

2021 NWT Water Stewardship Strategy

Progress Review



Government of
Northwest Territories

Gouvernement des
Territoires du Nord-Ouest



If you would like this information in another official language, call us.

English

Si vous voulez ces informations dans une autre langue officielle, contactez-nous.

French

Kĩspin ki nitawihtĩn ē nĩhĩyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsinān.

Cree

Thchq yatı k'ęę. Dı wegodı newq dè, gots'o gonede.

Thchq

ʔerihł'ıs Dēne Sųhné yatı t'a huts'elkēr xa beyáyatı theʔą ʔat'e, nuwe ts'ēn yółtı.

Chipewyan

Edı gondı dehghá got'ie zhatié k'ęę edatł'éh enahddhę nıde naxets'ę edahı.

South Slavey

K'áhshó got'ıne xədə k'é hederı ʔedihtł'é yerıniwę nıde dúle.

North Slavey

Jii gwandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ijąhch'uu zhit yinothtan ji', diits'at ginohkhii.

Gwich'in

Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaqluta.

Inuvialuktun

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Inuktitut

Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.

Inuinnaqtun

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Checking Our Progress

2021 NWT Water Stewardship Strategy Progress Review Summary

Northern Voices, Northern Waters: NWT Water Stewardship Strategy (the Water Strategy) is a made-in-the-North strategy developed collaboratively with **water partners** in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Since the first version of the Water Strategy was released in 2010, three five-year Action Plans have been developed to guide the implementation of the Water Strategy.

The current Action Plan for 2021-2025 is organized into four components and includes 86 Action Items, 50 Performance Indicators and 23 Keys to Success. The *2021 NWT Water Stewardship Strategy Progress Review* is the first annual progress review under the current Action Plan and summarizes the status of all the 2021 and ongoing Action Items. It also provides examples of performance indicator results. The review is based on survey responses from water partners, communication and meetings with lead water partners, document review and database analytics. The goal is to fully implement the Action Plan by the end of 2025, contributing to the vision and goals of the Water Strategy.

Water partners include organizations who have a role in water stewardship, including all levels of governments, Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, regulatory boards, non-governmental organizations, academia, industry, and NWT communities.

Comprehensive report on actions

Data for each Performance Indicator and Action Item are recorded in a comprehensive spreadsheet available at **www.nwtwaterstewardship.ca**

The Four Components

Water Strategy activities are organized into four components: Work Together, Know and Plan, Use Responsibly and Check Our Progress.

Specific Action Items and Performance Indicators under each of these four components identify what work needs to be done and how success will be evaluated.

CHECK OUR PROGRESS

Actions ensure water partners are moving towards achieving the Water Strategy vision by transparently reporting on progress. This includes using progress checks to assess and adjust actions in other component areas.

WORK TOGETHER

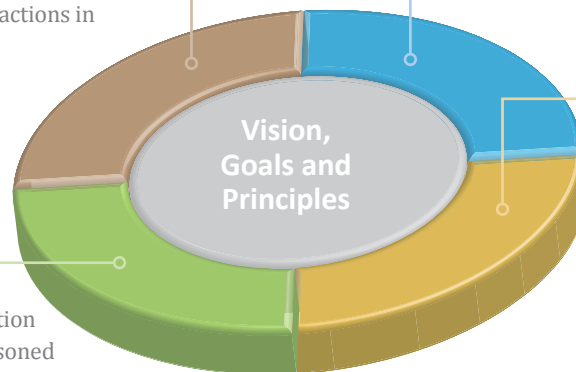
Actions ensure a cooperative environment to support **water managers** and water partners in sharing information, building capacity, and working together.

KNOW AND PLAN

Actions ensure the implementation of multidisciplinary aquatic monitoring and research programs. These programs consider Indigenous, local, and western scientific knowledge and use of this information in the planning and implementation of water stewardship activities.

USE RESPONSIBLY

Actions ensure water managers have the information necessary to make well-reasoned decisions.



Water managers include any government, agency or regulatory board that has a role in decision-making processes.



Indigenous Steering Committee

The Indigenous Steering Committee (ISC) guided the development of the Water Strategy and Action Plans and continues to guide the implementation of the Water Strategy, playing a key role in the Strategy's success. This guidance ensures implementation activities represent the values of Indigenous governments and people, while respecting Aboriginal and Treaty rights. The ISC includes representatives from the following Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations:

- Acho Dene Koe First Nation
- Dehcho First Nations
- Gwich'in Tribal Council
- Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
- Kátł'odeeche First Nation
- Nahanni Butte Dene Band
- North Slave Métis Alliance
- Northwest Territory Métis Nation
- Sahtú Secretariat Incorporated
- Salt River First Nation
- Tłıchǫ Government
- Akaitcho Territory Government (Observer)

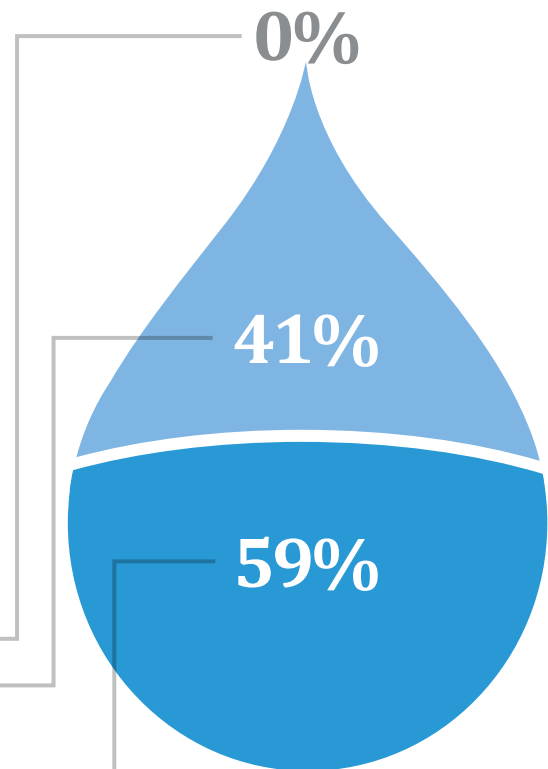
Action Item Status Overview

Progress on Action Items was assessed based on the following criteria:

- **Not started**
Activities towards completion of the Action Item have not started and no deliverables currently exist.
- **In progress**
Activities towards completion of the Action Item have begun and there are deliverables; however, there is still work to do.
- **Complete**
The Action Item is complete and information and deliverables are available to water partners.
- **Complete for reporting period and ongoing**
The Action Item is complete for the current reporting period; however, the Action Item requires ongoing work.

The percentages shown indicate overall progress for all 41 “2021 and ongoing” Action Items. And the 2021-2025 Action Plan has a total of 86 action items to be completed by the end of 2025.

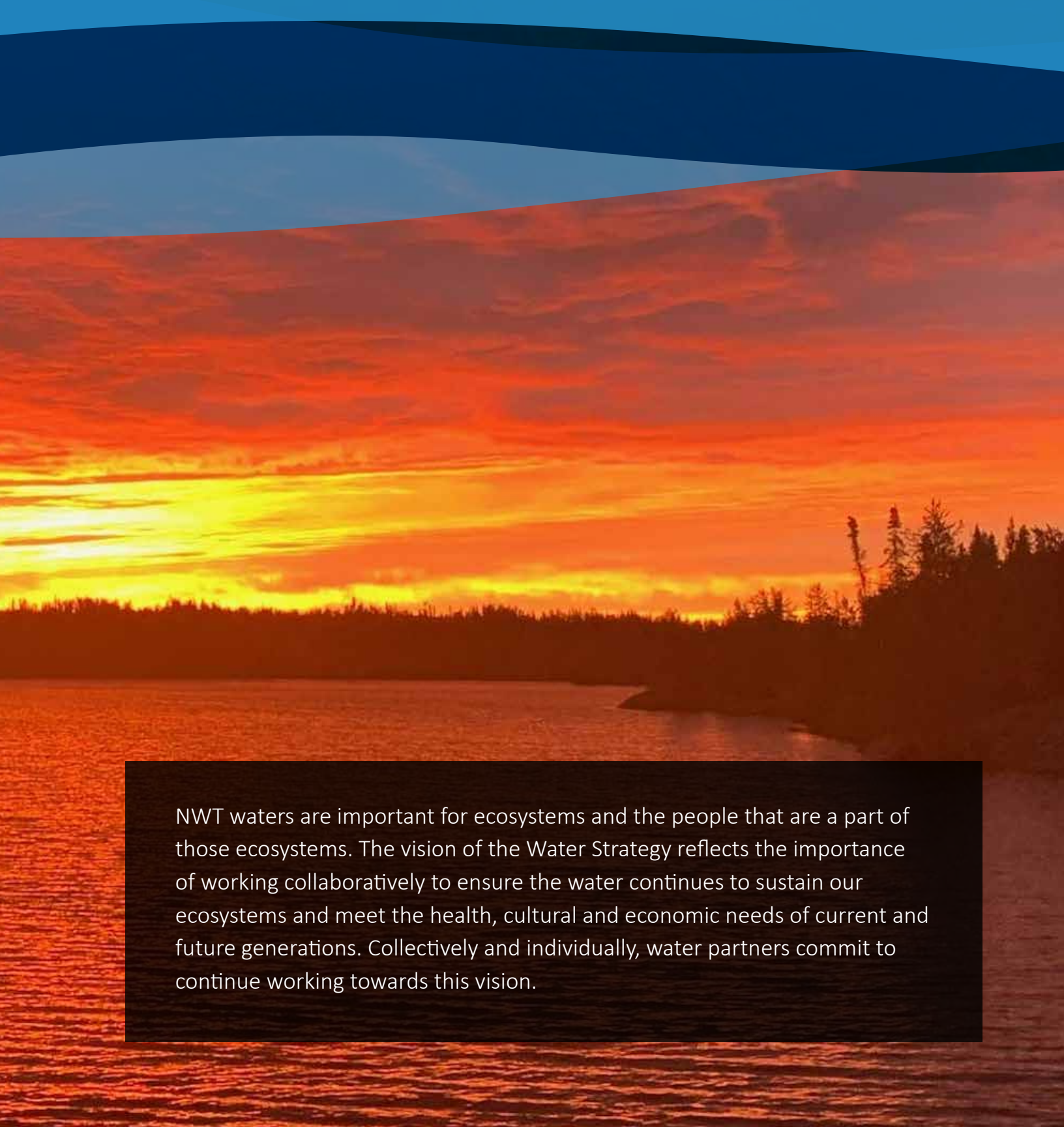
- Not started (0%)
- In progress
- Complete (N/A)
- Complete for reporting period and ongoing





OUR VISION

The waters of the Northwest Territories will remain clean, abundant and productive for all time.

The background image is a vibrant sunset over a calm body of water. The sky is filled with horizontal bands of orange, red, and yellow, with some darker clouds catching the low light. The sun is a bright, glowing orb on the left side of the horizon. The water in the foreground reflects the intense colors of the sky. In the distance, a dark silhouette of a forested shoreline is visible. On the right side, a small peninsula or point of land juts out into the water. At the very top of the image, there is a stylized graphic consisting of two wavy, horizontal bands of blue and dark blue, resembling a wave or a stylized sky element.

NWT waters are important for ecosystems and the people that are a part of those ecosystems. The vision of the Water Strategy reflects the importance of working collaboratively to ensure the water continues to sustain our ecosystems and meet the health, cultural and economic needs of current and future generations. Collectively and individually, water partners commit to continue working towards this vision.

1.0 Work Together

- 1.1** Status of Work Together
- 1.1** Success Story: NWT-Wide Community-Based Water Quality Monitoring Program

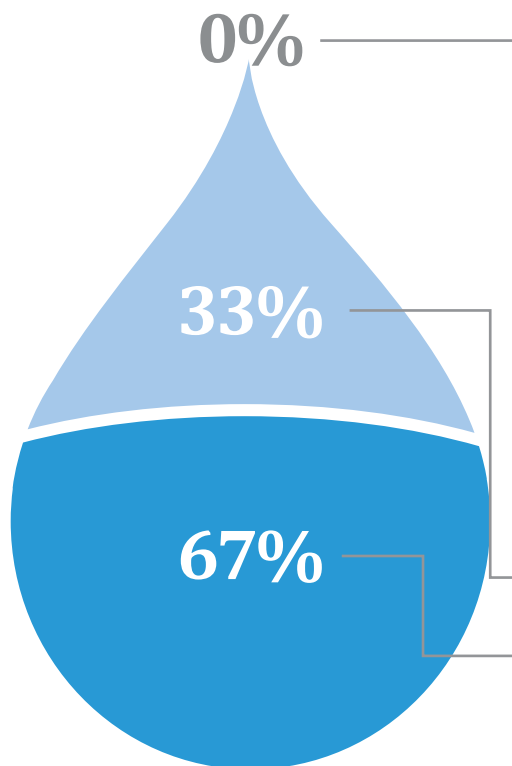


Working Together is about partnerships, communication and engagement, capacity building, leadership training and education, as well as discussions, agreements, and obligations with our neighbouring jurisdictions. Activities under this component ensure that water managers and water partners build and strengthen relationships to collaboratively achieve the vision and goals of the Water Strategy.

Co-design and co-management of water-related activities and programs with Indigenous partners are foundational to the NWT's approach to water stewardship to ensure Indigenous and local knowledge and ways of knowing and being are valued and respected. Youth and community engagement is also key to this component. Progress under the Work Together component was assessed for 15 "2021 and ongoing" action items.



1.1 Status of Work Together



Lead Water Partners for Action Items

- Indigenous Steering Committee (ISC)
- Department of Environment and Climate Change, GNWT (ECC)
- All Water Partners
- Academic partners
- Aurora Research Institute (Aurora College/ARI)
- Ecology North
- Dehcho Aboriginal Aquatic Resources and Ocean Management Program (Dehcho AAROM)
- Makeway
- DataStream Initiative (DataStream)

Status of Action Item Progress

- Not started
- In progress
- Complete (N/A)
- Complete for reporting period and ongoing

1.2

Success Story: NWT-Wide Community-Based Water Quality Monitoring Program

One example of a water stewardship activity that contributes to partnership, engagement and capacity building is the NWT-Wide Community-Based Water Quality Monitoring (CBM) Program. This program relates to Action items 1.1 C.2, 1.1 C.3 and 1.3 A.2, as well as 2.2 C.2 and 2.2 C.3, in the Action Plan.

Partnerships with communities, building capacity and looking at water from different perspectives to understand how to maintain water quality continue to be important parts of the CBM Program.

The year 2021 marked the 10th anniversary of the CBM Program. While the pandemic's gathering restrictions meant the program's partners were not able to gather and celebrate the program's anniversary, water sampling and hands-on training occurred as usual in 20 NWT communities. In normal times, annual CBM workshops and gathering with community monitors and partners are a great opportunity to build relationships among community members and ECC staff from the Water Monitoring and Stewardship Division and the relationship building and exchange of knowledge support meaningful program delivery during field seasons. Feedback from community monitors during the workshops allows us to improve the development and implementation of the CBM Program.

Starting in 2020, citizen science kits were shared with communities as an easy-to-use tool to independently support water stewardship efforts outside of scheduled community monitoring visits. The kits assist in visualizing water quality changes because they provide a colorimetric scale for 10 water quality parameters. When CBM program staff go out to the communities, they offer these kits to community members to increase water stewardship capacity across the NWT. Users can

upload results directly to the Water Rangers open website which is automatically uploads the results to Mackenzie DataStream, a source for NWT water monitoring data.

ECC is working to strengthen the Indigenous knowledge component of the CBM Program. One way the program is trying to do that is by updating field sheets to include oral history of where, when, and why specific sampling locations are chosen. Open communication allows parties to ask questions and understand the significance of why sampling is done, and also allows for a two-way approach, comfortably engaging, listening, and connecting.

Partnership with communities, building capacity and looking at water from different perspectives to understand how to maintain water quality continue to be important parts of the CBM Program.



Water sampling on local sites by Catherine Graydon and Laura Krutko, 2022.



Guylaine Ross and Robin Catholique using the citizen science kit in Lutsel K'e, NWT.

2.0 Know and Plan

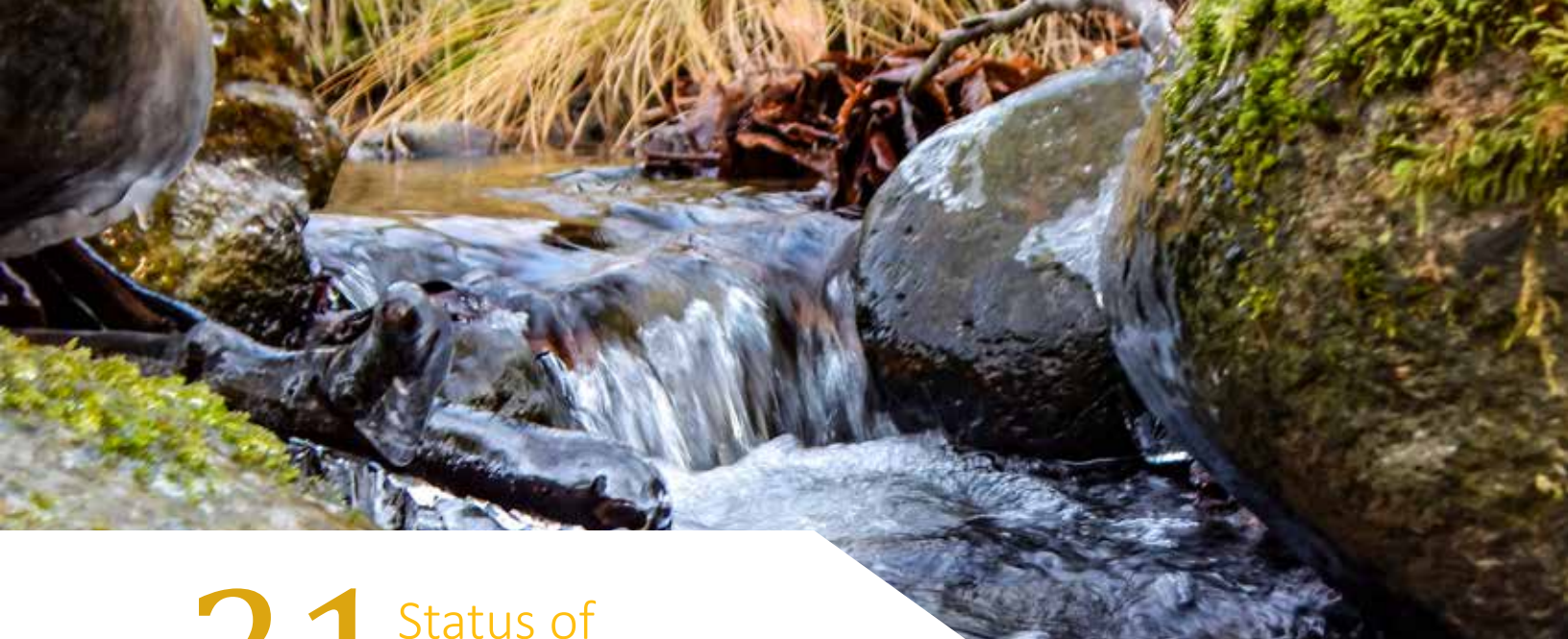
2.1 Status of Know and Plan

2.2 Success Story: Mackenzie DataStream

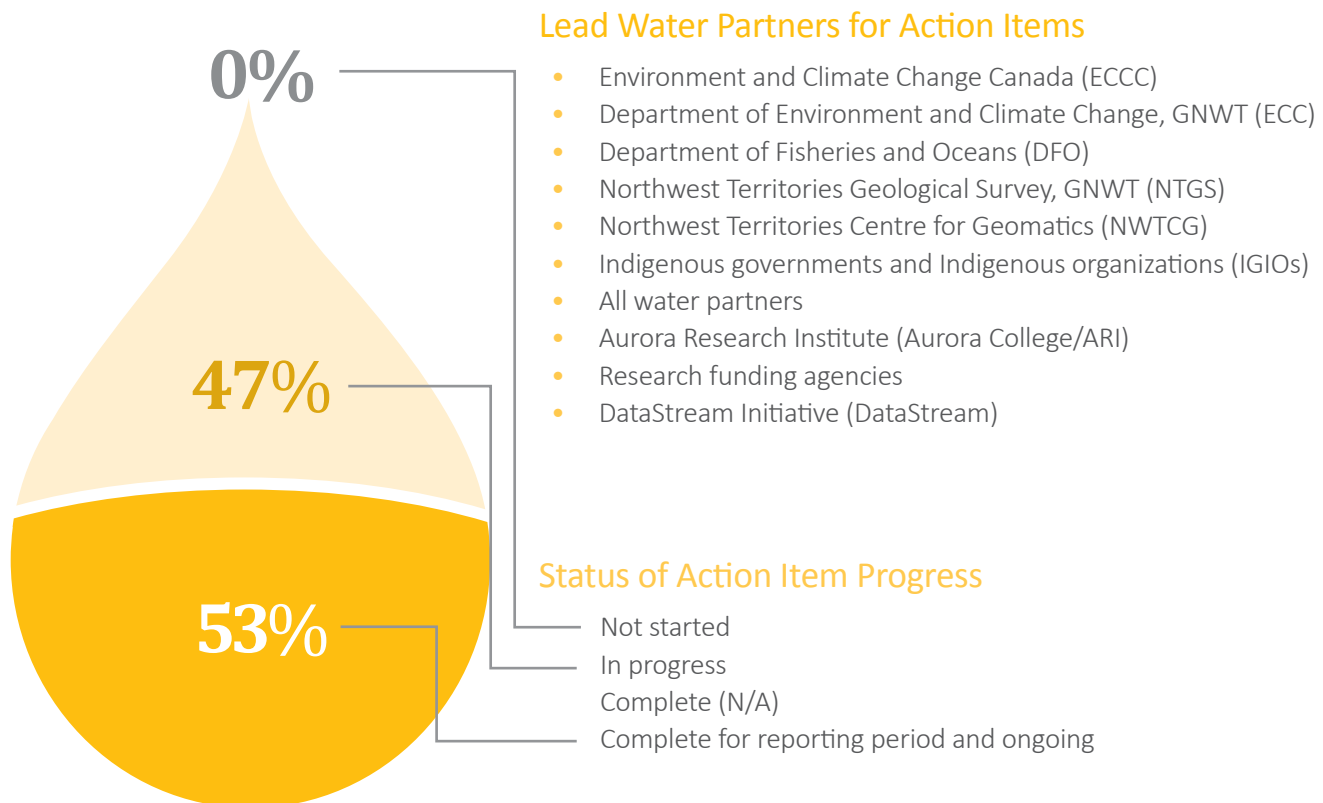


Under the Know and Plan component, water partners and community members work together to build knowledge over time and deepen their understanding of natural processes. Building knowledge about the NWT's aquatic ecosystems requires ongoing monitoring, analyses, reporting and communication. Applying that gained knowledge is critical for the protection of the aquatic environment.

To ensure that decision-making is based on the best available information, data management and sharing are very important, as a rapidly changing environment requires adaptive decision-making responses. Indigenous knowledge, local knowledge, and western science are all needed to better understand the aquatic environment. Progress under this component was assessed for 15 "2021 and ongoing" action items.



2.1 Status of Know and Plan



2.2

Success Story: Mackenzie DataStream

Mackenzie DataStream is an online portal for accessing and sharing water monitoring results collected by communities, governments and researchers across the NWT and the whole of the Mackenzie River Basin (including Alberta and Northeastern British Columbia). This initiative relates to Action Items 2.1 A.1, 2.2 A.2 and 2.2 C.4 in the Action Plan.

Today Mackenzie DataStream contains over 1.3 million unique water quality observations from more than 2,300 monitoring sites in the basin

The map-based search, data visualization tools, science explainers (information on water quality parameters, what they are, why they matter and how they are measured) and a focus on storytelling through blogs and video help make Mackenzie DataStream and the information it contains accessible to a broad audience.

Since it first launched in 2016, Mackenzie DataStream has continued to grow and improve through input and collaboration with water partners across the territory. Today Mackenzie DataStream contains over 1.3 million unique water quality observations from more than 2,300 monitoring sites in the basin, collected by 56 different communities, governments, and other monitoring programs. We've also seen more people using and accessing the site, with over 4,500 unique visitors between March 2021 and April 2022. In addition, DataStream's *A Monitor's Guide to Water Quality* is becoming a popular educational resource (available both in print and online).



In 2021, DataStream introduced a new and long-requested feature that allows for search and download of specific types of data from across multiple datasets (for example, all mercury data collected in a given watershed) with accompanying information on sample collection and analysis methods. DataStream also hosted a *'Dive into Data' webinar series* to support data management best practices and build connections across the water community.

Between March 2021 to April 2022, a total of seven new datasets were published on Mackenzie DataStream, including the NWT Transboundary Rivers Water Quality Monitoring Program, Smith's Landing First Nation Community Based Monitoring Program, Kaska

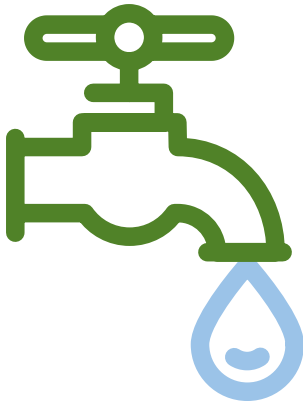
Dena Indigenous Guardians Program, Dehcho Region Water Quality Monitoring, Wood Buffalo National Park, as well as multiple water quality datasets collected through the NWT-Cumulative Impacts Monitoring Program.

The inclusion of community collected data is especially important because local communities know their waterways and are well placed to observe changes in water health. These data can inform water management and protection, and Mackenzie DataStream plays an important role in making sure the data collected by these diverse programs is stored and shared in accessible and usable formats.

3.0

Use Responsibly

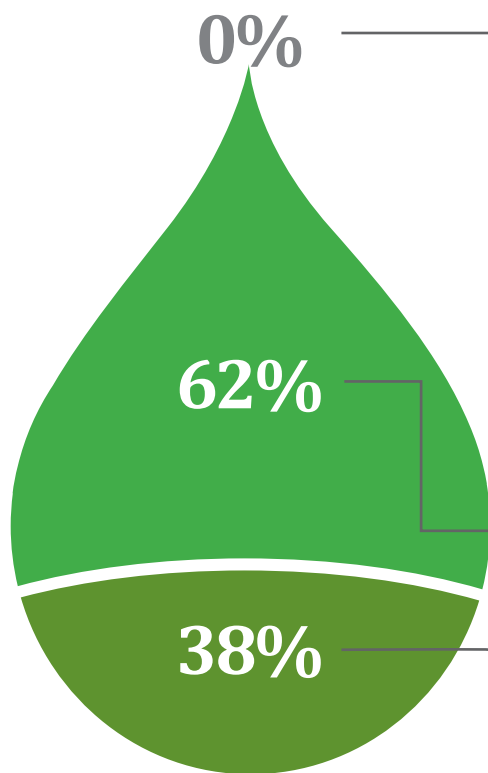
- 3.1 Status of Use Responsibly
- 3.2 Success Story: Land and Water Boards (LWBs)
MVRMA Workshops



Activities under this component support sound water stewardship through the development and implementation of programs, practices and guidance for environmental assessment, regulatory and post-regulatory processes through monitoring, compliance, enforcement, and adaptive management of environmental assessment measures. Strategic actions over the next five years will support the maintenance of water treatment facilities, build community awareness about the quality of community drinking water, strengthen support for community water stewardship, clarify management practices to ensure communities have confidence in their drinking water, waste, and wastewater systems as well as prioritizing and advancing water-related guidelines, policy, and regulations. Progress was assessed for 8 “2021 and ongoing” action items under this component.



3.1 Status of Use Responsibly



Lead Water Partners for Action Items

- Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, GNWT (MACA)
- Department of Environment and Climate Change, GNWT (ECC)
- Land and Water Boards (Gwich'in Land and Water Board, Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board, Sahtú Land and Water Board, and Wek'èezhìi Land and Water Board) and Inuvialuit Water Board (LWBs/IWB)
- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC)
- Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board (MVEIRB)

Status of Action Item Progress

- Not started
- In progress
- Complete (N/A)
- Complete for reporting period and ongoing

3.2

Success Story: Land and Water Boards (LWBs) MVRMA Workshops

The goals of the *Well-being and MVRMA: Making Good Co-management Decisions in the Mackenzie Valley* workshop were to discuss the elements of the co-management system, and to identify opportunities for improvement – all through the lens of well-being.

The LWBs continue to contribute to responsible water stewardship and decision making in the NWT. A valuable way the LWBs do this is through improving understanding the co-management system for land and water in the NWT through annual themed workshops. Each of the workshops aims to build understanding about the integrated co-management system of land and water management in the NWT established through the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act* (MVRMA). This initiative relates to Action Item 3.2 A.1 in the Action Plan.

Building on the success of workshops in previous years, the Land and Water Boards of the Mackenzie Valley, the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board, and territorial and federal government departments and agencies hosted a three-day virtual workshop in March 2021 that focused on the link between well-being and resource development decision making within the Mackenzie Valley. Also, a two-day virtual workshop was held in June 2021 on an update to the LWBs Engagement and Consultation Policy.

The goals of the *Well-being and MVRMA: Making Good Co-management Decisions in the Mackenzie Valley* workshop were to discuss the elements of the co-management system, and to identify opportunities for improvement – all through the lens of well-being. The workshop was a chance to share knowledge, ideas, experiences, and an opportunity for dialogue on existing co-management processes.

For more information, visit *Well-being and MVRMA: Making Good Co-management Decisions in the Mackenzie Valley Summary Report*.

The Engagement and Consultation Policy Update workshop focused on consultation roles and responsibilities as well as proponent engagement and Board procedures. The workshop highlighted the importance of early engagement for enabling dialogue and understanding of local perspectives and history. Overall, the theme of the workshop came down to more active involvement of IGIOs in decision-making, the need for all parties to have a clearer sense of what their responsibilities are, and for those that have fiduciary responsibilities to be at the table and fully understand Indigenous peoples' views and perspectives. A few recommendations from the workshop were that the Policy should align with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action and the discussion about the use of traditional knowledge should start early in the idea stage of a project.

For more information, visit *Engagement and Consultation Policy Update Workshop*.



Photo: Marie Lennie

4.0 Check Our Progress

4.1 Status of Check Our Progress

4.2 Success Story: Water Strategy Implementation Workshops



Regular reviews of Water Strategy implementation ensure progress is being made and adjustments can be made as necessary. Progress is assessed by reviewing the Action Items and Performance Indicators in the 2021-2025 NWT Water Strategy Action Plan. Action Items are activities that specific water partners are leading, and Performance Indicators are intended to measure the outcomes of those activities.

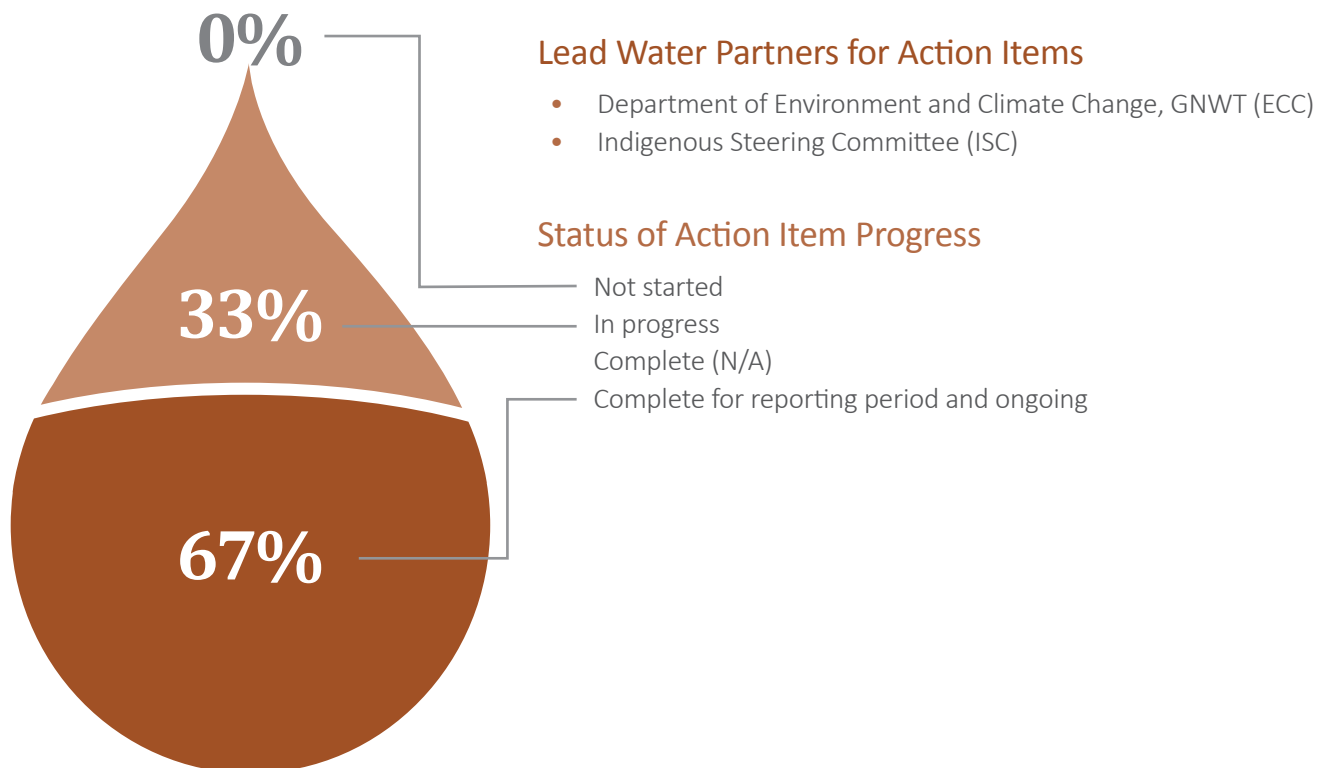
The Water Strategy implementation progress for 2021 is communicated to water partners and the public through the release of 2021 NWT Water Stewardship Strategy Progress Review Summary and comprehensive spreadsheet. Information was gathered through an online survey that was sent to water partners in September 2022 and direct contact with key lead partners. This report is a summary of that information.

An independent evaluation of the Water Strategy's Action Plan takes place every five years and will next occur in 2025/26. The results and recommendations of the independent evaluation will help shape the next five-year Action Plan. Under this component 3 "2021 and ongoing" action items were evaluated to assess progress made.



Photo: Stefan Goodman

4.1 Status of Check Our Progress



4.2

Success Story: Water Strategy Implementation Workshops

In the 2020 independent evaluation of the Water Strategy Action Plan 2016-2020, annual Water Strategy Implementation workshops were seen as the flagship of the Water Strategy and were recognized as valuable for relationship building and maintaining momentum among water partners. In 2021, the 11th and 12th Water Stewardship Strategy Implementation Workshops were both held virtually, due to Covid-19 pandemic. These workshops were an opportunity to share successes, improvements, and remaining challenges.

The 11th Annual Implementation Workshop, held April 13-15, 2021, brought together all water partners under the theme *“Where We Are Now, Strengthening Where We are Going”*. Water partners discussed the important work to date and reflected on priorities and how to continue to work collaboratively to achieve the vision of the Water Strategy through a new five-year Action Plan.



The 12th Annual Water Stewardship Implementation Workshop, held November 16-18, 2021, brought together water and climate change partners for the first time under the theme *"Collaborating for Water"*. The workshop introduced the new Climate Change Advisory Group and began discussions to coordinate research and monitoring programs on Great Slave Lake. The workshop emphasized knowledge sharing as important for continued collaboration to achieve the goals of the Water Stewardship Strategy 2021-25 Action Plan and the 2030 NWT Climate Change Strategic Framework and its Action Plan.



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