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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Environment

### **Historic new water legislation introduced**

VICTORIA – Environment Minister Mary Polak introduced legislation today that will update and replace B.C.’s century-old Water Act with the new Water Sustainability Act.

Since 2009, the B.C. government has engaged widely, and received suggestions and ideas on an unprecedented scale and quality. This input from individual British Columbians, First Nations organizations and stakeholder groups has helped shape the Water Sustainability Act.

The proposed act will make improvements in seven key areas, to:

- Protect stream health and aquatic environments.
- Consider water in land-use decisions.
- Regulate and protect groundwater.
- Regulate water use during times of scarcity.
- Improve security, water-use efficiency and conservation.
- Measure and report large-scale water use.
- Provide for a range of governance approaches.

The Water Sustainability Act will be brought into effect in spring 2015, once supporting regulations are developed and finalized. The B.C. government is also reviewing its approach to water pricing and has released a set of principles that will help inform a new fee and rental structure to support the new act and sustainable water management.

#### **Quotes:**

##### **Minister of Environment Mary Polak –**

“Modernizing the Water Act was a key commitment in our election platform, and we have delivered. The development of the new Water Sustainability Act is a historic achievement. The act will respond to current and future pressures on our fresh water – including groundwater – and position B.C. as a leader in water stewardship.”

##### **Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Steve Thomson –**

“The Water Sustainability Act is an important step forward. Given our growing population, changing climate and expanding development, we must take concrete steps to ensure our supply of clean fresh water is sustainable. Our generation has a duty and an obligation to be water stewards today, and for the generations that follow.”

**Mark Angelo, rivers chair, Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia –**

“The new Water Sustainability Act modernizes the previous, century-old Water Act, which didn’t reflect today’s norms or values, especially from an environmental perspective. This new legislation is a welcomed, step forward and will improve our ability to better manage and care for our rivers, aquifers and water resources in general.”

**Bruce Ingimundson, managing director, British Columbia Ground Water Association –**

“The B.C. Ground Water Association is very pleased to see the introduction of the Water Sustainability Act in the legislature. This landmark event has been anticipated for some time and we are proud to have been a part of the creation process. The association looks forward to the subsequent development of regulations to bring the new act into force.”

**Paul Kariya, executive director, Clean Energy BC –**

“Clean Energy BC commends Minister Polak and the government for introducing legislation to modernize B.C.’s Water Act. As an industry that has been leading the way in protecting and monitoring aquatic health, our members support the consideration of environmental flows.”

**Learn More:**

To learn more about the Water Sustainability Act, including the principles that will inform new water fees and rentals, please visit: <http://engage.gov.bc.ca/watersustainabilityact/>

**Media**            Media Relations  
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