

TO: UBCM Members
FROM: UBCM Executive
DATE: September 23, 2012
RE: **COLLABORATIVE WATERSHED
GOVERNANCE ACCORD**

POLICY PAPER

#3

2012 CONVENTION

1. DECISION REQUEST

That the UBCM membership considers whether UBCM should become a signatory to the Collaborative Watershed Governance Accord.

2. BACKGROUND

In 2008, the Pacific Salmon Foundation, the Fraser Basin Council and the Georgia Basin/Vancouver Island Living Rivers Project with financial support from the Living Rivers Trust Fund launched the Collaborative Watershed Governance Initiative to establish a process for developing and implementing a framework for more collaborative governance in BC watersheds. The Initiative maintains that through governance, more integrated decisions, a better understanding of causes and effects in watersheds, and an improved exchange of views and information can be promoted.

The context of this Initiative is that watershed ecosystems are essential to the BC economy and the overall well being of communities. The Initiative perceived the current governance system as uncoordinated, and unable to account for the accumulated effects of multiple resource allocation decisions. It examines watershed issues such as flooding, water quality, and the impact on economic activities, as well as climate change in the management of watersheds.

In November 2008, the Initiative organized a workshop to discuss watershed governance and the willingness of participants to engage further. The workshop reached a consensus calling for collective action to build a framework or accord for more collaborative processes in watershed management. There was agreement among participants to continue the dialogue and engagement.

In March of 2009, the UBCM Executive endorsed a recommendation to monitor the work of the Collaborative Watershed Initiative, and to identify a local government representative to sit on the Initiative's Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is comprised of representatives from the federal and provincial governments, UBCM, First Nations, forestry, mining and agriculture. The Fraser Basin Council is the agency co-ordinating and facilitating the work of the Initiative.

Support for UBCM participation in the Initiative arose from the recognition that the management of watersheds has been a contentious issue for UBCM members, with several resolutions being passed over the years. In particular, UBCM members have endorsed resolutions calling for greater protection, regulation and oversight of both watersheds and activities within watersheds to protect drinking water. The membership

has endorsed resolutions calling for the development of watershed management groups and protocols (2007-B122), for the regulation of land clearing activities that can affect water sources (2001-B93), the establishment of a lead government agency for the protection of drinking water sources (1999-A17), and joint government regulation of activities in watersheds (1998-B65). The membership also endorsed resolution 1991-B14 which called for the recognition of "watershed" as a land use in the Forest Act, the Water Act and the Municipal Act in order to facilitate local government control over watersheds.

In July of 2010, the Collaborative Watershed Initiative's Steering Committee proposed the development of accord or charter, where all orders of government, First Nations and resource user organizations would agree to work collaboratively in watersheds based on a set of common principles. At the July 2010 UBCM Executive meeting, the Executive endorsed a recommendation supporting the development of a draft memorandum of understanding and accompanying guidebook and for the collaborative management of watersheds.

Under the guidance and leadership of the Fraser Basin Council, the Steering Committee developed Collaborative Watershed Governance Accord (**Appendix A**). The stated purpose of the Accord is:

To encourage all orders of government (local, First Nations, provincial, and federal), organizations and commercial interests throughout BC to work collaboratively to attain enduring, healthy, resilient watersheds for the benefit of those ecosystems, communities, resource users and economies that depend on them.

In May 2012, the Executive approved the distribution of the Collaborative Watershed Governance Accord for review by the membership prior to potential consideration and ratification of the Accord at the UBCM Convention.

3. DISCUSSION

The Accord is a high-level agreement that outlines the principles of effective governance and management of watersheds. The agreement is designed to raise awareness around the need for effective watershed governance amongst stakeholders that have responsibilities, interests and/or activities in BC's watersheds. As such, the provisions focus on facilitating effective dialogue and decision making amongst competing interests.

From a local government perspective, the Accord has the following benefits, as it:

- seeks to address outstanding local government concerns around watershed management as identified in past resolutions;
- raises awareness on the need and opportunity for collaborative governance and elevates the issue amongst all relevant stakeholders; and
- holds the potential to be leveraged into concrete actions by the signatories.

In addition to the benefits, the Accord has the following challenges, as it:

- constitutes only the first step towards constructive dialogue and engagement on watershed governance; and

- requires an ongoing commitment by all parties to engage in constructive dialogue in order for the Accord to be successful; and
- raises issues around where the Accord applies – multiple use watersheds versus closed and protected watersheds.

In terms of application, UBCM notes that some local governments exert greater control over local watersheds through closed and protected watersheds designated for drinking water, and as such, do not want to see the collaborative governance approach in the Accord impinge upon their authority, mandate and responsibilities. However, it is UBCM's understanding that the Accord applies to multiple use watersheds involving commercial, recreational and drinking water uses, and that it does not, and is not intended to, apply to closed and protected watersheds.

To date, the Accord has received supporting resolutions from two primary First Nations Organizations in BC: the First Nations Summit and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. Several other organizations have provided their support in principle, including Clean Energy BC, the Council of Forest Industries and the Federal Government (Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Environment Canada). Others such as the Provincial Government, the Mining Association of BC, the Urban Development Institute, and the BC Agriculture Council are currently reviewing the Accord.

Once the Accord is approved by the signatory organizations, a signing ceremony will take place, followed by semi-annual meetings of representatives of the signatories, to report on progress on its implementation within respective organizations, and to share knowledge and lessons learned as collaborative watershed governance approaches are undertaken and adopted throughout BC. UBCM would have representation on the Accord's implementation committee.

4. RECOMMENDATION

That UBCM supports becoming a signatory to the Collaborative Watershed Governance Accord with the explicit understanding that the Accord applies to watersheds involving multiple uses and not watersheds that are closed and protected.

Appendix A



Purpose of the Accord

To encourage all orders of government (local, First Nations, provincial, and federal), organizations and commercial interests throughout BC, to work collaboratively to attain enduring healthy, resilient watersheds for the benefit of those ecosystems, communities, resource users and economies that depend on them.

The signatories of this Accord will:

1. Encourage interests in watersheds throughout the province to adopt these principles;
2. Encourage participation of those active in watersheds to engage collaboratively in watershed planning processes;
3. Encourage implementation of measures in support of collaborative watershed planning and management; and
4. Apply lessons learned from other models of collaborative watershed governance¹

Guiding Principles of Collaborative Watershed Governance

The following inter-dependent principles will guide activities in watersheds:

1. Ecological, social, cultural and economic considerations are integral parts of decision making.
2. Best practices are to be employed to contribute to watershed sustainability in new and existing obligations, jurisdictions and plans.
3. Effective collaborative watershed governance is to be carried out in a transparent, accountable and inclusive manner.
4. Effective working relationships are to be developed and maintained through open communication, trust and cooperation.
5. Decisions are to be based on the best available scientific information and First Nations traditional ecological knowledge, with the goal of achieving watershed sustainability.
6. Authorizations to use water are to take into account the interests of present and future generations.
7. Effective watershed management is to be integrated with land-based resource objectives and activities on a watershed scale.
8. Watershed governance is to include shared responsibilities and enable those affected to have input in decision-making processes.

“We the signatories of this Accord will strive to implement the Guiding Principles in this Accord”

Province of British Columbia

Union of BC Municipalities

First Nations Summit

BC Assembly of First Nations

Union of BC Indian Chiefs

Urban Development Institute

Council of Forest Industries

Mining Association of BC

BC Agriculture Council

Clean Energy BC

The Federal Government, represented by Environment Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, support the principles in this Accord.



¹ “Collaborative watershed governance” refers to a coordinated and collaborative decision making process that involves all interests within a watershed.
² “Watershed sustainability” refers to sustaining the natural attributes of watersheds for present and future generations.