

## Convening for Action in British Columbia

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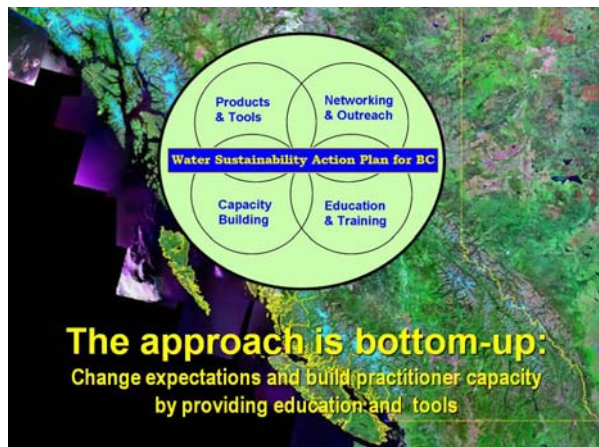
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## 4. Convening for Action in British Columbia

The Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia is about implementation - in particular, showcasing what local government implementers are doing on the ground to effect changes in land development, infrastructure servicing and water use practices.

The Action Plan is also about building capacity to implement The New Business As Usual by:

- informing and educating practitioners;
- aligning expectations with desired outcomes;
- empowering a 'regional team approach'; and
- providing tools that enable 'design with nature'.



**Regional Initiatives:** "Commencing in 2005, we have initiated and cross-fertilized 'convening for action' programs in three regions: Vancouver Island, Okanagan and Metro Vancouver," states Tim Pringle.

"Each regional initiative has its own vision and road map. However, a commonality is a desire for a **Regional Team Approach** founded on partnerships and collaboration."

"The term 'regional team approach' is resonating. Insertion of the word **team** in 'regional approach' has had a profound impact on how practitioners view their world. Team implies there is personal commitment; it also suggests there is a game plan and a coachable context. The regional team approach is proving to be a powerful motivator."

### Okanagan Genesis

Convening for Action in British Columbia was formally launched at the **Okanagan Conference on the Future for Water**, held in Kelowna in February 2005. Participation in this regional event provided the first opportunity to publish the *What -So What - Now What* mind-map (refer to Figure 11); and to present the vision for *Water OUT = Water IN*.

The 'Kelowna Conference' was followed by the **Penticton Water OUT = Water IN Workshop**, held in April 2005. This was the first 'convening for action' event. The 'Penticton Workshop' introduced a number of key concepts that the Action Plan has continued to build upon, in particular the equation shown on Figure 12.

**It Started in the South Okanagan:** In 2005, the Action Plan partnered with the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen to 'convene for action' at a sub-regional scale.

The partnership enabled the South Okanagan Regional Growth Strategy to establish a provincial precedent: the strategy is *water-centric*.



**Mini-Summit on Water for Life & Livelihoods:** In May 2006, the **Whistler Mini-Summit** raised the profile of the South Okanagan as a provincial pilot for water-centric planning. Held as part of the BCWWA Annual Conference, the Mini-Summit provided a focus group opportunity to test an approach to engaging an audience in a dialogue.

The Whistler Mini-Summit also introduced the *Settlement Change in Balance with Ecology* way of thinking about water sustainability. This principle is an extension of the *Water for Life and Livelihoods* approach to community well-being.

**Transferability to Vancouver Island:** Starting in September 2006, South Okanagan experience has been successfully adapted by the Convening for Action on Vancouver Island initiative. Branded as CAVI, this demonstration program is facilitating change at a regional scale.

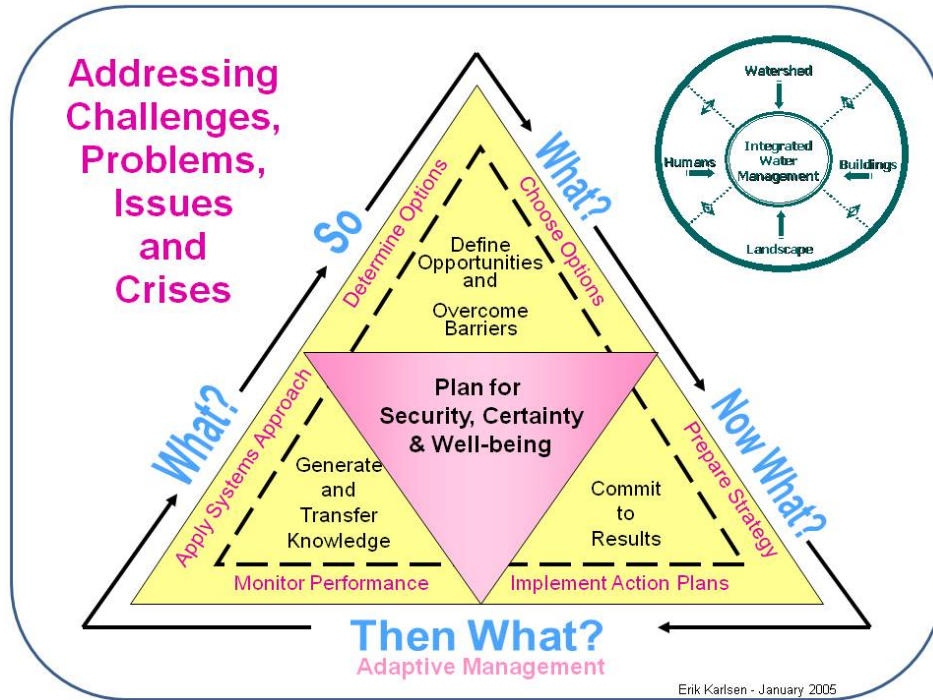


Figure 11

### Water for Life & Livelihoods:

*This deceptively simple equation embodies principles and concepts for dealing with uncertainty and managing risk; and implementing an holistic approach to **Drought Management & Rainwater Management***

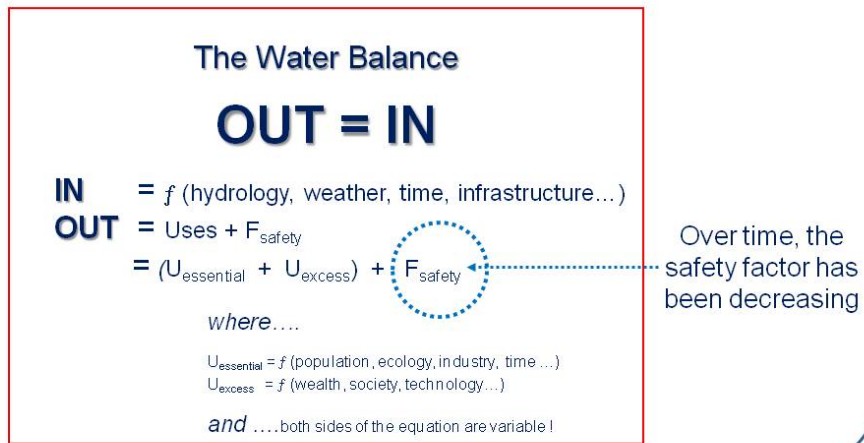


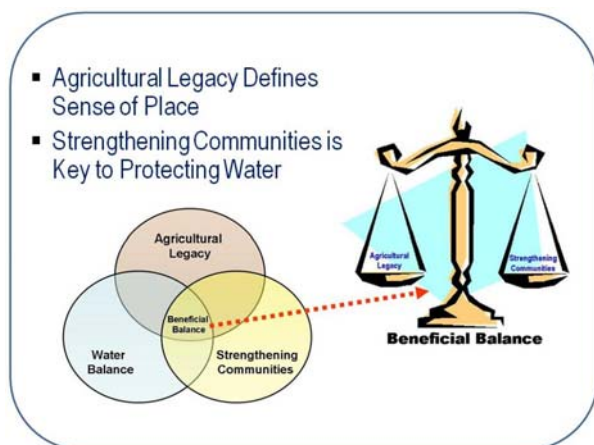
Figure 12

### South Okanagan Growth Strategy: Precedent for Water-Centric Action

The South Okanagan Regional Growth Strategy recognizes the relationship between land and water in terms of both water use and water runoff. The innovation is the toolkit that follows policy, and which leads to benchmarking and monitoring/measuring what matters.



**Beneficial Balance:** “When Kim Stephens and I got involved in the South Okanagan, we started by having conversations with people from Osoyoos to Summerland,” reports Tim Pringle. “We asked questions and we listened. These conversations yielded insights that we captured in a graphic that we called the *beneficial balance*. We found that it helped communities visualize how to integrate land and water issues. The Regional District recognized the value of the ‘convening of the action’ process when it incorporated the graphic in the Regional Growth Strategy document.”



**Inter-Regional Sharing:** “As we travelled from community to community to have conversations about growth and water, we soon realized that there was a limited awareness of what their neighbours were doing; and there was little or no sharing of experience, between regions,” recalls Kim Stephens, Program Coordinator for the Water Sustainability Action Plan.



“In December 2007, the Green Infrastructure Leadership Forum in Nanaimo created an opportunity for the South Okanagan experience to directly inform the Vancouver Island audience. John Slater, Chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, suggested it would be most effective if I was the one who told their ‘South Okanagan story’ from three perspectives: regional leader, regional planner and municipal administrator.”

“So I did three interviews. I asked each person what one message would you like me to convey on your behalf to the Vancouver Island audience.”

“John Slater said ‘elected representatives are starting to think and act regionally as well as locally’. Susanne Theurer emphasized that ‘to agree on where growth should occur, urban and rural elected representatives will have a new framework to dialogue with one another’. Tom Szalay said ‘to make informed decisions, elected representatives must first be informed. To inform elected representatives, technical advisors must communicate using clear and understandable language’.”

Connecting the Dots in the South Okanagan: Three Perspectives

- **John Slater:**  
regional leader  
Mayor of Osoyoos
- **Susanne Theurer:**  
regional planner  
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
- **Tom Szalay:**  
municipal administrator  
Town of Oliver



## Vancouver Island Implementation

“When we launched CAVI in September 2006, we identified several desired outcomes. First and foremost, that by 2010 Vancouver Island would be well on the way to achieving water sustainability,” states John Finnie, CAVI Chair. “CAVI defines water sustainability in terms of how we use water, and how water drains off the land.”



**CAVI Genesis:** “This all started in 2002 when I was still with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and a Director of BCWWA,” recalls Eric Bonham, a founding member of the CAVI Leadership Team, and also a member of the 2002 Guidebook Steering Committee. “I had the opportunity to travel the length and breadth of Vancouver Island and talk to people about the issues of concern to them. I would ask ...*where are we going on Vancouver Island?*”

“It became clear through these conversations that there was a shared concern: there was no forum for discussing the future of Vancouver Island. Filling a vacuum provided the impetus for CAVI.”

“You will not find CAVI listed in the Yellow Pages. CAVI is a process. CAVI is a vision. CAVI is you and me and everyone else. That is the strength of this grass-roots initiative. It is a collective effort to see where we can go on Vancouver Island, and do it in a way that is a little bit different. We are doing this as a genuine team.”

“The big issues are settlement change and ecology. What we have is precious and unless we have a vision now, 50 years down the road we will end up where we don’t want to be.”

**Formation of VICT:** “The strength of the CAVI approach on Vancouver Island is the engagement of our partners on a one-on-one basis who ‘buy in’ to the vision of water-centric planning. The process is accumulative, as others from diverse backgrounds are drawn to the common goal of achieving water sustainability,” emphasizes Eric Bonham when he reflects on what has been accomplished since 2006.

**Rainwater Management & Local Government:** CAVI is broad-based and encompasses government, the private sector, the stewardship sector and academia. Local government, for example, is represented on the CAVI Leadership Team through the *Vancouver Island Coordinating Team (VICT)*.

Formed at the end of 2006, VICT serves as an implementation and outreach arm of CAVI. In concert with CAVI’s direction, VICT champions rainwater management on Vancouver Island by:

- Helping local government improve rainwater practices by providing access to resources and local expertise;
- Demonstrating practical, cost-effective, ecologically functional solutions to common problems that apply across all landscapes;
- Promoting knowledge transfer and showcasing innovative on-the-ground projects; and
- Aligning efforts across disciplines and across organizations to advance the state-of-the-practice of rainwater management on Vancouver Island.

“It is exciting to be part of a network of change, where only after a short period, we are seeing



results on the ground,” confirms Jay Bradley, VICT Chair. “The Learning Lunch seminar series in the Comox and Cowichan valleys are demonstrable evidence of how practitioners, property owners and politicians are embracing the need for change, and are willing to look at options for the ‘New Business as Usual’.”

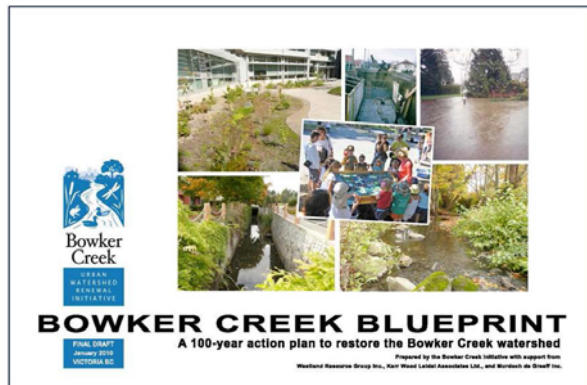
Jay notes an important lesson learned from the VICT experience is the need for collaboration and integration across regions. “We cannot achieve rainwater sustainability, or effect positive change on Vancouver Island, if each municipality or region works on its own,” he adds.

**Bowker Creek Blueprint:** “The CAVI vision is that we will build and/or rebuild our communities in a way that achieves water sustainability over time. The Bowker Creek Blueprint process provides us with a road map that shows us how to get there,” states John Finnie.

Context: The Bowker Creek urban watershed is located in the Capital Regional District. The Bowker Creek Initiative (BCI) is a unique multi-jurisdictional collaboration which produced the Bowker Creek Blueprint, a 100-Year Action Plan.

- It will guide creek corridor and watershed restoration as the watershed redevelops.
- It will be implemented over a period of decades because change can be slow in the urban environment.

Having an action plan in place will ensure that positive changes can happen incrementally. (*To learn more, refer to Chapter 7*)



**Bowker Creek Forum and Beyond:** “The Bowker Creek Blueprint is impressive. The BCI is leading the way with their ‘design with nature’ strategy for watershed restoration. By drawing attention to the Bowker Creek Blueprint, the CAVI team believes this will help us advance the Regional Team Approach in other jurisdictions,” explains John Finnie.

“For these reasons, CAVI partnered with the BCI and the Capital Regional District to hold the **Bowker Creek Forum** in February 2010. This flagship event provided a platform to advance a regional team approach throughout the Georgia Basin.”

## Vision for Georgia Basin Regional Team Approach

Starting in 2007, CAVI has been effective in getting the message out about the need for a shared vision for Vancouver Island communities; and a consistent Island-wide approach to green infrastructure policies and practices.

The Bowker Creek Forum drew attention to five watershed-based initiatives in five regional districts (refer to Figure 13). All five are keyed to integration of water and land planning. Each one has established a provincial precedent.

**Hands across the Georgia Strait:** Vancouver Island and Metro Vancouver are learning from each other, and are moving in the same direction.

“Program elements implemented by CAVI have built on Metro Vancouver approaches. In 2007, for example, there were parallel **Showcasing Green Infrastructure Innovation Series** on both sides of the Georgia Basin,” states Ray Fung, GIP Chair. (*To learn more, refer to Chapter 5*)

“The Vancouver Island experience has since informed and influenced elements of the Metro Vancouver Integrated Liquid Waste & Resource Management Plan, in particular those actions that will advance a *regional team approach*. For example, the **Vancouver Island Learning Lunch Seminar Series** is seen as the model for an approach to team-building and integration that is desired in the Metro Vancouver region.”

**An Earlier Example of Collaboration:** In 2005, the Rainwater Harvesting Series comprised workshops in Metro Vancouver and the Capital Regional. Organized under the banner of ‘convening for action’, the two were part of a cross-Canada series of transformational events.

Drawing on the experience of two international experts, workshops connected the dots between WHY harvest rainwater and HOW to cost-effectively implement rainwater collection, storage, treatment and delivery systems.

“In 2005, we were pushing the envelope with the holistic approach that we were introducing and advancing via this series,” recalls Ray Fung.



Figure 13

### Explanatory Notes – Provincial Significance

The Province intervened in the Comox Valley to both create a new regional district and mandate regional plans that can feed into **An Integrated Watershed Approach to Settlement**.

The Nanaimo Region's **Action Plan for Water** created a drinking water and watershed protection service area with taxation authority in an electoral area.

The **Cowichan Basin Water Management Plan** is a provincial case study for watershed governance changes being contemplated as part of *Water Act Modernization*.

The **Bowker Creek Blueprint** reflects community values. This outcome has been achieved because the Bowker Creek Initiative is a partnership that has enabled community groups and municipal staffs to coalesce around a shared vision: *What do we want this watershed to look like in 100 years, and what steps will we take to get there?*

The **Integrated Liquid Waste & Resource Management Plan** establishes the framework for moving beyond regulatory compliance to transitioning Metro Vancouver to an approach where management of liquid discharges and rainwater resources is planned and implemented within a broader, sustainability framework.



### Creation of a Practitioners Network

Local governments in BC are demonstrating that the practitioner culture can be changed through collaboration, partnerships and alignment. The Regional Team Approach is an outcome of 'convening for action'; and is evolving into a provincial 'practitioners network'.

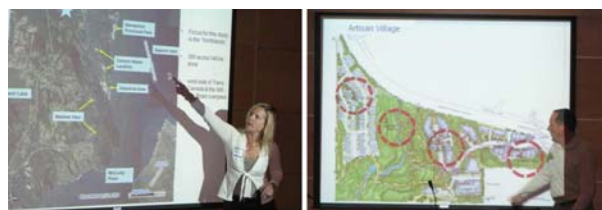
The Bowker Creek Forum was the latest in a series of Forums. It was preceded by the Cowichan Valley, Surrey, Penticton and Nanaimo forums. The first three were organized under the umbrella of Living Water Smart and the Green Communities Initiative.

### Cowichan Valley Water Balance Model Forum:

The Cowichan Valley has been an incubator for proving out ideas and approaches to building practitioner capacity for adaptation elsewhere in the Georgia Basin (refer to p. 47). In October 2008, for example, the Cowichan Valley Regional District hosted a Water Balance Model Forum.

"This sharing and learning event brought together developers, their consultants and local governments. Willing development proponents were asked to apply the Water Balance Model to their projects. Three case studies at different scales provided the technical foundation for roundtable exploration about how to implement green infrastructure effectively," explains Jay Bradley, VICT Chair.

"In the larger context, the forum was indicative of how far along our community of Vancouver Island practitioners has come. We are fostering a growing understanding of the fact that what goes on at a site, in terms of how rainwater is treated, is linked not only to stream and watershed health, but also to our social well-being and aesthetics of our communities. Unlike the pipe-and-convey approach, the use of source control features is an investment in green value that brings returns for the developer and end-users of a site."



**Surrey Water Balance Model Forum:** In March 2009, a practitioners Forum hosted by the City of Surrey adapted the Cowichan Valley format to address this challenge statement:

*How do we simultaneously work together as staff within a municipality and as a region AND externally with developers and other private sector players, to ensure we implement sustainable approaches to development?*

The Surrey Forum was co-sponsored by the Inter-Governmental Partnership and the Green Infrastructure Partnership.

**Outcomes:** "A Forum goal was to start a dialogue between policy makers and project implementers. This learning event accomplished a range of objectives related to implementing rainwater management and green infrastructure in Metro Vancouver," states Ted van der Gulik, IGP Chair.

"The Forum initiated branding of 'shared responsibility' as a way of doing business. Also, it provided a platform for Surrey to announce that it is moving beyond pilot projects to a watersheds objective approach (refer to Chapter 7)."



"Examples inform policy. Case studies in the morning session provided the policy people with an appreciation for what is involved in constructing green infrastructure. The afternoon session then provided the implementers with an understanding of provincial, regional and local goals...and what they are intended to achieve. We wanted participants to think about how their choices can influence what neighbourhoods look like, and how embracing shared responsibility can lead to different choices," explains Ray Fung, GIP Chair.



## Beyond the Guidebook 2010: Implementing a New Culture for Urban Watershed Protection and Restoration In British Columbia

**Penticton Forum:** Held in April 2009 as an adjunct to the BCWWA Annual Conference, the Forum was organized in collaboration with the Okanagan Basin Water Board and three provincial Ministries. This flagship learning event showcased how partnerships, collaboration, innovation and integration are helping local governments in three regions respond to this challenge statement:

*How do we align our efforts at three scales – provincial, regional and local – to do business differently, prepare communities for change, and choose to be water smart?*

Each regional initiative is developing a vision and road map to change the way that land is developed and water is used.

The Penticton Forum also showcased web-based provincial tools that have been developed to help communities achieve water sustainability through truly green development.

**Leading Change:** “The ‘convening for action’ vision is that the Penticton Forum will prove to be a transformational event that inspires participants to do better. Creating a lasting legacy requires sustained commitment to make things happen. The Penticton Forum is an important milestone in advancing a **regional team approach** that aligns local actions with provincial goals for the common good,” summarized Glen Brown, WSC Chair, when he provided context for desired outcomes.

The Penticton Forum comprised four modules built around the ‘creating our future’ theme. Participants were challenged to apply what they learned at the Penticton Forum: *What will you do differently after today?*

### Smart Planning & Living Water Smart: Approaches and Tools for Doing Business Differently in BC

- A. Creating Our Future:  
*What Do We Want British Columbia to Look Like?*
- B. Doing Business Differently:  
*Convening for Action in the Okanagan*
- C. Doing Business Differently:  
*Convening for Action in the Georgia Basin*
- D. Facilitating Our Future:  
*The Natural City Vision*

**Nanaimo Green Infrastructure Leadership Forum:** The Cowichan Valley, Surrey and Penticton events were preceded by the Nanaimo Forum, held in December 2007. CAVI partnered with the Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities to co-host this Georgia Basin event.

**Creating Our Future:** Rod Sherrell, President of AVICC, opened the Leadership Forum by stating that “we can create our future because local government controls land use”.

“If we are to control our destiny, then we need to challenge Vancouver Islanders to visualize what they want this place to look like in 50 years and get on with creating our future.”



### After today, our hopes for tomorrow are...

We hope to develop an ongoing conversation about planning that results in good decisions for the future needs of our communities.

We hope to move beyond awareness of big picture issues to local actions that help Island communities develop solutions to their specific challenges

**Inform and Educate:** Designed to start a conversation that would lead to a region-wide dialogue around achieving settlement change in balance with ecology, the Leadership Forum emphasized the ‘telling of stories’ to energize participants.

“Although this high-profile event was a success, we concluded that there had to be a more effective way to inform and educate those who would benefit most,” recalls John Finnie. “That realization led us to sound out several local governments about an idea we had for inter-departmental learning that would result in a shared understanding of green infrastructure challenges and solutions.”

“The Nanaimo Green Infrastructure Leadership Forum was the genesis for the **Vancouver Island Learning Lunch Seminar Series**, launched in 2008 in both the Cowichan Valley and Comox Valley (refer to Chapter 5).”



## Linking the Site to the Health of the Region

“What the cell is to the body,  
the site is to the region”

Patrick Condon, 1998  
Design Centre for Sustainability  
University of British Columbia