



## Mission Possible: Implementing a New Culture for Urban Watershed Protection and Restoration in the Salish Sea Bio-Region

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A DECADE AGO, the Province of British Columbia made a conscious decision to follow an educational rather than prescriptive path to change practices for the use and conservation of land and water. Practical research and new tools are now enabling engineers, planners and other disciplines to do business differently. Case study experience demonstrates that creating change on the ground revolves around four basic ingredients:

1. Start with a unifying concept that makes sense (e.g. 'design with nature' goal);
2. Develop a science-based and pragmatic methodology for undertaking technical analyses (e.g. water balance);
3. Create a web-based calculation tool that has a user-friendly interface and is accessible to anyone (e.g. Water Balance Model for British Columbia); and
4. Implement a multi-audience outreach and professional development program that is defined by consistent messaging (e.g. "convening for action").

A fifth ingredient is patience. It takes time to incrementally change the practitioner culture in the local government setting and implement a new way of doing business.

Released in June 2010, *Beyond the Guidebook 2010: Implementing a New Culture for Urban Watershed Protection and Restoration in British Columbia* describes how a 'convening for action' philosophy has taken root in British Columbia. Bringing together local government practitioners in neutral forums has enabled implementers to collaborate as regional teams. Their action-oriented focus has resulted in 'how to do it' examples of rainwater management and green infrastructure that help decision-makers visualize what 'design with nature' policy goals look like on the ground.

Systemic change is possible, as the case study experience in *Beyond the Guidebook 2010* demonstrates, even in the complicated sphere of planning for use and conservation of land. It requires understanding and pursuit of holistic outcomes. The Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference provides a timely opportunity to inform and educate planners, engineers and other professionals on both sides of the Canada-USA border. It is about turning the whole game around to 'design with nature' as a consistent approach to development and redevelopment, urban infrastructure practices, and protection/restoration of stream and watershed health. When the land ethic changes for the better, the health of the Salish Sea will be improved.

The MISSION POSSIBLE session will be conducted as a Forum; and will draw on the resources of the CONVENING FOR ACTION NETWORK to provide an engaging program. The Partnership for Water Sustainability is at the hub of that network.

The tag-line for the Forum is "The Province and the Partnership: Collaboration in Action". Through collaboration, objectives are shared across boundaries that normally limit projects. The Partnership is helping the Province implement the Living Water Smart and Green Communities initiatives. This is how we are changing the culture.

The Forum will be structured in two segments. First, we will present information that provides context and sets the scene for a town-hall segment that will follow. We will have a panel of six to represent the Province and Partnership perspectives in a conversational style. The town-hall segment will then be conducted as a sharing and learning session to engage the audience.