

Nothing is more important than good, clean water.



Here on the "wet coast", we take a safe, abundant supply of water for granted. However, our surface and groundwater sources are constantly at risk from human activities - land development, forestry, agriculture, mining, recreation, water consumption, waste disposal to name a few.

All of these activities are on the rise in our Regional District. The population here is projected to grow from 145,000 today to over 231,000 by 2036. More people means more pressure on water. Add in the effects of climate change, and the impacts could be significant.

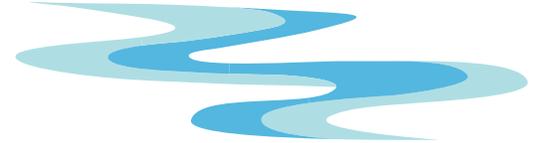
Already there are signs of trouble - declining water levels in wells in some parts of the Region, saltwater intrusion in others, low flows and high temperatures in many streams during the summer.

Is it worth protecting?



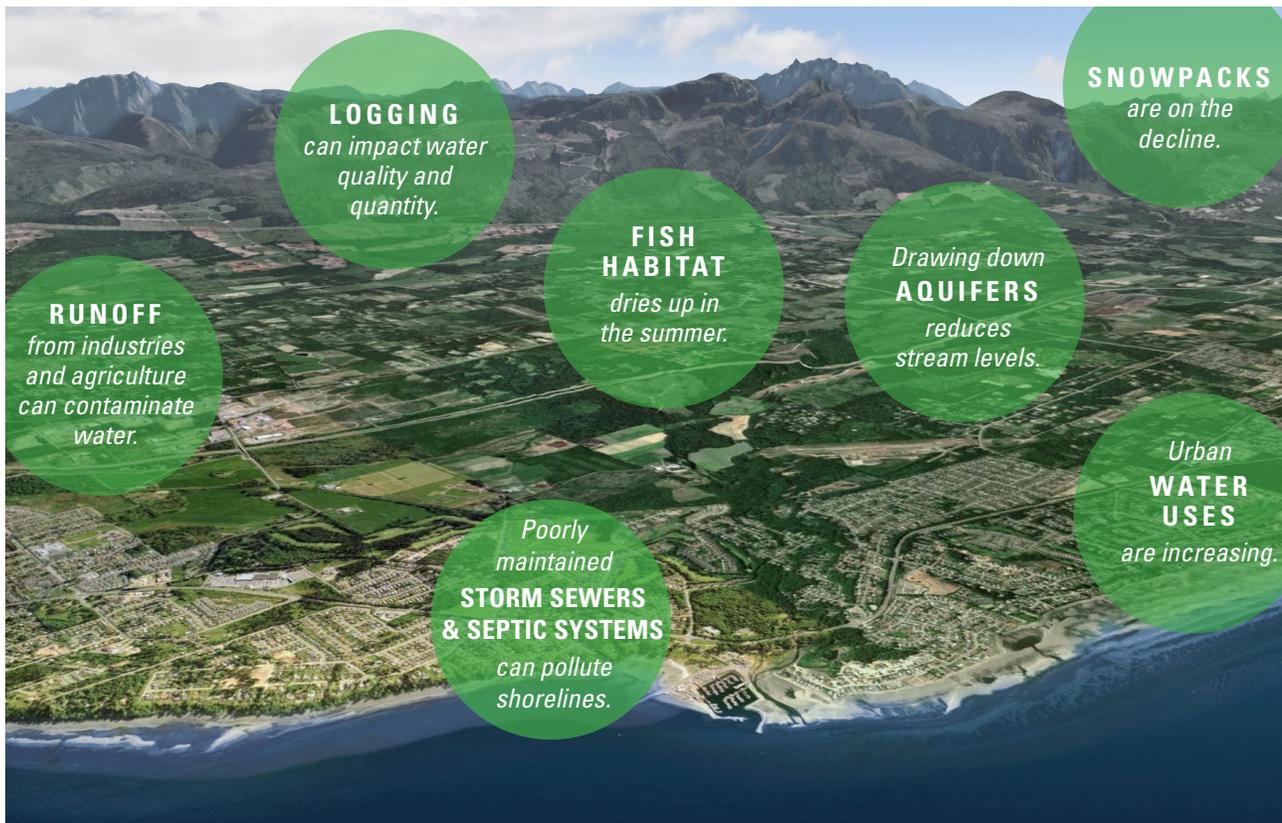
REFERENDUM NOVEMBER 15

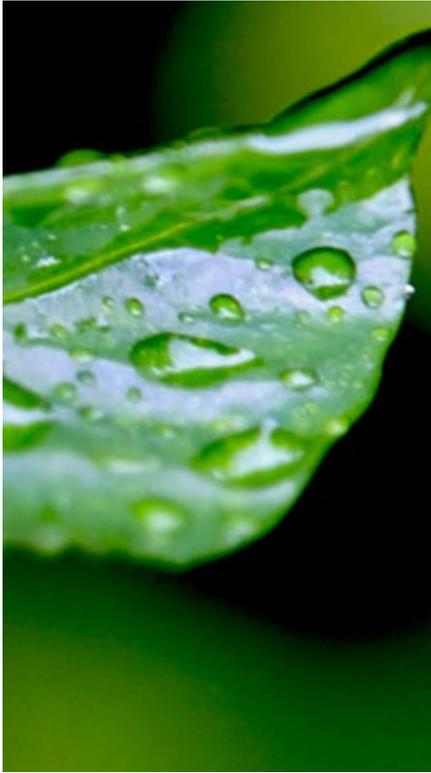
# Action for Water



On November 15th, you can take **Action for Water**

The RDN has developed a strategy for sustaining our water resources called Action for Water. Whether the RDN should implement this strategy will be decided by Electoral Area voters in a referendum on November 15th. This brochure provides a summary of the proposed strategy.





**“ 85% of Electoral Area residents rely on groundwater. Yet the RDN really doesn’t have a clue how fast aquifers are being drained or what climate change might do to them. It’s time we find out.”**

J. Stanhope, RDN Area G Director and Chair of the RDN Board

**“Just ask anyone from Tofino on BC’s wet coast - how can one of Canada’s wettest places run out of water? Or ask the folks in the Prairies who wonder where their water will come from when the Rocky Mountain glaciers are gone...*Water scarcity isn’t just a one-off event in a few isolated communities. It’s becoming increasingly common throughout Canada.*”**

Oliver M Brandes, University of Victoria POLIS Project

## Action for Water

The “Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Action Plan” was created over the last year with the help of a committee representing a variety of region-wide interests - BC Environment, the Vancouver Island Health Authority, the Islands Trust, local well drillers, forestry interests, residents and conservation groups. The Action Plan forms the basis of Action for Water.

Action for Water’s long-term goal is better management and increased security of the ground and surface water resources that sustain our communities. To achieve this goal, the Plan focuses on

### 5 Major Actions.

#### 1 Healthy Water

Some areas in the Regional District are at risk or already suffering from water contamination. To protect water quality, Action for Water will:

- Work with the Vancouver Island Water Resource Vulnerability Mapping Project to identify areas vulnerable to contamination from land uses.
- Start a pilot program that offers to test water from private wells, to better understand water quality issues in different parts of the Regional District.
- Develop standards for different land uses (e.g., commercial, industrial, farming activities) to avoid or reduce the risks of contaminating surface and groundwater.



#### 2 Understand the Risks

There is much we don’t know about our water resources, and the data is scattered among many different agencies. To improve this situation, Action for Water will:

- Gather up and map the existing data about the Region’s watersheds and aquifers, to build a comprehensive picture of our water resources.
- Identify major gaps in this picture, and coordinate work with other agencies to address all aspects of watershed protection.
- Examine the potential impacts of climate change on our water resources (e.g., stormier winters and drier summers) and identify ways to reduce those impacts.



### 3 Reduce the Risks

Stronger land use planning and regulatory tools are needed to reduce risks to our watersheds and aquifers. Under Action for Water, the RDN will be able to:

- Generate Management Plans for watersheds and aquifers at risk to guide future land and resource decisions.
- Adopt “low-impact development” standards to reduce impacts on watersheds – e.g., standards that reduce impervious areas, use more absorbent soils, require low water use fixtures.
- Promote water for agriculture to support local food security.

### 4 Use Wisely

Most areas in the Regional District are subject to water restrictions, and some already experience water shortages in dry summers. To use water more efficiently, Action for Water will:

- Develop Water Conservation Plans for priority areas that lay out goals and actions for more efficient use of water.
- Promote technologies that use rainwater and greywater.
- Form a working group of community water providers in the Region to coordinate management activities.



### 5 Improve Awareness

We often don't know about the impacts that our activities can have on water resources. To improve everyone's knowledge base, Action for Water will:

- Provide information and incentives on how to make the best use of our water.
- Expand the WaterSmart website to provide user-friendly information to residents about their community water resources.
- Enhance the WaterSmart program with neighbourhood and school projects that demonstrate best management practices - e.g., water-saving demonstration gardens, seminars with local water experts, “septic socials” to learn about septic system maintenance.



*“There are many emerging challenges to **our ability to provide safe, secure water for the future** - in a way that does not jeopardize the environmental and community health in our Region.”*

D. Bartram, RDN Area H Director

*“By being forward-thinking and long-term in perspective, **the Action for Water plan will give us a better understanding of our water supplies**. With the plan, it will be easier to identify problems and take affordable action before they balloon into crises requiring huge funds and resources.”*

A. Dakin, Hydrogeological Engineer and member of the BC Groundwater Advisory Board



*"Money cannot buy survival **in a world without water.**"*

J. MacLeod, Drinking Water-Watershed Protection Stewardship Committee, RDN

*"Consider what's in this **for our kids and our kids' kids.**"*

G. Buckingham, Drinking Water-Watershed Protection Stewardship Committee, RDN

## The Referendum Question

To make Action for Water a reality, the RDN needs to adopt a new "service" to help ensure healthy watersheds and secure water supplies for the future. This new service requires the support of the residents of the Regional District.

On November 15, the RDN Board will ask voters in a referendum if it should adopt a bylaw to carry out the Drinking Water and Watershed Action Plan. The wording of the referendum question will be:

*"Are you in favour of the adoption of Regional District of Nanaimo Drinking Water-Watershed Protection Establishment Bylaw No. 1556, 2008, which, if enacted, would establish a drinking water-watershed protection function in Electoral Areas A, B, C, E, F, G and H for the purpose of the protection of sources of drinking water and watersheds within the electoral areas?"*

If a majority of residents vote yes, Action for Water will become part of the RDN's daily operations.

## \$25 for Action for Water

Action for Water would be funded primarily through a parcel tax of \$25 per year on all residential, commercial and industrial properties in the RDN's seven Electoral Areas. These funds would generate the necessary funding to allow the RDN to hire the expertise and acquire the equipment needed to support this new service.

## For more Information...

Go to [www.actionforwater.ca](http://www.actionforwater.ca). There you will find a description of the 5 Actions of Action for Water as well as links to the "Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Action Plan". Also, check out the "Frequently Asked Questions".

## Have Questions or Comments...

Email us at [envsrv@rdn.bc.ca](mailto:envsrv@rdn.bc.ca) or call us at the Regional District Environmental Services Department at 250-390-6560 (Nanaimo), 250-954-3792 (Parksville) or 1-877-604-4111 (toll free).

Action for  
**Water**

