



For Immediate Release

\$6 Million supporting 26 community-led watershed projects across BC

[April 13, 2026, Vancouver, BC / Xʷməθkʷəy̅əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations] — The [Watershed Security Fund](#) (WSF), 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 third round of funding under the WSF Grants Program. **\$6 million is being distributed to 26 community-led projects across British Columbia.**

This critical resourcing is a positive step forward to advance watershed resiliency in the province while supporting biodiversity, fish habitat, and clean water. In addition to the \$5 million generated from interest earned on the initial \$100 million endowment from the Province of B.C., the WSF received a **\$1 million contribution from [The Hilary and Galen Weston Foundation \(HGWF\)](#) to support Spring 2026 grants**, increasing the grants budget by 20%.

"Collaboration is at the heart of this work, as we all have a shared responsibility to contribute to the care and preservation of our most sacred source of life — water. It is inspiring to see First Nations, non-governmental organizations, crown governments, industry and local communities come together, through these watershed projects, to support and care for the natural world we all rely on. When we support each other in this work, we support a future with vibrant watersheds and healthy communities." - Toni Boot, Vice-Chair, REFBC Board of Governors and member of the Watershed Security Fund Joint Executive

Since the launch of the grants program in 2024, the **WSF has supported 80 watershed projects, investing \$18 million directly into communities.** This includes \$10 million from the WSF and \$8 million in philanthropic contributions, including those from REFBC and the most recent \$1 million gift from the HGWF.

The funded projects are supporting over 640 jobs and helping communities achieve economic, environmental, cultural, and social goals while prioritizing the health of waterways, centering First Nations rights and knowledge, and fostering enduring relationships and partnerships grounded in reciprocity and respect. In the face of climate change-driven events, such as extreme flooding, droughts, wildfires, and habitat loss, these projects demonstrate how communities are implementing smart, nature-based solutions to mitigate impacts from natural events.

"Protecting B.C.'s watersheds is essential for the health and wellbeing of every single living thing in our province. Thank you to the 26 recipients for all they do to care for our water so it can continue sustaining people, communities and ecosystems throughout B.C. None of this would be possible without the expertise and leadership of our partner organizations. Together





we are helping ensure clean, safe water for today, tomorrow, and generations to come.” - Hon. Randene Neill, B.C. Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

The 26 recipients of the Spring 2026 grants include First Nation and non-First Nations organizations and partners working in territories and communities across BC. Project examples include:

- **Wildsight** is receiving \$40,000 to support an educational program that will empower grade 10-12 students across the Columbia River Basin to engage with climate and systems change and to sharpen critical thinking related to watershed management and governance. Wildsight's educational team is partnering with local school teachers, with the key outcome for students to understand the need for ongoing water monitoring and the collection, sharing, and analysis of data to effectively manage water.
- **Soowahlie First Nations** is receiving \$150,000 to undertake restoration activities in Sweltzer Creek Watershed. This includes replacing existing ineffective flood infrastructure required for community safety and flooding emergency management, improving fish passage and restoring habitat for aquatic/terrestrial species, and implementing continued monitoring.
- **Redd Fish Restoration Society, in partnership with ʕaahuusʔath (Ahousaht) Fisheries, hiškʷiiʔath (Hesquiaht) Fisheries, Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, and Maaqutusiis Hahoulthee Stewardship Society (MHSS)**, is receiving \$400,000 to continue their work of evaluating and identifying optimal strategies to enhance the recovery of fish and wildlife habitats through watershed-level assessments. Key objectives are to conduct restoration with a holistic approach that comprehends the complexity of ecosystems, addresses the underlying causes of habitat degradation and species decline, and actively involves Indigenous leadership while fostering a stewardship ethos.

“This work is about restoring balance and abundance in our haʕuuti. By leading watershed restoration in partnership, we are bringing together knowledge systems, creating opportunities for our people, and ensuring these ecosystems are healthy for generations to come.” - Saya Masso, Lands and Resources Manger, ʕaʕuukʷiiʔath (Tla-o-qui-aht) Nation

In its two years of operation, the WSF Grants Program **has received over 400 grant applications with over \$100 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.





“WSF-funded projects demonstrate how communities are coming together to protect, restore, and safeguard the watersheds they depend on. When First Nations rights and knowledge are centred in that work, we see strong whole-of-watershed projects that benefit both the land and the people connected to it. This progress shows what is possible, but far more funding is needed to carry it forward. Demand continues to far exceed available funding, demonstrating the urgent need for increased investment in watersheds.” - Stu Barnes, Executive Director, First Nations Fisheries Council

The interim partners aspire to continue growing the fund through Crown governments, industry and philanthropic contributions to generate enduring and predictable funding that will support healthy watersheds and thriving communities for generations. A fourth funding application intake is anticipated for Fall 2026.

For more information about the Watershed Security Fund and the list of Spring 2026 Grant Recipients, please visit watershedsecurityfund.ca/funded-projects

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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 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** 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.

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.

The **Hilary and Galen Weston Foundation (HGWF)** is a Canadian family foundation with the goal to empower people and communities whose bold ideas create a better world. Since its launch in 2020, the Foundation has committed over \$150 million to organizations supporting education, arts & culture, health, and the environment, among other worthy causes. The Foundation is a member of Environment Funders Canada and Philanthropic Foundations Canada

