



A Water Strategy for New Brunswick

PROGRESS REPORT AND FIVE-YEAR REVIEW - JANUARY 2024

Department Of Environment and Local Government



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Province of New Brunswick
PO 6000, Fredericton NB
E3B 5H1 CANADA

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Introduction

01

NEW BRUNSWICK'S WATER STRATEGY

[A Water Strategy for New Brunswick 2018 – 2028](#) (the Water Strategy) was released in December 2017. The vision set out in the strategy is that “New Brunswick’s water will be protected and managed to ensure its quality and availability for future generations.”

The [first progress report](#) on the Water Strategy was published in 2021. For consistency, the 2024 progress report follows the same approach and is organized according to the strategy’s five goals:

- Goal 1: Understanding and sharing knowledge about water
- Goal 2: Protecting drinking water
- Goal 3: Preserving and enhancing ecosystem health
- Goal 4: Working cooperatively on water protection and management
- Goal 5: Implementing the strategy and reporting progress

The first five-years of the Water Strategy have seen the completion of fourteen Actions, seven since the last progress report. A review of the Strategy was conducted in the Fall of 2023 to ensure its continued relevance moving towards 2028. This review meets [Action 29](#).

The Water Strategy continues to set the course for protecting and sustainably managing New Brunswick’s water resources now and into the future.

Five-Year Review

02

[Goal five](#) of the Water Strategy is focused on tracking the progress and reporting publicly on strategy implementation. Action 29 calls for the Department to “review the strategy within five years of its release to ensure its continued relevance and to identify potential new actions for consideration in the next version.”

In the Fall of 2023, the Department conducted an internal review of the strategy to ensure its continued relevance moving towards its completion in 2028.

The review revealed that all actions continue to be relevant and achievable.

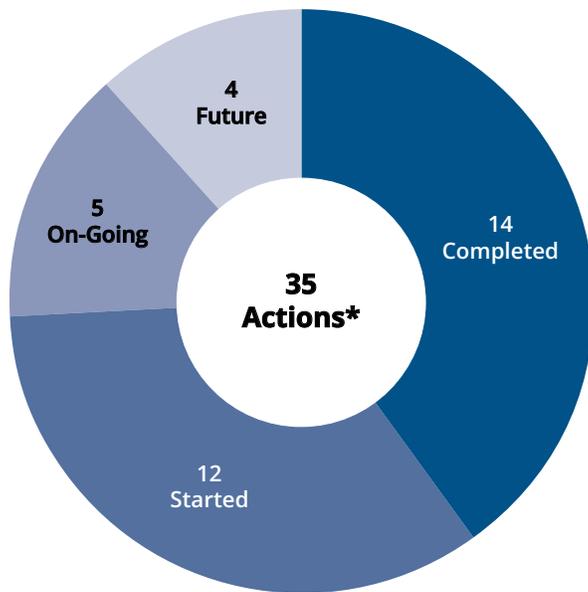
Twelve actions were identified as benefitting from being further clarified to better define the action. The table below tracks which actions are being clarified and the new wording. This amended wording will be reflected in the progress report below and Water Strategy documents moving forward.

	ORIGINAL WORDING	AMENDMENT
Action 2	Maintain an on-going dialogue with First Nations in order to better understand and incorporate the Aboriginal perspective as it relates to water.	Maintain an on-going dialogue with First Nations in order to better understand and incorporate Indigenous perspective as it relates to water.
Action 4	Provide on-line access to the final reports of projects funded by the Environmental Trust Fund, so the results of these projects are more widely available.	Improve final reporting of projects funded by the Environmental Trust Fund by standardizing data collection and sharing the results in a centralized location and making it consumable for the broader public.
Action 5b	Develop and implement a plan to establish a government-led, publicly accessible water data warehouse as part of New Brunswick’s Open Data Policy.	Develop and implement a plan to establish government-led, publicly accessible water data portals as part of New Brunswick’s Open Data Policy.

	ORIGINAL WORDING	AMENDMENT
Action 8	Identify and implement options for on-line posting of water-related permits, approvals and associated conditions.	Identify and implement options for public access to water-related permits, approvals and associated conditions.
Action 10	In collaboration with local governments, introduce a legislated requirement for public reporting of drinking water quality monitoring results.	Introduce a legislated requirement for public reporting of local government drinking water quality monitoring results.
Action 11	Complete the designation of New Brunswick's existing local government drinking water wellfields under the <i>Wellfield Protected Area Designation Order - Clean Water Act</i> .	Complete the designation of the 56 local government drinking water wellfields, identified in 2001, under the <i>Wellfield Protected Area Designation Order - Clean Water Act</i> .
Action 13b	Evaluate options for introducing regulatory requirements for drinking water supplies with capacity below the current 50 m ³ /day requirement to ensure that: public health is protected, these operations undergo inspections, and monitoring and potential effects on other water users are considered.	Evaluate options for introducing regulatory requirements for drinking water supplies that use less than 50 m ³ /day of water so that they are monitored, and public health is protected.
Action 16c	Amending the Watercourse and Wetland Alteration Regulation under the <i>Clean Water Act</i> to extend protection to coastal Provincially Significant Wetlands less than 1 hectare in size.	Explore options for increasing protection to coastal areas including coastal Provincially Significant Wetlands less than 1 hectare in size.
Action 19	Prepare a water conservation plan for the province that addresses water use by households and industry and includes water demand management, education and response to drought conditions.	Establish a drought index and public advisory reporting system to better inform local governments and the public when water conservation strategies should be implemented.
Action 20	Understand and evaluate the causes of algal blooms in order to develop and implement a comprehensive action plan that will reduce their occurrence over the long-term.	Provide public education on the presence of cyanobacteria in New Brunswick, continue to enable research regarding the causes of blooms and monitor their distribution.
Action 23	Develop a regulatory framework to designate coastal protected areas under the <i>Clean Water Act</i> .	Explore options for improved management of coastal areas.
Action 28b	Issue annual progress reports on the status of water strategy action items.	Issue periodic progress reports on the status of water strategy action items.

Summary of Progress

03



Complete actions have been finished.

Started actions have been commenced and are moving towards completion.

On-going actions have been initiated, but represent a continuous process.

Future actions have not yet begun.

*Some of the original 29 Actions have been subdivided to better track progress.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS 2021-2023

Since the 2021 Progress Report

- 7 actions have been Completed.
- 6 actions have moved from Future to Started.
- 1 action has moved from Future to On-going.
- 1 action has moved from On-going to Started.



The wellfield protection program continues to be implemented to protect drinking water sources in New Brunswick. Île-de-Lamèque, along with 3 additional Miramichi wellfields were designated as protected under the *Clean Water Act* in 2023.



As of the Fall of 2023, the requirement to submit annual water usage reports has been included in all Approvals to Operate for industries with substantial water consumption.



Environmental Impact Assessment registrations and determinations, Watercourse and Wetland Alteration Permits and Approvals to Operate are publicly available. [See below for more information.](#)



A review of the regulation and management of on-site sewage disposal systems was conducted and recommendations will be made by a multi-agency working group for consideration by government.



The Pesticide Advisory Board (PAB) was reinstated in 2021. All pesticide related concerns are referred to the Board.



\$4.4 million in ETF funding has supported watershed groups, universities and other partners for projects related to freshwater management (2022-2023, 2023-2024).



With support from the Climate Change Fund in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, the Department led the development of [cyanobacteria education signage and other educational materials](#). 150 cyanobacteria education signs were distributed throughout the province.



With support from the Climate Change Fund in 2022-2023, the Department led the development of [educational infographics and an educational video](#) to inform well owners on how to care for their private well and encourage testing of well water quality so that drinking water is protected.



In the Fall of 2023, the Department conducted an internal review of the Water Strategy to ensure its continued relevance moving toward its completion in 2028.

Detailed Water Strategy Progress Report

04

GOAL 1: UNDERSTANDING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WATER

Timely and accurate water-related information is necessary to make wise decisions. This information should be made widely available, so it can be used to: measure the effectiveness of implemented actions; identify and respond to pressing issues such as climate change; include Indigenous traditional knowledge in relation to water resources and the importance of ecosystems in water-related initiatives; and identify new water-related actions that should be undertaken.

Action 1

Issue an initial report on the current state of water quality in lakes and rivers in New Brunswick.

2018-2021 REPORT: COMPLETE
CURRENT REPORT: COMPLETE

[The State of Water Quality in NB's Lakes and Rivers – Water Quality Results 2003-2016](#) was released in November of 2019.

Action 2

Maintain an on-going dialogue with First Nations in order to better understand and incorporate Indigenous perspective as it relates to water.

**Amended wording as a result of the five-year review.*

2018-2021 REPORT: ON-GOING
CURRENT REPORT: ON-GOING

With support from the Climate Change Fund in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, the Department led the development of cyanobacteria education signage and other educational materials. Partnerships were established with Kopit Lodge, Peskotomuhkati Nation



at Skutik and Wolastoqey Nation in New Brunswick leading to the development and installation of the following signs, respectively:

- A Mi'gmaq language sign, coupled with a bilingual sign, in 15 locations along the Richibucto River.
- A Passamaquoddy-Maliseet language sign, coupled with a bilingual sign, in 4 locations around the community.
- A Wolastoqey language sign, coupled with a bilingual sign, in 8 locations around the province.

Action 3

Pursue a legislated requirement, similar to that contained in the Clean Air Act, for mandatory annual reporting by government on the state of New Brunswick's surface water and groundwater.

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: STARTED

The Department is exploring options for mandatory annual reporting by government on the state of New Brunswick's surface water and groundwater.

Action 4

Improve final reporting of projects funded by the Environmental Trust Fund by standardizing data collection and sharing the results in a centralized location and making it consumable for the broader public.

**Amended wording as a result of the five-year review.*

2018-2021 REPORT: ON-GOING
CURRENT REPORT: STARTED

The original scope of this action was to forward Environmental Trust Fund final reports to the New Brunswick Legislative Library, making them publicly available online. However, entering numerous reports into the library's catalogue is time-consuming and some reports do not meet the library's criteria for hosting documents. The Department is therefore exploring alternative options to make the reports publicly available online. Because of this, the Action is now listed as Started.

The Department is also exploring options for improving final reporting to be standardized and more consumable to the public. In 2022, the Auditor General released a [report on the ETF program](#) which included recommendations to improve project reporting and the sharing of this information.

Action 5a

Prepare a standard, electronic data reporting template for use by First Nations, non-government organizations and industry when providing water monitoring results to the Department of Environment and Local Government.

2018-2021 REPORT: COMPLETE
CURRENT REPORT: COMPLETE

Data collected by non-governmental organizations under the Department's volunteer lakes monitoring program can be uploaded to the [Water Quality Data Portal](#). Data is also captured when samples are sent to New Brunswick's Research and Productivity Council (RPC) laboratory for analysis.

Action 5b

*Develop and implement a plan to establish government-led, publicly accessible water data portals as part of New Brunswick's Open Data Policy. *Amended wording as a result of the five-year review.*

2018-2021 REPORT: COMPLETE
CURRENT REPORT: COMPLETE

The [Water Quality Data Portal](#) was launched in 2016. In 2020, three new data portals were launched through the Department's website to provide open access to monitoring results obtained from: 1) the volunteer lakes monitoring program; 2) water quality monitoring by watershed groups; and 3) lakes water quality monitoring led by the Department.



Action 6

Expand the provincial groundwater and surface water monitoring networks to provide more complete information about New Brunswick's water resources including the effects of climate change.

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: **STARTED**

The Department is developing a five-year work plan to include a review and monitoring network optimization.

Action 7

Continue implementation of water metering for industrial water users.

2018-2021 REPORT: **STARTED**
CURRENT REPORT: **COMPLETE**

As of the Fall of 2023, the requirement to submit annual water usage reports has been included in all Approvals to Operate for industries with substantial water consumption. The Department will continue to implement metering through the Approvals to Operate as new users are identified.

Action 8

Identify and implement options for public access to water-related permits, approvals and associated conditions.

**Amended wording as a result of the five-year review.*

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: **COMPLETE**

The following water-related permits, approvals and associated conditions are publicly available:

- The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) [Registrations and Determinations](#) are available online. Current and archived projects [registered for a comprehensive EIA](#) are also available online.
- The Watercourse and Wetland Alteration Permits are available for a fee by emailing WAWA@gnb.ca and providing the Property Identification (PID) number of the property.
- Approvals to Operate are available by emailing elg/egl-info@gnb.ca.

GOAL 2: PROTECTING DRINKING WATER

Potable water is a basic human need and all New Brunswickers should have access to safe, secure drinking water to meet their daily requirements.

Action 9

In collaboration with local governments, issue a report based on a comprehensive analysis of drinking water quality for all New Brunswick communities that have a public water supply system.

2018-2021 REPORT: COMPLETE
CURRENT REPORT: COMPLETE

The [Drinking Quality Water in my Community](#) report was released in October 2021.

Action 10

Introduce a legislated requirement for public reporting of local government drinking water quality monitoring results.

**Amended wording as a result of the five-year review.*

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: STARTED

The Department is exploring options to introduce a legislated requirement for the public reporting of drinking water quality monitoring results.

Action 11

*Complete the designation of the 56 local government drinking water wellfields, identified in 2001, under the Wellfield Protected Area Designation Order – Clean Water Act. *Amended wording as a result of the five-year review.*

2018-2021 REPORT: STARTED
CURRENT REPORT: STARTED

The Wellfield Protection Program continues to be implemented to protect drinking water sources in New Brunswick. Île-de-Lamèque, along with 3 additional Miramichi wellfields were designated as protected under the *Clean Water Act* in 2023. The Department continues to collaborate with the 3 remaining local governments in Shediac, Perth-Andover (within the Village of Southern Victoria) and Sussex in order to move towards strengthening the protection of these valuable drinking water sources.



Action 12

Develop a coordinated plan to enhance protection and testing of private water wells through a combination of public education and strengthening of the Water Well Regulation (e.g. water well and geothermal well construction standards, set-backs, etc.), and the Potable Water Regulation under the Clean Water Act.

2018-2021 REPORT: STARTED
CURRENT REPORT: STARTED

The Department is exploring options to enhance protection and testing of private water wells through an amendment to the *Clean Water Act* and its regulations. [Educational materials](#) were developed and are provided to homeowners along with their well water test results.

Action 13a

Evaluate options for introducing regulatory requirements for the bottling and sale of potable water; to ensure that: public health is protected, these operations undergo inspections and monitoring, and potential effects on other water users are considered.

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: COMPLETE

Bottled water is regulated by the federal government under the *Food and Drug Act* to ensure it is safe for people to drink. The responsibility for the regulation of bottled water is shared by Health Canada and the Canadian Food and Inspection Agency (CFIA). The CFIA carries out inspection and enforcement duties under the Act.

Action 13b

Evaluate options for introducing regulatory requirements for drinking water supplies that use less than 50 m³/day of water so that they are monitored, and public health is protected.

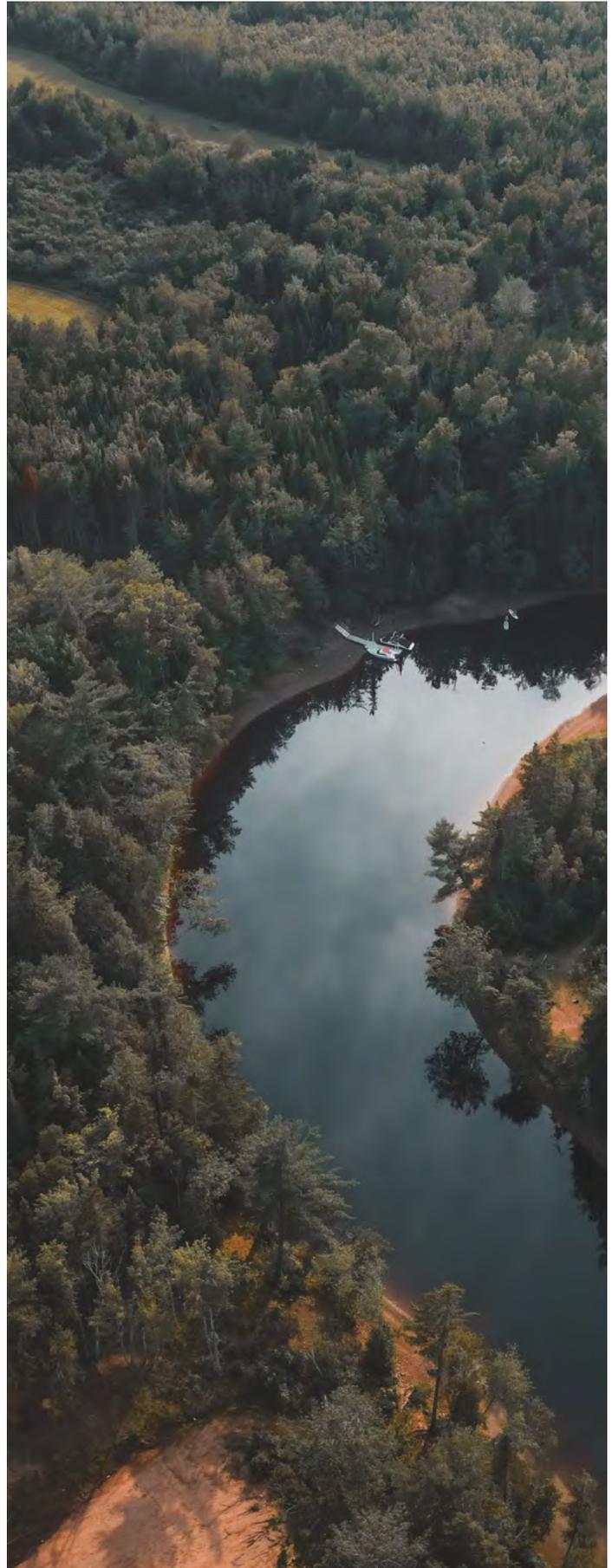
**Amended wording as a result of the five-year review.*

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: FUTURE

Action 14

Evaluate options for extending source water protection to communal and provincially owned drinking water supplies.

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: FUTURE



GOAL 3: PRESERVING AND ENHANCING ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

Within each watershed, the needs of aquatic life such as fish, plants and other wildlife must be considered in water use decisions, to help ensure that ecosystem needs are respected. While meeting the primary goal of protecting ecosystem health, water must be managed in a way that recognizes its value to all New Brunswickers and First Nations and for social and economic uses. There is also a need to develop a renewed framework for watershed management in New Brunswick.

Action 15

Develop and implement a renewed approach to managing surface water quality on a watershed basis in light of the recommendations submitted to the Minister of Environment and Local Government by the Working Group on Watershed Management in December 2017.

2018-2021 REPORT: STARTED
CURRENT REPORT: STARTED

The development of options for the management, funding, scientific assessment, process and timelines is underway for future consideration by government, including a plan for engagement.

Action 16a

Improve wetland protection and management in New Brunswick by releasing new, more accurate on-line wetland mapping using the most up-to-date data. The mapping will be improved on a continuous basis by incorporating the latest information as it becomes available in order to better identify wetland locations.

2018-2021 REPORT: COMPLETE
CURRENT REPORT: COMPLETE

A new, more accurate Watercourse and Wetland Alteration (WAWA) [reference map](#) for the province was released online in January 2020 and is updated yearly with the most recent available data.

Action 16b

Improve wetland protection and management in New Brunswick by releasing Implementation Guidelines to help ensure consistent decision-making and transparency when applying [New Brunswick's Wetlands Conservation Policy \(2002\)](#) and to assist applicants through the regulatory process.

2018-2021 REPORT: COMPLETE
CURRENT REPORT: COMPLETE

Updated guidelines and fact sheets have been made available on the Department of Environment and Local Government's [wetlands website](#).



Action 16c

Explore options for increasing protection to coastal areas including coastal Provincially Significant Wetlands less than 1 hectare in size. **Amended wording as a result of the five-year review.*

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: STARTED

The Department is exploring options to manage development in coastal areas which would include the protection of coastal Provincially Significant Wetlands less than 1 hectare in size.

Action 17

Establish a recreational water monitoring program for the provincial park system that includes water quality monitoring and signage that enables the public to make informed decisions and protects public health.

2018-2021 REPORT: COMPLETE
CURRENT REPORT: COMPLETE

A recreational water monitoring program is in place for [nine provincial park beaches](#). Water quality status is posted online and made available via signage placed at key locations on each beach.

Action 18

Prepare a policy aimed at the identification and maintenance of environmental flows so that water resources are not over-exploited and ecosystem health is preserved.

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: FUTURE

Action 19

Establish a drought index and public advisory reporting system to better inform local governments and the public when water conservation strategies should be implemented. **Amended wording as a result of the five-year review.*

2018-2021 REPORT: STARTED
CURRENT REPORT: STARTED

The Department began working on developing a drought index for the province and is considering how best to keep the public informed of drought conditions.

Action 20

Provide public education on the presence of cyanobacteria in New Brunswick, continue to enable research regarding the causes of blooms and monitor their distribution. **Amended wording as a result of the five-year review.*

2018-2021 REPORT: STARTED
CURRENT REPORT: STARTED

Create an inter-departmental working group comprised of the Department of Environment and Local Government and the Department of Public Health tasked with enabling research, monitoring, and educating the public on the presence of cyanobacteria in New Brunswick.

Action 21a

Assemble a multi-agency working group to review the regulation and management of on-site sewage disposal systems including design and construction standards, such as new technology to address nutrients.

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: COMPLETE

A multi-agency working group was assembled with representation from the Department of Justice and Public Safety, Public Health New Brunswick and the Department of Environment and Local Government. A review of the regulation and management of on-site sewage disposal systems was conducted. As a next step, recommendations will be made for future consideration of government.

Action 21b

Assemble a multi-agency working group to review the regulation and management of onsite sewage disposal systems including options for ensuring that on-site sewage systems are properly functioning and maintained.

Action 22

Evaluate the pesticide permitting requirements for the agriculture industry under the Pesticides Control Act for non-domestic pesticides, and take appropriate action.

2018-2021 REPORT: STARTED
CURRENT REPORT: COMPLETE

The Pesticide Advisory Board (PAB) was reinstated in 2021. The mandate of the PAB is to provide advice to the Minister on matters related to pesticide use. The Board is comprised of staff from the Department of Environment and Local Government, Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, Department of Public Health, Department of Natural Resources and Energy Development, and WorkSafe NB. All pesticide related concerns are referred to the Board.

Action 23

Explore options for improved management of coastal areas. **Amended wording as a result of the five-year review.*

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: STARTED

The Department is exploring options for management of coastal areas. A jurisdictional scan has been completed.





GOAL 4: WORKING COOPERATIVELY ON WATER PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

The Province recognizes that it has a leadership role in developing and enforcing water-related legislation; however, all New Brunswickers have a stake in the protection and management of water and all have responsibilities with respect to its safekeeping. Federal, provincial, and local governments, First Nations, stakeholders and the public must work cooperatively to better protect and manage New Brunswick's waters. Partnerships between the province and others should be further developed to achieve the province's water protection and management vision.

Action 24

Continue a collaborative dialogue between government and First Nations regarding permits, projects, initiatives and other topics of mutual interest.

2018-2021 REPORT: ON-GOING
CURRENT REPORT: ON-GOING

In collaboration with the Department of Indigenous Affairs, the Department has supported First Nation communities and organizations as they undergo stewardship efforts such as water quality monitoring and make plans to adapt to climate change. The Department notifies First Nations of each project proposal registered under the *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulation*. For the comprehensive EIA reviews, communication with First Nations continues throughout the various stages of the process. For more information about the EIA process, [click here](#).

Action 25

Work collaboratively with watershed groups, lake associations, First Nations, academia, and non-governmental organizations on data collection, education, stewardship and other water protection and management-related initiatives.

2018-2021 REPORT: ON-GOING
CURRENT REPORT: ON-GOING

Since the last progress report, the Department continues to work collaboratively with several groups. The work of watershed groups, lake associations, universities and other partners is supported through the province's Environmental Trust Fund (ETF). In 2022-23 and 2023-24, the ETF provided a total of \$4.4 million to projects directly relevant to management, protection, and improvement of freshwater in New Brunswick.



Action 26

Develop and implement a public education and awareness plan aimed at ensuring New Brunswickers: understand the legislative framework that affects the use of water and how to comply with it; have the knowledge and opportunity to become involved in water management activities; and have sufficient information to make wise decisions about their use of water.

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: **STARTED**

The Department is exploring options for the development of a public education and awareness plan incorporating the work completed to date and mapping out future strategic efforts.

To date, with support from the Climate Change Fund in 2022-2023, the Department led the development of educational infographics and an educational video on [protecting your private well](#).

In 2023, the Department updated its [environmental impact assessment \(EIA\) webpage](#) to clarify what projects require an EIA. The new information will provide certainty and clarity for proponents regarding what projects require EIA, including those that involve or may impact water.

To improve wetland protection and management in New Brunswick, updated guidelines and fact sheets have been made available on the [wetlands website](#).

The Department also began working on developing a drought index for the province and is considering how best to keep the public informed of drought conditions.

Action 27

Pursue a partnership with the Geological Survey of Canada to develop groundwater availability mapping.

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: **FUTURE**

GOAL 5: IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY AND REPORTING PROGRESS

This 10-year Water Strategy identifies actions designed to respond to challenges facing the province. Progress in implementing the strategy will be measured, tracked and reported. The strategy must also remain current; a water strategy is not a static document or a result of a one-time effort. Therefore, it will be reviewed and revised in the future to ensure that it remains relevant.

Action 28a

Identify key performance indicators for each action in this strategy as the actions are initiated.

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: ON-GOING

The Department will continue to create project charters for each project once they are started.

Action 28b

Issue periodic progress reports on the status of water strategy action items.

**Amended wording as a result of the five-year review.*

2018-2021 REPORT: ON-GOING
CURRENT REPORT: ON-GOING

The first progress report was issued in December 2021. This second progress report was issued January 2024.

Action 29

Review the strategy within five years of its release to ensure its continued relevance and to identify potential new actions for consideration in the next version.

2018-2021 REPORT: FUTURE
CURRENT REPORT: COMPLETE

The [five-year review section](#) of this report was issued January 2024. Please refer to this section for more information.

