



OUR LIVING WATERS

All waters in Canada in good health by 2030

2021 - 2022

ANNUAL REPORT



A project of

MakeWay

The OLW Shared Measurement System

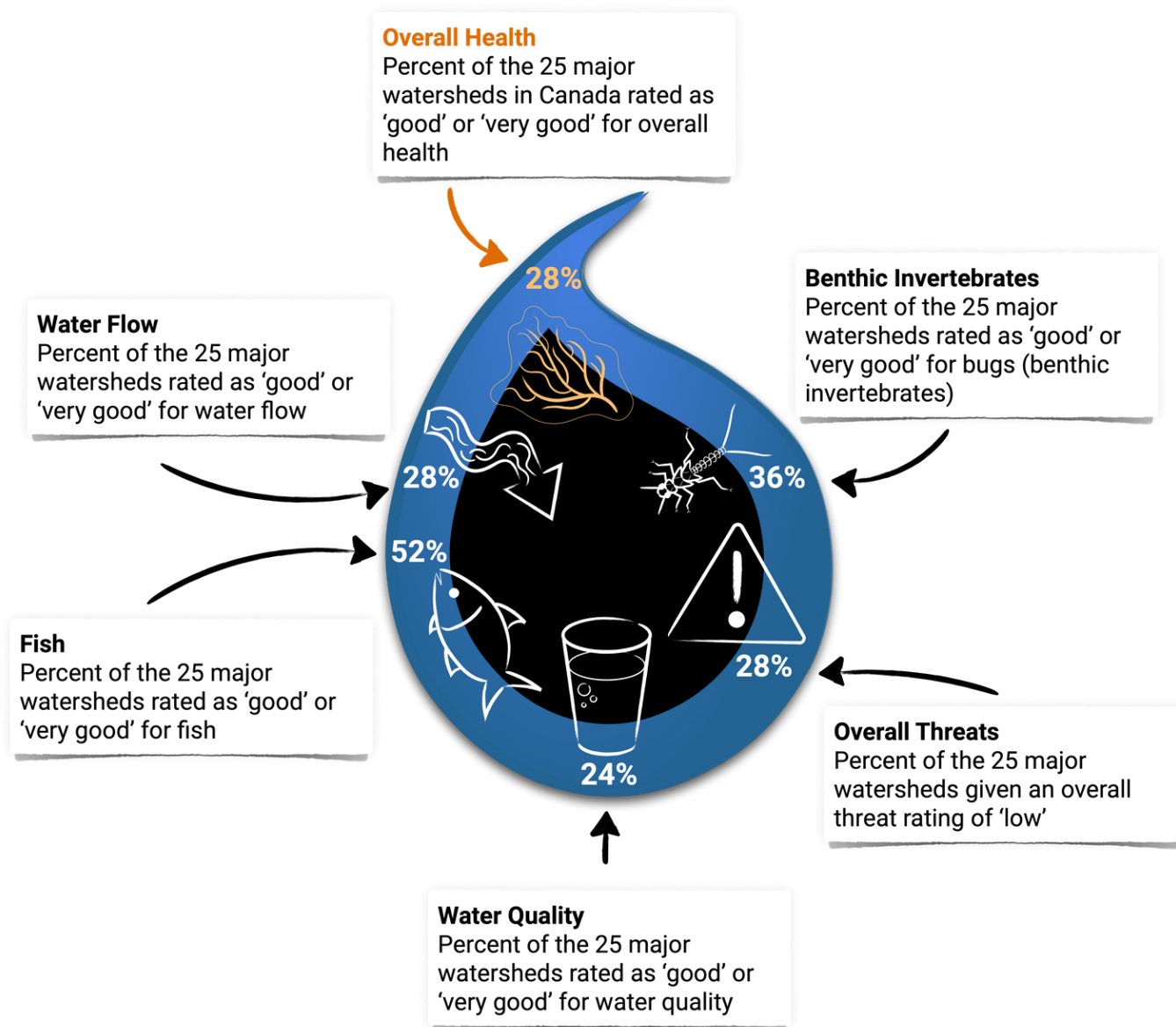
ourlivingwaters.ca/shared_measurement_system

Our Ambitious Goal

Our ambitious goal of all waters in Canada 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.

Six Water Health Indicators

We've adopted six water health indicators from [WWF-Canada's Watershed Reports](#). These indicators track the health of waters in Canada and signal if we are moving closer or further away from achieving the ambitious goal:



Twenty-four Impact Measures in Four Categories

Our ambitious goal and water health indicators provide a north star for organizations within the OLW Network to head towards. However, these metrics are high-level, making it difficult to attribute progress on any of these fronts to specific actions.

That's where impact measures come in. These 24 measures, organized into four categories, guide the many actors in the freshwater community to work together as a connected and aligned Network, tracking our collective progress over time.



Robust & Accessible Information



Accessible Data



Decision Makers



Open Access Hubs



Informed & Engaged People



Citizen Legal Action



Freshwater Awareness



Media



Supporter Actions



Our Blue Footprint



Combined Sewer Overflows



Drinking Water Advisories



Government Financing for Protection



Green Infrastructure



Harmful Algae Blooms



Legislating Restoration



Municipal Natural Asset Management



Pipeline Threats



Water Policy & Governance



Drinking Water Source Protection



Enforceable Water Quality Standards



Environmental Flow Standards



Freshwater Policy



Human Right to Water



National Drinking Water Standards



Recreational Water Quality



Watershed Entities & Plans



Watershed Governance

The OLW Network by the Numbers

157 Community and organizational members

An increase from 121 members since March 2021

16 E-blasts sent to members

Garnering an impressive 56% open rate (industry average is 35%), 14.5% click rate (industry average is <2%) and generating 1308 engagements. Up from last year when we had open rates of 48% and click rates of 14%, and drove 702 engagements.

3 Network-wide member convenings

This is the second year we have brought together members for virtual Meetups, with one more this year than last. This year, we wove water art into our November 2021 gathering, with artist [Amelia Alcock-White](#) inspiring us with her paintings.



3 OLW Teams:

15 Organizations involved in the Green Infrastructure Community of Practice

In existence since 2016, [Green Communities Canada](#) took the lead to facilitate this Team in 2021. This year, the community of practice turned its focus to a [Living Cities campaign](#), in partnership with communities and organizations in six pilot cities across the country.

56 Organizations joined the Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters

This [non-partisan Coalition](#) came together in 2021 to advocate the federal government for leadership and policy to support freshwater health. The Coalition advocates for three actions, including: building a Canada Water Agency; renewing the *Canada Water Act*; and annual funding for freshwater in Canada.

13 Organizations in the Community-Based Water Monitoring Collaborative

The Community-Based Water Monitoring Collaborative works to strengthen and legitimize community-based water monitoring across the country, through federal advocacy and by responding to members' needs.

5 Impact Stories

We hired Rebekah Kipp, our new bilingual Communications Lead and Network Weaver this year! That meant we needed to pause publishing impact stories during this process. But we have been making up for lost time, publishing one per month on average since she started, and we are excited to be covering new ground (or water) with our choice of topics, and offering our stories in both official languages!

31 Signatories to a letter addressed to ECCC Minister Guilbeault

[The letter](#) constituted the first action of the Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters after the government's mandate letters were published in December 2021, resulting in meetings with government, and the kickoff of our united advocacy efforts.



Data Development for Impact Measures

The OLW Shared Measurement System consists of 24 impact measures that track our progress towards freshwater health across the country. Our resources are precious, so it's important for us to prioritize which measures to update and collect data for each year.

When we chose which measures to update this year, we took into account survey feedback from the Network, as well as the age of data, data deficiency, and the time and resources it takes to update data. With these factors in mind, we collected baseline data for the first time on one new impact measure, bringing the total number of impact measures with data to 19. We also updated two impact measures.

[See our story on data development updates for 2021 to 2022 here.](#)

Impact Measures with New Baseline Data

Thanks to support from [Midsummer Analytics](#), we were able to populate the Enforceable Water Quality Standards impact measure with new data:



Enforceable Water Quality Standards

No provinces or territories have enforceable water quality standards at present, while only six have some water quality standards that are not enforceable.

Impact Measures with Updated Data



Drinking Water Advisories

The total number of communities with drinking water advisories in effect is now 978, dropping by 150 since 2017. Nevertheless, Indigenous communities continue to be disproportionately affected by these advisories.



Freshwater Policy

No federal, provincial or territorial jurisdiction currently has a policy AND a law less than ten years old, while seven have either a policy or a law less than ten years old.



Our Living Waters Impact Stories

*Highlighting collaborations & Network initiatives
towards all waters in good health by 2030*

Impact Story: **DataStream Moves towards Pan-Canadian Coverage with Great Lakes on Board**

[Accessible Water Data](#) and [Open Access Hubs](#) have been consistent priority areas for members since the inception of the OLW Network. As such, we're so excited that the Gordon Foundation expanded its DataStream initiative this year to include [the Great Lakes](#)! The Great Lakes represent the fourth hub on a platform that also includes [the Mackenzie River Basin](#), [Lake Winnipeg Basin](#), and [Atlantic Canada](#). DataStream is an open access platform for community organizations, researchers, and decision makers alike to share and access water data!

[Read the full impact story here](#), and meet Carolyn DuBois, executive director of the Water Program for the Gordon Foundation. (Led by The Gordon Foundation)

Impact Story: **Waterlution's Integrated Arts Strategy**

Our Living Waters is amplifying the voices of member organizations using art in their work, and putting a spotlight on the art and artists involved! This new focus, which we are calling [The Art of Water](#), aims to: highlight effective ways of driving change; honour the sacredness of water; and centre on Right Relations with Indigenous Peoples and waters in Canada. Through emphasizing art as a medium of change-making, we are also focusing on our [Freshwater Awareness](#) and [Supporter Actions](#) impact measures, which remain challenging to quantify.

[Waterlution](#) is an OLW Network member at the forefront of social innovation, focusing on artistic process as an approach to evolving our relationships with water. They work to build capacity, train young leaders, and lead the future of water. By integrating arts-based knowledge into their programming, Waterlution promotes community engagement and inspires youth to act for water!

[Read the full impact story here](#) and meet artistic director Christopher McLeod, who joined Waterlution in 2016. (Led by Waterlution)

Two Teams Making a Splash for Federal Action on Freshwater!

Teams are where the magic happens at Our Living Waters! They are collaborative forums where OLW Network members convene to drive action on a shared water goal. This year, all three of our Teams made significant progress forward towards our collective goal of all waters in good health by 2030. Two of our Teams, the Community-Based Water Monitoring Collaborative and the Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters, worked in different ways to promote federal action for freshwater health.

Impact Story: Business Case for Investing in Community-Based Water Monitoring

In the months and years after the [2018 National Roundtable on community-based water monitoring](#) (CBWM), the Community-Based Water Monitoring Collaborative coalesced as an Our Living Waters Team. This Collaborative advocates for the importance of CBWM at the federal level, strengthens the CBWM network across Canada, and strives to secure long term funding for CBWM.

For years, community-based water monitoring leaders have wanted to quantify CBWM's contribution to Canadian water management, creating the case for long-term, programmatic support. This year, the CBWM Collaborative teamed up with the International Institute for Sustainable Development to make a [business case for CBWM in Canada](#), effectively advocating for the importance of CBWM in [freshwater policy](#) and for [decision makers](#).

[Read the full impact story here](#) and learn about partner organizations featured in the report. (Led by OLW & the International Institute for Sustainable Development)



Impact Story: Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters Springs into Action!

In early 2021, Our Living Waters and the [Forum for Leadership on Water](#) championed a [joint submission](#) to the federal government to influence the creation of a Canada Water Agency. Building on this momentum, a new OLW Team took shape in 2021: the [Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters](#) (CCHW). The CCHW fills a much-needed role to advocate the federal government on [freshwater policy](#) and related legislation, regulations, institutions and investments.

As a new OLW Team, CCHW member organizations signed a [letter to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada](#) in early 2022. In the letter, the CCHW advocates for the establishment of a Canada Water Agency, the modernization of the *Canada Water Act*, and the creation of a Canada Water Fund.

[Read the full impact story here](#) and learn about why a Quebec-based member organization joined the CCHW steering committee. (Led by OLW through the Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters)

Indigenous Rights & Right Relations

Last year, we made three commitments to continue learning about and practising Right Relations. Here are some highlights on each and renewed commitments for next year:

Critically consider how OLW's services create space for (or impede) Indigenous water initiatives

Often, 'Truth and Reconciliation' is discussed as an isolated topic without being fully incorporated into an organization's work. We are holding ourselves accountable by weaving our learning about Truth and Reconciliation into our services and decision making. For our Teams, that meant: a) embedding conversations about the Two-Row Wampum belt into the design of the CCHW; and b) centering the CBWM Collaborative's open-data conversation on First Nations principles of ethical information governance - Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession. Whenever a decision is made regarding federal government relations, we pause to question if and how space can be made for Indigenous voices in the process. These are evolving understandings and practices for us.

Deepen our understanding about the field, its leaders, and what partnership opportunities might be welcomed

Building relationships, both with Indigenous leaders and with allies, is an ongoing process. By allocating time and budget towards it this year, we were able to prioritize our connections and communications related to Indigenous rights and Right Relations. This steadfast, relational approach is building trust within the Network and a sense of where to build partnerships. We allocated continued capacity here for 2022-23 so relationships can continue to form and OLW can respond to invitations as they arise.

Continue conversations that push us to be vulnerable in our unlearning, explore interconnectedness and spirituality, identify our responsibilities as treaty people, and update OLW's theory of change with our shifting worldviews

This year we shifted our gaze from internal to inter-organizational in our commitment to hosting vulnerable conversations. We incorporated interconnectedness and spirituality through language on the OLW website and through ritual at OLW Member Meetups. Two Network members invited us to support ongoing circles to consider these questions intently. We host the BC Legacy Braiding Circle as a small, intimate space for the BC Freshwater Legacy staff to unlearn and reconsider their responsibilities. In Ontario, we helped facilitate the emergence of 'Decolonizing Efforts for Water', a community of practice involving 13 freshwater organizations committed to vulnerable unlearning.

This year, in addition to continuing these three commitments above, we will:

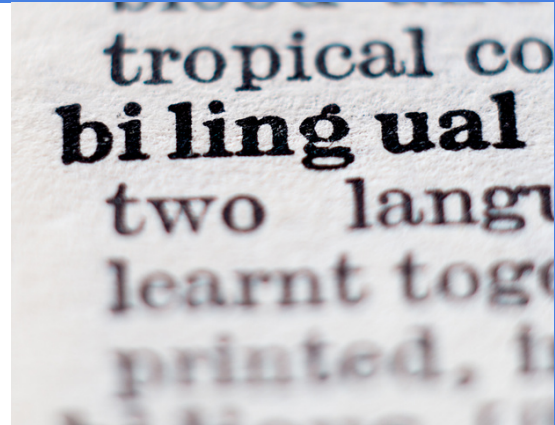
- a) create space for Indigenous presence and sovereignty within the Shared Measurement System; and**
- b) Find a way to tell OLW's 'Reconciliation Story' that aligns with our position, and clarify what we mean by 'Right Relations'**

Looking to the Horizon

This was a year of change and growth for Our Living Waters. A new governance structure emerged and we grew our staff team from two to three! A third OLV Team coalesced: the Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters. We completely redesigned the OLV website to reach a growing Network membership and reassessed the structure of the Shared Measurement System. As we look to the future, we see three streams of momentum. These streams consolidate the growth and change from this past year, improving the services we provide our members.

OLW Commitment to Serving a Bilingual Network

Last year we worked towards making the services we provide the Network more inclusive of our francophone members by hiring a bilingual Communications Lead and Network Weaver! We now have the capacity to provide communications in both official languages, and we have been working hard to revamp our French and English websites. This year, we look forward to launching our new website in both languages and continuing to strengthen relationships between French and English groups across the country. We are excited about promoting intercultural dialogue around water challenges and making our services even more accessible to language minorities.



The Art of Water

We are committed to centering our relationship with water in our work because we know that water is sacred and we are responsible to care for all waters. As such, we launched [The Art of Water](#) at the end of last year to highlight changemakers who honour water's sacredness through art. We incorporated artist perspectives into one of our Member Meetups and into an [impact story](#), underlining the importance of spirit in working towards freshwater health. We look forward to welcoming artist perspectives from different cultural and linguistic groups in Canada in a variety of impact stories and Member Meetups this year. We will continue to amplify the work of our member organizations while moving towards Right Relations with water and Indigenous Peoples.



Digital Facilitation Expertise

As OLV has become more established, our services in connecting and convening freshwater organizations have grown the demand for ongoing remote facilitation. The meetings and events we hold to sustain collaborations across the country require incredible amounts of engagement and input from participants in between! This year we will leverage [Howspace](#) – a digital software designed to facilitate change – making collaboration more efficient and effective. We expect this new tool will help Network members feel more connected and heard, while making it easier for OLV facilitators to glean more insight and experience from participants. Also, it's just a great change from the age-old Google Doc!



Our Living Waters Network Members

AbbaTek • ACAP Saint John • Alberta Wilderness Association • Aqua Action • Athabasca Watershed Council • Atlantic Water Network • Battle River Watershed Alliance • Bighill Creek Preservation Society • Bird Studies Canada • Blood Tribe • Blue Lion Labs • Canadian Environmental Law Association • Canadian Freshwater Alliance • Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Southern Alberta Chapter • Canadian Wildlife Federation • Carrot River Valley Watershed Association • Centre d'écologie urbaine de Montréal • Centre d'interprétation de l'eau de Laval • Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources • City of Charlottetown • City of Coquitlam - Coquitlam River Watershed Roundtable • Coalition pour une navigation responsable et durable • Conservation Council of New Brunswick • Corporation du bassin de la Jacques-Cartier • COVABAR (OBV Richelieu/zone St. Laurent) • DataStream Initiative • David Suzuki Foundation • de Gaspé Beaubien Foundation • Delta N-90 Trappers • Dragonfly Ventures • Ecology Action Centre • Ecorana Environmental Ltd. • EcoSuperior • Elbow River Watershed Partnership • Environmental Defence • Environment Funders Canada • EOS Eco Energy • Evergreen Theatre • False Creek Friends Society • First Nations Fisheries Council of BC • Forum for Leadership on Water (FLOW) • Fraser Basin Council - Nechako Watershed Roundtable • Freshwater Future • GPI Atlantic • Green Communities Canada • Green Roofs for Healthy Cities • G3E - Groupe d'éducation et d'écovigilance de l'eau • International Institute for Sustainable Development • Jijuktu'kwejk Watershed Alliance • Kairos Canada • Kennebecasis Watershed Restoration Committee • Lake Ontario Waterkeeper • Lake Windermere Ambassadors • Lake Winnipeg Foundation • Land Based Learning • Living Lakes Canada • Lower Qu'Appelle Watershed Stewards Inc. • Lush Cosmetics • MAGNA Engineering Services Inc. • Mainstreams Environmental • MakeWay • Manitoba Eco-Network • Muskoka Watershed Council • My Water Quality • Nashwaak Watershed Association • Niagara Coastal Community Collaborative • North American Youth Parliament for Water • Northern Confluence • Nova Scotia Nature Trust • Obabika Consultant Society • Okanagan Basin Water Board • Oldman Watershed Council • Olds College • One Cowichan • OBV de la Capitale • OBV Haute-Côte Nord • OBV Matapédia-Restigouche • OBV du Nord-Est du Bas St-Laurent • OBV des rivières Rouges, Petite Nation et Saumon • OBV du Saguenay • OBV de la Yamaska • Ottawa Riverkeeper • Petitcodiac Watershed Alliance • Pigeon Lake Watershed Association • POLIS Water Sustainability Project • Real Estate Foundation of BC • Red Deer Watershed Alliance • ROBVQ - Regroupement des organismes de bassins versants du Québec • Re-imagining Atlantic Harbours • Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition • Resilient Waters • Riparia • Rivershed Society of BC • Rivers without Borders Canada • Save the River / Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper • Sitka Foundation • Souris and Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation • South East Alberta Watershed Alliance Society • Stewardship Centre for BC • Swim Drink Fish • T Buck Suzuki Foundation • Tesera Systems Inc. • The Council of Canadians • The Gordon Foundation • The WaterWealth Project • Toronto Green Community • Toronto Region Conservation Authority • U-Links Centre for Community Based Research • Vancouver Aquarium • Waterlution • Water Rangers • Watersheds Canada • Watershed Watch Salmon Society • Wellington Water Watchers • WWF-Canada



2021-22 Staff Team

From left to right:

Andrew Stegemann, Director

Taylor Wilkes, Facilitator

Rebekah Kipp, Communications Lead and Network Weaver

2021-22 Steering Committee

Carolynn Beaty: Executive Director, The Sitka Foundation

Wendy Cooper: Co-CEO Integrated Capital, Dragonfly Ventures

Elizabeth Hendriks: Vice-President, Restoration Conservation, World Wildlife Fund Canada

Tim Morris: Project Director, BC Freshwater Legacy Initiative

Lindsay Telfer: Manager, Capacity Development, Green Municipal Fund, Federation of Canadian Municipalities

With thanks to our funders

