

**AFER Implementing Nature-based Solutions (NbS) Working Group  
November 25, 2020**

**Attendees:**

*Key Question: How can NGOs and local governments support one another and collaborate better on NbS in the Lower Fraser?*

**Key Takeaways:**

*What is needed:*

- Understanding of needs for data and information requests so that they can be delivered in useful ways
- Grants are organized around timelines that may be uneven for NGOs
- NGOs need to reach out and invite LGs more and vice versa regarding public events
- Success stories/case studies of collaborative management between NGOs/local governments could provide valuable templates and best practices
- Greater acceptance of risk: traditional engineering solutions are risk-averse, and can form barriers to innovation
- Central hub or space for information/data sharing and communication
- Many practitioners and decision-makers have decades of status-quo experience that is separated from environmental work and innovative solutions that are needed
- Academics are good at talking to one another, but there needs to be movement outside of the institution
- How do we address differences in collaborative networks?
- There needs to be more consideration of stakeholders and connections to policies, e.g., liquid waste management is an opportunity to implement NbS, but connections aren't being made between this and other policies/departments/NGOs/strategies

*What we have:*

- Rivershed is creating regional hubs for conservation opportunities, such as the AFER network
- There are environmental advisory processes available for the general public, but nothing currently for NGO-specific engagement
- Several groups focused on information and data-sharing
- WCEL template of a co-learning process throughout project and process design
- We see Indigenous voices being uplifted and centred in certain projects (LFFA, for example); this needs to be increased
- Foundational expertise & resources
  - GI/adaptation course at SFU, natural asset course at Royal Roads, reports from Martin Lab, MNAI, etc.

*How to better collaborate:*

- There are knowledge gaps surrounding the roles, interests, goals, and responsibilities of NGOs, local and municipal governments, and First Nations; clear communication in these areas may facilitate better collaboration and reduce duplicated efforts
- Champions dedicated to certain policies within local governments can elevate and accelerate uptake
- Common goals and a common purpose are needed when working collaboratively, along with conflict resolution practices; uniting principles will ground this work in reality and 'keep the drive alive'
- Academia involvement: barriers appear in engineering departments, and many students are only being taught NbS at the graduate level; how can we incorporate this kind of learning at the undergraduate level?

*Examples of Nature-Based Solutions collaborative initiatives that have gone well between NGOs and local governments and/or other sectors here or elsewhere:*

- Compensation and public/private partnerships on bird conservation
- Still Creek
- City of Delta collaborating with Musqueam Nation and streamkeeper community groups
- Surrey Living Dyke project
- Success Factors: Sustained/sustainable funding; dedicated 'point person' or 'community guide' who is the main point of contact for a project; recognition of expertise within members of collaborative networks; communications plans that outline what is to be shared publicly or kept private; community engagement/volunteerism supported by governments
- Challenges: Capacity; late/little/no involvement of Indigenous nations; political cycles changing leadership; colonial governance structures structured towards aggressive timelines and project management frameworks that do not allow for trust and relationship building; maintaining momentum; funding from higher levels of government may not be as progressive; cross-departmental collaboration

*Are there projects you are working on now that could use support/collaboration? What do you need?*

- Regional agriculture project; Iona water treatment plant needs restoration management plan - the ecological plan is being developed alongside the upgrade - need to get NGOs onto mailing list so they can participate in the public engagement opportunities; ecosystem resilience in the Fraser River Delta is critical as we prepare for sea level rise; regulators need to be at the table from beginning to end of a project

#### **Next Steps:**

- Look at opportunities for setting up a central place to communicate and keep updated on initiatives and projects remotely; this could be useful for sharing reports etc. from NGOs and LG involved in the AFER network

- Consider efficient and effective ways to maximize existing expertise in AFER
- Prioritize increased involvement of Indigenous nations or groups in the AFER network; representation is crucial