

Staff Update – Developing our Whole of Watershed Strategy

From May 13-15 2025, the Watershed Board core staff dedicated time to thinking about the next steps in the CWB's Target strategy, based on the discussion paper *Evolving our Targets Strategy – Jan 2025*. Namely, we sought to address these three key areas for improvement (page 7)

1. **How should our Targets be expanded or adjusted to add up to Whole of Watershed Well-Being?**
2. **Is there a better way to review and update Targets, including integrating Indigenous Knowledge?**
3. **How can we keep what is still valued about CWB working groups, and let go of what isn't?**

We decided that these questions are interrelated, and what was needed to address them (for starters) is a shared understanding of where we have been, where we are now, where we are going, and how we get there. After some discussion, these were reshaped into 4 key elements.

- A. Indigenous perspective / origins of the watershed / original state
- B. State of the watershed (current)
- C. Targets and indicators
- D. Actions plans (for targets)

For each of the 4 elements, we drafted:

- Essential components
- Challenges and strategies
- Tools and Resources
- Key Milestones

In summary, the four proposed elements look roughly like this:

A) Indigenous perspective - what should we know about the original state of the watershed? This would be authored and/or created by Indigenous voices, with CWB available to support/facilitate as needed. It might be in the form of art, quotes, stories, maps, photos, etc. Much of this already exists so this could be a compilation, recognizing that the time of Elders is very stretched. This piece should provide guidance for what CWB and its partners need to consider when we talk about whole of watershed health in the Quw'utsun/Xwulqw'selu Sta'lo' watershed. It might be formatted around the Targets to more directly inform them, if possible.

B) Baseline Report - taking the pulse now. This might be similar to a classic western science “State of the Watershed” report, providing a full picture of the whole watershed, highlighting pressures, and including attention to original form and function. Taking stock of current conditions. This will provide guidance for prioritizing actions to get from where we are today to achieving the targets over time. It will also inform what targets need to be developed to fill gaps. This work would be coordinated in partnership and with recognition of the many organizations who have done or are doing parts of this already. It will require considerable time and expense, and would dovetail with the CWB’s other data sharing/mapping efforts. It might also be formatted to reflect the Targets, but it is also intended to reveal gaps in the targets.

C) Target/Indicator Strategies. These will look like an expanded and enhanced set of the inspiring and aspirational targets developed in the CWB’s founding years but incorporating more Indigenous Knowledge and including new targets (e.g. for biodiversity, forests, soils, wildlife), reflecting parts A & B above. Loose target strategies will be drafted for each, naming the broadly known steps needed to achieve each target to create a bit of a roadmap for everyone to get behind (e.g. building the weir, moving the JUB, etc), leaving room to fill in the blanks about other barriers to achieving the target as they are revealed. Work is needed here to keep the former Target Working Group knowledge sharing and cross sectoral collaborations alive and well, with fewer meetings! Target Advisors are a model to explore in tandem with existing ways that organizations are already collaborating (e.g. Stewardship Roundtable, Technical Working Groups, etc.).

4) Action Plans for each Target. Capture in broad scale the known steps needed to achieve each Target. These don’t need to be complete, as much is unknown, but let’s keep moving! In some cases the steps will already be underway with detailed plans (e.g. weir, JUB removal) but we want to capture them as part of a Target story to help everyone understand the long term benefits of these projects. In other cases it might be a placeholder for something we know is needed to achieve a Target, even if we don’t know where to start (e.g. cold water refugia, restoring old growth forests, etc). This will be a map of our forever work, in partnership with all the organizations in the watershed, taken a few steps at a time.

We found it difficult to categorize what this work is (not a plan, or a strategy, or a report...), so hoped we might be able to use the hul'q'umi'num term s'yaay'us (work) if granted permission, and help with spelling.

We also realized this work will not be sequential, but cyclical and ongoing with each piece informing the others. In the past decade, the CWB has worked hard to develop our governance model which is captured in our Principle - *Nutsamat kws yaay'us tu qa'*: This is an effort to develop our work priorities - we can't do it all so what should we do first?