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About the Collaborative Stewardship Framework and Environmental Stewardship Initiative

Background

The Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) and the Collaborative Stewardship Framework (CSF) were created in 2014 and 2018 respectively to provide collaborative space for the Province of British Columbia (B.C.) and Indigenous governments to work together on shared responsibility for stewardship of the natural environment.

Through the ESI, four regionally-based collaborative Forums were established with Nations across the North Area: Omineca, Skeena, North Coast and North East regions of B.C. These projects were designed to focus on ecosystem assessment and monitoring; ecosystem restoration and enhancement; ecosystem research and knowledge exchange; and stewardship education and training.

A further five Forums were established across the Province in 2018 through CSF, based upon the success of the initial ESI mandate. The CSF Forums addressed the same goals as ESI, and also explored approaches to co-management and shared decision making.

Moving Forward

In April of 2022, ESI and CSF were unified under a single framework, delivered through the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. In October 2022, provincial Cabinet Ministers of the Natural Resource Sector (NRS) endorsed a commitment to a long-term collaborative model for regional stewardship and co-management of land and resources with First Nations. The model includes Forums under ESI, CSF, the Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP), and the Great Bear Rainforest (GBR), and also includes an expanded Cumulative Effects Framework (CEF) and a co-developed approach to Guardians. This commitment provides stability and certainty to the work of existing and future Forums.

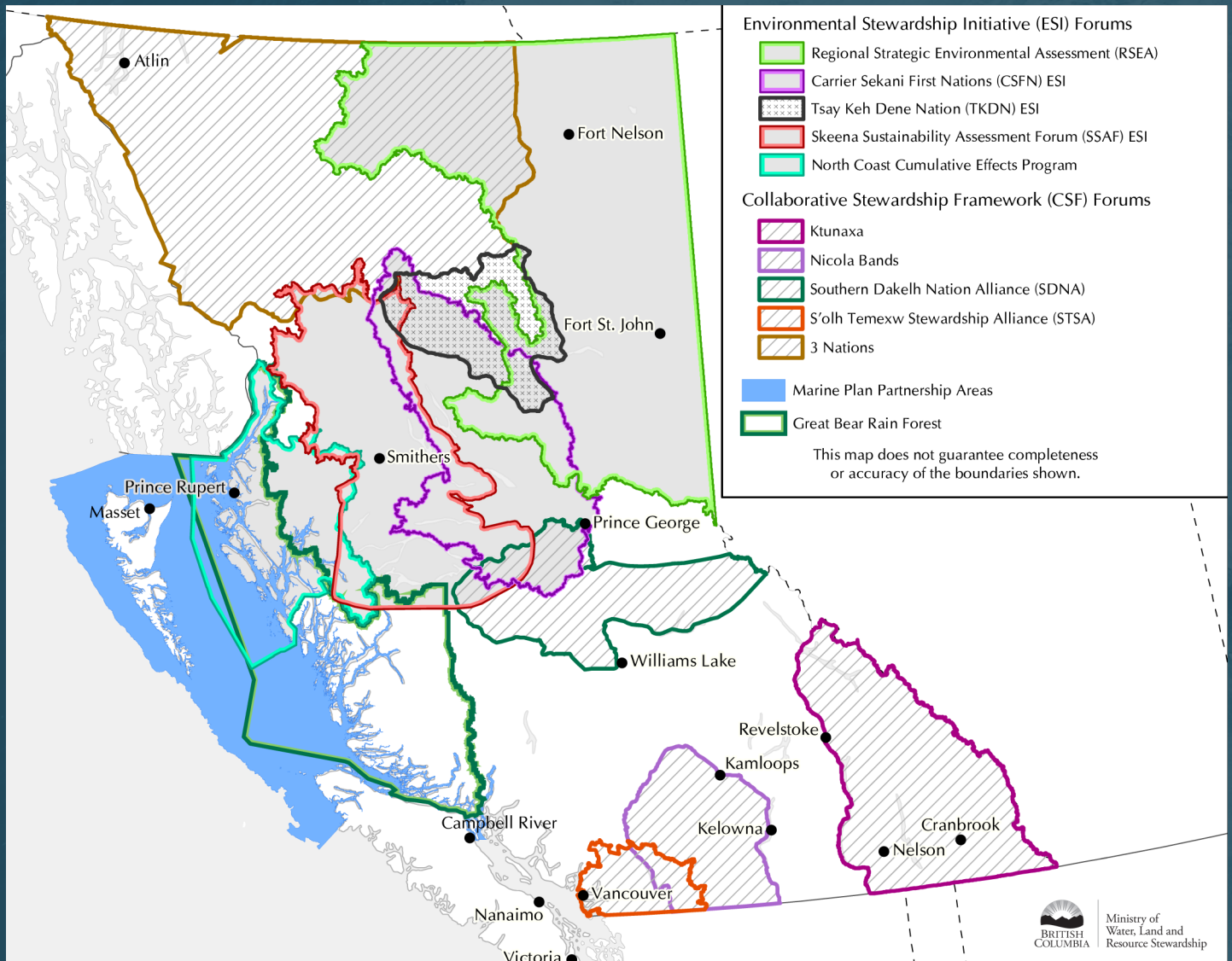
Approximately 80% of the landbase in B.C. is associated with a Forum study area*, and products coming out of Forums are currently being used to inform a sustainable co-management approach to natural resource management in B.C. These Forums have proven to be an effective model for supporting shared resource stewardship and co-management objectives, guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act)*.

The following pages provide information on each individual Forum.

Notes:

*Based on data gathered from GeoBC

FORUM STUDY AREAS



Read on to learn about each Forum



ESI FORUMS



Regional Strategic Environmental Assessment

The first phase of the Regional Strategic Environmental Assessment (RSEA) between the Province and seven Treaty 8 First Nations (Blueberry River, Doig River, Halfway River, Prophet River, Sauleau, West Moberly and McLeod Lake) was completed on March 31, 2022. Five current condition reports with their accompanying assessment methodologies and a draft Recommendations Report have been completed.

The Province is reviewing the draft Recommendations Report and determining how to implement the proposed recommendations with Treaty 8 First Nations. Currently, the Province and Treaty 8 Nations are working together to develop a new collaborative model for regional stewardship through Forums, that will complement and enhance what was produced by RSEA.

The RSEA results are being incorporated into interim GIS-based visual mapping tool (Enhanced Decision Support Tool) to ensure that cumulative effects information is being incorporated into land and resource management decisions. Training tools are also under development.

Carrier Sekani First Nations ESI

Since 2015, the Carrier Sekani First Nations (CSFNs) and the Province have developed shared, trusted information and strengthened relationships between our governments through the Environmental Stewardship Initiative Omineca Demonstration Project. This work is rooted in CSFN values, and combines traditional ecological knowledge with modern science. Since 2018, a series of cumulative effect assessments that have shown that natural resource developments combined with natural disturbance has increased the risk to biodiversity, moose habitat, and watershed health – the Valued Ecosystem Components.

In 2018, the CSFNs and the Province began a new chapter in their relationship by developing a set of Immediate Forest Management Measures to address the risks identified by the Omineca ESI project team. These Immediate Measures included setting aside areas of mixed old growth and young forest to preserve biodiversity and moose habitat. We also agreed to modernize land use planning in the Carrier Sekani territories through a process called Resource Management Planning. CSFN and B.C. have been working with forest licensees to explore options for short term conservation of these areas.

Moving Forward

The CSFNs and B.C. are continuing to collaboratively create strategies to protect, manage and monitor the cumulative effects to the valued ecosystem components. The CSFNs and the Province are now developing the terms of reference and scope and scale for Resource Management Planning, including exploring interests of nations sharing territory with the CSFNs.

The intention is to integrate objectives and strategies for land and resource uses, providing resource managers with tools to manage cumulative effects, land, and natural resources, including forests (old growth), fish, wildlife, waters and cultural values. It also intends to advance co-developing a vision for natural resource co-management and shared decision-making with First Nations. We are excited for the prospect of building a climate-resilient landscape, preserving biodiversity, and developing new mechanisms for collaborative decision-making over resources in the region.

“We are excited for the prospect of building a climate-resilient landscape, preserving biodiversity, and developing new mechanisms for collaborative decision-making over resources in the region” - Carrier Sekani First Nations ESI



“The Tsay Keh Dene ESI is continuing the collaborative work to understand the current condition and risks to valued ecosystem components, develop solutions to mitigate the effects of natural resource extraction and implement strategies to protect, manage and monitor the cumulative effects.”

-Tsay Keh Dene ESI

Images provided by Chu Cho Environmental



Tsay Keh Dene ESI

The Tsay Keh Dene (TKD) ESI is a government-to-government collaboration between Tsay Keh Dene Nation and the Province of B.C. The Tsay Keh Dene are a Sekani people. Sekani means ‘people of the mountains’, and the Tsay Keh Dene have territory in the Omineca and Rocky mountains of northern British Columbia. The Tsay Keh Dene have watched over and managed their land since time immemorial and have unextinguished Indigenous rights in their territory, including those enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The objective of the Tsay Keh Dene ESI is to assess the cumulative effects of natural resource development in Tsay Keh Dene Nation territory on values that are linked to the Tsay Keh Dene’s Indigenous Rights, and their ability to meaningfully exercise those Rights. This collaboration is building trusted information about moose, caribou, grizzly bear, marmot, forest biodiversity and freshwater fish and their habitats. It is working to quantify the risk to those terrestrial and aquatic species and ecosystems on which the Tsay Keh Dene rely. Indigenous knowledge and western science are being integrated to create a more holistic understanding of the current condition of these valued ecosystem components, and evaluate how they are being impacted by cumulative effects on the landscape. The information generated by the Tsay Keh Dene ESI will be used by Tsay Keh Dene Nation and the Province of B.C. to collaboratively make informed decisions on land management and use within the Territory.

Moving Forward

The Tsay Keh Dene ESI is continuing the collaborative work to understand the current condition and risks to valued ecosystem components, develop solutions to mitigate the effects of natural resource extraction and implement strategies to protect, manage and monitor the cumulative effects. The project team will engage with other Nations, communities, and natural resource proponents on the work done to date and seek input on the development of recommendations to preserve or mitigate the risk to the valued ecosystem components. Tsay Keh Dene Nation and the Province of B.C. are pursuing landscape level resource management planning that seeks to integrate and balance environmental protection and Tsay Keh Dene rights, while also creating sustainable economic opportunities in the Territory.



Image provided by SSAF ESI



The Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum ESI

The Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum (SSAF) ESI is proud to be incorporating Indigenous perspectives, knowledge and science into its monitoring and assessment protocols, and providing a model for collaboration on stewardship that gives meaningful effect to reconciliation, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and B.C.'s *Declaration Act*.

Recent Successes

The **SSAF Forestry Working Group** provides a venue for the Province, First Nations, and forest licensees to collaboratively work together to improve stewardship and build relationships.

Confluence of Minds – Fish and Fish Habitat in the Skeena Watershed and Estuary workshop brought together fish experts and enthusiasts from all over the province to discuss priorities for addressing fish and fish habitat protection and restoration in the Skeena Watershed and Estuary.

As SSAF ESI evolves and SSAF ESI trusted data becomes foundational to informing decisions, processes, and plans, **the SSAF ESI Engagement Scoping process was developed**. This is a structured process that allows provincial or other initiatives to request engagement with the Forum.

In the Spring of 2022, the Office of the Chief Forester approached the SSAF ESI through the SSAF ESI Engagement Scoping Process. As result of this process, the SSAF ESI committed to leading a collaborative technical working group for the **Timber Supply Review process**.

In the Spring of 2022, the Project Team endorsed the decision to aid the **Lakes Resiliency Project's Forest Landscape Planning (FLP)** project at the technical level. Through the SSAF ESI Engagement Scoping Process, SSAF ESI participation in the FLP project was defined and the SSAF ESI will lead two technical working groups: Aquatics and Terrestrial Wildlife.

Moving Forward

A newly formed working group with the SSAF ESI Project Team and Skeena Region Management Team is bringing leadership together to work toward shared interests.

SSAF ESI will develop tools for governments and industry to use in decision making and planning. Another focus of the year is to develop management recommendations that tie into our decision support tools.

SSAF ESI plans to bring industry into the collaborative monitoring work to increase capacity and understanding of the program.

“SSAF ESI will develop tools for governments and industry to use in decision making and planning.” - SSAF ESI



Eelgrass monitoring for the NC CE Field Program. Photo © Kitselas First Nation

North Coast Cumulative Effects Program

The integrated North Coast Cumulative Effects (NCCE) Program, combines the Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) and the Marine Plan Partnership (MaPP) on the North Coast of B.C., and arose from a shared goal of monitoring, assessment, and management of cumulative effects on the North Coast on core coastal and marine values.

The NCCE Program includes Partners from Gitga'at First Nation, Gitxaala Nation, Haisla Nation, Kitselas First Nation, Kitsumkalum First Nation, Metlakatla First Nation and the Province of B.C., with coordination and technical support from the North Coast-Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society.

Key Highlights

Initial core values identified for implementation are Estuaries, Salmon, Food Security, and Access to Resources. A key component of the NCCE Program is the connectivity of data collected through the Field Program and Food Security/ Access to Resources community data, to inform current condition reports, cumulative effects assessments and management recommendations. The Partners have increased focus on external engagement of these outputs and are moving towards implementation.

Key priorities are strengthening Nation capacity and developing a secure North Coast Data Management System (NC DMS). The NC DMS aims to improve technical collaboration and accessibility of collaboratively-generated data, and to facilitate assessment and management of cumulative effects. Partner Nations have also initiated a project to develop a Skeena Estuary Habitat Management and Protection Plan and implement salmon habitat restoration projects supported by the B.C. Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund.

Looking Ahead

The Partners continue to create trusted data, enhance the NC DMS, and eliminate jurisdictional barriers. Further engagement with the NCCE Program's North Coast Integrated Advisory Committee will help guide shared decision-making and co-management on the North Coast.



"Drying halibut - Gitga'at seaweed camp". Photo © Maya Paul

CSF FORUMS



Nicola

The Government-to-Government (G2G) Nicola Watershed Governance Partnership (NWGP) focuses on sustainable water resource management in the Nicola Watershed. It is a partnership between the Province and the five Nicola First Nations Governments (Nicola 5). The Nicola 5 is comprised of the Coldwater Indian Band, Lower Nicola Indian Band, Nooaitch Indian Band, Shackan Indian Band (Nlaka'pamux Nation), and Upper Nicola Band (Syilx Nation). The NWGP takes place within the respective traditional territories of the Nlaka'pamux & Syilx people and is informed by Nlaka'pamux and Syilx values, language and knowledge.

The NWGP had its beginnings in 2018, when the five Nicola Chiefs and the Province entered into a two-year Memorandum of Understanding to undertake the Nicola Watershed Pilot. There are 13 projects under the umbrella of the original G2G Nicola Pilot that are focused on water management, governance and capacity-building.

The structure of the NWGP includes a G2G Forum, which focuses on the G2G relationship and strategic issues, as well as a G2G Core Council that is made up of authorized decision makers and focuses on shared decision-making. Both the Forum and Core Council are supported by a Secretariat comprised of Nicola 5 and B.C. staff and facilitators that provides administrative and policy support. The Forum and core committee work to identify and develop solutions that address specific water-management concerns in the Nicola Valley. Through water conservation, the NWGP has helped to mitigate the effects of a series of extreme droughts and floods in recent years in the Nicola Valley. The G2G partners' objective is to develop and recommend a governance approach to sustainable water management in the Nicola Watershed to benefit future generations.

Moving Forward

The NWGP wants to become a stronger and more influential G2G partnership, and as such did a learning and evaluation exercise in Spring 2022 to help set priorities for moving forward. The focus is on continuing to work on good governance, communication and engagement, and establishing technical tables. The G2G partners will also be focusing on the renewal of their Memorandum of Understanding. The NWGP's five-year plan involves further defining principles and developing recommendations for decision-making regarding water and watershed function in the Nicola Valley.

“Through water conservation, the NWGP has helped to mitigate the effects of a series of extreme droughts and floods in recent years in the Nicola Valley. “

Ktunaxa

Ktunaxa Nation Council (KNC) is working with the Province in southeast B.C. to inform stewardship decisions on environmental and cultural values. KNC includes ʔaʔam (St. Mary's Band), ʔakisq̓nuk, Yaʔan Nukiy (Lower Kootenay Band) and Yaʔit ʔa·knuq̓i'it (Tobacco Plains Band).

The primary objective of the KNC CSF is to implement an effective and enduring model of true partnership and shared decision making that reflects the vision, values and interests of both parties; supports long-term ecosystem health; and is consistent with the Ktunaxa Nation's self-determination aspirations and nation re-building efforts. Initial projects are: Land Stewardship Planning, Guardians, Collaborative Wildlife Management, Columbia Lake East Side Cultural Landscape Co-Management, Collaborative Stewardship Planning for Wild Huckleberry.

3 Nations

The 3 Nations BC CSF Forum (3NBC) is a collaborative partnership between the Kaska, Taku River Tlingit and Tahltan First Nations (collectively the “3 Nations”) and the Province of B.C. The 3NBC Forum has a vision of shared capacity for shared outcomes in environmental stewardship with a current focus on collaborative wildlife management.

Projects fall into three categories: Governance, Specific Projects and Land Guardians. Governance projects focus on exploring co-management models and developing recommendations for advancing the co-management of wildlife. Specific projects include inventories and monitoring to gather shared information on wildlife, with moose, caribou, sheep and mountain goat as the focal species. Land Guardian programs support land use monitoring, wildlife data collection, and community education and engagement.



3Nations BC
COLLABORATION & STEWARDSHIP

Moving Forward

Development of Community-based Moose Stewardship Plans (MSP) within three population units is a cornerstone project for the 3NBC Forum this year. Population units were selected due to their proximity and importance to each of the 3 Nations communities. Moose population inventories, technical information summaries, and community questionnaires to gather local knowledge have been completed. This year the 3NBC Forum plans to set objectives for moose, engage communities and stakeholders, and finalize each plan and associated management recommendations.

In addition to Moose Stewardship Planning, this year the 3NBC Forum will focus on continuing to gather shared information on wildlife, developing an Information and Data Sharing Agreement, establishing a stakeholder engagement table, and monitoring resident hunter pressure by implementing a joint plan between the B.C. Conservation Officer Service and 3 Nations Land Guardians.

S'ólh Téméxw Stewardship Alliance

The S'ólh Téméxw Stewardship Alliance (STSA) - B.C. Collaborative Stewardship Forum consists of 17 member Stó:lō First Nations, including the Ts'elxwéyeqw Tribe, working together with five Ministries from the Province of B.C. The relationship between the STSA and B.C. is founded on a number of key Government-to-Government Agreements including the STSA-B.C. Strategic Engagement Agreement, as well as the Collaborative Stewardship Framework initiated in 2018.

Through the Forum, the STSA and the Province are collaboratively developing and implementing shared stewardship visions for the land base. Such visions focus on common values of interest by employing both the Stó:lō land use objectives and cultural features from the S'ólh Téméxw Use Plan and Stó:lō Heritage Policy along with Provincial interests and objectives, thereby integrating western science and Indigenous knowledge.

The Province and the STSA approach this Forum with a shared vision of collaboration using the term Lets'emó:t (meaning “one mind” in Halq'eméylem – language of the Stó:lō) to guide their actions.

Together, combined objectives, knowledge and information sharing aid in the development of collaborative joint recommendations to drive change to provincial legislation, policy, regulations, as well as management practices and monitoring programs related to environmental stewardship.

Moving Forward

Within the Forum, 8 collaborative themes have been adopted. These include:

1. Government-to-Government Organizational Structure and Relations,
2. S'ólh Téméxw Integrity Analysis,
3. Land Use Planning,
4. Cultural Site Protection,
5. Monitoring and Compliance (Guardians),
6. Resource Revenue Sharing,
7. Stó:lō Youth and Cultural Education Directive, and
8. Climate Change.

In alignment with these themes, the Forum is currently working on approximately 40 projects. A number of these projects are in response to the effects of climate change and the catastrophic environmental events over the last couple of years which highlights the adaptability of this type of collaborative work.

Southern Dakelh Nation Alliance

The Province and the Southern Dakelh Nation Alliance (SNDA) have been working together via a Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship relationship since 2018. The Southern Dakelh Nation Alliance is comprised of the southern Carrier Nations of the Lhtako Dene First Nation, Lhoosk'uz Dene First Nation and Nazko First Nation.

Guided by the priorities and structure identified in the Hubulhsooninats'uhoot'alh Foundation Framework Agreement (FFA), the province and Nations have been working to respond to challenges in the B.C. forestry sector. The Dakelh name of the FFA means 'together we will fix it', and in collaboration with ?Esdilagh First Nation and Ulkatcho First Nation, the SDNA Nations and B.C. have been piloting the development of a Forest Landscape Plan (FLP) across the Quesnel Timber Supply Area (TSA). The FLP aims to address the following:

1. Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples – aligning forest management with the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and becoming active Government-with-Government land managers.
2. Sustainability – addressing incorporation of climate change adaptation, cumulative impacts, timber supply challenges and increasing disturbance on the land base.
3. Re-asserting public interest in forest management amidst evolving societal values and expectations

The pilot FLP in the Quesnel TSA is helping to test the FLP process provincially, and will be foundational in informing policy and ongoing *Forest and Range Practices Act* Regulation development. The main successes the SDNA Nations and the Province have made working in this collaborative space have been largely around the relationships. Trust is building between the Nations and the Province and honest conversations, and sharing of Indigenous knowledge, expectations and protocols are continually occurring.

Moving Forward

Changing any regime is challenging, but the purpose and opportunity for substantive change at the FLP table is keeping the operational process moving. The FLP work is supported by the respective leadership and recognized as a priority in the new agreement (currently being negotiated) and is an example of how *lhulhts'edulh* [we are walking together (in Dakelh)].

“lhulhts'edulh” [we are walking together (in Dakelh)].—Southern Dakelh Nation Alliance

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