

Local Waters, Local Decisions: Practical Advice on How to Move Watershed Issues Forward with Local Government

Our Living Waters

- Our Living Waters is a national network of over 300 water champions from across Canada, collectively working towards having 'all waters in good health by 2030'
- Amplifies and connects the work of network members by 'network weaving' for collective action
- Is guided by inclusion in the spirit of reconciliation and bilingualism
- Advances federal water policy through the Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters (CCHW)



Network weaving graphic (credit: Our Living Waters)

Challenges for Freshwater Management in Canada

- A lot of water to manage responsibly and cooperatively: 5 drainage basins, 11 major watersheds, 165 sub-watersheds across Canada
- Local-level work brings different roles and perspectives together

Water Jurisdiction and Planning Tools

- City size influences the capacity to manage water effectively, but cross-city sharing is always possible
- Division of responsibility & capacity gaps create challenges; conservation authorities help streamline
- Municipal planning tools: Municipal Protected Areas, Asset Management Plans, Water Efficiency Master Plans, Wastewater Distribution Master Plan, Stormwater Master Plan, and more. Opportunity in each of the planning phases of each of these documents is their engagement process.

What Is Missing Locally?

- We plan for municipalities, not watersheds. Resource sharing agreements exist, but no broader lens.
 - Need more focus on intact watersheds - assess stakeholder needs, upstream vs. downstream equity.
- We do not have established way of working with academic partners to understand ecosystem benefits.
 - Need more partnerships with researchers - maps, intelligence gathering inform decision making.

Roles of Different Groups

- Council: built for resolutions. Can 'champion' water issues, but may need outside push from public.
- NGOs: education. Sharing intelligence builds capacity and motivation for change at the watershed scale.
- Public: provides local context and creates urgency for change. Use your voice to contact local media, contact councillors directly, push for water as an election issue, and connect your peers to the outdoors.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Learn more about [Our Living Waters](#), including their [Shared Management System](#).
- Read about water governance and legislation with [this resource from the Government of Canada](#).
- Explore the webpage of the [Association of Municipalities of Ontario](#).
- Explore the Water Rangers' [Watershed Reports](#).
- Read about water equity in this resource from the [Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority](#).
- Read the report ["The Future of Our Shores"](#) to learn about shoreland stewardship and land use