



# *Salt Spring Island Water Preservation Society*

## **JULY 2015 NEWSLETTER**

### **Drought and Water Supply Update**

The North Salt Spring Waterworks District has placed a moratorium on new water connections until the weir on St. Mary Lake is raised. But the District made clear that even with the weir, there may not be enough water to allow further subdivision of properties within the District's service area even if zoning allows it. The District's hydrology report states that both St. Mary and Maxwell Lakes are fully allocated.

NSSWD is to be praised for quantifying how much water is available and how many households can be served. Tragically, the moratorium is delaying two long planned affordable housing projects: a CRD project for 80 units on Dean Road and a private housing project on Norton Road. Also held up is the Farmland Trust's farm produce processing and storage center on Beddis Rd. Better planning could have set aside water for these projects years ago.

NSSWD's water supply is very important to SSI since it supplies water to about half of Salt Spring including Ganges, the hospital and many island businesses. Yet, there are no cheap new sources of water for NSSWD. Large construction projects such as moving water to St. Mary Lake from other watersheds, building new reservoirs or a desalination plant are environmentally destructive and expensive. Groundwater is believed to be short on the north part of the island, and groundwater supplies elsewhere are uncertain. Large rainwater collection systems are also expensive.

Islanders need to conserve water to help stretch supplies through this summer. But conservation or rainwater collection won't change the provincial requirement that NSSWD have the capacity to supply a minimum of 550 gallons per day per single family dwelling.

If water districts had the power to determine how much water each household requires, they could serve more households through methods found effective across the southwest US, such as charging high rates to those using large amounts of water (which gives them the incentive to install conservation and rainwater collection systems), providing cash incentives to purchase low-water-use washing machines, low water use toilets and rainwater collection systems. Such methods have been found to be the least expensive and environmentally damaging ways to stretch water supplies.

When those opportunities have been exhausted, the most economical solution is to limit development to what our water sources can supply. But for now, we all need to do what we can to conserve water.

### **SSI Water Preservation Society & Water Council**

Present a

### **Water Conservation Forum**

**Sunday July 19, 2015**

Legion Hall - 2:00 -5:00 pm

A panel of experts on water conservation, rainwater collection, fire mitigation, hydrology & drought levels will answer your questions about our current drought, how to cope and what to expect in the future.



## Public Input on BC's Water Sustainability Act

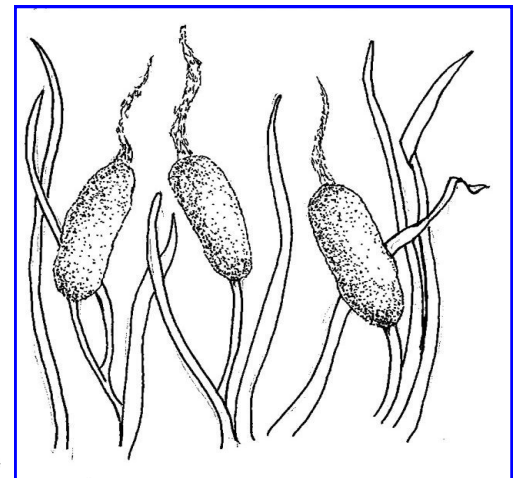
WPS accepted an invitation from the Freshwater Alliance to attend a webinar series to help non-profit organizations and their communities comment on regulations being drafted by the BC government to implement the new Water Sustainability Act. Prior to this act being passed, BC had no regulation of groundwater withdrawals. Any person or business could pump out an unlimited amount of water regardless of the effect on others. Corporations are currently pumping huge amounts of groundwater for sale, for fracking for oil and natural gas and for other industrial uses. Summer shortages of water here on SSI could result in more wells being drilled and there are no protections for neighbours.

Under this new Act passed last year, the BC government will manage surface and groundwater as one resource. Now, we have an opportunity to have a say in the Regulation Development Phase. This is a **HUGE** opportunity for islanders to encourage adoption of strong regulations to protect BC's water.

### Problem Areas - Water Rates

BC government released a new rate structure for water on February 5th as the very first rollout of the Act. The Freshwater Alliance believes there is general consensus that the proposed rates are too low to cover the costs of effectively administering the Act, monitoring withdrawals, and reviewing of licenses etc. Without oversight, the Act's rules will in effect be only recommendations.

WaterWealth: (a non-profit citizen group in the Chilliwack area) has pointed out that information is lacking on groundwater supplies, rates of use, refresh rates and interactions between groundwater and surface water. Plus, climate change is altering patterns of precipitation. Thus, this group objects to the government promising not to change the fees for the next 30 years!



Cattails

While WaterWealth applauds the government for moving in the right direction, it also asks British Columbians to join them in telling the province that these water rates must be reviewed in the next few years, and again periodically, to ensure that the new Water Sustainability Act is indeed sustainable.

Over the summer, your Water Preservation Society will be publicizing these and other issues regarding the Water Act. In the Fall/Winter of 2015, we will be focusing on the regulations needed to authorize and manage groundwater use.

### What you can do

But right now, we ask that you write to the Provincial government to urge that water rates be reviewed periodically and not set for 30 years, that fees be set to reflect the true cost for the government to implement and enforce its Water Act regulations, and that controls on groundwater withdrawals be considered for water short areas like the Gulf Islands.

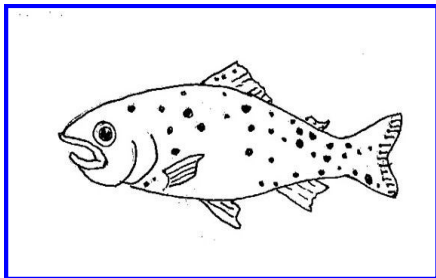
Direct letters to the Honorable Mary Polak, Minister of the Environment, Parliament Buildings, Victoria, BC V8V 1X4. Or send an email to [mary.polak.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:mary.polak.mla@leg.bc.ca). If you would like to help WPS by writing a letter to the editor for a local or provincial newspaper, please contact WPS at [ssiwps@gmail.com](mailto:ssiwps@gmail.com) or 250-537-2883.



## St. Mary Lake Management Plan

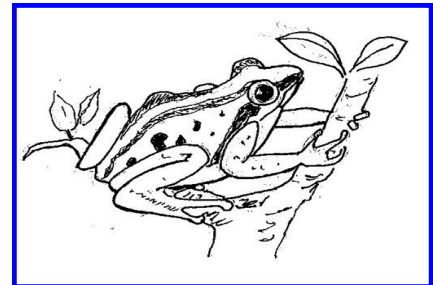
Your WPS Board has been participating in the SSI Watershed Protection Authority's (SSIWPA) project to create a management plan to address blooms of toxin-producing cyanobacteria at St. Mary Lake. Maxine Leichter and Rodney Polden (now replaced by Usha Rautenbach) have been representing WPS members on a Public Advisory Committee (PAC). We and other PAC members have been urging that riparian areas and native species be protected, that public education funds would be spent more effectively if guided by social science research, and that there be outreach to watershed residents and support for them getting more involved.

The SSIWPA Technical Committee has been conducting research for the past year. A surprising finding was that of the four septic systems monitored, none were contributing phosphorus to the lake meaning it is unlikely that septic systems are contributing to the blooms. No quick fixes were identified and therefore several types of educational activities are proposed. Studies will continue including measuring phosphorus inputs from streams and ditches. The Management Plan will be on the SSIWPA website ([ssiwatersheds.ca](http://ssiwatersheds.ca)) under "publications" on July 17th. Materials about the Plan will be at the Library July 17th through August 14th. Shannon Cowan, SSIWPA coordinator, will be at various public venues in July and August with information on the Plan. Check the SSIWPA website for details or contact WPS at [ssiwps@gmail.com](mailto:ssiwps@gmail.com) or 537-1577.



Cutthroat trout

This newsletter features wetland plants and animals drawn by Linda Steager.



Red-legged frog

### Why your newsletter is late

Are you wondering why your newsletter is late? It is because more and more tasks are falling to a very small group of board members and we cannot keep up. Over the past year, two valuable volunteers have not been able to continue their tasks. We greatly appreciate the work they did for many years. Now it is time for someone new to help.

We need someone to tabulate our receipts from Country Grocer. This is an easy job that only takes a few hours a month, but is an important source of income for us. We also need a volunteer to layout our newsletter. This person doesn't have to write any articles, only insert them into our design format.

If there is some other way in which you would like to contribute, please let us know.

Many of you have told us how much you appreciate getting our newsletter and the other work that we do, so please consider lending us a hand. Email us at [ssiwps@gmail.com](mailto:ssiwps@gmail.com) or call 537-1577

- Maxine Leichter



### OUR EXECUTIVE

|                    |                 |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| President          | Maxine Leichter |
| Secretary          | Penny Polden    |
| Treasurer          | John Borst      |
| Directors-at-Large | Nolan Magnus    |
|                    | Usha Rautenbach |
|                    | Linda Steager   |
|                    | Peter Steager   |

### CONTACT US

**E-mail** [ssiwps@gmail.com](mailto:ssiwps@gmail.com)

**Online** [ssiwaterpreservationsociety.ca](http://ssiwaterpreservationsociety.ca)

Please pick up a Thrifty Smile Card from us.



### MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are only \$15 for individuals or \$30 for a family/couple.

Additional donations are very gratefully received, and help to keep WPS active, effective and working hard to protect our island waters. Tax Receipts are issued.

Please consider providing us with your email address so we can notify you of WPS events that take place between the publication of newsletters.

Current members - Mail membership fee to:

Box 555, Ganges PO, SSI, BC, V8K 2W3.

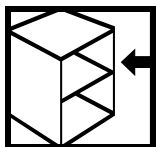
New members - Please request an application form to fill out and return.

**If your mailing label is highlighted, we have not yet received your membership dues for 2015.**



#### SSI Water Preservation Society

Box 555, Ganges PO  
Salt Spring Island, BC  
V8K 2W3



#### COUNTRY GROCER TAPES

Please put your tapes in **BOX #73**