

# Working towards a Water Strategy for New Brunswick: Managing Our Water Resources



## New Brunswick Today

Management of water has evolved in response to the changing demands to satisfying basic needs for long-term sustainability and enabling economic development.

New Brunswick's fresh water is used for many purposes, including drinking water, recreation, irrigation, and industrial processes. While it may seem that the province has an abundant supply of fresh water, it is not always available where and when it is needed.

Water management (otherwise known as water security) is key to water availability and it involves a process of planning, developing and protecting water resources through policies and regulations that ensure optimal use and sustainability of water resources.

Water management includes such actions as collection of water quality and quantity data, analyses for flood forecasting, and enforcement of drinking water regulations along with the Department of Health. The sources of

municipal water supplies are designated as protected areas under the *Clean Water Act* and various approvals for wellfields, watersheds and private wells are issued by the Department of Environment and Local Government.

In New Brunswick, individuals and community-based groups have long been involved in the research and monitoring of water. In addition to this, to the interest from the business and industrial sectors, cottage owners' associations and environmental groups is encouraging greater local involvement in water management.

## National Water Management

Preserving the health of Canadian waters is a responsibility shared by organizations and individuals across Canada and internationally.

In 2010, Premiers from across Canada adopted a water charter, which recognized the collective obligation of Canadians and their governments to be responsible water stewards.

New Brunswick is also a member of the national Water Management Committee (WMC) of The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME). This group provides tools necessary to manage our water resources. In October 2009 Environment Ministers across Canada endorsed a strategic vision for water. WMC continues to carry out the strategic vision to help ensure that Canadians have access to clean, safe and sufficient water to meet their needs in ways that also maintain the integrity of ecosystems.

In addition, the *Canada-New Brunswick Water Quality Monitoring Agreement* has the objective of long term water quality monitoring and data collection for water resource management and for dissemination of water quality information to the public, government agencies, industry and the scientific community. This information is available on-line at: <https://www.ec.gc.ca/indicateurs-indicators/default.asp?lang=En&n=13307B2E-1>

In addition, a map containing water quality information is available at: <https://www.ec.gc.ca/indicateurs-indicators/default.asp?lang=En&n=CB97D13E-1>

### **New Brunswick First Nations**

First Nations peoples have long had a special relationship with water. They recognize the sacredness of water, the interconnectedness and the importance of protecting water.

Traditional activities depend on water for transportation, drinking, cleaning, and purification and provide habitat for many plants and animals that are gathered as medicines and food.

Responsibility for safe drinking water on reserves is shared between First Nations communities and the Government of Canada. Some communities also get their drinking water directly from municipalities.

First Nations Chief and Council are responsible for the day-to-day operation of water and wastewater systems on reserves, including sampling and testing drinking water.

### **Municipal and Rural Water Management**

Communities are increasingly interested in the overall picture of how the growing effects of climate change and development can impact water resources long-term. This includes consideration during infrastructure design and operations, land use planning and approvals, public education, emergency planning and response, pollution prevention, and habitat and shoreline restoration.

### **Community Planning and Water**

Clean water is an important component when planning a community development that is liveable, healthy and safe. In order for plans to be sustainable they should address issues that are important to the community including:

- clean water
- coastal protection
- flood protection; and
- ecosystem protection

## Funding in New Brunswick

### Building Canada Fund and Gas Tax Fund

The Small Communities Fund, a component of the federal Build Canada Fund, and the Provincial-Territorial fund provides support for projects related to drinking water and wastewater in smaller communities in order to build and deliver on local infrastructure needs.

Communities can also apply for the Gas Tax Fund which provides financial support for environmentally sustainable water and wastewater initiatives in local municipalities.

New Brunswick municipalities, rural communities, local service districts, regional service commissions, First Nations, water and wastewater commissions, band councils and the private sector whose application is supported by Local Government are eligible to apply to the Building Canada Fund.

### Environmental Trust Fund

The Environmental Trust Fund provides assistance for action-oriented projects that are aimed at protecting, preserving and enhancing the natural environment.

There are six categories of projects that are eligible for financial assistance including: protection, restoration, sustainable development, conservation, education, and beautification. All of which can include water-related topics.

Water related projects include those that deal with coastlines or wetlands, water quality protection, lake ecosystems, wastewater, education, interpretation and many more.

Responsibly managing water resources requires that decision making reflects the needs of many stakeholders balanced with the need to protect our water, satisfy basic needs, enable economic development, sustain the natural environment and support recreational activities.

For more information on water management or funding options in New Brunswick, contact:

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