



Salt Spring Island Water Preservation Society

MARCH 2017 NEWSLETTER

Planning for Future Water Supply and Demand on Salt Spring Island: What is being done now?

WPS aims to keep its members informed on what the government and community groups are doing to protect Salt Spring Island's drinking water. Drier and hotter summers over the past 2 years have made it more difficult to stretch supplies over this period, especially for our largest community water system, the North Salt Spring Waterworks District (the District). These shortages have resulted in our government agencies switching their attention from water quality (cyanobacteria blooms) to water quantity.

Actions are being taken by two agencies. The District responded to summer shortages beginning in 2015 by placing a moratorium on all new connections for its water. The moratorium was later relaxed to allow one connection per property on those properties with existing service agreements with the District. This ruled out subdivision on many properties that were zoned for multiple residences or business, including many planned and badly needed affordable housing projects. The sponsors of the project to build 24 affordable units on Drake Rd. are investigating if water can be supplied by another method, presumably a combination of groundwater and rainwater storage.

The District reported that 41 new connections were added in 2016, but there are still over 288 either residential or business parcels that are still entitled to connect. A District newsletter states that if the weir on St. Mary Lake can be raised, there will be enough water for these prior commitments. The District continues to conduct engineering studies to better quantify supply and demand. If the District determines that it can supply more than one additional unit of development per property then the District says it will seek community input regarding which projects should be a priority. The District's actions and plans reflect a commitment to act based on facts.

Facts are harder to come by for groundwater supplies, but there are indications of where we may be headed. About half of the island's residents are either on individual wells or receive water from a small community water system that depends on a lake or groundwater.

Simon Fraser University Professor Diana Allen has been studying groundwater on the Gulf Islands for many years. Her findings are that Salt Spring's groundwater is collected in cracks in rocks or spaces between rocks. The island does not have large aquifers like other places do. Each year these spaces fill up, get drawn out, and if there is sufficient rainfall, they refill the next fall. Experience has shown that groundwater supplies may differ greatly from one property to another. (Continued on page 2)

Salt Spring Island
Water Preservation Society

Annual General Meeting

Monday, April 10, 2017 at 4:00 pm

Salt Spring Island Conservancy
265 Blackburn Rd.

PROXY FORMS NEEDED

**If you will not be able to attend, please
nominate a board member as your proxy
by filling in the enclosed form, and
return it to a board member or to
P.O. Box 555, Ganges Post Office, SSI,
V8K 2W3
or send an email to ssiwps@gmail.com
no later than April 7th.**

Thank you to those of you have renewed your membership. If your mailing label is highlighted, we have not received your renewal yet. If that is you, please consider renewing.



Water shortage planning (Continued)

Yet, current zoning was not based on an assessment of the availability of water. Although actual growth has been slow, the island is zoned for a lot more development than is here now. One example is found in the Lake Management Plan, which states that in 2007, 281 residences or properties were either all or partly within the Cusheon Lake watershed. The zoning, however, would allow up to 703 residences — more than double the residences that existed at that time. Since 2007, some of those residences have been built.

Water shortages exist already. Salt Spring Water Company delivers water to over 100 families whose wells are inadequate for all or part of the year, most of which are in the north of the island. Several small water districts that get their water from wells struggle to stretch the available limited supplies through the summer.

When a property cannot be developed to the extent allowed by zoning, its value may be reduced. It is hard to imagine that the property owners who are thus affected have not complained to the powers that be. One can guess that the pressure is on elected officials to find a way to make subdividing these properties possible.

This brings us to the other agency addressing water supply: the SSI Watershed Protection Authority (the Authority). This agency was formed in 2013 by the Local Trust Committee. The Authority has no power itself; rather, its programs are implemented by one or the other of its member agencies. Last fall, the Authority completed a new management plan for St. Mary Lake (available on its website) and has now begun a review of the existing management plan for Cusheon Lake. That review includes implementation of key recommendations, as well as compilation of new data on water quality in the lake and hydrological information about the watershed.

The drought of 2015 and the District's moratorium on new connections focussed attention on water supply from our lakes and aquifers and on the potential for water shortages in the future. Recognizing the seriousness of this situation, the Authority initiated an Integrated Water Management Programme to address the issue of water supply and demand island-wide. The Programme's objectives include specifying the available water resources and examining conservation and efficiency measures to reduce demand. This programme will be directed by the Authority's two committees composed of volunteers, the Technical Working Group (TWG) and Conservation and Efficiency Working Group (CEWG).

The first tasks in this programme are to collect and analyze water consumption data - from both lakes and groundwater - and statistical modelling of that information to link usage categories with actual consumption numbers. Data on the amount of water available to meet the consumption targets are also being compiled, again for both surface reservoirs and groundwater. Water balance "models" (computer programs) have been created to calculate the dependable yield from the island's lakes, and the Authority's member agencies have contracted Golder Associates to provide an up-to-date assessment of aquifers and available groundwater. The engineers working on this project think that the new data and analytical methods will produce reasonable estimates of how much additional development our water supplies can serve. The new information and models can also be used to determine how various water supply or conservation scenarios will affect supply and demand. The hope is that the cost and feasibility of new water supply or conservation methods will also be evaluated by CEWG. CEWG is looking for more volunteers to help.

WPS members can help our community through this process by being aware of studies that are underway and expressing their preferences when decision time comes.



Sign welcoming you to Channel Ridge and WPS footpaths



Help Save Fraser's Thimble Farms Nursery

A group of islanders is raising funds to help Thimble Farms nursery to increase its rainwater storage so it can stay in business. Several dry summers have caused the farm's municipal water supply to be reduced. The owners of Thimble Farms have built ponds and rainwater collection systems, but they need more rainwater collection than they can afford to build on their own. Thimble Farms nursery specializes in rare and native plants and trees and makes them available to locals and across the province.

To support this cause, make your cheque out to "Thimble Farms Rainwater Storage Fund" and deposit it in Island Savings Account No 2555746. No tax receipts will be issued. For more information, contact: Sharon Bywater 537-5000, Linda Gilkeson 537-2503, or Nina Raginsky 537-4515.



Cusheon Lake after a snowstorm
Photo by Rodney Polden

If you are unable to attend the AGM, please fill in and return the Proxy Voting Form below. WPS bylaws require 25% of members to be present or represented by proxy to conduct an Annual General Meeting.

PROXY VOTING FORM

Proxy for the Salt Spring Island Water Preservation Society Annual General Meeting.

I/We (print name/s) _____, member (s) in good standing of the Salt Spring Island Water Preservation Society do hereby appoint (print name of a current Society Board Member who will attend) _____ to represent me/us, and to vote on my/our behalf at the WPS AGM meeting. I authorize this proxy to be valid for ____ 1 year, ____ 2 years ____ 3 years

Signature (s): _____ Date: _____

*If you will not be able to attend this year's AGM, please nominate a board member as your proxy by filling in, signing and returning this form to
PO Box 555 Ganges, Salt Spring Island, B.C. V8K 2W3,
give to a Board member, or email to ssiwps@gmail.com
no later than April 7th*



OUR EXECUTIVE

President	Maxine Leichter
Treasurer	Peter Steager
Secretary	Usha Rautenbach
Directors-at-Large	Nolan Magnus Ian Peace

CONTACT US

E-mail ssiwps@gmail.com

Online ssiwatpreservationsociety.ca

COUNTRY GROCER TAPES

Please put your tapes in box #73

Request a Smile Card to donate through your purchases at Thrifty

MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are \$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.

Current members - mail membership fee to:

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

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

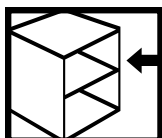
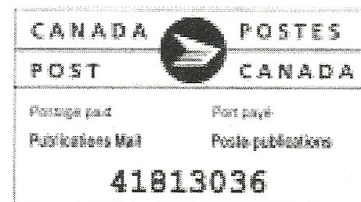
If your name is highlighted on your newsletter, it indicates that you have not yet renewed your membership for 2017. Please consider renewing soon.



SSI Water Preservation Society

Box 555, Ganges PO

Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 2W3



COUNTRY GROCER TAPES

Please put your tapes in Box 73