

Regaining Lost Momentum on Watershed Security

Where to start ?

CARGA - "Government will strengthen collaborative local processes around water management at the watershed"



What is WLRS role?

- Watershed security champion and "enabler" of partnerships
- Integration across government (link to FLPs, Community Watersheds, EMCR, Climate ...)
- Show urgency "touch ground"-communities empowered with tools ... *make it real*

Water central to current mandate!

Natural Resource Permitting Streamlining – proposed provincial changes and response

<https://engage.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/engagement/natural-resource-permitting-improvements/>

What it is

- Set of changes to make natural resources permitting more efficient, led by WLRS. Several changes fall under WSA.
- 1/3 straight house keeping – 1/3 improve restoration/habitat work – 1/3 substantive/shift in risk
- **Main cross-cutting change = shift to risk-based approach where low-risk proposals would be exempt from permitting or licensing requirements.**
- Housekeeping/fairly minor changes (e.g., to definitions or timelines).
- The positive – water is on the agenda.

October 17 deadline

Construction dewatering

Low volume water use – exemptions

Constructing ice roads – exemptions

Administrative penalties timelines

Stream restoration

Riparian Areas Protection Regulation
enhancements

December 12 deadline

Low volume water use – streamlined authorization

Groundwater applications – expediting applications

Changes in and about a stream – best practices

Changes in and about a stream – streamlining permitting

Managing all wetland classes

Wetland – mitigation hierarchy

Wetland conservation – offset payments

Wetland identification and delineation manual

Wetland professional accountability

Streamlining Forest Act permitting

Key points – POLIS initial response

- Across ALL changes need to define the “low risk” thresholds that will exempt permitting requirements
- For the three highlighted water changes, key concerns:
 - Cumulative impacts and potential for water overallocation particularly in the context of climate change, lack of data, or a clear definition of what constitutes “enough water supply” in streams or aquifers.
 - Expedited groundwater licensing - need for more detailed licence adjudication even with initial streamlined process

Criteria/management to designate “enough water”

- **Water management actions, e.g.:**
 - Measuring and reporting of existing licenced water uses
 - State of watershed reviews
 - Required registration for any unlicenced users (how much and where these users are using water)
 - Clarity on how unlicenced users will be affected by drought measures
 - Establishment of environmental flow needs and critical flow thresholds.
- **Criteria, e.g.:**
 - No other significant environmental or cultural concerns, e.g.:
 - No evidence of water scarcity in watershed-specific climate change projections
 - No evidence of water scarcity in drought conditions in last decades
 - Consent by local Indigenous nation(s) that water availability is sufficient to support additional uses.

Additional considerations/areas for December

- Develop criteria/definitions for risk thresholds for changes in and about a stream
- Bundle of wetland-related changes