



Media Release

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For immediate release

yaqan nu?kiy, RDCK, and Province Launch Intergovernmental Working Group to Address Water Scarcity in the Goat River Watershed

Nelson, BC: yaqan nu?kiy (Lower Kootenay Band), the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK), and the Province of British Columbia have launched a tripartite working group to address growing water scarcity challenges in the Goat River Watershed. The Collective Conversations Working Group held its inaugural meeting in Creston on May 28, 2026, marking a significant step forward in water management for the yaqan nu?kiy ?amak?is (Creston Valley).

For the purposes of this work, the Goat River Watershed is defined by the broader drainage area encompassing Arrow Creek, Duck Creek, a portion of the Creston Flats and reaches to the US border, including the communities of Lister and Canyon. [Click here for a reference map.](#)

The working group brings together staff representatives from yaqan nu?kiy, the RDCK, and multiple Provincial ministries, including the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry of Forests, and the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. The group is co-chaired by the RDCK and the Province's Watershed Stewardship and Security Branch.

"Water in the Goat River Watershed supports all beings - in communities, on farms, and within aquatic ecosystems," said Aimee Watson, RDCK Board Chair. "By bringing everyone to the table, we work towards our collective goals to support and protect a healthy watershed."

"Water has always been central to who we are and how we care for this land," said Nasukin Jason Louie, yaqan nu?kiy. "This working group is an opportunity bring yaqan nu?kiy knowledge and values into decision about the Goat River Watershed in a way that honours our responsibilities as stewards. We look forward to working alongside our partners toward a future where the health of the water and the health of our community are understood as one."

The Working Group is structured as a recommendation-making body. Its role is to develop joint recommendations for consideration by the respective leadership of each partner, including yaqan nu?kiy Nasukin and Council, the RDCK Board of Directors, and relevant Provincial ministries. Decision-making authority remains with each party's leadership.

Residents of the Goat River Watershed are encouraged to stay informed about the process through the RDCK's public engagement platform, <https://engage.rdck.ca/projects/goatwatershed>. On the site residents can take the Water Sustainability Planning Survey and read the "What We Heard Engagement Report" that captures what was heard through engagement carried out in 2025 and into early 2026. Improvement districts, community members and industry stakeholders will also have the opportunity to share their perspectives at an in-person engagement session July 24 at the [Riverside Wilderness Park](#) from 9:30 am to

11:30 am. Input gathered through these processes will contribute to the working group's discussions on watershed values and the desired future state of the Goat River Watershed.

At the inaugural meeting, Collective Conversations Working Group members endorsed a draft Terms of Reference, later received by the RDCK Board at the June Board meeting and a 2026 Workplan outlining a six-month series of structured conversations. The workplan is organized around three milestones: establishing the working group and defining watershed values; describing the current state and the desired future state of the watershed; and evaluating available water management tools. The goal is to develop joint recommendations by October 2026.

“Water in the Goat River watershed supports communities, agriculture, ecosystems, and local livelihoods,” said Randene Neil, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. “By bringing governments together at one table, we can build a shared understanding of the challenges facing the watershed and develop solutions that support people, the environment and future generations.”

Context and Background

The Goat River Watershed has experienced recurring seasonal low flows, with some years seeing near-zero flow conditions that stress domestic water supplies, agricultural operations, and aquatic habitat. Community engagement carried out over the past two years by RDCK and yaqan nu?kiy, including a survey that received approximately 220 responses from Creston Valley residents, consistently identified water scarcity as a priority concern and supported a collaborative, multi-government approach to finding solutions.

The working group process will explore a wide range of available tools and will operate consistent with the principles of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The working group has committed to recognizing Indigenous science and knowledge as inherently valid and to respecting yaqan nu?kiy cultural protocols and governance structures throughout the process.

About the Goat River Watershed Collective Conversations Working Group

The Collective Conversations Working Group is a tripartite body co-led by yaqan nu?kiy (Lower Kootenay Band), the Regional District of Central Kootenay, and the Province of British Columbia. The working group develops joint recommendations on water management for the Goat River Watershed for consideration by each party's leadership. The group's mandate is expected to conclude by October 2026. Outcomes and updates will be shared publicly as the work progresses.

Incorporated in 1965, the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) is a local government that serves 60,000 residents in 11 electoral areas and nine member municipalities. The RDCK provides more than 180 services, including community facilities, fire protection and emergency services, grants, planning and land use, regional parks, resource recovery and handling, transit, water services and much more. For more information about the RDCK, visit www.rdck.ca.

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