



**DATE:** November 12, 2015  
**TO:** Metro Vancouver Utilities Committee  
**FROM:** Kim A Stephens, M.Eng., P.Eng., Executive Director  
**SUBJECT:** **INTER-REGIONAL COLLABORATION FOR WATERSHED SUSTAINABILITY**  
Presentation #8 – Progress update for period November 2014 through November 2015

---

## BACKGROUND:

Launched in 2012, the *Georgia Basin Inter-Regional Education Initiative* (IREI) is endorsed by five Regional Boards representing 75% of the population of BC. In April 2015, all five – Metro Vancouver, Capital Region, Nanaimo Region, Cowichan Valley and Comox Valley – recommitted through 2017.

By 2017, the over-arching program goal is that all local governments would **understand** how to achieve **Sustainable Watershed Systems, through Asset Management** (supply source, stream, aquifer). The goal is a modest one. It is achievable because it recognizes how an idea or innovation is adopted or accepted. Progress in leading and implementing change is incremental.

This desired outcome aligns with the Minister of Environment's purpose in requiring that the Metro Vancouver region and members develop an *Adaptive Management Framework for Watershed Health*. The latter was approved in late 2014. Implementation is the responsibility of the individual municipalities.

## PURPOSE OF UPDATE:

We all learn from stories and the most compelling ones are based on the experiences of those who are leading in their communities. Through sharing, and learning from each other, inter-regional collaboration accelerates implementation of standards of practice (whether they be engineering, planning or environmental) that are affordable & effective in maintaining healthy watersheds and streams.

THEREFORE, this progress report provides the Partnership for Water Sustainability with the opportunity to update the Utilities Committee about inter-regional accomplishments over the past 12 months, and:

- Announce release of **Beyond the Guidebook 2015**  
[http://waterbucket.ca/viw/files/2015/11/Beyond-Guidebook-2015\\_final\\_Nov.pdf](http://waterbucket.ca/viw/files/2015/11/Beyond-Guidebook-2015_final_Nov.pdf)
- Elaborate on the IREI program goal for 2017
- Extend an invitation to attend the **Feast AND Famine Workshop** on December 1<sup>st</sup>

### The Partnership's History with the Utilities Committee provides context:

1. September 2011 – asked for funding for *Water Balance Model Express for Landowners*.
2. May 2012 – introduced the benefits of the *Georgia Basin Inter-Regional Education Initiative (IREI) for 'Rainwater Management in a Watershed Sustainability Context'*.
3. October 2012 – asked the Committee to formalize its support for inter-regional collaboration.
4. April 2013 – recognized Metro Vancouver as a "Champion Supporter" of the Partnership.
5. October 2013 – foreshadowed how inter-regional collaboration could inform implementation of the Metro Vancouver region's *Draft Adaptive Management Framework for Watershed Health*.
6. May 2014 – presented an overview of the 2014 Work Plan for inter-regional collaboration.
7. November 2014 – introduced the idea that communities can shift the ecological baseline upwards by implementing standards of practice that replicate and restore a desired watershed condition.

### BEYOND THE GUIDEBOOK 2015:

The event of record for release of ‘Beyond the Guidebook 2015’ is the Water Balance Partners Forum hosted by Metro Vancouver at the Annacis Research Centre on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

The full title is *Beyond the Guidebook 2015: Sustainable Watershed Systems, through Asset Management*. It is the third in a series, celebrates work by local government champions, and:

- Defines “cascading objectives” for Watershed Health, Resilient Rainwater Management and Sustainable Service Delivery.
- Explains three provincial “game-changers” (in 2014) that enable local government action to restore watershed health.
- Tells five “regional stories”, including Metro Vancouver as viewed through a SILG lens, to showcase how everyone benefits from “sharing & learning” through inter-regional collaboration.
- Enlightens how the IREI program would facilitate integration of “watershed systems thinking”, as well as adaptation to a changing climate change, into asset management.

### Watershed Systems as Infrastructure Assets & IREI Program Goal for 2017:

A watershed system is an integrated system, is infrastructure, and must therefore be viewed as an asset that provides municipal services. More specifically, the three pathways by which rainfall reaches streams provide ‘water balance services’. As such, protection and maintenance of the three pathways has financial, level-of-service and life-cycle implications for asset management.

Going forward, the IREI program will be guided by the road map presented on the image opposite. This graphic conceptualizes the multiple land and water processes that can be in play in a region, the potential interactions between processes, as well as the interactions among IREI partners. It also illustrates how a Regional Water Sustainability Plan could ultimately be the integrator of those processes.

Over the next two years, the IREI program would progressively inform and educate an expanding network of practitioners (inside and outside local government) on how to achieve **water balance (hydrologic) integrity** and hence avoid expensive fixes.

The twin technical pillars of the IREI program are the **Water Balance Methodology** (adopted by Province in 2002) and **Ecological Accounting Protocol** (to be developed by PWSBC).

