

Babine Watershed Monitoring Framework



Summary

The Babine Watershed Monitoring Trust is a registered charity that prioritizes and independently funds the monitoring of government-approved land use plans in the Babine Watershed. The monitoring aims at ensuring that the management objectives in these plans are met in the interest of stakeholders and the publicly defined goals are achieved. BWMT monitors the government rules that resource developers must follow in the Babine River watershed. It does this to see if those rules are achieving the goals set out in provincial land-use plans.

An integral part of the Trust's governance structure is its Monitoring Framework. This is an analytical tool for identifying strategic priorities for assessing the risks to the health and management of the Watershed's natural resources. It ranks those plan objectives that are most at risk from current and planned resource development rules. Trustees are appointed in a volunteer capacity to administer the Trust in accordance with the Trust Agreement and the Monitoring Framework. These legal mechanisms oblige Trustees to distance themselves from their individual value preferences in favour of cooperation and collaboration, when deciding monitoring priorities as determined by the Framework. Most importantly, the Monitoring Framework permits the Trust to focus its scarce financial resources on those factors most critical to sustainable resource management in the Babine watershed, in accordance with the objectives of current land use plans. This approach has successfully reduced longstanding conflict among stakeholders in the area.

The Framework facilitates the selection of projects that will fill key information gaps, or examine the greatest risks to achieving the goals of existing land use plans. It points to where monitoring matters most: where there's least certainty about conserving natural resources; where there's the greatest risk that values won't be maintained; and where there's simply not enough information to know the risks.

It fulfills these functions in a multi-stage process that culminates in an annual ranked set of priorities for monitoring. It assures that monitoring adheres to some half-dozen government-approved land use plans for the Babine Watershed and is credible, by directly tying monitoring options to the goals and objectives contained in these plans. For the dozens of goals and objectives contained in the land use plans, the Framework summarizes the essential scientific information and analyzes the relevant factors, thereby enabling Trustees to decide, with impartiality and transparency, on monitoring priorities from among competing resource values. Overall, the Monitoring Framework guides Trustees to select monitoring activities that provide results most essential for assessing how well the Babine Watershed's land-use plans are working.

The Framework permits Trustees to select monitoring projects in a logical and efficient, cost-effective manner, to address the Watershed's riskiest management strategies. To date, projects funded by the Trust include studies of fish habitat, water quality, wilderness values, road crossings of streams, distribution of old forests, and more. Results of these studies feed back to validate or improve the land-use plans that direct government's management of the Babine Watershed's natural resources. The work has garnered formal recognition from the local community for the Monitoring Framework's unprecedented contribution to sustainable resource management, as well as considerable interest among the wider resource management community. For More Information: Refer to www.BWMT.ca