BC/WA Transboundary Water Management

Doug Allen
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Does water management in British Columbia affect water in Whatcom County?
Lower Nooksack River Watershed

Stream flows in Bertrand and Fishtrap creeks
Are we depleting the aquifer serving most of northern Whatcom County?
Cross Boundary Water Resources Challenges

1. Bertrand and Fishtrap creeks – low summer flows
2. Abbotsford-Sumas Aquifer – high nitrates near Sumas
3. Clean groundwater can be part of the solution
Maximum Nitrate concentrations (mg/L-N)

- Less than 3.0
- 3.0 to 4.99
- 5.0 to 9.99
- 10 to 19.9
- 20 and greater

Sumas-Blaine Aquifer
- Canadian portion of aquifer
Fecal Coliform concentrations at border crossings for Bertrand Creek and Jackman Ditch
**Purpose:** To develop a common understanding of current water quality issues, data, and conditions related to fecal coliform bacteria (FCBs) in transboundary waters and tributaries to the Nooksack River and Portage Bay in Washington State (WA), as well as legislative, policy, and best practices, and other opportunities to support reducing non-point sources of FCB pollution in each jurisdiction. Pending the results of inventory and analysis, recommendations for further action and next steps will be made to the Project Executive. At the completion and evaluation stage of this project, the team will assess the effectiveness of this Task Group for its potential to address additional acknowledged transboundary water quality issues, such as asbestos and nitrates.

**Background and Context:** The BC/WA Nooksack River Transboundary Water Quality Task Group (WTQG) reports to the BC/WA Environmental Cooperation Council (ECC) and will focus on water quality issues and shellfish bed closures in WA related to FCBs in transboundary tributaries to the Nooksack River. Recent shellfish bed closures in Portage Bay are linked to increased FCB counts on the Nooksack River from sources on both sides of the border; both WA and BC are interested in working together to understand the non-point sources of FCB pollution and sharing best practices to reduce these sources and improve water quality in Portage Bay. The WTQG may make recommendations to the ECC for further action. Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) are interested in participating as observers at a technical level where alignment exists.

**Objectives**
- Develop a common understanding of current water quality issues, data, and conditions related to FCBs.
- Develop a common understanding of legislative frameworks and best practice guidance to reduce pollution from non-point sources.
- Assess current gaps and recommend action where necessary.
- Demonstrate to external parties that BC and WA are addressing these issues collaboratively.
- Narrow scope and nimble team will ensure a time-bound project completed within budget constraints.

**Critical Success Factors**
- Ongoing executive support.
- Ongoing project team engagement.
- Time-bound with limited resources for project requires narrow scope.
- Conduct initial webinar / inventory / analysis and revise objectives / scope for next steps as needed.
- Communication and engagement plan with external parties.

**Links & Dependencies**
- WA: "Water Quality Management Plan to Control Nonpoint Sources of Pollution" [US EPA - Clean Water Act (1972)]
- Whatcom County District (WCD) "Whatcom Clean Water Program"
- BC: "Environmental Management Act and Agricultural Waste Control Regulation (currently undergoing comprehensive review)
- BC: Environmental Farm Plan Program & Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs)
- 2015 "BC Application Risk Management Pilot Project" with Agriculture Nutrient and Air Working Group (ANAG; WCD includes WCD)
- ECCC/US EPA SOC at the Salish Sea
- ECCC: Canadian Environmental Protection Act (1999); Fisheries Act (1985, sec. 36(3)).

**Out of Scope**
- Water quality data sharing related to FCBs in WA and transboundary tributaries to the Nooksack River.
- Legislative, policy, program, standards and best practices sharing, both federal and state/provincial level.
- One or more technical workshops.
- Identification of monitoring & mitigation opportunities.
- Public/tribal/offshore/other/First Nation and Tribe Communication and/or engagement on work under WTQG.
- Observers with ECCC / US EPA

**Project Team**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Project Role</th>
<th>Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WA Governor’s Office – Julie Horowitz (Rob Duft)</td>
<td>10 hrs/mon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC Min. of Env. – Robyn Roome, Sheldon Raddick (Cailtin Copage)</td>
<td>10 hrs/mon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA Dept. of Ecology – Heather Bartlet (Carol Smith)</td>
<td>3.5 hrs/mo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA Dept. of Agriculture – Patrick Capper</td>
<td>3.5 hrs/mo.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC Ministry of Agriculture – Mark Raymond</td>
<td>3.5 hrs/mo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observers: ECCC – Anoma Patirana, Gwyn Graham, Cecilia Wong</td>
<td>1-3 hrs/mo.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observers: US EPA – Lucy Edmondson, Peter Mumford</td>
<td>1-3 hrs/mo.</td>
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**Governance**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Minister of Environment Wes Schoemaker</td>
<td>BC Exec. Lead</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Environment Director Maia Bellon</td>
<td>WA Exec. Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Horowitz (Rob Duft)</td>
<td>Chair – WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robyn Roome (Caitlin Copage)</td>
<td>Chair – BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cailtin Copage</td>
<td>Secretariat</td>
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**Risk Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Likelihood</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Response Strategy</th>
<th>Residual Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scope creep—limited budget, time, and resources but many avenues for collaboration</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Charter reviewed and confirmed by all participants and exec.</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Engagement—may impact scope, credibility of results</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Appropriate communications plan developed for external parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity / personnel constraints</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Constraint is defined and communicated to all parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources—very little budget available to deliver</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Constraint is defined and communicated to all parties</td>
<td>Low</td>
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This charter is non-binding and may be revised as agreed by the project team and executive leads at any time during the course of this project.

Charter approved by Project Team on [DAY/MONTH/YEAR].
Approved by Executive Sponsors: BC [Date] and WA [Date].
Thank you!

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360 - 255 - 4400

Department of Ecology
www.ecy.wa.gov