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British Columbia
Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

**Agency Report to the
Mackenzie River Basin Board**

**Meeting 82 of the
Mackenzie River Basin Board
January 21, 2025**

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1. Bilateral Water Management Agreements

The *Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement* provides for neighbouring jurisdictions to negotiate Bilateral Water Management Agreements (BWMA) to address shared surface water quantity, quality and groundwater. Under the Master Agreement, British Columbia (B.C.) is required to negotiate three such agreements with the governments of the Northwest Territories (NWT), Yukon and Alberta.



Figure 1: Three transboundary water management agreements in British Columbia.

British Columbia – Northwest Territories

B.C. and the NWT [signed their BWMA](#) in October 2015. The British Columbia – Northwest Territories BWMA applies to all transboundary waters shared between B.C. and the NWT in the Mackenzie River Basin, primarily the Liard River basin. On August 31, 2017, the B.C. government approved implementation of the British Columbia – Northwest Territories BWMA through an Order in Council.

British Columbia – Yukon

B.C. and the Yukon [signed their BWMA](#) on March 30, 2017. On August 31, 2017, the B.C. government approved implementation of the British Columbia – Yukon BWMA through an Order in Council. This BWMA applies to all transboundary waters shared between B.C. and Yukon in the Mackenzie River Basin, primarily the Liard River basin. Transboundary waters shared between the jurisdictions outside the Mackenzie River Basin, such as the headwaters of the Yukon River, are not included in the BWMA.

B.C., NWT and Yukon have collaborated to produce a joint annual BWMA implementation report covering activities undertaken between April 2021 and March 2024. The implementation report will be publicly available on the [Bilateral Water Management Agreements](#) webpage.

A Learning Plan for the Liard River Basin

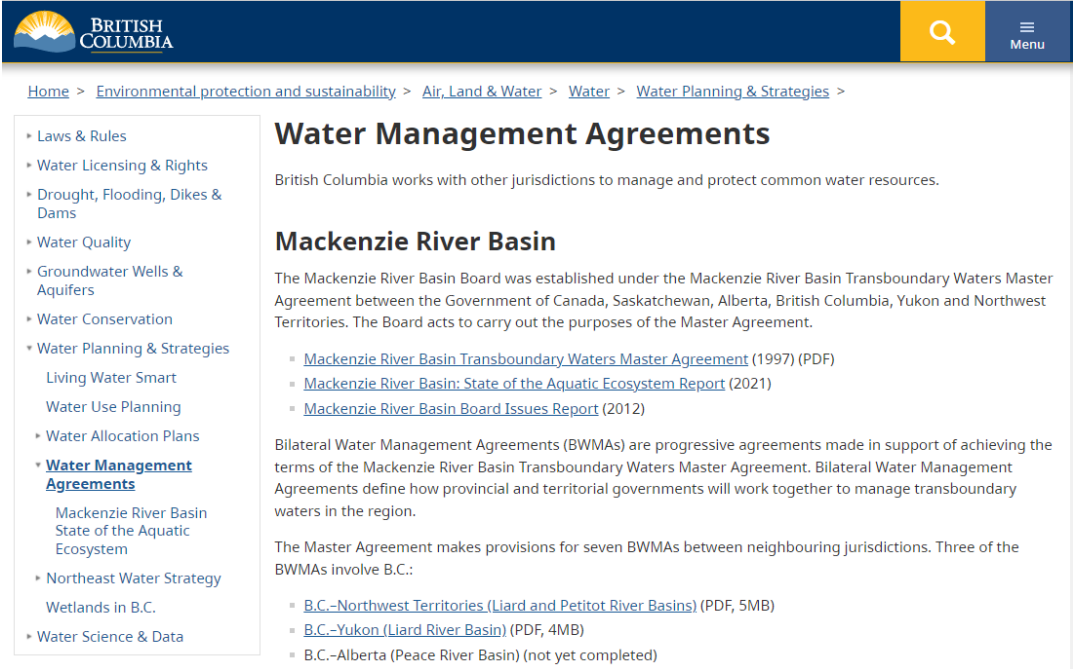
Both BWMA's are guided by a Risk Informed Management Approach in which water bodies are classified based on risk. The classification of the entire Liard River as Class 2 for water quality in 2021 means that this transboundary watercourse may be at risk of adverse changes and, therefore, requires a Learning Plan. These plans are intended to better understand the historical, current, and potential future of water quality, quantity, and health of the overall aquatic ecosystem, and the values of the waters long held by Indigenous peoples and local communities in the Liard basin.

In 2024, both the B.C. – NWT and the B.C. – Yukon Bilateral Management Committees continued to focus efforts on collaborative development of a Learning Plan for the Liard River Basin. An [Elders Circle What We Heard Report](#) was completed and posted to the MRBB website, summarizing recommendations from 11 First Nations across the basin to inform development of the Learning Plan. Next steps will include collaborative workshops for the B.C.-NWT and B.C – Yukon Bilateral Management Committees, including Indigenous members, to develop the Learning Plan itself.

British Columbia – Alberta

B.C. remains committed to collaborating with Alberta on water matters of joint interest. Development of a B.C. – Alberta BWMA has been put on hold; however, information exchanges and updates have been held regularly in virtual meeting format since February 2021, and the two jurisdictions remain in contact about transboundary water priorities.

Updates on the implementation of agreements are available on the B.C. [Water Management Agreements](#) webpages.



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Water Management Agreements

British Columbia works with other jurisdictions to manage and protect common water resources.

Mackenzie River Basin

The Mackenzie River Basin Board was established under the Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement between the Government of Canada, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon and Northwest Territories. The Board acts to carry out the purposes of the Master Agreement.

- [Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement](#) (1997) (PDF)
- [Mackenzie River Basin: State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report](#) (2021)
- [Mackenzie River Basin Board Issues Report](#) (2012)

Bilateral Water Management Agreements (BWMA) are progressive agreements made in support of achieving the terms of the Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement. Bilateral Water Management Agreements define how provincial and territorial governments will work together to manage transboundary waters in the region.

The Master Agreement makes provisions for seven BWMA between neighbouring jurisdictions. Three of the BWMA involve B.C.:

- [B.C.–Northwest Territories \(Liard and Petitot River Basins\)](#) (PDF, 5MB)
- [B.C.–Yukon \(Liard River Basin\)](#) (PDF, 4MB)
- B.C.–Alberta (Peace River Basin) (not yet completed)

Figure 2: Landing page for the water management agreements in British Columbia.

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2. Water-Related Legislation / Policy / Regulations / Planning

The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

In November 2024, Honourable Randene Neill was appointed as the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS). In an [Agreement in Principle](#) between the BC NDP Caucus and BC Green Party Caucus, the BC Government commits to strengthening collaborative local processes around water management at the watershed level and identify clear actions to improve local governance. Ministry of WLRS [mandate](#) commitments also include working with communities impacted by drought or water shortages to support community based priority setting and supporting cross-government work in partnership with First Nations to improve timing and transparency of permitting processes to support sustainable economic growth, housing, and infrastructure while maintaining world-leading environmental standards, and working collaboratively to protect critical ecosystems and salmon spawning habitats. A continued commitment to take action on climate change remains foundational to a healthy and prosperous BC for future generations.

WLRS responsibilities include advancing reconciliation, implementing the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and working in partnership with First Nations rights-holders to advance shared interests; this is a responsibility shared across Ministries.

Water Sustainability Act Implementation Continues

The Province is committed to the successful implementation of the 2016 [Water Sustainability Act](#) (WSA) which remains a key legislative driver for continuous improvement in water stewardship in B.C.

Operational policy and guidance documents completed in 2024 emphasize area-based tools under the WSA and include a [WSA Objectives Interim Policy](#) and associated [Technical Guidance](#). These documents support the development of WSA Objectives, which are an area-based planning tool enabled under WSA s.43 that can promote positive outcomes for water and communities. Additionally, several internal guidance documents on Water Sustainability Plans (WSPs) have been developed. WSPs are initiated by ministerial order and can provide for extensive change in how a watershed is managed. Both WSA Objectives and WSPs enable a whole of watershed management approach. Other operational guidance released in 2024 includes an update to the Water Licence Application Drawing Standards.

Further, the Administrative Penalties (*Water Sustainability Act*) Regulation was introduced in early 2024. This regulation enables financial penalties for moderate to serious violations of the WSA. Operational guidance to support decision makers in the application of this regulation is currently being developed by the Ministry of Forests.



WSA implementation in 2025 will support the priorities of the new ministerial mandate by strengthening drought response, improving permitting processes, and protecting critical ecosystems.

Perhaps most pertinent to the Mackenzie River Basin Board, B.C.'s North area water staff supported the provincial groundwater licensing outreach program and directly mailed or phoned agricultural, industrial and commercial businesses believed to require a licence. These efforts resulted in many additional applications which staff are currently assessing. Efforts are also underway to notify any existing groundwater users who may not have applied for a licence by the deadline.

In May 2024 in the Fort Nelson region, water staff and Fort Nelson First Nation (FNFN) staff downloaded groundwater monitoring data and completed maintenance of [Provincial Groundwater Observation Well Network](#) wells in the area. In December 2024, FNFN staff completed another round of data download and maintenance of the monitoring wells. The data collected will enhance our understanding of the local aquifers. Data is accessible from the [Groundwater Level Data Interactive Map](#).

Several reports have been received of wells in the north area being drilled without required oversight and of well construction not meeting regulated standards. Well inspections have been completed across the north to assess whether well construction is meeting Groundwater Protection Regulation construction standards. Provincial staff also followed up with drillers and professionals to inform them of their construction, supervision, and documentation obligations. In several cases, enforcement has been escalated, with one well ordered closed and several tickets issued by Natural Resource Officers.

For more information about the WSA, its regulations, and water policy and guidance visit the [Water Sustainability Act](#), the [WSA public engagement and blog](#) and [Water Licensing and Rights](#) webpages.

Watershed Security Strategy and Fund

Developing a [Watershed Security Strategy](#) and associated [Fund](#) (Strategy and Fund) was a mandate letter commitment for the previous Minister of WLRS with support from the Minister of Environment and Parks. Reconciliation and collaboration with Indigenous peoples was central to this work. The Province worked with Indigenous partners to jointly build the enduring engagement and collaboration processes needed to co-develop the Strategy and Fund. This work was done at the B.C. – First Nations Water Table (the Water Table), which is a shared space for dialogue and solutions about water. The release of the Strategy was paused pending a decision of the new government. We anticipate a decision early in the new mandate.

In March 2023, the Province and the Water Table announced an unprecedented \$100 million investment in healthy watersheds. The [Watershed Security Fund](#) is currently co-developed and co-managed by Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC) and the First Nations Water Caucus

(Water Caucus) with the First Nations Fisheries Council (FNFC). This co-developed governance model with First Nations is unique in B.C. Investment yields are expected to amount to \$5-7 million per year in watershed security projects. The first grant intake announced fund recipients in late 2024, funding 26 projects with nearly \$5M in watershed security projects. One of the funded projects, the [Tsay Keh Dene Nation Biodiversity Monitoring Program](#), is within the Mackenzie Basin. The results of the second grant intake are expected to be announced in spring 2025, funding a similar amount of watershed security work.

Watershed Security Funding

The Province has since continued to invest in watersheds with \$371M in budget 2023 and \$157M in budget 2024. Province wide commitments include:

- Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy,
- Agricultural water infrastructure program,
- B.C. Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund,
- Pacific Salmon Foundation and First Nations Fisheries Council to work on emergency interventions for salmon,
- Community Emergency Preparedness Fund,
- Water metering in select communities,
- Raising the Cowichan Lake weir, and
- Raise Saint Mary Lake dam.

2024 Drought Response

Drought trends from 2021-2024 show that drought conditions are occurring earlier, and/or extending later, are occurring more frequently, and/or are more severe. Year-over-year precipitation deficits have led to low surface water and groundwater flows in some areas, particularly in the northeast.

2024 began with a record-low snowpack, including the lowest April 1st snowpack since at least 1970 (63% of normal), signaling continued drought conditions that had persisted since fall 2022. Warm weather in early May accelerated snowmelt, but cooler temperatures and rain in late May and early June slowed the melt to a seasonal pace. Despite this, widespread heat in July worsened drought conditions, especially on Vancouver Island and in the Thompson-Okanagan, Bulkley-Lakes, and Upper Fraser West basins. Summer precipitation varied, with southwest and northwest B.C. receiving up to 200% of normal totals, while northeast B.C. saw just 30%. Even areas with above-normal rain experienced slow groundwater and streamflow recovery, worsened by a September heatwave. Significant drought relief came with mid-September fall storms, though drought risks may persist in areas with ongoing precipitation deficits, particularly in the northeast and portions of the interior plateaus.



Collaboration across ministries, especially between Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship was central to the 2024 drought response. The B.C. Government focused on early communication, voluntary water reduction encouragement, and collaborative management of water use.

Key actions included distributing over 76,000 written communications pieces regarding drought preparedness, hosting 55 workshops for agricultural water management, and initiating 44 projects to mitigate drought impacts on fish populations in partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, First Nations Fisheries Council and Pacific Salmon Foundation. Early communication about voluntary water conservation requests and the potential for regulatory action was conveyed to water licensees. A Drinking Water Supply Dashboard was launched to communicate water supply status information between water suppliers and health authorities, improving situational awareness around drinking water supply vulnerability. The B.C. Government issued 12 orders under the *Water Sustainability Act* to address unauthorized water use. The BC Energy Regulator also utilized regulatory authority under the *Oil and Gas Activities Act* to limit water use for the oil and gas sector in the northeast. No Temporary Protection Orders were issued.

Although emergency legislation was not activated, the development of a toolkit that describes circumstances which may prompt the B.C. Government to declare a drought-related State of Provincial Emergency (SOPE), along with the progressive use of existing legislation to respond to a drought emergency has set the foundation for ensuring a coordinated response should a drought emergency arise.

B.C. Flood Strategy

The Ministry of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship (WLRS), supported by the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR), released [*From Flood Risk to Resilience: a B.C. Flood Strategy to 2035*](#) (the Strategy) in March 2024. The Strategy was developed, beginning in 2020, in collaboration with First Nations, local governments, and stakeholders, and was drafted with eight First Nations partners from B.C.'s major watersheds. The Strategy emphasizes the need for stable, multi-year funding, regionally based decision-making, better flood risk information, and investments in complementary nature-based and non-structural solutions. The Strategy outlines a strategic framework guided by a clear vision and principles and includes 25 actions aimed at advancing flood resilience in British Columbia, to be implemented in phases through a Flood Resilience (Implementation) Plan. The Province is currently advancing priority actions in alignment with other strategic objectives and existing funding avenues, including updating floodplain mapping and provincial flood policy and guidance. For more details and current updates, see the website: [B.C. Flood Strategy](#).

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3. Science, Monitoring and Information

Groundwater Science Program

B.C.'s Groundwater Science Program continuously improves the level of scientific knowledge on provincial groundwater, aquifers and the interactions between surface water and groundwater to support the sustainable management of our shared water resources and water-related values. Science and research are often conducted collaboratively with leading experts, stakeholders, and, increasingly in partnership with local communities and Indigenous groups, which facilitates a more transparent and inclusive growth in our knowledge of water. These activities support the implementation of the WSA and Groundwater Protection Regulation, as well as provide critical information related to a range of current and emerging issues and opportunities, including drought prediction and response, source drinking water risk assessment, and potential analyses for identifying demand-supply constraints and opportunities related to major housing development objectives.

The following key projects represent some of the groundwater science work initiated in 2024/25:

1. Fiber Optic Distributed Temperature Sensing Pilot Study on the Tsolum River to support Drought Management Preparedness
2. Thomson Okanagan Collaborative Monitoring
3. Seasonal Groundwater Contribution to Streamflow – Carnation Creek

Multi-year groundwater projects initiated in previous years that are also funded in 2024/25:

1. Surface Water Exchange Dynamics in Low-Gradient and Tidally Influenced Streams in the Lower Fraser Valley
2. GWELLS/Aquifer Factsheets, New Functionalities and Enhancements
3. Rithet's Bog Experimental Site
4. South Coast Aquifer Mapping

Water Quality Guidelines and Objectives

Pursuant to the *Environmental Management Act*, B.C.'s [water quality guidelines \(WQGs\)](#) provide provincial benchmarks for fresh and marine water quality, which are used to assess and manage the health and sustainability of B.C.'s aquatic resources. WQGs are established for the protection of aquatic life, wildlife, agriculture, drinking water sources, and recreation.

WQGs currently under development in B.C. include Cobalt, Conductivity, Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, Petroleum Hydrocarbons, Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons, and Silver.

Also pursuant to the *Environmental Management Act*, [Water Quality Objectives \(WQOs\)](#) provide approved policy direction to guide the balance between human use, values and healthy aquatic environments by guiding statutory decisions that may impact the quality of a specific waterbody. WQOs are established on a priority basis for freshwater, estuarine and marine waterbodies of regional, provincial, inter-provincial, and international significance. They are used to inform resource management decisions, identify which values should be addressed based on local concerns, promote water stewardship, and support long-term planning in communities across B.C. WQOs are numbers or statements representing low-risk conditions to provide protection for a specific waterbody and its associated water values and uses. These include:

- Drinking water sources;
- Aquatic life and its habitat;
- Wildlife and its habitat;
- Agriculture (livestock watering and irrigation);
- Recreational use and aesthetics; and
- Traditional, cultural, and social uses.

In northeast B.C., the Ministry of Environment and Parks and WLRS worked collaboratively with Treaty 8 First Nations (West Moberly First Nation, Saulneau First Nation, and McLeod Lake Indian Band) to develop WQOs for the kinosew sîpîy / whutone gah saghé Murray River watershed in response to cumulative impacts on water quality and Indigenous water values. These WQOs were approved by the Nations and the BC Government in January 2025. All existing WQO reports (and WQGs) are available on [B.C.'s Water Quality website](#).

Tracking Algae Blooms in B.C. Lakes: “Algae Watch”

In 2021, the Province launched the [Algae Watch](#) website to track harmful algae bloom information throughout the province. Public can access the website to learn about harmful and non-harmful algae blooms and use the online submission form to share photos and information on the location and extent of algae blooms in their communities. This citizen science program will help the Province track and understand these events throughout B.C.

Canada-B.C. Water Quality Monitoring Program

The [Canada-B.C. Water Quality Monitoring Program](#) was established under an agreement in 1985 as a partnership between the Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and the current B.C. Ministry of Environment and Parks. The goal of the program is to provide inter-jurisdictional coordination and integration of water quality monitoring on 52 river and stream sites across B.C. in a cost-shared manner, including three stations in the Mackenzie River basin. Interested members of the public can click on individual stations to download data and to review

water quality status and trends using the [Canada-B.C. Water Quality Monitoring Program - Interactive Map](#).

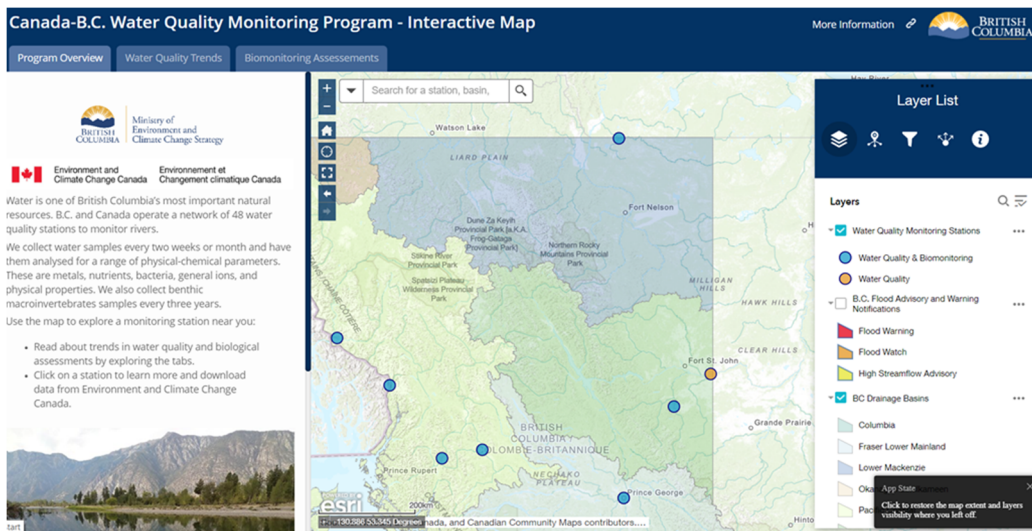


Figure 3: Canada-B.C. Water Quality Monitoring Program Interactive Map.

B.C. Lake Monitoring Network

The [B.C. Lake Monitoring Network](#) monitors 61 key lakes sites across B.C. and was formally established in 2018 when it became managed at a provincial scale by dedicated program staff. The transition from regional to provincial scale management has allowed for standardization of monitoring and reporting approach and associated improvement to data quality. Lakes are sampled by Ministry staff bi-annually (spring and late-summer) to assess status and trends and evaluate lake water quality data in relation to ecosystem change including watershed stressors and climate change. In 2024, Muncho Lake and Summit Lake were added to the monitoring network.

Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network in B.C.

The Province continues to work closely with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) to promote the nationally standardized Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network (CABIN) program across B.C. CABIN uses benthic macroinvertebrates as indicators of aquatic ecosystem health. CABIN uses data from a wide range of reference sites (i.e., minimally affected by human activities) to build predictive models that can be used to evaluate the condition of test sites (i.e., where there are concerns about impacts to the aquatic ecosystem). The differences between the macroinvertebrate communities at the test site and the “healthy” reference sites provide an indication of the extent of effects to aquatic biota. The role of the B.C. Biomonitoring Program is to collect reference site data to maintain the reference condition models.

There are two CABIN models available to monitor and assess aquatic ecosystem health within the B.C. portion of the Mackenzie River Basin (i.e., Liard and Peace Basins). CABIN Models



and sites are accessible on the [Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network \(CABIN\) Sites in B.C. Interactive Map](#).

BC-Yukon Inter-Jurisdictional Collaborative Monitoring Project

A collaborative groundwater monitoring project between the Province of British Columbia and the Yukon Government began in 2023 to monitor groundwater quality and quantity within the transboundary Atlin Lake watershed. The monitoring well was drilled at the Atlin Airport into fluvial materials from Pine Creek, with groundwater reached at 9.5mbg (31 feet), on top of the underlying bedrock. The cost to drill the well was shared between the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship and the Yukon Department of Environment. The Province of BC maintains the data and provides funding for sampling and equipment. The Yukon groundwater monitoring program performs ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the well in Atlin. The monitoring information from this project supports the implementation of the Mackenzie River Basin Bilateral Water Management Agreement between the Government of British Columbia and the Yukon Government (signed in 2017).

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4. Major Projects

In B.C., major projects are assessed for potential environmental, social, economic, health and cultural effects by the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO). The B.C. Environmental Assessment Office uses [EPIC Portal](#) to report on and provide information on major projects. The system provides searchable information on projects, an overview of the environmental assessment process, and an interactive map that displays the geographic locations of projects.

The following tables summarize the major projects in EPIC that fall under the Project Types of Energy-Petroleum and Natural Gas, Energy-Electricity, Industrial, Mines, Water Management, and Waste Disposal, that are in the *Pre-Environmental Assessment Act*, Pre-Application, and Application Review phases. There is one project in the *Pre-Environmental Assessment Act* category. There are 10 projects in the Pre-Application phase, and there are no major projects currently under the Evaluation phase.

Pre-Environmental Assessment Act

Title	Category and Location	Phase	Comments
Stronsay Lead/Zinc	Mines; Mineral Mines Northeast of Fort Ware	Pre-EA Act Approval; June 1995	An open-pit mine operation.

Pre-Application and Early Engagement

Title	Category and Location	Phase	Comments
Pacific Northern Gas Looping Project	Energy-Petroleum and Natural Gas; Transmission Lines Summit Lake to Kitimat	Pre-Application; Scoping	The Pacific Northern Gas Looping Project would supply natural gas, via a 525 km long pipeline, from Summit Lake to proposed liquefied natural gas (LNG) export facilities in Kitimat, BC. It would have an initial capacity of 600 million standard cubic feet per day.
Rocky Creek Metallurgical Coal	Mine; Coal Mine; 47 km southwest of Chetwynd, B.C.	Early Engagement	CTI Plus Resources Ltd. proposes to develop a metallurgical coal mine with an estimated annual production of 1.75 megatonnes of clean coal per year. The lifespan of the mine is anticipated to be 14 years with 2 years of construction. CTI Plus Resources Ltd. is a Canadian resource company based in Alberta.
Aley Mine	Mines; Mineral Mines 140 km N of Mackenzie, B.C.	Pre-Application; Scoping	Proposed 10,000 tonne per day open pit niobium mine with a 25-year mine life.
Carbon Creek Coal Mine Project	Mine; Coal Mines Approximately 40 km west of Hudson's Hope, B.C.	Pre-Application; Scoping	Cardero Coal Ltd. proposes to develop a new open-pit surface and underground metallurgical coal mine with an average annual production rate of 2.9 million metric tonnes of clean coal.
Gething Coal	Mines; Coal Mines 25 km Northwest of Hudson's Hope, B.C.	Pre-Application; Scoping	Proposed new underground coal mine with an onsite coal preparation plant. The production rate is 2 million tonnes per year with a mine life estimated at 40 years.
Frontier Project	Energy-Petroleum and Natural Gas; Natural Gas Processing Plants South to Southwest of Fort St. John, B.C.	Early Engagement	Enbridge proposes to construct a natural gas liquids straddle plant, 130-170 kilometre (km) pipeline, and associated infrastructure in northeastern B.C. The straddle plant and initiating pump station are located approximately 36 km west of Chetwynd, and the pipeline is proposed to span from the straddle plant to Taylor.

There are 50 projects in the Post-Decision phases of Pre-Construction, Construction, Operation, Care and Maintenance, Complete, and Substantial Start phases. These projects include the Site C Clean Energy electricity power plant (more information below); the Mt. Milligan Copper-Gold Mine which is in operation; and the Roman Coal Mine, which is currently in care and maintenance. One project, the Kemess South Mine, is in decommissioning.

Important Related Links:

- [B.C. Environmental Assessment Office](#)
- [Frequently asked questions](#)

B.C. Hydro Site “C” Clean Energy Project

In 2024, the first two generating units came into operation at Site C on the Peace River in the northeast of the province and are currently providing power into BC Hydro’s electricity system. By the end of 2025, the Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions expects to have all six generating units providing electricity to British Columbians. In total, Site C will provide 1,100 megawatts of capacity and produce about 5,100 gigawatt hours of electricity each year, adding about eight per cent more supply to British Columbia’s electricity grid. Construction on the site began in July 2015. More information about the Site C project is available on the [project page](#).



Figure 6: Dam site at Site C, November 6, 2024.

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5. Events, Conferences and Seminars

3rd Annual Groundwater Science Symposium

On December 12, 2024 the Province of British Columbia's 3rd Annual Groundwater Science Symposium highlighted projects undertaken last year by BC government staff in partnership with a variety of external organizations. There were 348 unique attendees throughout the day, represented by 32 organizations including various levels of governments, BC First Nations, municipalities, universities, NGOs and private industry. Notably, 12% of attendees were from other provinces and territories across Canada. The event drew a 20% increase in attendees than the previous year and was a success by all measures. The symposium presentations featured several research projects included in the annual Compendium of Provincial Groundwater Science and Monitoring Projects: 2023-24 available on the online [Ecological Reports Catalogue](#).

2024 B.C. Groundwater Association Convention (BCGWA)

On April 19 and 20, 2024, the BCGWA held its annual convention. The BCGWA's mission is to provide professional and technical leadership in the advancement of the groundwater industry and the protection, promotion, and responsible development of groundwater resources. Hosting the convention aligns with their mission to foster and promote education, standards, research and techniques that improve methods of well construction, materials and services.

On Day 1, sessions included technical presentations on several topics, such as climate change, drought and groundwater, workplace health and safety, and Skilled Trades BC certification and delivery of driller's and pump installer's courses. Day 2 of the convention was focused on introduction to water rights for licensed groundwater users, industry education and outreach. Five staff from B.C. Government took part in the convention and hosted a booth to share information about groundwater initiatives and resources.

Mackenzie River Basin Board Water Quality Task Team

B.C. continues to participate actively on the Water Quality Task Team (WQTT). The WQTT is a group of experts who discuss issues related to Mackenzie River Basin (MRB) surface water quality and are committed to developing consensus-based approaches for the assessment of water quality in transboundary rivers of MRB. The WQTT meets monthly (virtually) to discuss priority activities of the group. In 2024, WQTT finalized a basin-wide approach for water quality trend analysis, initiated validation of this approach using MRB long term surface water quality data, examined water temperature data and emerging contaminants to determine how to incorporate these elements in the validation work for trends methods, received updates from Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) Science and Technology Branch researchers on National Water Quality Modelling Framework using MRB as an early test case, and revisited the WQTT terms of reference. WQTT also hosted the State of Aquatic Ecosystem Report (SOAER) Committee Chair at several meetings in 2024 to understand the SOAER roadmap and to identify areas of common interest.

6. Other

Treaty 8 Nations and B.C. Move Forward on Cumulative Impacts

The Province has issued a Northeast Cumulative Effects Legal Order requiring statutory decision makers in the northeast region to consider the extent and duration of cumulative impacts, and measures to avoid or minimize cumulative impacts and potential infringement of treaty rights.

Agreements have been made between the Province and Blueberry River First Nations (see [Blueberry River First Nations Implementation Agreement](#)), and the Province and four Treaty 8 First Nations – Fort Nelson, Saulneau, Halfway River, and Doig River First Nations (Consensus Document not publicly available). These agreements offer a collaborative approach to land and resource planning, and to advancing regional solutions that benefit all those living in northeastern B.C. and Treaty 8 territory.

The legal order and agreements follow a June 2021 B.C. Supreme Court ruling that determined that the constitutionally protected Treaty 8 rights of the Blueberry River First Nations have been breached by the cumulative impacts of industrial development authorized by successive provincial governments over many years.

Implementing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)

Continuing the Province's commitments to advance reconciliation and adopt and implement UNDRIP, B.C. passed new legislation (DRIPA) to recognize Indigenous human rights on November 26, 2019. DRIPA is the foundational framework for reconciliation in B.C. It sets out a process to align B.C.'s laws with UNDRIP and requires the development of an action plan to achieve the alignment of provincial laws with UNDRIP, providing transparency and accountability to the process. Regular reporting to the Legislature is required to monitor progress. The 2023-2024 Annual report is the fifth since DRIPA came into force and is available on the [Declaration Act Annual Reporting webpage](#).

Other Initiatives Contact:

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