual reliance on water that will continue to drive this work forward.” — Lydia Hwitsum, Co-Commissioner, First Nations Water Caucus

The 28 recipients of the second intake include First Nation and non-First Nations organizations and partners working in territories and communities across BC. Project examples include:

- **McLeod Lake Indian Band**, in partnership with **Saulteau First Nations and West Moberly First Nations**, are receiving \$400,000 to protect and restore the Kinosew Sîpîy/Whutone Gah Saghé, Murray River Watershed by implementing the actions in the 2024 Watershed Health Assessment and upcoming 2025 Water Quality Objectives established through government policy.





We wanted to address an important question through this project: "Can we drink the water, can we eat the fish, would I be honoured to make tea for our Elders with these waters?" The WSF grant allows our Nations and local communities to advance critical collaborative work and studies to protect and recover this heavily impacted watershed. We look forward to continuing to work with all levels of government on this important project."—Nathan Prince, Traditional Land Use Coordinator, McLeod Lake Indian Band

- **Raincoast Conservation Foundation**, in partnership with **Scw'exmx Tribal Council and Citxw Nlaka'pamux Assembly**, are receiving \$107,500 to continue mapping and assessing cold water shelter areas in the Coldwater River to support salmon recovery and climate adaptation.
- **Lake Babine Nation** is receiving \$50,000 to enhance climate resiliency across the Lake Babine watershed through the development of a paired-watershed study that assesses feasible restoration sites for sockeye-bearing streams using beaver dam analogs (BDAs).

"By using beaver dam analogs to build resilient salmon habitats in the face of industrial logging and a changing climate, we ensure that Lake Babine Nation members can rely on salmon into the future." — Lake Babine Nation Fisheries Team

Amid tariffs and economic instability, many of these projects provide good jobs and nature-based solutions rooted in collaboration and focused on long-term resiliency goals.

B.C.'s watersheds are the lifeblood of this province, and I thank every one of the 28 recipients for doing their part to help ensure safe, clean water is available to communities throughout B.C. for generations. Every watershed is unique in its characteristics, needs of the ecosystem, and the people it supports, so I'm thankful that we will see so much of First Nations' expertise and local knowledge go into these projects. This second grant intake creates another amazing path forward in taking action for watershed security, and we hope it will inspire others to contribute to the Fund's growth to support this important work."— Hon. Randene Neill, B.C. Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Our mutual reliance on water drives the need for collaboration to support enduring funding streams. Through shared leadership and strategic investments, the interim partners aspire to continue growing the Fund through crown governments, industry and philanthropic contributions to generate enduring and predictable funding. A third round of funding is anticipated for **October 2025**.





For more information about the Watershed Security Fund and the list of Intake 2 Grant Recipients, please visit watershedsecurityfund.ca/funded-projects

Media Contact:

Alieska Robles, Communications Manager, Real Estate Foundation of BC
alieska@refbc.ca

Madison Rattai, Habitat and Environmental Protections Manager, First Nations Fisheries Council of BC
madison@fnfisheriescouncil.ca

watershedsecurityfund.ca



Photo credit: Cheam First Nation





About the Watershed Security Fund

On March 6, 2023, the Province of British Columbia and the B.C.-First Nations Water Table jointly announced an initial \$100-million investment from the Province of BC to establish the creation of an independent Watershed Security Fund (WSF or ‘the Fund’). Grants for watershed security projects are provided from the interest earned on the fund. The initial \$100-million contribution will generate a \$3-5 million annual baseline budget for grants and programs.

Interim Governance and Working Towards a Permanent Entity

Since the announcement of the initial \$100-million endowment to the WSF, the First Nations Water Caucus (FNWC) – with the First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC) acting as its secretariat – partnered with the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia (REFBC) to provide interim Fund stewardship. Together, the interim partners are working to create a permanent entity to oversee, manage and grow the Fund over the long term. The Province of BC acts in an advisory role to the interim Fund.

The **First Nations Water Caucus (FNWC)** is comprised of the First Nation delegates who participate in the joint B.C.-First Nations Water Table (Water Table). The Water Table addresses water and watershed security issues of concern between First Nations in B.C. and the Province through co-development and consensus. FNWC was first convened by FNFC in June 2022 and, since then, has worked with the Province at the Water Table to co-develop a draft Watershed Security Strategy for B.C.

The **First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC)** is a non-profit society that works to develop a cohesive and united voice among First Nations in B.C. FNFC, as the secretariat to FNWC, implements the goals and priorities of FNWC and carries out the substantive operational work. They are partnering with REFBC as interim stewards of the Fund and supporting the co-development process.

The **Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC)** is a philanthropic organization working to advance sustainable, equitable, and socially-just land use across what is known as B.C. For many years, REFBC has been proud to work with First Nations, local governments, the Province and a broad network of partners to advance watershed security through its grants, research and convening, and as host of the Healthy Watersheds Initiative.

