



Salt Spring Island Water Preservation Society

October 2015 NEWSLETTER

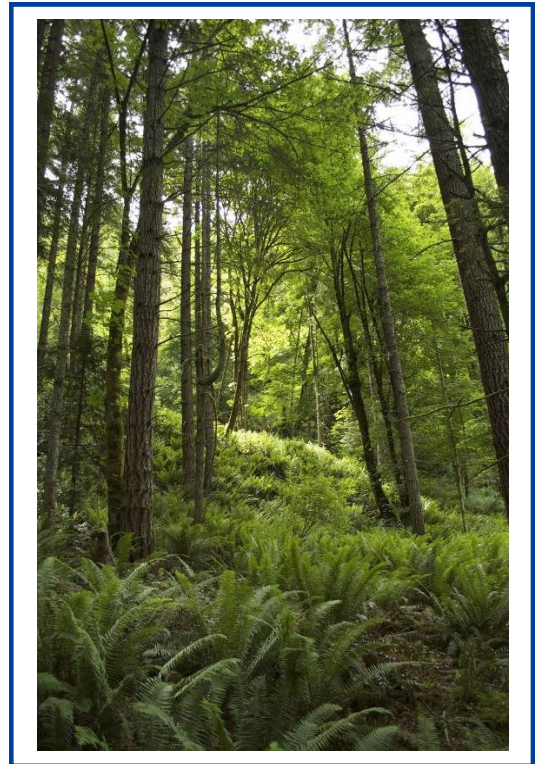
The Society Has Been Sued

In September the Water Preservation Society was served with a lawsuit demanding, among other things, that the WPS return 272 acres of St. Mary Lake watershed to Channel Ridge Properties. The lawsuit, legally known as a Notice of Civil Claim, was filed by Paradigm Mortgage Investment Corporation (mortgage holder of Channel Ridge Properties) and Channel Ridge Properties Ltd. Also sued were the North Salt Spring Waterworks District (NSSWD), the Islands Trust, and the Province.

The lawsuit refers to an agreement/covenant signed by these parties in 1986, which had among its provisions a promise by NSSWD to supply Channel Ridge Properties with water, and a promise by Channel Ridge Properties to transfer 272 acres of forested watershed land to WPS. The lawsuit claims that NSSWD isn't keeping its promise to supply the water and therefore the WPS lands should be returned to the developer.

As many of you know, Channel Ridge Properties went bankrupt in August of 2012. Paradigm Mortgage claims that there was a purchaser for the land, who backed out because of the current moratorium on new water connections within the NSSWD service area, which includes Channel Ridge.

The 272 acres of forested slopes to the west of St. Mary Lake were transferred by Channel Ridge to WPS in three portions. Over the years WPS has worked hard to keep these vital watershed lands in as pristine a condition as possible, which is no easy task given that there is public access to this area.



WPS Watershed Lands

Much of the WPS land is very steep. However, there are a few areas that are relatively level with stunning views of St. Mary Lake and the mainland beyond. The rest of the land might be logged as it has been in the past. If this happens it could be devastating for St. Mary Lake, which has been plagued with blooms of toxin-producing cyanobacteria due to high levels of phosphorus. Land-clearing in the watershed could result in rains carrying more phosphorus into the lake making for more toxic blooms.

Senior lawyers at Woodward and Company in Victoria are handling WPS's defence. They have been lawyers for WPS since the early 1980s, and are familiar with its history. WPS thinks that the plaintiffs' legal argument for the return of the watershed lands is weak. However, WPS has to defend itself or possibly lose the lands. Legal costs could be \$50,000 or more depending on how long the legal wrangling goes on. One reason for the costs being high is that the case was filed in Kelowna, and our lawyers may have to travel there to appear in court. (This article continues on page 2.)



WPS Sued (continued)

These costs could easily exhaust WPS' funds, carefully saved over many years from member donations and special bequests, including from one of our founders Tom Gossett. The WPS Board had planned to save this money to use for caring for this land and in some cases for restoring disturbed areas to their natural condition, all to protect St. Mary Lake drinking water.

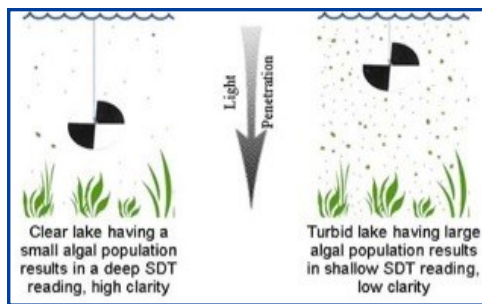
The WPS Board of Directors is taking this challenge very seriously and will strive to do its utmost to maintain ownership of these lands, which are a precious resource for the entire Salt Spring Island community. In the 33 years since its formation in 1982, WPS has stood up to many who needed to be reminded of the importance of our drinking water sources. An example would be the long and successful battle WPS fought to keep gasoline-powered boats off of our drinking-water lakes.

With your help WPS intends to fight this battle with the same seriousness of purpose. Our lawyers have submitted an initial response to the claim, which states that we do not believe the conditions for the return of the land to the developer as set out in the covenant have been met. If you would like a copy of the WPS response, please email us at ssiwps@gmail.com.

Adventures Dealing with a Cyanobacterial Bloom on Cusheon Lake

On October 9th, when this article was written, on October 9th, Cusheon Lake had had a bloom since August 31st. At that time the visible depth measured by a Secchi disk dropped from 3.2 metres to 2.4 metres, which indicates increased algae and/or bacteria in the water. Visibility continued to drop through September. On September 9th CRD testing determined that there were toxins present in the untreated/raw water. The Secchi disk dropped to 1.6 meters on September 17th, and on September 21st levels ranging from 1-2 micrograms per liter of cyanotoxins were detected. This amount is above the allowed limit of the Canadian Drinking Water Regulations.

The CRD continues to monitor the raw water and the last test was negative for toxins. But their prediction is that toxin levels could go up again as the cyanobacteria cells die. The water delivered from Cusheon Lake to those in the Beddis Water District is treated to remove toxins. Doreen Hewitt also warns, "There is no scientific method to tell when or if the cells will release a toxin. Hopefully they won't, but they did earlier in September so it is wise to use caution. This is primarily of concern to the 60+ households that are not on the Beddis Water System whose water comes from Cusheon Lake."



Doreen reports that the lake was relatively low all summer but did not get as low as it did on November 4, 2002. Records going back to 1998 indicate that the lower the lake is in July the earlier the bloom starts. Typically there is a bloom in the fall, but it usually begins later than it did this year and flushes out when the rain starts. This year with the drought the situation is worse, and there is still no flow in or out of the lake.



In Appreciation of A Morning So Well Spent

The Water Preservation Society broke new ground last March when it collaborated with the Salt Spring Centre School to present a mini-conference on water-quality monitoring. The conference was organized by classroom teachers Kate Richer and Katherine Byers, scientists Maggie Squires, Drew Bodaly and Cate McEwen, and citizen scientist/WPS volunteer Usha Rautenbach.

The morning's activities began with Drew's slide presentation about being a fish biologist and working at Canada's Experimental Lakes Area in Ontario. Then students in groups of 2 to 4 explained what their two classes have been doing. They used graphs on the walls to show measurements of stream flow, pH value, temperature, and transparency. They also showed what tools they were using, how they had used them, and reported on conclusions drawn so far and predictions for the next season.

Usha reported that students' presentations were remarkable for their clarity and the confidence shown, proving that the students understood what they were doing and why. They also showed skill at engaging in discussion with the scientists.

After a break for play and snacks, groups of students rotated through stations where they experienced stream-monitoring methods. These included measuring stream discharge with a bucket, filtering water to measure suspended sediment content, using a clear tube to measure turbidity, using a hand level and survey rod to measure slope, and comparing measuring stream flow with a meter to timing its velocity with a cork traveling down the stream. At one station students were led through a discussion of methods and reasons for measuring pH, log scales, and Avogadro's number.

Activities concluded with a wrap-up circle, during which everybody had the chance to tell the others what they had enjoyed most about the morning. A great deal of preparation went into the mini-conference, but WPS participants felt it was well worth it to see the students developing a deeper understanding of scientific methods.



Drawings by Linda Steager



OUR EXECUTIVE

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

CONTACT US

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Online 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 will be 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.

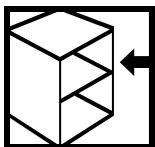
New members - Please request an application form to fill out and return.

WPS membership renewal dues received during November and December of 2015 are applied to your 2016 membership.



SSI Water Preservation Society

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



COUNTRY GROCER TAPES

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