

Missing Evidence Threatens B.C.'s Most Treasured Natural Resources

Report: Communities and regulators lack critical data needed to protect freshwater ecosystems

NOVEMBER 15, 2017, VANCOUVER, B.C. – British Columbians regard their province's rivers, lakes, streams, and wetlands as its "most precious resource," but nobody knows how those ecosystems are faring against a range of threats because critical data is outdated, inaccessible, incomplete, or missing.

That's the conclusion of [Murky Waters: Taking a snapshot of freshwater sustainability in BC](#), a new Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia (REFBC) report. The authors set out to score provincial progress towards a range of freshwater-health goals, but were thwarted by missing data. They found instead that key decision makers have an incomplete picture of the challenges and threats most needing attention.

"Policy makers depend on accurate and current data to establish and enforce the regulations that keep our lakes and rivers healthy," says Jack Wong, the Foundation's CEO. "Unfortunately, here in B.C. our leaders are working with inadequate, out of date, or simply unavailable data; better information will lead to smarter decision on how to allocate resources."

Though most B.C. local governments have a handle on conservation plans and water health, other critical measures—on lake water quality, wastewater treatment levels, and more—fall short.

"As every business owner knows, you can't manage what you can't measure," says REFBC chair Mandy Hansen. "Senior governments need improve data collection, monitoring, and reporting, so we can better care for B.C.'s freshwater ecosystems."

British Columbians feel strongly that governments must defend freshwater ecosystems. In polling conducted in 2013 for the REFBC, 93% of respondents agreed that "freshwater is our most precious resource," while 89% favoured strict province-wide rules and standards for water protection.

Murky Waters is the first in a series of three "snapshot" reports that will take stock of key British Columbia issues. Two subsequent reports will assess, separately, the state of B.C.'s built environment and local and sustainable food systems.

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Murky Waters: Taking a Snapshot of Freshwater Sustainability in BC

[Full Report](#) | [Topline Findings](#)

About the Real Estate Foundation of BC:

The Real Estate Foundation of BC is a philanthropic organization that helps advance sustainable land use in British Columbia. It provides grants to non-profit organizations working to improve B.C. communities and natural environments through responsible and informed land use, conservation and real estate

practices. Its funding programs support research, education, and law and policy reform. Since 1988, the Foundation has approved more than \$80 million in grants. The Foundation also conducts research and special projects to support collaboration and knowledge-sharing around land use.

Learn more at www.refbc.com.

Contacts:

Stephanie Butler | Communications Manager | Real Estate Foundation of BC
stephanie@refbc.com | direct: 604-343-2620 | toll-free: 1-866-912-6800 x101

Jack Wong | CEO | Real Estate Foundation of BC
jack@refbc.com | direct: 604-343-2624 | toll-free: 1-866-912-6800 x104