



2019 – 2020

*We are reporting on an extended calendar year (January 2019 – March 2020) as we adjust OLW programs to reflect our new fiscal year.

ANNUAL REPORT

Working for a future where all Canada's
waters are in good health





Shared Measurement

1 Ambitious Goal

Our ambitious goal of all Canada's waters in good health by 2030 unites the Our Living Waters Network towards an important future, but it's hard to measure on its own. To measure our collective progress towards the ambitious goal, we first need to have a clear understanding of what good water health means.

4 Results

These four results describe what our ambitious goal would look like if we could see it. They are conditions of well-being we all strive for when we protect and care for the fresh water near our homes. Canada's waters will be in good health when these results are achieved:

			
Canada's water is safe for swimming and drinking and safe from contaminants.	Fish are flourishing in Canada's waters and are healthy to eat.	The flow of water in Canada's rivers and lakes supports life, recreation and a healthy environment.	Aquatic bugs that form the base of the food chain are thriving in Canada's waterways.

6 Water Health Indicators

Six water health indicators measure whether we are getting closer or further away from achieving the four results and, in turn, the ambitious goal. We've adopted the following six indicators from WWF-Canada's Watershed Reports that track the health of Canada's waters and signal if conditions are getting better or worse:



7 Winning Conditions

The winning conditions are our theories on how we can work towards the results. We believe that the following winning conditions will make a large difference if we can collectively achieve them.

Robust and Accessible
Information

Informed
People

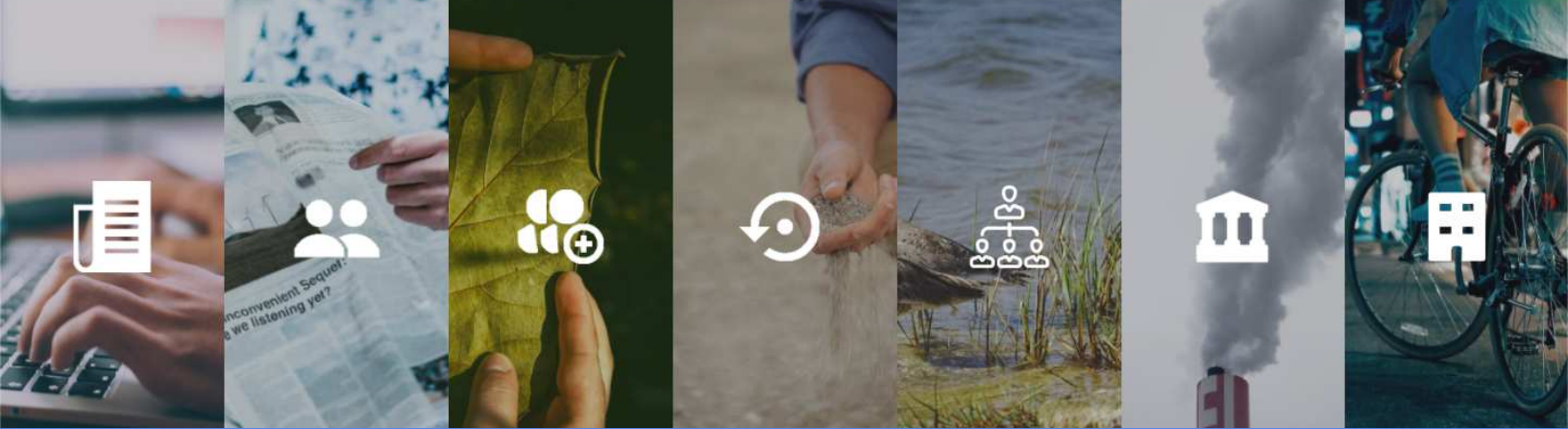
Engaged
Constituents

Restoration
Economy

Nested Watershed
Governance

Enforced Legal
Standards

Sustainable Built
Environment



24 Impact Measures

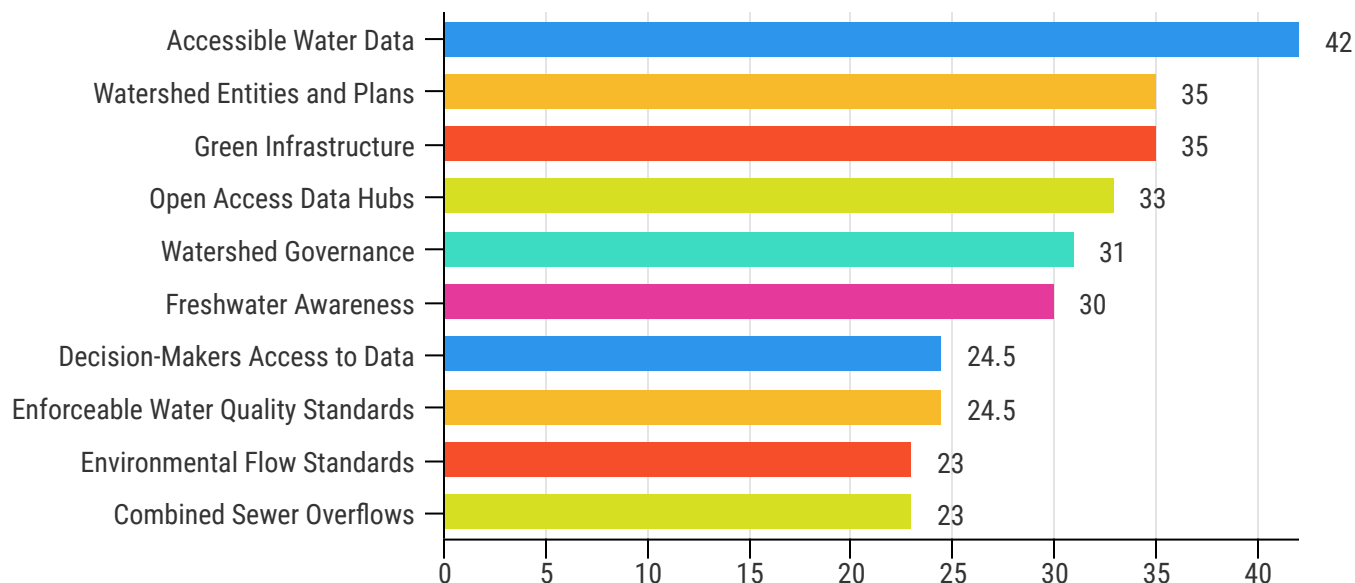
Impact measures are metrics that help us to measure and assess our progress on achieving these winning conditions. Impact measures are a key part of the shared measurement system because reporting on them regularly gives us an idea of how we are doing as a Network and they also help to facilitate collaboration and set priorities for collective action.



More details at www.ourlivingwaters.ca/our_progress

2019–2020 Network Priorities

The Our Living Waters shared measurement system consists of 24 impact measures that drive our actions towards freshwater health across the country. However, with limited resources, it's important for us to prioritize which measures to focus on each year. To identify these priorities, we send a survey to all OLV Network members. With 81% of members responding to the survey, we are confident that these priorities truly reflect the work and collective priorities of OLV Network members. These were the top ten impact measures as ranked by the Network in the spring of 2019: Results from this survey, alongside input from our OLV 2030 Fund Advisory Committee informed our five OLV Network priorities for the period between April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020.



TOP PRIORITIES

These priorities focused our resources to drive collaboration and support the Network in turning the curve on relevant impact measures. Practically, this meant:

- Channeling financial resources from the OLV 2030 Fund to these priorities;
- Convening Network members and other groups to define collaborative opportunities to advance priorities; and
- Engaging Network members around priority issues.

1

Accessible Water Data: Fill knowledge gaps with more data on water health while making water data accessible for everyone, especially decision-makers.

2

Green Infrastructure: Reduce our reliance on 'grey infrastructure' - pipes and treatment plants - to manage rainfall and invest in nature based solutions - wetlands, rain gardens, permeable surfaces - instead. In addition, drive solutions to eliminate sewage from entering our waterways.

3

Policy and Governance: Advance policy and legal tools that empower local decision-making while supporting the sustainability and vitality of the entire watershed.

4

Indigenous Water Rights: Support our Indigenous neighbours to assert their water rights, while also supporting non-indigenous governments to advance the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.

5

Freshwater Awareness: Increase awareness of freshwater health and threats across Canada.

By the Numbers



92 Community and organizational members

(up from 75 in 2018)



567 Followers

(up from 504 in 2018)



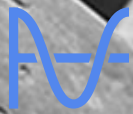
20 E-blasts

Garnering an impressive 45% open rate (industry average is 25%), 11% click rate (industry average is 2.5%) and generating 447 engagements. Significantly up from 2018, where we sent 15 e-blasts, had similar open and click through rates, and drove 244 engagements.



17 of 24 Impact measures have data

(four additional baseline data-sets added in 2019, and two datasets updated). This number hikes steadily, up from 13 last year.



3 Turning the curve strategy sessions

(compared to one in-person session in 2018), which convened multiple organizations to determine what collaborative actions can be taken to turn the curve on priority impact measures. Sessions included: Watershed Entities & Plans; Combined Sewer Overflows; Decision Makers.



6 Grants totalling \$90,900 under the Our Living Waters 2030 Fund

In 2018, we issued nine grants totalling \$97,000.



Strengthened the 2030 Fund's governance processes by formalizing assessment criteria for project approvals and updating the Fund Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference.



Hired a new OLW Program Coordinator, Taylor Wilkes, who also coordinates the OLW 2030 Fund.



Impact Stories

Collaborations driving results on our priority impact measures

Accessible Water Data - Filling knowledge gaps with more data on water health while making water data accessible for everyone, especially decision-makers.

Impact Story Snapshot: Defining data-deficiencies in the Atlantic DataStream

The uptake of Atlantic DataStream has been tremendous with 40 environmental non profits, provincial and federal governments coming on board to share their water quality data since the open access database went live in June 2018. However this wasn't always the case. Following the kick off event, we had just under 30 monitoring groups online and still many others who were eager to share their water quality datasets. So many that it was clear additional support was needed to get this valuable information online.

(Led by the Atlantic Water Network and the Gordon Foundation)

Impact Story Snapshot: customized model designed for the Columbia Basin Data Hub

In southeastern British Columbia, a new Columbia Basin Data Hub seeks to address climate change and water scarcity risks within the watershed. This Hub required more than a year of data inventory and case-study research to design a model that would meet the Basin's hydrological and quantitative data needs. As of Spring 2020, water monitoring groups, in coordination with First Nations, Provincial and Federal governments can synergize their data management on this open-source Hub, making credible water data available for decision making.

(Led by Living Lakes Canada)

Impact Story Snapshot: Lake Winnipeg Launches new Datastream

A new online platform will help close the gap between data and decision-making in Manitoba. Lake Winnipeg DataStream is an open-access, online portal for water-quality data. Led nationally by The Gordon Foundation, Lake Winnipeg DataStream launched in collaboration with the Lake Winnipeg Foundation on March 20, 2019. Advancing LWF's core commitment to open and accessible information, Lake Winnipeg DataStream offers a platform to support strategic collaboration and innovative approaches to water policy and management.

(Led by the Lake Winnipeg Foundation and the Gordon Foundation)

Read all our Impact Stories at:
www.ourlivingwaters.ca/our_stories

Green Infrastructure – Reducing our reliance on ‘grey infrastructure’ like pipes and treatment plants to manage rainfall by investing in nature-based solutions like wetlands, rain gardens, and permeable surfaces.

Impact Story Snapshot: Communities advancing green infrastructure projects

Over the past 2-years, the Canadian Freshwater Alliance with Green Communities Canada have been facilitating a community of practice uniting 15 groups in shared learning around strategies to advance the adoption of green infrastructure in our communities. Four of the projects that have emerged from this community of practice have been made into case studies demonstrating how projects can go beyond pilots to inform and inspire decision makers in our regions to embrace nature based solutions to building climate resilience and better manage water on our urban landscapes.

(Led by Canadian Freshwater Alliance and Green Communities Canada)

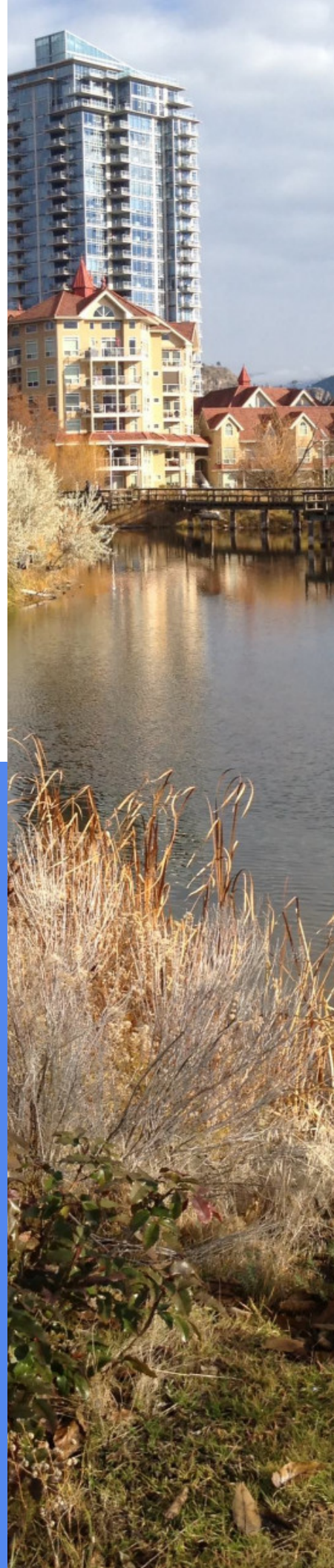
Combined Sewage Overflows - Driving action to eliminate sewage from entering our waterways.

Impact Story Snapshot: CSO data now available on open government portal

From 2013 to 2017, 890 million cubic metres of untreated sewage and wastewater effluent was released from combined sewer overflows (CSOs) into 844 different waterbodies across Canada. This is the equivalent of untreated sewage flowing over Niagara Falls for 3.7 days, or 88.8 hours. This also means it could fill everyone's bathtub in Canada 148 times. After years of requesting CSO data become public, thanks to work of OLW member groups, it now is.

(Led by Ottawa Riverkeeper and Swim Drink Fish)

Read all our Impact Stories at:
www.ourlivingwaters.ca/our_stories



Policy and Governance – Advancing policy and legal tools that empower local decision-making while supporting the sustainability and vitality of the entire watershed.

Impact Story Snapshot: Freshwater groups advance need for radical renewal of the Canada Water Act.

On April 11, 2019, a wide range of people united by their common concern for Canada's water future – water and climate scientists, policy experts, legislators, and water decision rights-holders and stakeholders – gathered in Ottawa to discuss solutions for Canada's emerging water crisis. The keystone piece of this event was a report, *Water Security for Canadians: Solutions for Canada's Emerging Water Crisis*, that was the culmination of months of work by a coalition of groups who recognize the urgent need for more active federal leadership on water. In January 2020, the POLIS Water Sustainability Project hosted a webinar that discussed the report and key developments since its release.

(OLW Member Groups: Forum for Leadership on Water, Polis Water Sustainability Project and the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources)

Freshwater Awareness – Increase awareness about freshwater health and threats across Canada.

Our priority area on Freshwater Awareness is one of two priorities that we invite funded OLW 2030 fund projects to embed in their projects. A number of these initiatives are focused on engaging communities in freshwater conversations and thus improving awareness around the threats to and health of freshwater. All of our data access stories are about creating publicly accessible and open data hubs that communicate the status of water health to any audience that wants to explore and understand. Our partners' work around combined-sewer overflows has been focused on advancing the need for open-data on sewage release, run-off and discharge events. Again, this publicly accessible data-set allows the public to understand the scope and scale to which sewage discharges are impacting our waters. And finally, our Green Infrastructure case studies each document how public audiences were engaged to raise awareness on the value, opportunity and impact of the implementation of green infrastructure solutions.

Read all our Impact Stories at:
www.ourlivingwaters.ca/our_stories

Indigenous Water Rights – supporting our Indigenous neighbours to assert their water rights, while also supporting non-Indigenous governments to advance UNDRIP and TRC calls to action

Over the past year, OLW Management team members have been spending time reaching out to our existing members that are Indigenous led. In these conversations, we have been exploring how OLW can better support their efforts and advance the aligned conversations of water health and Indigenous rights. We hear over and over in these conversations that it's important to support Indigenous led initiatives; that sometimes these initiatives are local and very place based; and we have also heard that though Indigenous rights are embedded in a number of our impact measures, it is not immediately clear to new potential partners that we value and uphold the rights on Indigenous communities and their unique challenges with respect to water rights and access to clean, healthy water. We are working to integrate this feedback into our work and funding priorities at OLW.

In addition to these conversations, we are continuously looking to promote stories around Indigenous communities and water. Nearly every supporter e-blast will contain one story profiling Indigenous water news. And finally, a number of our priority projects integrated Indigenous water perspectives into the projects. Specifically, the following stories, mentioned above, also support this priority area:

- Freshwater groups advance need for radical renewal of the Canada Water Act
- The Green Infrastructure project conducted by Project Watershed on the Courtenay River
- CBWM partnerships with Indigenous Nations/guardian programs



excerpts for freshwater organizations **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

view full text at www.un.org

Preamble

- Convinced that control by indigenous peoples over developments affecting them and their lands, territories and resources will enable them to maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions, and to promote their development in accordance with their aspirations and needs.
- Recognizing that respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment.
- Considering also that treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements, and the relationship they represent, are the basis for a strengthened partnership between indigenous peoples and States.

Actions

- States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.
- Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.
- States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.
- Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.
- Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.
- Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.
- States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.



What can your organization do?

- Read the full text of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. https://bit.ly/Read_UNDRIP
- Document the areas of intersection between your organization and UNDRIP. Define what you can do to be UNDRIP compliant.
- Follow Indigenous Water Leaders on social media. Consider these OLW Members on Facebook(/fnfcbc, /yourCIER), on Twitter (@FNFish, @yourCIER @AFN_Updates) and on Instagram (/yourCIER, /assemblyofirstations)



Story Spotlight

OLW and the Sustainable Development Goals

[*https://www.ourlivingwaters.ca/olw_and_sdgs](https://www.ourlivingwaters.ca/olw_and_sdgs)

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This global agenda aims to catalyze actions necessary for humans to live sustainably with each other and the planet by focusing on a variety of thematic areas including people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. To inspire action, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been developed and specific targets and indicators have been created under each goal to measure progress.

While reaching the SDGs is going to take many organizations all across the world, for each individual organization, it means understanding the important part we play in the larger picture.

The work of the Our Living Waters Network – and the OLW shared measurement system, which drives many of the collaborative actions we take – is well aligned with many of the SDGs. In particular SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, but also with specific targets and indicators within SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 14: Life Below Water, SDG 15: Life on Land, and SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.

We know many organizations, from governments to non-profit organizations, funders to businesses, are actively determining how to achieve the SDGs, and as a member of the OLW Network, we invite you to explore our handy guide: Our Living Waters and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which demonstrates how the OLW shared measurement system, and much of the work that you do, helps achieve these SDGs. We hope you will find this guide useful if you are looking to demonstrate how your activities contribute to the SDGs.

Taking a step back, the guide also shows how the OLW shared measurement system provides an excellent roadmap on how to achieve many parts of the SDGs, especially SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, within the Canadian context, allowing us all to play our important part in the larger picture.

Improving our Impact Measures

Impact Measures with New Baseline Data

Thanks to a generous grant from RBC, we were able to gain new data on four OLW impact measures:



Open Access Hubs: A qualitative analysis of available open access water data hubs per major watershed basin. The number of threatened watershed basins with high quality open accesses water data hubs: 11 (of 23 basins).



Decision Makers: A survey about decision makers' satisfaction with existing water-related data. Among selected water decision makers, 6.1 was the average level of agreement (1 to 10) with the statement "in general, when faced with a decision related to water-resource management, I am able to obtain information of sufficient quality to make a sound decision".



Harmful Algae: A landscape scan on how different provinces or territories monitor for hazardous and nuisance algal blooms. The number of provinces/territories with potential to estimate the number of water bodies impacted by algal blooms: 0.



Government Financing for Protection: Analysis of government spending on environmental protection. The ratio of all Canadian government spending on biodiversity and landscape protection to spending on fuel and energy programs: 33% (in 2017).

Measures with Updated Data

Resulting from the OLW Network's collaborative research, two impact measures were updated:



Freshwater Policy: The state of freshwater policies in Canada including how current and sustainably-focused they are (Analysis led by University of Ottawa and FLOW).



Combined Sewer Overflow: Tracking CSO locations and pollution conditions in municipalities across Canada. (Led by Swim Drink Fish Canada).

Check out these and other impact measures at:
www.ourlivingwaters.ca/shared_measurement_system

2020 Collaborative Projects

These projects were funded by the OLW 2030 Fund in the 2019/20 fiscal year to be delivered in 2020.

Scoping Workshop to Report on Watershed Entities & Plans

*Policy and Governance
Indigenous Water Rights*

Defining a process to determine what are the best practices that define 'viable and effective' watershed entities & plans and how we can encourage more viable and effective watershed entities & plans in Canada.

Capacity support for a water data hub in the Columbia Basin of BC & Capacity support for a water data hub in Atlantic Canada

Accessible Water Data

There is growing momentum in building data hubs across the country, leveraging the momentum and success of Mackenzie DataStream. Investments in the Columbia Basin and Atlantic Canada will help ensure that hubs in these regions make water data accessible for analysis and decision making.

Addressing sewage discharge in communities

*Freshwater Awareness
Green Infrastructure - CSOs*

There is growing national awareness about the threats combined sewer overflows pose to water bodies. Training local sewage investigators how to utilize existing tools, data and resources will help communities address sewage discharge events.

A community of practice for local green infrastructure implementation

*Freshwater Awareness
Green Infrastructure
Policy and Governance*

Expanding the community of practice with training, resources, and peer support, while also advocating for municipalities to adopt action plans that have been piloted.

Federal Water Strategy Team spurring federal action for community-based water monitoring

*Accessible Water Data
Policy and Governance*

Coordinating action to advance federal implementation of the 2018 Roundtable's Final Recommendations on legitimizing community-based water monitoring (CBWM). Team working to maximize CBWM's potential to support decision makers with robust water data.

Looking to the Horizon

Expanding the OLW 2030 Fund - Canadian Businesses for Freshwater Launch

In 2019, Our Living Waters developed a corporate engagement initiative called Canadian Businesses for Freshwater (CBFF). Our hope with this initiative is to raise funds to augment the OLW 2030 Fund while engaging value-aligned businesses to be champions for freshwater in Canada. In 2019, we developed the program and communication materials, including the CBFF website.

We have also begun engaging businesses. Hundreds of messages have been sent through email and LinkedIn, and the OLW team has met in-person with four companies to discuss donor opportunities. While we would love to say we have successfully brought many businesses on board, this work - especially in the beginning - requires a long 'cultivation cycle' to build relationships and we are only just starting.

We know we need to find innovative ways to grow the OLW 2030 Fund to support the work of the Network. In the upcoming year, we will continue to build relationships with value-aligned businesses to join our Canadian Businesses for Freshwater community with hopes that in the future, this will be a dynamic source of funding and support from Canada's business community for the OLW Network. Read more at: https://www.ourlivingwaters.ca/canadian_businesses_for_freshwater

Accountability to 'Reconciliation in our Watersheds'

As 'supporting our Indigenous neighbours and Indigenous water rights' continues to be an OLW Network priority, we recognize both education and action are required to hold ourselves accountable. Over the next year Our Living Waters commits to:

- increasing transparency about our organization's approach and involvement in reconciliation
- critically considering the ways our services offer (or fail to offer) support to Indigenous water initiatives
- deepening our understanding on what OLW Network members' current engagement levels and educational needs are continuing to build relationships with and support our Indigenous colleagues' work

Look out for updates throughout the year and in next year's annual report!

2019 – 2020 OLV Members



2019 – 2020 Funding Partners



2019 – 2020 Management Team



from left to right
 Policy Lead - Tony Maas
 OLV Program Coordinator - Taylor Wilkes
 OLV Project Director - Andrew Stegemann
 Membership and Engagement Lead - Lindsay Telfer
 Funding Lead - Tim Morris