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April 2024 Newsletter



Environment

Bridge-Seton Watershed Strategic Plan

“We, the St’át’imc view our territory as the basis for our survival. We acknowledge the creator and our responsibility as caretakers of our territory. We are inseparably connected to our land, its water, air, wildlife, and plants. What happens to one part impacts the other parts.”¹

What is a Watershed?

A watershed is an area of land in which all its precipitation (surface water and groundwater) drains into a specific set of creeks, streams, and rivers. Watersheds are separated from each other by ridges and hills that form drainage divides and funnel water towards a common outlet, such as a larger river system (e.g., the Fraser River). A tributary is a river or stream (like the Bridge River) that flows into a larger body of water (like the Fraser River). One way to think about a watershed is by comparing it to a shower. When water flows from the shower head (snow and rain), the water hits the shower curtains, shower walls, and the bottom of the shower. Any water that lands in the shower will then flow down into the same drain (or river).

Watersheds are important because, as water moves through the system and is absorbed into the ground, healthy and well-functioning watersheds help to slow, clean, filter and store water. These processes improve water quality and water security, help protect fish habitat, reduce the risk of floods and increase resiliency to the impacts of climate change. Trees, plants, animals, leaves, rocks, soil, root systems, nutrients, and microorganisms all have roles to play in a healthy watershed.

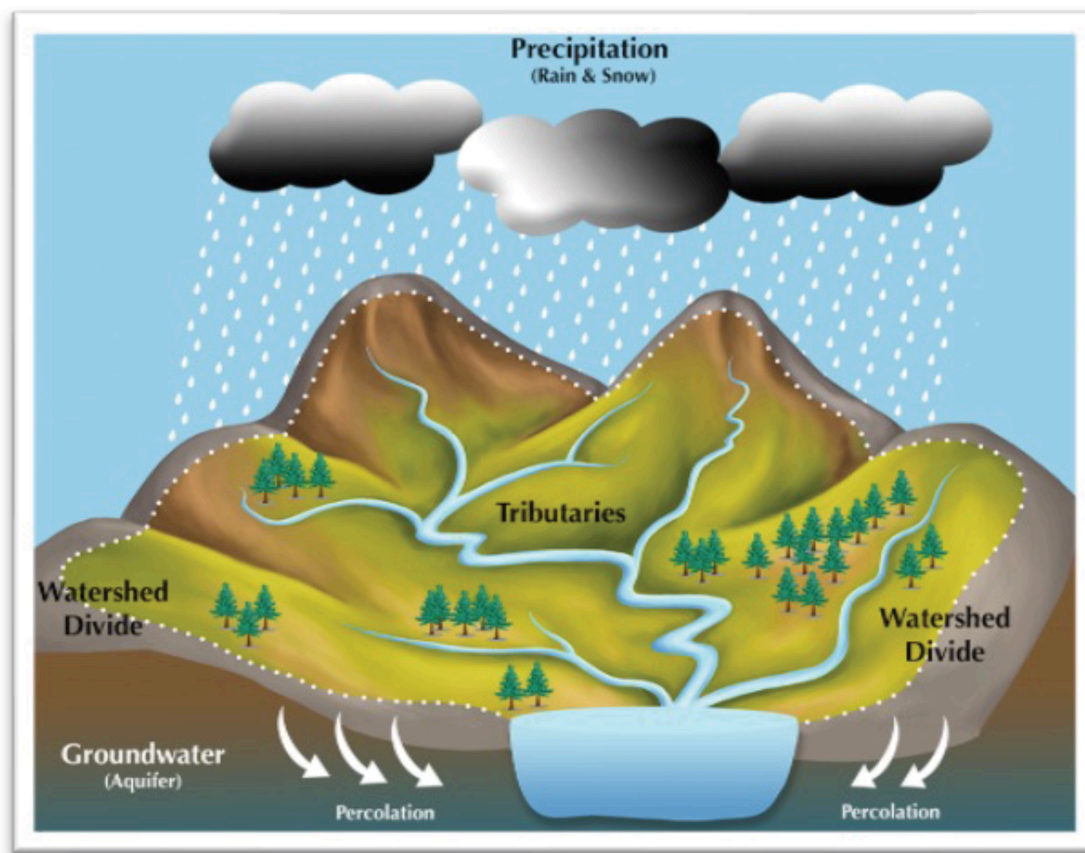


Figure 1: Diagram of a Watershed²

¹St'át'imc Preliminary Draft Land Use Plan, 2004

²SeacoastScience Center, "What is a Watershed," accessed March 6, 2024, <https://www.seacoastsciencecenter.org/learning-resource/whats-a-watershed/>

What are the Bridge-Seton Watersheds?

The Bridge-Seton Watersheds cover approximately 32.8% of St'át'imc Territory and are located just west of Lillooet. The elevations in this area range from approximately 200 m above sea-level at the confluence of the Fraser River and Bridge River, to peaks of up to 3,000 m. The Watersheds drains an area of approximately 3,700 km². This includes Duffey Lake, Seton Lake, Anderson Lake, Carpenter Reservoir, and Downton Reservoir, as well as many streams and rivers that carry water into the lakes and eventually to the Fraser River.

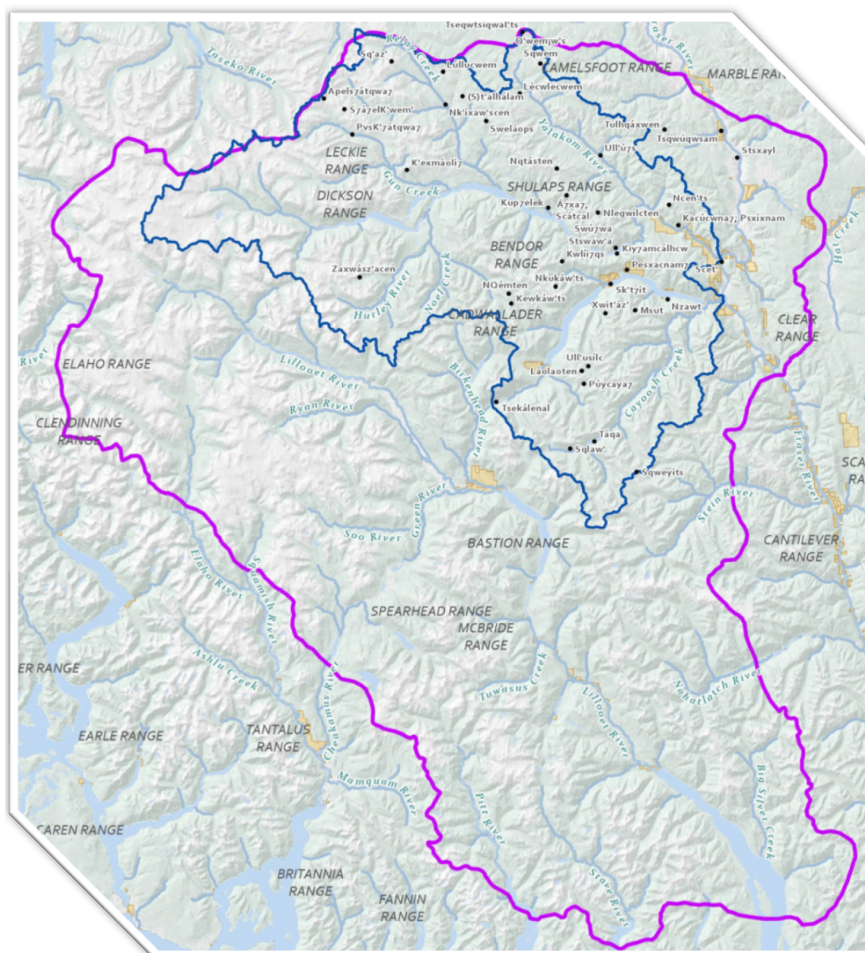


Figure 2: Map of St'át'imc Territory (purple) and bridge-Seton Watersheds (blue)

The Bridge-Seton Watersheds have been dramatically altered through impacts such as logging and hydroelectric systems. St'át'imc laws and way of life (Nxekeḿenlhkálha m'úta7 nt'ákmenlhkálha) come from the land and thus are fundamentally influenced by these impacts.

What is a Watershed Strategic Plan?

A Watershed Strategic Plan is a document that communicates guidelines and expectations for the use of land within a given area. The Bridge-Seton Watershed Strategic Plan (BSWP) is a commitment of the 2011 St'át'imc Settlement Agreement, with the overall objective of determining the impacts of existing and future development activities on important St'át'imc values within the Bridge-Seton watershed. The Bridge-Seton Watershed Strategic Plan is being developed to communicate land use guidelines for those who have an interest in developing land or resources within the Bridge-Seton Watersheds. This plan is being developed using a process that will allow St'át'imc to determine a vision for the watershed that considers the environmental, cultural, spiritual, social, and economic values of community members. Land use guidelines that align with the St'át'imc community vision for the Bridge-Seton Watersheds will then be developed and included within the Bridge-Seton Watershed Strategic Plan to provide direction to industry proponents that may be considering land or resource development projects within the Bridge-Seton Watersheds.

Community Engagement

SGS is hosting information-sharing sessions on important St'át'imc priorities, visions and objectives for the Bridge-Seton Watershed Strategic Plan to ensure the plan is reflective of St'át'imc visions and knowledge and is rooted in St'át'imc values.

This engagement will occur over 3 days and be organized into the following three sessions to allow community members to prioritize their areas of interest.

- **Friday, April 12th, 2 pm–5 pm (Dinner provided)**
Overall Environmental Conditions and Economic Opportunities
- **Saturday, April 13th, 10 am–2 pm (Lunch provided)**
Water Quality, Fish/Fish Habitat and Wildlife/Wildlife Habitat
- **Sunday, April 14th, 10 am – 2 pm (Lunch provided)**
Vegetation, Archaeological Resources and Cultural/Spiritual Values

These sessions intend to share information to aid SGS in:

- Develop priorities, goals, and objectives for each Watershed component.
- Understanding priorities relating to the use and protection of lands and resources within the Bridge-Seton Watershed.
- Developing land-use planning visions and principles.
- Identifying road land-use planning zones and developing management directions for each zone.

The first engagement session will be in-person at the Bridge River multipurpose room April 12th to 14th, with the option to join virtually. All are welcome to attend, lunch or dinner will be provided. An agenda and link to register will be posted soon. In addition to the in-person engagement sessions, an online survey will also be sent out.

If you have any questions about attending an engagement session, please contact Elhe Black at elblack@statimcgs.org or 1-226-620-1593.



Post-WildFire Food Security Project

St'át'imc Government Services (SGS) is supporting Mule Deer Winter Range (MDWR) habitat restoration efforts, in response to recent catastrophic wildfires which have significantly impacted food security through St'át'imc Territory. SGS is funding this project, along with grants from the Indigenous Climate Health Action Program and the RealEstate Foundation of BC.

Using both Traditional and Western knowledge systems, this project will create community resilience by dispersing seeds of traditional food and medicine plants within newly created corridors, which will link low severity or unburned patches of MDWR habitat, within the McKay fire zone. Resiliency to a changing climate enhances St'át'imc's ability to sustain cultural practices intergenerationally; ensure Indigenous food sovereignty and security; and manage food, medicines, and ceremonial plants and animals in traditional ways.

The goals of this project are to:

1. Reconnect patches of the Mule Deer winter range through the McKay fire zone;
2. Enhance St'át'imc food security by dispersing seeds of traditional food and medicine plants, and reestablishing critical habitat for Mule Deer;
3. Analyze 3 different approaches to dispersing culturally important plant seeds and determine best practices to mitigate existing and future wildfire impacts throughout St'át'imc Territory.

Seeds of culturally important plants and bear scat will be collected in June and July, seeds will be processed into seed balls, and the dispersal of seed balls and Bear scat in the corridors will occur in the fall of 2024, Spring of 2025 and again in fall of 2025.

SGS Environment will be coordinating "SeedBall Workshops" with community members in Summer 2024. The goal of the workshops is to construct seed balls containing traditional food and medicinal plant seeds, which will be dispersed within the newly created Mule Deer corridors of the McKay wildfire. The balls will be mixed and shaped by hand and will contain compost and nutrients to help the plants establish the footprint of the McKay wildfire which burned in 2021 and 2023. The plants that sprout from the seedballs will help establish forage and cover for Mule Deer, while also providing food and medicinal plants for community members to access in future years.

Seed ball ingredients will primarily contain clay, compost, soil, water, and seeds of culturally important plants, such as xúsum (soapberry), tśóltśví (Oregon grape), úsa7 (huckleberry), tsets7úsa7 (blackcap), stsáqwem (saskatoon) andel7álmicw (blueberry).

SGS is seeking input on this project from any St'át'imc Elders, Harvesters or Knowledge-Keepers who wish to share their knowledge and help guide this restoration work.

Workshop dates will be announced via SGS Newsletter, email, community bulletins and social media. The Seedball-making workshops will be family-friendly, with opportunities for hands-on learning, information sharing and door prizes. We hope to see you there!



Monitoring the Migration Systems of Chinook Salmon

February 26th-28th, 2024, Tenderfoot Hatchery, Squamish, B.C. — St'at'imc Government Services (SGS), N'Quatqua Hatchery, and InStream Fisheries Research Group, participated in PIT (Passive Integrated Transponder) tagging juvenile Chinook Hatchery Salmon to enable a greater understanding of their migration timing – when they leave of the river system as juveniles and when they return to Seton Portage as spawning adults. PIT tagging Chinook assists in migration tracking by inserting a microchip into the juvenile salmon internally by either careful scalpel incision or through a specific PIT tag gun. From there, the tracking chip becomes activated when the fish swims over an underwater antenna located throughout the river system. The completion of the PIT tagging this past week will allow the juvenile salmon to be ready for the spring release.

History of the project's beginnings – Portage Chinook are a genetically unique population that originates from Portage Creek in the community of Tsal'alh. The population was showing signs of declining returns for the past 20 years, and without intervention, it was anticipated that they would become extinct within the following 10 years. That is when the Portage Creek Chinook Salmon Recovery Program was established to assist in recovering the Portage Chinook population;

2019 – St'át'imc Eco-Resources Ltd. and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) staff started a brood stock collection program to help preserve and rebuild the population. This program resulted in the first successful spawning of the Portage Creek Chinook.

2020–2021 – yearling smolts (juvenile salmon) were released with more successful spawning.

2022 – juvenile salmon began being implanted with PIT tags to be tracked as they pass through the river system

Through the great stocking efforts to preserve the Portage Chinook population, there has been an increase in spawning returns, but there is still more information to be monitored and measured to help determine long-term actions to help save the wild population. That is where the multi-part program between Lillooet and Seton Portage is being implemented. This program is being led by St'át'imc Government Services (SGS) in collaboration with Instream Fisheries Research (IFR) with funding and support from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), and the Province of British Columbia. This multi-part program is scheduled to continue for the next two years, and parts of the program include;

- Use of PIT Antennas for detection along the river system – aids to better understand the timing of migration as well as potential barriers to fish passageways.
- Night Snorkel Surveys along Portage Creek – allows the team to count and measure the juvenile salmon with minimal disturbance.
- Portage Creek Walks during spawning returns to assess the proportions of wild and hatchery through the weekly dead pitch – through this assessment, they collect the length, sex, and age data of spawned-out Chinook, as well as collecting scales for genetic analysis and assessing whether the salmon were PIT tagged and if they came from hatchery origins.
- In-Depth Portage Creek Habitat Analysis – measuring of bed materials, spawning grounds, water velocity riparian vegetation, off-channel habitat, and disturbance indicators – all this data will be used to create a watershed restoration plan for the salmon recovery (last analysis was completed in October 2023).

As this past week's part of the project comes to completion, Elhe Black, Biologist at SGS states "Salmon are so important, they care for the land by providing nutrients to the plants and animals around them. Our goal with this program is to ensure that Wild Salmon continue coming back to Portage Creek for future generations." It is thrilling to see the continuous efforts of this collective group towards the preservation and restoration of Portage Chinook Salmon and eager to see more of the project's parts in the upcoming 2024 year. Be on the look out for an announcement for the Spring Release of the Portage Chinook Salmon, which is to occur in Tsal'alh along the Portage Creek!

[Read more](#)



Capital Projects

Work continues on the preparation for the Bridge River Transmission Project (B RTP), however, BC Hydro has paused the project to evaluate some recent detail design information related to the work at the Bridge River Terminal substation. This may affect the scope of the work on the B RTP project over the next couple of years.

Antares Construction, a Sekw'el'was company, has begun the Seton Canal dewatering and repair work; this work is in Lillooet and will continue into May 2024. If you are in Lillooet during this time, take a walk along the canal to see the work in progress.

Work at the Bridge River generating facilities located in Tsal'alh continues. The Bridge 1 Units 1 to 4 replacement project contract award is anticipated in the coming weeks. Just last week the site visit for the Bridge Generating Station No.1 Penstock recoating took place, and over 20 contractor personnel attended getting an extensive 'hike' tour of the roughly 1,000-foot high steep slope where the penstocks are located.

The Slope Drainage Improvement project (spoil pile removal) on this same steep penstock slope, which is expected to commence next year is now becoming a reality. This project is intended to address several slope stability and safety issues in Tsal'alh.

The Tsal'alh Development Corporation continues development work with BC Hydro and contractors to ensure worker accommodations are available for these and future projects.

The LaJoie project investigative work begins this fall, including quarry sampling – expected to be several truckloads of small and larger size samples taken for lab

analysis. Core drilling will also be completed at several dam site locations to assess the geotechnical aspects of the existing materials. The objective of this project is to rebuild the dam to its original height with major dam construction currently scheduled to begin in 2027. Between now and then, only 3 years, a significant amount of preparatory work will be done, and significant economic opportunities are expected.

The SetonBypass project, near Sekw'el'was, is in the early stages of design and investigation with a target to begin construction in 2026 to 2027.

Several St'at'imc businesses have or will be responding to the BC Hydro Earth Moving and Other Heavy Equipment [Request for Information and Supplier Qualifications \(RFSQ 13448-4\)](#) now posted on BC Bid (closes on April 3) – if successful, these businesses will receive a Master Services Agreement (MSA) that greatly streamlines the effort to get BC Hydro contracts for this type of work.

BC Hydro will be issuing an Invitation to Qualify (ITQ) for First Aid Services shortly. St'at'imc businesses are encouraged to respond to get qualified to perform this type of work for BC Hydro, these types of services will be a part of every project.

Explore project related information at your own pace by accessing information on SharePoint.

Here is a small sample of what you can find on the [St'at'imc SharePoint information portal](#):

- Reports on the [Reservoir Archaeology Program](#) and the [Seton Lake Environmental Mitigation Project](#)
- [List of the BC Hydro projects](#) in St'at'imc Territory
- Copies of the [BC Hydro project opportunities](#) that have been provided to St'at'imc businesses
- Materials and notes on the [Quarterly Capital Planning Meetings](#)
- A [glossary of commonly used project and system terms](#)

The St'at'imc SharePoint Information Portal access now requires Multi-Factor Authentication – an instruction sheet has been sent out on how to set this up. The instructions also provide a way to contact tech support should you have a problem. If you did not receive the instructions, please call Sherry Kane at SGS (778.771.5903)



Meeting Description:

The Annual Operations Update on BC Hydro's Operations in St'at'imc Territory includes an overview of transmission, distribution, water management, environment, education and small capital projects activity in the past year and planned for the year ahead.

Meeting is open to all St'at'imc members to register please contact Sherry Kane at relationsmgr@statimcgs.org or (250) 256-0425 ext.260

Time	Agenda Item
<i>Morning session in person and via Teams</i>	
9:00am-9:30am	• Coffee and Social
9:15am	• Videoconference open
9:30am-9:40am	Welcome and Introductions
9:40am-9:50am	BC Hydro Operations in St'at'imc Territory
9:50am-10:00am	Employment & Training
10:00am-10:20am	Joint Planning Forum Update & Water Management Forecast
10:20am-10:40am	Transmission Maintenance Program Work
10:40am-11:15am	Distribution OH Capital (End of Life) Replacements Distribution UG Capital (End of Life) Replacements Distribution Maintenance T&D Test & Treat
11:15am-11:30am	Distribution Vegetation Maintenance
11:30am-11:45am	BC Hydro Transmission Vegetation & Access Management Program
11:45am-12:00pm	Generating Stations Small & Minor Capital Projects
12:00pm-12:10pm	Reportable Environmental Incidents
<i>Afternoon Session in-person only</i>	
12:10pm-1:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm-4pm	• Booths by BC Hydro and SGS with opportunity to ask questions on various programs • BC Hydro Bucket Truck Rides (12:10pm-2pm) • Cultural activities





Andrew Montjoy (Tít'qet) — PLT

April 23, 2024

Bucket Truck Rides

Join us for bucket truck rides allowing everyone to experience the thrill of reaching new heights in one of our most recognizable trades – Powerline Technician.

Learn what Powerline Technicians do in their important role to keep the lights on!

Where:
762 N'quatqua Main Street, D'arcy, BC. at the N'quatqua Band office.

12:10pm–2pm



Photo left: Apprentice PLT's – Layne Malm, Ryan Combs and PLT, Andrew Montjoy.

The fillable forms can be found here:
<https://statimc.ca/.../2024/03/Forms-for-Bucket-Ride.zip>



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