

Skeena Watershed Ecosystem Valuation Project

Visioning and Strategic Planning Workshop

Final Report on Grant 2014-137

March 31, 2015



Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition

*"Cultivating a sustainable future from a sustainable environment
rooted in our culture and thriving wild salmon ecosystem."*



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Overview

On February 19, 2015, Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition (SWCC) held a visioning and strategic planning workshop for the Skeena Watershed Ecosystem Valuation Project in Hazelton with key regional stakeholders. This workshop built on the scoping phase of the project, which were reported on by SWCC in June 2013, and the initial document analysis completed in July, 2014.

Eighteen stakeholders representing First Nations (Gitksan, Kitselas, Kitsumkalum, Metlakatla), government (District of Hazelton; BC Ministry of Environment; BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations; Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine), non-governmental organizations (Bulkley Valley Research Centre, Northwest Institute for Bioregional Research, Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust), private consultants (Big River Analytics, Nexus Solutions) and regional residents, attended the workshop and provided a variety of perspectives.

The purpose of the workshop was to increase understanding of the structural framework required to scope, construct, and implement ecosystem valuation for the Skeena Watershed, generate a network of organizations committed to the process, and receive guidance from stakeholders regarding focus and scope in moving forward.



Figure 1. Skeena Watershed

Creating Consensus Around Ecosystem Valuation

The workshop began by encouraging participants to think on a watershed perspective. Stakeholders addressed the question, “What is your connection to the Skeena watershed?” to name key values of natural capital and services. This established a foundation of values that participants identified through their personal experience in the areas of community, livelihood, recreation, natural environment, spirituality and culture. A Summary of Values is presented in Appendix A.

Using this as an introduction to each other and ecosystem values, participants unpacked ecosystem valuation through a round table discussion.

Participants then explored benefits and risks of completing an ecosystem valuation of the Skeena Watershed. A Summary of Benefits and Risks is presented in the Appendix B.

Participants identified benefits which were grouped into three main areas as follows:

- Education: defining values and services provided by the ecosystem, hence increasing awareness;
- Accounting: enumerating values; and
- Planning: development of management objectives.

In contrast, the risks identified, include:

- Pricing challenges;
- Application of project results; and
- Potential damage to other project efforts.

Next, participants started to identify past and current work being conducted in the Skeena Watershed and how this work might mesh with an ecosystem valuation of the watershed. A Summary of Intersecting Work is presented in the Appendix C.

Participants indicated that ecosystem valuation could provide data for, or connect with the following current or future projects: cumulative effects studies, land use planning, values and data mapping, fish and wildlife assessments, monitoring and surveys, traditional use studies, community engagement and understanding the need for clean air and water. These projects are being completed by several BC government ministries, First Nation groups, non-governmental organizations, Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine and private consulting companies.

Workshop participants then envisioned what a future with ecosystem valuation might look like and what valuation could be used for; a document titled *Imagining Our Future* is included as Appendix D.

Participants generally indicated that ecosystem valuation could assist in developing a strategic vision for the watershed, in conjunction with strategic land use planning and understanding of cumulative effects.

Participants explored who would drive and implement the process and what their mandates are. The drivers and implementers of ecosystem valuation were identified as citizens, communities, First Nations, government, industry, non-governmental organizations and future generations; many of these groups were represented at the workshop.

Participants discussed how ecosystem valuation could influence governance and decision-making pertaining to the Skeena Watershed, suggesting that ‘ecosystem valuation is a tool for identifying trade-offs’ and ‘all aspects of the ecosystem would be taken into account’.

Finally, participants discussed whether or not they would like to see an ecosystem valuation of the Skeena Watershed move forward, and what role they might play in the process. A Summary of Potential Contributions and Roles is included in the Appendix E.

Eleven of sixteen participants (68%) indicated that they see a future for ecosystem valuation in the Skeena watershed. Two participants felt there is a role for ecosystem valuation in some form or other, three participants did not answer and two participants left the workshop prior to this exercise.

Participants suggested they were willing to play a variety of roles in conducting an ecosystem valuation of the Skeena Watershed, including partnering, assisting with communication and education around the project, and providing data.

Key Successes

Stakeholder Engagement. Of 47 people who were invited to the workshop from across the Skeena watershed, 22 people accepted the invitation and 18 attended on February 19, 2015. Twenty-five people declined to participate primarily due to scheduling conflicts. Participants noted the diversity and high caliber of attendees that contributed to workshop success.

Feedback provided on anonymous feedback forms indicated that at least 80% of those who completed the forms found the workshop well organized, the exercises productive, that they now know what the Skeena Watershed Ecosystem Valuation Project is about, and they look forward to hearing how the project progresses. A Summary of Workshop Feedback is presented in Appendix F.

Building Social Capital. The workshop was an opportunity for relationship building across sectors. Participants exchanged contact information and data regarding current and future projects. This was a positive outcome and will be necessary for ecosystem valuation to go forward. Participants reported that finding out what others were working on and learning about the wide range of expertise in the region, was valuable.

Support in Moving Forward. Stakeholders are supportive of an ecosystem valuation in the Skeena Watershed and want to be a part of the process. There is a desire to work together, avoid duplication and share successes in the areas of assessment, monitoring and ecosystem management.

Project Impacts

The workshop impacted stakeholders by providing an opportunity to network and discuss ongoing projects throughout the Skeena Watershed. The workshop was also an opportunity for stakeholders to learn and clarify their thoughts and understanding of ecosystem valuation and how it may apply to the Skeena. Debates regarding benefits and risks of ecosystem valuation were valuable, and the majority of participants decided that an ecosystem valuation of the Skeena Watershed was valuable.

The workshop resulted in a list of potential next steps – outlined below – to guide SWCC and potential partners in moving forward with the Skeena Watershed Ecosystem Valuation project.

Challenges

The main challenges in holding the ecosystem valuation workshop included the following.

Some stakeholders that were invited to attend the workshop were not familiar with ecosystem valuation or had pre-conceived notions of what it might mean for the Skeena Watershed, so were hesitant to attend. Other stakeholders, who had much expertise to offer, were simply too busy to attend or unavailable on the workshop date.

Feedback provided on anonymous feedback forms suggested that attendance by additional regional experts would be preferred, and an explanation of what ecosystem valuation means and how it might unfold in the Skeena Watershed, would have been useful.

Lessons Learned

The main lessons learned by SWCC from this workshop were:

- There is emerging interest in ecosystem valuation being applied in the Skeena;
- Clarity is needed regarding how ecosystem valuation has been applied in other locations, and how it could be applied in the Skeena Watershed;
- It's difficult to get a large variety of stakeholders in one room at one time, and
- Although collaboration is imperative and forthcoming, consensus in determining project direction is challenging.

Spreading the Word

SWCC posted the completed workshop report on our website and included a link to the report in our regular email update that goes out to over 2000 members. The workshop report was shared with participants and partner organizations, enabling us to reach a broader audience. SWCC anticipates receiving additional thoughts and comments from partners regarding the visioning and strategic planning workshop.

Contribution to Resilient, Healthy Communities and Natural Environments

The Skeena Watershed Ecosystem Valuation Project directly and indirectly supports the Real Estate Foundation of BC mandate of responsible and sustainable land use. The main objective of this project is to address selected economic issues that favour some land uses over others. By finding ways to account for important values that are routinely overlooked, undervalued or ignored – such as social and cultural values that are so integral to the Skeena Watershed - the ecosystem valuation project aims to improve land and resource use planning and management.

Next Steps

One of the main purposes of the workshop was to identify five key action steps to move the ecosystem valuation project forward. However, stakeholders were hesitant to determine action items without clear leadership in choosing the direction forward. Based on workshop discussions, several next steps are:

Share information. Identify, acquire and collate existing information and databases resulting from past and ongoing Skeena projects that intersect with or are related to ecosystem valuation.

Create a tool. Create a multi-user group tool to share data identified above. This tool would be useful in itself, but will also allow ecosystem valuation – among other projects – to build on work that has already been done.

Engage and educate. Increase residents' knowledge and awareness of the Skeena watershed and its value, by asking residents what they value about the watershed and the services it provides. This would potentially be completed via widespread grassroots workshops. This information would generate a statistically valid survey of what Skeena residents value in relation to the given ecosystem values.

Identify no-go zones. Determine intrinsic values that are priceless (Flora Bank, clean water, clean air) and map or determine limits for those areas.

Map natural capital. Map the natural capital (ie populations of wildlife, ecosystem types, etc) across the watershed. Identify gaps.

Identify methodology and outcomes. Research possible methods of conducting an ecosystem valuation of the Skeena watershed, and identify outcomes that would be produced by each process.

These options will be shared and discussed with stakeholders to assist in guiding our direction moving forward. Once a direction is decided upon, the next steps include:

1. Communicating the project approach and strategies to potential regional partners.
2. Request support from potential regional partners.
3. Identify and confirm funding to enable forward movement.
4. Partnering and completing the next stage(s) of the project.

Recognition

This project would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the Real Estate Foundation of BC. This support is recognized on the title page of this report, on our website, in opening and closing statements at the ecosystem valuation workshop and in our letter inviting participants to the workshop. These activities helped ensure that recognition reached a wide audience.

Appendices: Workshop Data

Appendix A: Summary of Values

Workshop participants were asked ‘What is your connection to the Skeena watershed? How do you depend on the watershed? A summary of responses is tabulated below.

Values – Summary	Participant comments
Community, livelihood	<p>Live here – family Home for 75 years Community Live, raise family and make a living here. Home for 20 years. Home, work Home, chosen place to live and work. Friends in different communities Roots are here – 6 generations. Sustain myself and family from the watershed. Connected community, integrated.</p>
Recreation	<p>Recreate throughout watershed. Recreation throughout the watershed. Outdoor recreation</p>
Natural environment	<p>Skeena’s energy flows from salmon – the artery of life Protect and benefit from watershed Skeena watershed is our lifeline: food, pleasure, must protect to have a future here Natural landscape, rivers Body chemistry is mostly made from Skeena watershed elements Food Grew up hunting and fishing, living on the land. Conservation. Land, water, climate. Protect environment, fish, wildlife habitat.</p>
Spirituality, culture	<p>Spiritual connection to wilderness See the watershed as a sanctuary Connection to river life cycle Culture of the Skeena. Biophysical landscape drives culture Personal connection. Have experienced every watershed in the Skeena. Ensure bounty for future generations. Admirer of the Skeena and all it provides for the people here. Culture. Special place. Show me where you live and I’ll tell you who you are.</p>

Appendix B: Summary of Benefits and Risks

Workshop participants were asked ‘What are the benefits and risks of completing an ecosystem valuation of the Skeena watershed?’ Their responses are summarised below.

Benefits - summary	Comments from workshop participants
Define values and services, education	<p>Draws attention to services we take for granted.</p> <p>Understanding ecosystems (ie acknowledging what we take for granted).</p> <p>Potential for communities to better understand the values of the ecosystem which could lead to creation of requirements for development (ie checking development at the door).</p> <p>Educational / pedagogical purpose.</p> <p>Educating the public.</p> <p>Local ownership and influence over things that locals value.</p>
Accounting	<p>Full cost accounting.</p> <p>Enumerating values.</p> <p>Allows comparison.</p> <p>Can develop economic arguments for conservation and for sustaining watershed values.</p>
Planning tool	<p>Ecosystem function development, possibly for economic gain (ie Chicago Creek riparian repair increased salmon numbers from baseline).</p> <p>Necessity of leadership and planning, taking responsibility.</p> <p>Transparency, accountability – double edged sword (ie who values the watershed? Who made these decisions?).</p> <p>Tool to evaluate cumulative impacts.</p> <p>Poses options, scenarios.</p> <p>Better accounting of costs, therefore more informed decisions.</p> <p>Help provide certainty to both communities and potential developers.</p> <p>Defines values and hence sets management objectives.</p>
Risks - summary	Comments from workshop participants
Pricing challenges, applying valuation (how to)	<p>Using dollars. Can we put a true price on some values?</p> <p>Applying large discount rates to future values.</p> <p>Buying into anthropocentric valuation.</p> <p>The watershed is dynamic – the valuation may not be.</p> <p>Could get boxed in by economic arguments (may get outplayed).</p> <p>Non-market values (spiritual, cultural) may be ignored.</p> <p>Some values are priceless (Flora Bank, clean air, clean water).</p> <p>Substitution – does the dollar value reflect the actual value (ie spiritual, cultural, social).</p> <p>Some things just can’t be measured.</p> <p>There are intrinsic values that drive our culture.</p> <p>Current valuation would be of a damaged system (worth less) than the original ecosystem state or a better potential state.</p> <p>Social values are in conflict with economic values (ie a thriving economy might not reflect social well-being).</p> <p>May discount the value of social licence.</p>

Risks – summary (continued)	Comments from workshop participants (continued)
Application of results	Problems of ownership and stewardship of the EV. Limited scope and application of results. There would be winners and losers. Accessibility and transparency of the EV work. Will always be imperfect.
Potential damage to other efforts	Local economic benefits may be eroded. Exposing values for scrutiny. Spend lots of time and energy (big investment) with uncertain payout.

Appendix C: Summary of Intersecting Work

Workshop participants were asked ‘How does ecosystem valuation fit into your current work? What work is underway and who is doing it?’ A summary of responses is outlined in the table below.

Note that the information provided below reflects what participants discussed in the limited time allowed at the workshop, and does not constitute a full listing of intersecting work currently underway in the Skeena Watershed.

Organization	Summary of Work
BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources; BC Ministry of Environment	Cumulative effects studies – quantifying and accounting. Measuring ecosystem components and thresholds.
	Air quality assessments
	Value mapping
	Land use plan agreements (complete)
	Cumulative effects
	Monitoring water quality, conducting watershed assessment
	Provincial grizzly bear assessment
First Nations	Cumulative effects management system. Currently at first step - identifying values and how to measure them. Stating intrinsic values.
	Fisheries, large mammal studies assessments and management strategies.
	Guardianship program, including fisheries surveys on lower Skeena. Issuing permits, conducting enforcement. Stock assessment.
	Sustainable employment utilizing available natural resources.
	Traditional Use Studies
Non-governmental organizations	Supporting First Nation house groups to build and/or implement management plans for territories.
	Cultural heritage resource exploration and mapping. Connecting to, and action on the land.
	Getting out on the land and building/maintaining community relationships.
	Salmon habitat: understanding impacts, potential impacts and cumulative effects from different industries. Integrating information into environmental assessment and planning. Having negotiations and discussions with government.
	Addressing air quality concerns from proposed and current Kitimat industries.
	Understanding clean air/water impacts.
	Creation of independent Skeena Knowledge Trust. Working with many groups. Creating layers of information available to all. Includes creation of data sets/portal regarding salmon, road development, stream crossings, water quality/quantity.

Appendix D: Imagining Our Future

What are the uses for ecosystem valuation?

- Some things are priceless: Flora Bank, clean air, clean water.
- First decide what to leave (protect) then decide what to take.
- Gitanyow land use plan maps areas that are ‘no go’. Have identified designated ‘water management units’ that are priceless areas/ecosystem components. How did Gitanyow place values on their territory? Can their process be systematized? Could ecosystem valuation follow this?
- Government is providing capacity support to First Nations. Hence First Nations could request funding from government to assess ecosystem components, to enable them to assess proposed developments.
- There is a three corner triangle that has the following points which all work together: ecosystem valuation (value), strategic land use plan/vision (no go areas, what can and cannot occur), cumulative effects (monitoring/feedback)
- Conduct workshops in communities to identify values.
- Put a box around EV: inclusive of all communities, identify values on watershed scale, assessment of watershed-wide special areas (ie watershed management units or no go zones)
- Mandate should be largely community driven: inclusive of citizens and First Nations with oversight assistance and expertise provided by government.
- Mandate should be a collective, collaborative choice.
- The strategic visions currently in place are Land and Resource management Plans (LRMPs) and Sustainable Resource Management Plans (SRMPs).
- Some participants felt LRMP/SRMP processes have been community driven, providing direction to government, although (unfortunately) there has been lack of government support for the timeline implementation of direction provided in LRMP/SRMPs. Others felt that the current implementation of land use is not co-ordinated or holistic – it is piecemeal by government with pressure from industry with no broad consultation. Ecosystem valuation may help develop a more cohesive vision.

Who are the drivers of ecosystem valuation? (Who are the decision makers or people who care and/or have a stake in the outcome?)

Drivers	Details
First Nations	If they see value in the process
Industry	Reactive to market conditions and public image
Government	Sensitive to social – political pressures so reactive this way
Citizens, communities, owners, stewards of land, individuals	Depending on their view
Conservation groups, NGOs	Depending on their mission and values
Current land use and it’s dollar value	Current use may be easier to ‘see’ than future possibilities

Who are the implementers of ecosystem valuation?

Implementers	Details
First Nations	Have the most power to effect change
Municipalities	Little influence on a broader scale
Youth/future generations	Further engagement needed
Industry	Choices may not be what watershed stakeholders desire

How can ecosystem valuation influence governance?

- Not an academic study, we want something useful
- Tool for identifying trade-offs
- EV may not have any bearing on Federal decision making
- Depends on who is making/influencing the decisions
- A different framework is needed to include social/cultural values
- All aspects of the ecosystem are taken into account
- By impacting social licence provided to industry pending valuation
- Will effect public expectations, which may lead to changes in voting choices by public
- Governments grant permits, communities grant permission
- It will have moderate influence. Governments find it easier to compare economics than social metrics/issues.

Appendix E: Summary of Potential Contributions and Roles

Workshop participants were asked to answer the question ‘Do you see a future for ecosystem valuation in the Skeena Watershed? What role could you play?’ Their responses are summarized below.

- Eleven of sixteen participants (68%) indicated that yes, they see a future for ecosystem valuation in the Skeena watershed. Two participants felt there is a role for ecosystem valuation in some form or other. Three participants did not answer. Two participants left the workshop prior to this exercise.
- A variety of roles were offered by participants. These are tabulated below.

Summary of Roles	Details
Partnering	EC Val project could mesh with BVRC cumulative effects work Provide advice, counsel Advice re: system approach, five capital accountability High level planning / oversight Participate on a First Nation basis. Continue in group discussions Help with ad hoc input Getting the party started to support our vision
Communication / education	Communicating the project to the public First Nation consultation, in house planning Bring citizen/First Nation views to regional decision-making Community engagement and empowerment Spread the word
Provision of data	Can contribute: metrics of future conditions scenarios Moose population study in Kitsumkalum area and ecosystem suitability Expert data Conservation values of upper Nass – Skeena Contribute ecosystem value mapping/identification (habitat supply), strategic land use planning, habitat assessments

Appendix F: Summary of Workshop Feedback

Feedback was requested at the end of the workshop via a feedback form. Thirteen forms were completed and submitted. A summary of responses is provided below.

Question	Total sum of scores/number of answers provided	Average score between 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree)
The workshop was well organized.	61/13	4.7
Exercises were productive.	53/13	4
My input was heard and captured.	57/13	4.4
I gained additional knowledge about ecosystem valuation.	49/12	4
I understand what the Skeena Watershed Ecosystem Valuation project is about.	55/13	4.2
I look forward to hearing how the Skeena Watershed Ecosystem Valuation project progresses.	59/13	4.5
It's important that the Skeena Watershed Ecosystem Valuation project is completed.	56/13	4.3
Results of the Skeena Watershed Ecosystem Valuation project will be useful.	49/11	4.5
Food and beverages were satisfactory.	57/13	4.4

What did you find most useful or interesting?

- Various discussions
- Different points of view
- Discovering the expertise in the room, area, region
- Potential implementation
- What others are working on
- Diverse and high calibre of attendees
- The range of knowledge and expertise
- Hearing what others are working on
- Learning and hearing other people's thoughts, ideas and feedback
- The participant views and meeting others doing similar work
- Diversity of viewpoints and interests
- Enjoyed all the people and comments
- Soup was great
- Good quality of discussion and range of participants
- Dialogue among participants

- Diversity of contributors
- How FN can create their own database for consultation and planning
- Excellent yummy yam soup
- A breath of fresh air to link up with other like-minded individuals for a constructive workshop and share insight with a touch of humour

Do you have any questions that were not answered?

- No – but there is the issue of where this thing is going to go in terms of EV becoming ‘carved in stone’ law
- When do we start? Are we co-ordinated, and by whom?
- Why did SWCC start this project?
- What are the methods to do EV? Risks?
- What will ‘the box’ look like? (ie what is the scope of the project)
- Project size/scope/resources to follow through with

How could we improve this workshop?

- Very well done
- Include more experts from the region
- Continue the process
- It was awesome
- Very good workshop
- Provide expert overview of EV – how, what etc
- Ensure prompt attendance by participants to keep things on schedule
- Excellent work, thank you
- A more convergent process that focuses the discussions and defines the objectives and goals at the end
- More time