

THE STATE OF THE BASIN: TRANSITIONING FROM 2008 TO 2012 AND BEYOND

The Selkirk College Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (RDI) is a regional centre of excellence in applied research and information provision focused on strengthening rural communities in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region of British Columbia. The Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute is supported through a partnership between Columbia Basin Trust and Selkirk College. Columbia Basin Trust and Selkirk College recognize that there are collective and mutual benefits to collaboration between CBT's State of the Basin Initiative, Selkirk College's Regional Innovation Chair in Rural Economic Development and the Selkirk Geospatial Research Centre. Each of these has complementary mandates, capacities and resources that serve to support and promote evidence-based planning and decision-making and informed citizen engagement in the Columbia Basin-Boundary Region. The RDI research focus areas include: the State of the Basin, regional rural revitalization, and innovation and knowledge transfer.

STATE OF THE BASIN: DEVELOPING A WELL-BEING INDICATORS MODEL (2006-2010)

In 2006 The Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) responded to long-standing requests for information on social, economic, environmental and other trends in the Basin by launching the State of the Basin Initiative. The State of the Basin Initiative is a model for monitoring and reporting on social, environmental, economic and other community indicators and trends. Resulting from the work of project consultants, a volunteer working group, CBT staff and more than 50 expert advisors, The State of the Basin report and interactive website was released in 2008. In order to support the use of available information the State of the Basin initiative also included the provision of support to individuals and communities interested in understanding and using the data in addition to the launch of three pilot projects¹ focused on advancing the use of information in planning.

Framework for Well-Being in the Basin



The purpose of the 2008 State of the Basin Initiative was to test the concept of indicator reporting in the Basin by presenting a sample of credible, locally relevant information. The following guiding principles were used to develop the State of the Basin indicator reporting model for the Basin:

- **Meaningful** to Basin communities by reflecting what is important to residents and illuminating the diversity of the Basin;
- **Add value** by building on and going beyond data and information that is readily available;
- **Credible** by using accurate, trustworthy information sources and clear presentation;
- **Accessible** by providing easy access to understandable information; and
- **Affordable** by using indicators that can be monitoring with reasonable resources over time.

A total of 29 indicators were presented in the 2008 report and were organized according to the above Well-Being in the Basin Framework. A State of the Basin Final Consultant's Report was produced in 2009 and a State of the Basin Pilot Projects Final Consultant's Report was produced in 2010. Each report includes lessons learned and recommendations.

¹ The Columbia Lake Sensitive Habitat Inventory Mapping Project, the State of Rossland Project, and Kaslo & District Community Forest Long Term Plan Project.

STATE OF THE BASIN: RESEARCHING BEST PRACTICES & LESSONS LEARNED (2011-2012)

The Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (RDI) assumed responsibility for the State of the Basin Initiative in the Fall of 2011. Best practices and lessons learned research focused on indicator reporting models was conducted from September 2011 to September 2012. This research included a literature review of well-being and sustainable development indicator reporting models and follow-up interviews with key stakeholders from other regional indicator reporting initiatives to better understand lessons learned from other jurisdictions. All related documents from the 2008 State of the Basin initiative (consultant reports, bulletins, pilot project reports, etc.) were included in the literature review and interviews were also conducted with lead consultants and technical advisors from the 2008 initiative.

Coinciding with the release of the 2012 State of the Basin Snap Shot report a survey was created to better understand the needs and capabilities of those who will be using information presented in State of the Basin reports and related products. The purpose of the survey is to better understand lessons learned from the 2008 initiative, especially as it relates to the selection, collection and use of indicator data. The survey will also collect feedback on the proposed new well-being and sustainable development framework. In addition, a series of literature review focused on economic, social, cultural and environmental indicators were produced and follow up interviews with 2008 State of the Basin stakeholders are being conducted as needed.

STATE OF THE BASIN: FUTURE RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2012 AND BEYOND)

Indicators presented in the 2008 State of the Basin report were updated and presented in a State of the Basin 2012 Snap Shot report using the 2008 Well-Being in the Basin framework. The 2012 Long Report is expected to be released in the Fall 2013 and will include data from Census 2011. The State of the Basin web-based indicators 'Digital Basin' portal is expected to launch early in 2014. Export, compare and collaboration functionality is expected to be added in 2014.

Drawing on emerging models identified through the literature review of best practices in indicators reporting, it is recommended that 2008 indicators be refined and re-framed using an integrated 'well-being' and 'sustainability' framework for the 2013 and future reports and the web-based portal.

Proposed Draft Framework for Well-Being & Sustainable Development in the Basin-Boundary Region

State of the Basin Indicators Framework





In addition to developing new indicators to support a well-balanced, comprehensive and locally relevant model, it is anticipated the following elements will form the foundation of a State of the Basin Research & Development Plan:

- Prioritize the analysis of interrelationships between economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions;
- Include both objective and perceptual indicator data and conduct follow-up research to explore differences between objective and perceptual measures;
- Focus groups with key economic, social, cultural and environmental stakeholder groups to better understand their information needs and research capacity (ability to collect & use related information);
- Identify opportunities for local data collection by key stakeholder groups;
- Provide direct research support, standardized data templates, training and support materials focused on the collection and use of indicators data;
- Promote and facilitate the sharing of information and best practices across key stakeholder groups;
- Create an interactive, web-based geospatial indicators portal including compare, export, upload & sharing functionality;
- Include the Boundary area in addition to the Columbia Basin Trust defined 'Basin' catchment area;
- Include 'corridor' level analysis (i.e. West Kootenay, Boundary, Southeast Kootenay, Elk Valley, Columbia Valley)
- Release annual State of the Basin reports and ongoing Trends Analysis research reports; and
- Explore opportunities to link the State of the Basin Initiative with K-12 and post-secondary student learning.

Now that Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Pillar Lead researchers have completed the series of indicator literature reviews in the Spring 2013 they are now engaging stakeholder groups in helping to refine plans for future indicator development. Pillar Lead Researchers will also begin to provide direct support to key stakeholder groups in the collection and use of related indicator data early in 2014.

For more information on the State of the Basin, to provide feedback or to stay informed please:

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