

PART ONE

Water Act modernization overview

1 Introduction

The *Water Act* is the primary law in British Columbia for managing our water resources and has a key role in ensuring the sustainability of BC's water resources. Under the *Water Act*, government makes decisions on licences to divert and use water in streams (water allocation); the construction of works or other changes in and about a stream; and any change or transfer of water licences. Water management planning, water allocation planning and drought management are included in the *Water Act*.

Government is looking at ways to modernize the *Water Act* to respond to new challenges that exist for managing our water, including dealing with population growth and climate change. Modernizing the *Water Act* is an important commitment in *Living Water Smart, BC's Water Plan*. A modernized *Water Act* will better protect our water resources, thereby helping to keep our environment, economy and investment climate strong for future generations.

In February 2010, government released the *Water Act* Modernization Discussion Paper. The Discussion Paper and an associated Technical Background report describe opportunities for using, sustaining and managing water resources in a changing environment. They were developed to encourage dialogue on ways to modernize the *Water Act*. The Discussion Paper proposed principles to underpin a modernized *Water Act* and presented goals, supporting objectives and possible solutions.

This Report on Engagement provides a summary of the comments received from stakeholders, First Nations and individuals in response to the Discussion Paper. This report is also informed by the extensive dialogue that occurred during multi-stakeholder and First Nations workshops held in March and April 2010. The report provides an overview of the public input that is being considered by government in modernizing the *Water Act*. The report does not include all detailed comments but intends to capture trends, themes and key themes expressed in the submissions and at workshops. Also, the report and the associated summaries do not reflect government's position on any aspect of *Water Act* Modernization.



All submissions received through the engagement process are listed in Appendix One to this report and are available along with workshop summaries and background information on the Living Water Smart website at www.livingwatersmart.ca.

2 Organization of this report

Part One of this report describes the *Water Act* Modernization process, engagement opportunities and provides an overview of participation. Then, it outlines what participants shared through the *Water Act* Modernization engagement process in two ways.

Part Two – *What we heard: Principles & Goals* – presents feedback on the principles and goals. Graphs and content illustrate the overall trends as expressed by all submissions. Input received through dialogue at multi-stakeholder and First Nations workshops is also referenced.

Part Three – *What we heard: Sector-level Reports* – provides a more detailed picture of the perspectives on principles and goals as shared by different sectors. Inputs from regional workshops are tied to stakeholder findings where applicable. The stakeholder and First Nations reports illustrate the broad diversity of perspectives on WAM and provide a closer look at the interests, preferences and key messages of each group.

Finally, Part Four – *Appendices* – includes a list of submissions received and details on the regional multi-stakeholder and First Nations workshops. It also includes a list of the proposed *Water Act* Modernization goals, objectives and principles for reference.

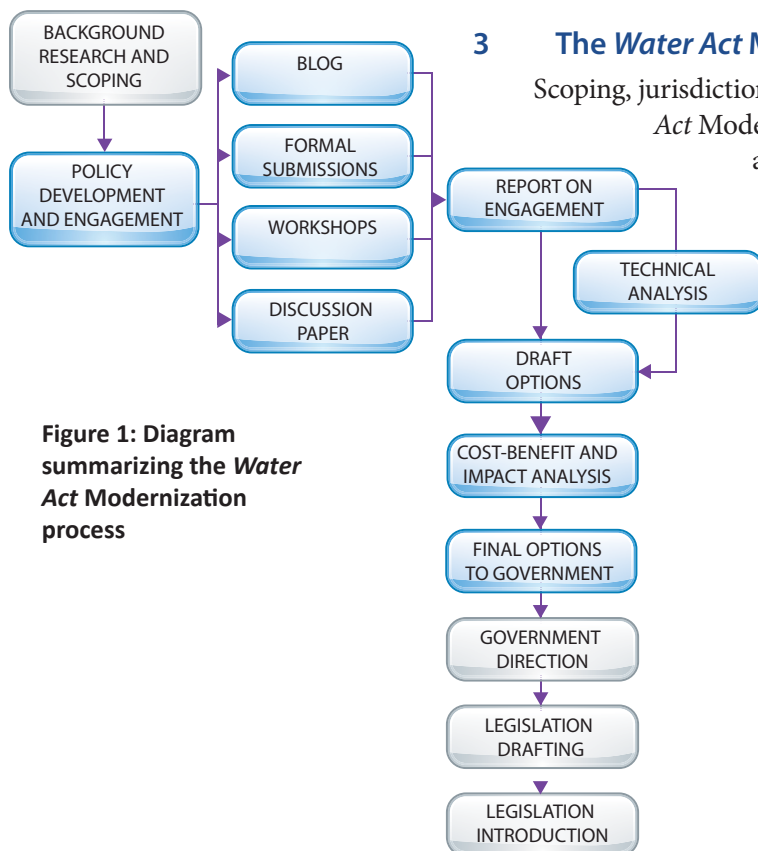


Figure 1: Diagram summarizing the *Water Act* Modernization process

Scoping, jurisdictional review and background research for *Water Act* Modernization was completed in 2009 and included a review of science and monitoring information as well as Canadian and international best practices.

As described in this report, the views of stakeholders, First Nations and individual British Columbians were gathered through the blog, workshops, and by formal submissions on the Discussion Paper.

The input was reviewed, analyzed and summarized into this Report on Engagement. The report along with all submissions, workshop results and other input is being assessed using the proposed principles and objectives under each goal area.

With help from internal and external technical experts and advisors, public input is being carefully considered and further analyzed.

Draft options to change the *Water Act* are being formulated. Further analysis of draft options will be undertaken on the costs, benefits, and the social and environmental implications of proposed changes.

Final options will be recommended to Government for consideration and final decisions will be made through the BC Government parliamentary and law-making process.

4 Engagement opportunities

The BC government recognizes the value of engaging citizens in policy development and understands that there is a diverse range of interests and perspectives on a modernized *Water Act*. Objectives of the engagement process were to:

- Provide opportunities for First Nations, stakeholders and the public to participate in modernizing the *Water Act* and help shape water policies;
- Demonstrate transparency and inclusiveness in the policy development process; and
- Build trust and align relationships for collaborative water stewardship and Living Water Smart implementation

Public engagement on modernizing the *Water Act* occurred from mid December 2009 to early May 2010 and included the key elements described below.

Moderated Blog and website

The Ministry of Environment launched the Living Water Smart Blog and an updated website on December 16, 2009. The Blog provides a forum for British Columbians to discuss the Living Water Smart plan including the commitment to modernize the provincial water laws. The Blog is also used to provide regular updates on the WAM process. The website complemented the Blog and included background material and references on the modernizing the *Water Act*. From December 2009 to April 2010, the Blog received a total of 6,214 visits. In addition, seventeen blog posts generated 108 public comments which ranged from detailed WAM submissions to inquiries on the engagement workshop locations.

The Living Water Smart website also offered visitors the opportunity to use an online feedback form to prepare their WAM submission. A total of 95 submissions were collected through the online feedback form. When combined, feedback provided through the Blog and via the online feedback form accounted for nearly 20 percent of total WAM submissions.

Discussion paper and submission process

A Discussion Paper was released in February 2010 to stimulate discussion on modernizing the *Water Act* and help British Columbians prepare their comments and submissions. The Discussion Paper was supported by a Technical Background Report released in March 2010.

Over 1,500 copies of the Discussion Paper were distributed during the period from February to May 2010. Copies of the Discussion Paper were also sent to all 203 First Nations organizations and a further 1,600 copies were downloaded from the Living Water Smart website.

In response to the Discussion Paper the Ministry received many substantive and thoughtful comments from across the province. In total, the Ministry received 899 submissions

from a wide range of stakeholder groups, individuals and First Nations organizations. Comments were submitted by email, fax, mail and via an on-line feedback form that was accessible from the Living Water Smart website.

Figure 2: Summary of written submissions on *Water Act* Modernization

<i>Submission Type</i>	<i>Stakeholder Groups</i>	<i>First Nations Organizations</i>	<i>Individuals</i>	<i>Total</i>
Email	125	5	578	708
Fax/Post	23	10	11	44
Blog comment	10	0	42	52
On-line Form	16	0	79	95
Total	174	15	710	899

Regional workshops

The Ministry delivered a series of 12 workshops around the province during March and April 2010. Three of the workshops were organized specifically for First Nations. The purpose of the full-day sessions was to interact face-to-face with British Columbians to share information, discuss principles for a new *Water Act*, and explore opportunities for change.

The facilitated workshops included presentations, breakout sessions and plenary discussions. Policy development staff from the Ministry of Environment were directly involved in workshop delivery a dialogue. This helped to ensure that staff heard the interests and ideas expressed by participants first hand.

Workshops were promoted through the Blog, a stakeholder email list, a press release, and via direct mail and telephone. In total, over 500 participants attended the 12 sessions and included participants representing a range of interests and regions of the province.

Figure 3: Overview of workshop opportunities and participation

<i>Date</i>	<i>Workshop Location</i>	<i>Registrants</i>	<i>Participants</i>
March 5	Nanaimo	109	91
March 8	Prince George	29	21
March 11	Kamloops	61	54
March 12	Kelowna	105	82
March 29	Langley	67	46
March 31	Kamloops*	31	28
April 1	Nanaimo*	24	17
April 13	Smithers	24	13
April 14	Terrace*	24	26
April 16	Nelson	101	78
April 20	Fort St. John	51	48
April 21	Vancouver	107	78
	TOTAL	654	511

**First Nations sessions*