

RDN Community Watershed Monitoring Network Data Results Session
May 5th 2021 | Q & A from the Zoom meeting

Q: Are the Province Water Quality Guidelines and Objectives enforceable?

A: Water Quality Guidelines and Objectives provide site-specific guidance for a waterbody in which the Province has collected data and completed several studies. To be enforceable, WQGs or WQOs must be incorporated into a waste discharge authorization or a local bylaw or a Water Sustainability Act regulation.

Q: How was the stream restoration on Shelly Creek done?

A: The restoration on Shelly Creek was done by MVIHES (Mid Van Isle Habitat Enhancement Society) stewardship group with funding support from RDN, Pacific Streamkeepers and other granting sources. Volunteer efforts paying off with improved dissolved oxygen trends is great to see! See their website: <https://www.mvihes.bc.ca/current-initiatives/shelly-creek>, and contact info@mvihes.bc.ca.

Q: What mapping of groundwater has been done?

A: Aquifer mapping is done by the Province and has been improved over the years through additional localized mapping efforts done by RDN and other partners to refine the understanding of what aquifers are where -- i.e. their boundaries and characteristics. For example, RDN have recently re-mapped two aquifers in Nanoose and the Province has nearly completed updated aquifer mapping in the French Creek area. Learn more by exploring the Province's aquifer search tool: apps.nrs.gov.bc.ca/gwells/aquifers. The RDN State of our Aquifers newsletter has a nice map as well: www.rdn.bc.ca/sites/default/files/legacy_asp/dms/documents/dwwp-reports/region-wide-reports/state_of_our_aquifers_newsletter_-_2017.pdf

Q: Were there turbidity measures for the Nanaimo River?

A: Yes, there were turbidity measurements taken for Nanaimo River, not all were highlighted in the presentation but they are available in the final report which will be posted and in the package of graphs and maps that will be provided to the group that monitors those sites (NALT) and the Nanaimo River Watershed Roundtable.

Q: Could you comment on road run-off that is channeled into the streams as a source of turbidity or any other problems?

A: Turbidity data can point to where there is an input of road run-off or stormwater outfalls contributing sedimentation to the creek.

Municipalities, for example City of Nanaimo, have been working to implement best practices for stormwater management especially with new development. When new developments happen it's an opportunity to get it right from the start, by adding swales and raingardens, keeping topsoil, and have site specific measures to improve stormwater quality that would be running off of sites. A big issue is the legacy issues of previous developments that were not designed in the most stormwater friendly way, in terms of preventing erosion and run-off into creeks, and that's really an education piece that we continue to do in terms of what can you retrofit on site to improve stormwater management.

The RDN has struck a regional Rainwater Working Group with members from all four municipalities, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI), working on projects and strategies that relate to this issue of how can our stormwater management systems better protect water quality in creeks and streams and also better infiltrate that run-off to not only protect water quality but maintain recharge to groundwater as well.

MOTI is an important and necessary partner in the rural areas outside of the urban municipalities; in the municipalities it's a matter of working with the engineering departments, developers and the community to implement best practices.

Q: Is there a Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) cohort for water quality monitoring in the area of Yellowpoint?

A: CVRD recently implemented their own DWWP program and they are in the process of rolling it out, but we understand they are looking into establishing a similar program of community-based water quality monitoring across their region. You could contact the CVRD directly to learn more about what they are planning on implementing.

For the Yellowpoint area, we suggest partnering up with the active volunteer group Quennell Lake Watershed Stewardship Society who are part of the RDN's Community Watershed Monitoring Network and sampling water quality in the Cedar-Yellowpoint area.

Groups outside of our region that are monitoring a watershed that overlaps with our region are eligible to attend our training if there is space. Information on volunteer training sessions for 2021 will be available closer to the training time (late July).

As a sidenote: The Province working towards being able to provide more consistently applied support to stewardship groups involved with water quality monitoring, that may assist the CVRD getting a program up and running similar to how the Province supported RDN's program establishment. The Environmental Protection Division's Provincial Monitoring Assessment and Stewardship Group in is working on a stewardship framework with tools that will be available online such as cheat sheets, self-audit forms, things that will help groups build their capacity.

Q: How do I answer my neighbour who says "I watch you go out in November in semi-dark and the rain to collect water quality samples, what are you doing?" What is the value of this program in simplistic terms for the layman?

A: Simply put, we can't manage what we don't measure. The fact that we have data from the creeks within our region going into a long-term database that can support all sorts of different uses by Provincial, local government, the public, industry, and professional consultants, provides an understanding of the health of our region's surface watercourses. Without it, there's anecdotal evidence or there's potentially sporadic samples taken with different protocols, but what this program does – and the volunteers' dedication to collecting the water quality data as a part of this network means – is there's an overarching, consistent set of reference data that can be used for a whole suite of purposes. Its value has been in supporting watercourse restoration activities, to inform where more outreach is needed, and providing a sound basis for decision-making around land use and water quality protection in the region and we appreciate all the efforts of volunteers for making this possible and for caring about our local waterways!