
TO: Neil Connelly
General Manager, Community Services

DATE: June 8, 2004

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FILE: 6780-50-RDWP

SUBJECT: DRINKING WATER PROTECTION INITIATIVE WORKSHOP

PURPOSE

To provide information about:

- feedback received at the May 8, 2004 Drinking Water Quality Workshop, and
- feedback received in response to the April 30, 2004 Drinking Water Quality Discussion Paper.

BACKGROUND

The Workshop Report for the May 8, 2004 Drinking Water Quality Workshop and the Feedback Report for Drinking Water Quality Discussion Paper are provided for consideration (*see Attachments #1 & #2*) pursuant to the Drinking Water Protection Workshop Initiative Terms of Reference approved by the Board on October 14, 2003.

Ninety-one residents from throughout the region participated in the Saturday, May 8, 2004 Drinking Water Quality Workshop conducted by the Regional District of Nanaimo, and twelve residents¹ contributed their ideas by submitting the Drinking Water Quality Discussion Paper Comment Form to the Regional District by the May 21, 2004 deadline.

The overall purpose of the Workshop and Discussion Paper was to obtain information for the Board to use in the development of a 'action plan' that identifies actions to take in regard to drinking water quality. In that regard, the Workshop was held to:

- raise public awareness about the characteristics of good quality drinking water, the Provincial government's perspectives about drinking water quality, drinking water law, drinking water quality issues in the region and the Regional District of Nanaimo's activities as they relate to drinking water; and
- to provide an opportunity for residents to share their perspectives about what action should be taken in regard to drinking water quality.

Workshop participant event evaluation form feedback indicates a very high degree of participant agreement that the Regional District achieved these objectives through the Workshop.

Public feedback received at the Workshop and on the Comment Forms suggests that the following broad categories of actions be considered to address drinking water quality:

¹ All of the Discussion Paper Comment Form respondents attended the Workshop.

1. Obtain more and better information related to the provision of a reliable, long-term supply of quality drinking water.

Residents would like more data to be readily available to the public and decision makers about:

- water quality monitoring (for all types of water providers, including local government, improvement districts, water user communities, water utilities, private wells and other systems),
- the quantity of water available,
- aquifer locations and characteristics,
- the location of groundwater recharge areas;
- the number and location of wells,
- the performance of wells,
- best management practices for activities that might detrimentally impact drinking water quality.

2. Educate and raise public awareness about all aspects of drinking water provision.

Residents would like to become more aware and educated about drinking water issues, including:

- methods of conserving water,
- methods of waste disposal that minimize or eliminate negative impacts on water quality,
- potential ways that drinking water quality can be jeopardized;
- information about how watersheds are being protected;
- water conservation and environmental protection as it relates to drinking water quality;
- water management;
- the different methods of obtaining drinking water and the requirements of all the different types of providers;
- water quality monitoring test results for all water providers in the region;
- the cost of obtaining drinking water from local supplies versus bottled water.

Residents suggest that public awareness be raised about these matters through the following means:

- the establishment of a one-stop resource centre for drinking water;
- the Regional District of Nanaimo web site;
- engaging the public in discussions through events like the Workshop;
- offering educational programs;
- establishing a school program to educate children about drinking water protection;
- placing signs in ditches to inform people about drinking water contamination possibilities

3. Acquire lands in watersheds.

Residents suggest that land in watersheds be acquired through purchase, negotiation or expropriation. Residents also suggest that groundwater recharge areas be protected through purchase, negotiation or expropriation.

4. Lobby for legislative changes to enhance watershed protection.

Residents suggest that legislation be changed so that drinking water is better protected. Suggestions include the enactment of legislation that:

- Eliminates agricultural and forestry practices in watersheds (such as waste disposal, clear cutting, pesticide application, fertilizer application) that might negatively impact drinking water;
- Establishes more rigorous requirements regarding the location of water intakes and outflows as it relates to drinking water quality;
- Protects watersheds, both surface and groundwater;
- Increases the ability of local governments to protect drinking water sources in their areas;
- Requires the submission of water well drilling records and well logs to the Province for inclusion in a database;
- Establishes drinking water provision as the highest priority watershed use.

5. Changes to land use, development and servicing practices to improve drinking water protection.

Residents suggested a range of different land use, development and servicing practices to enhance drinking water protection, including:

- The development of a watershed management strategy in cooperation with all of the jurisdictions with related responsibilities;
- Installing ozonation and ultra-violet equipment rather than continuing to use chlorine as the main drinking water purifier,
- Replacing septic systems with community sewer systems;
- Increasing the minimum parcel size in rural areas and aqua recharge areas;
- Protecting wetlands and riparian areas;
- Providing drinking water to property owners who are unable to obtain a sufficient water supply from their onsite wells;
- Locating drinking water intakes above pollution producing areas, such as farms, homes and industries;
- Limiting growth and development.

The final step remaining to be completed as a part of the Drinking Water Protection Workshop Initiative is the development of an 'action plan' that outlines actions to be taken to address drinking water quality issues in the region. It is suggested that the Board initiate discussion about this matter and direct staff to prepare an 'action plan' for its consideration.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Receive the Workshop Report for the May 8, 2004 Drinking Water Quality Workshop and the Feedback Report for April 30, 2004 Drinking Water Quality Discussion Paper.
2. Receive the Workshop Report for the May 8, 2004 Drinking Water Quality Workshop and the Feedback Report for the April 30, 2004 Drinking Water Quality Discussion Paper, and request that an 'action plan' that identifies actions to be taken in regard to drinking water quality be developed for the Board's consideration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Receipt of the reports has no financial implications. Funds for this project are provided in the 2004 Regional Growth Management Services budget.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

Public feedback received from Drinking Water Quality Workshop participants indicates a high degree of enthusiasm and support for workshops as an effective method for engaging the public in a discussion about key policy issues. The preparation of the recommended 'action plan' will help illustrate how the Regional District intends to use the public feedback received.

SUMMARY

As a part of the Drinking Water Protection Workshop Initiative approved by the Board on October 14, 2003, the Regional District of Nanaimo conducted a Drinking Water Quality Workshop on Saturday, May 8, 2004, published a Drinking Water Quality Discussion Paper on April 30, 2004, and provided an additional opportunity for residents to contribute their perspectives via submission of a Discussion Paper Comment Form.

The Workshop Report for the Drinking Water Quality Workshop and the Feedback Report for Drinking Water Quality Discussion Paper document the public feedback received through each of these mechanisms. Both of these reports are provided for the Board's consideration of receipt (*see separate enclosures*).

It is recommended that the Board consider these reports in its development of an 'action plan' regarding actions to take to address drinking water quality, and that the Board initiate discussion about the 'action plan' that identifies actions to be taken to address drinking water quality in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Workshop Report for the May 8, 2004 Drinking Water Quality Workshop be received.
2. That the Feedback Report for the April 30, 2004 Drinking Water Quality Discussion Paper be received.
3. That an 'action plan' that identifies actions to be taken to address drinking water quality in the region be prepared for the Board's consideration.

Report Writer

General Manager Concurrence

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