



Babine Watershed Monitoring Trust (BWM Trust) Background

The Babine Watershed Monitoring Trust (BWMT) is a registered charitable organization based in Smithers, BC, created in January 2005 to fund and coordinate independent effectiveness monitoring of natural resources within the Babine watershed north of Smithers. It funds independent research relating to management objectives contained in land use plans for the Babine watershed. The Trust makes the results of these studies available to the public and to government to provide up-to-date information for sound management decision-making.

The BWM Trust was formed through a collaborative process involving community groups, businesses and provincial government agencies. This included representatives of:

- Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board
- Babine River Foundation
- Pacific Inland Resources (West Fraser Mills Ltd.)
- Ministry of Forests
- Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (MSRM)
- Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (WLAP)

Representatives of these organizations met regularly during 2004, with support from MSRM, WLAP, Pacific Inland Resources and Babine River Foundation, to develop the governance structure for monitoring in the Babine watershed. They believed that monitoring of natural resources in the Babine watershed must assess the implementation of land-use plan strategies and the effectiveness of those strategies in meeting key land-use plan components such as objectives. Monitoring must also be conducted in a credible manner, so that monitoring results are broadly accepted.

They also felt that once since a wide array of government agencies, public interest groups, research organizations and businesses were involved in monitoring, there was a need to coordinate their activities, and that an independent source of funds was required to monitor important aspects that do not fall within an individual organization's mandate. A Trust best addresses these needs because its governing documents provide clear direction for monitoring activities.

One of the goals in creating the BWMT was to separate the impartial monitoring and science from the public / political decision making processes, into a two-step process. The first step is to fund the impartial monitoring of land use plan strategies to see if they are effectively meeting plan objectives. This is the responsibility of the Trustees

There are five trustees who are responsible for planning, prioritizing, and facilitating the funding for these projects, and for providing information on monitoring activities and results. These trustees act as individuals, and do not represent stakeholders, or funding contributors. The current Trustees are: Rosemary Fox, Jane Lloyd-Smith, Richard Overstall, and Gary Quanstrom.

In the event of the resignation of a Trustee, a selection committee comprised of a representative from each of the Ministry of SRM (now the Integrated Land Management Bureau), the Bulkley Valley Community Resources Board, and the Kispiox Public Advisory Committee solicits candidates from among the public, to produce a short list, from which the Trustees select the replacement Trustee.

The Trustees of the BWMT are constrained and directed by a legally binding **Trust Agreement**, as to how trust funds can be spent.

Priority ranking of which projects should receive funding are guided by a monitoring framework based on existing land use plans. The **monitoring framework** enables impartial priority-setting and cost-benefit analysis for selecting monitoring projects. Once they have identified and approved monitoring priorities, the Trustees are responsible for producing and overseeing the implementation of an **annual monitoring plan**, for the highest priority monitoring projects in the Babine watershed. The monitoring framework removes Trustees' decisions from the influence of politics, funding contributors, or any stakeholder interests. The Trustees are required to make the results of all BWMT monitoring research widely and publicly available. All reports will be posted on the Trust's web site at www.babinetrust.ca.

The Trustees may use monitoring report results to update the monitoring framework, but they do not determine whether changes to land use plans are called for. Decisions regarding land use plan amendments are made by government (Step 2), and outside the mandate of the BWMT.

The monitoring framework used by the Trust ensures that the priorities and methods used for impartial monitoring and independent scientific research, are separated from political priorities or funding priorities of individual stakeholders. Ultimately, this model is designed to ensure that the monitoring information is objective and free of bias.

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