

Bonsall Creek Watershed Management Plan Advisory Working Group

Meeting #2 - Notes

Municipality of North Cowichan Office
November 18, 2014

Present

Chris Cole	TimberWest Forest Corporation
Amanda Faulkner	Island Health
Neil Goeller	Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
Wayne Haddow	Ministry of Agriculture
Mel de Jager	Sustainability Solutions Group
Keith Lawrence	Cowichan Valley Regional District
Jeremy Murphy	Sustainability Solutions Group
Andrew Newall	Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
Stacey Sowa	Island Health
Jen Woike, Councillor	Municipality of North Cowichan

Staff Present

Brian Green	Manager of Planning and Sustainability
John MacKay	Director of Engineering
Vicki Swan	Community Liaison Coordinator
Kyle Young	Planner

Regrets

Don Allingham	Agricultural Community
Erica Blake	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Deb Epps	Ministry of Environment
Peter Griffiths	Creative Salmon
Earl Jack, Chief	Penelakut Tribe
Lynne Magee	Island Health
Ruth Sauder	Penelakut Tribe
James Thomas, Chief	Halalt First Nation

1. Introductions

The Advisory Working Group (AWG) members and the consultants – Sustainability Solutions Group (SSG) – introduced themselves.

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2. Project Methodology Review

Mr. Murphy provided an overview of the project approach, deliverables and timeline. SSG is currently developing a baseline report and watershed atlas. The baseline review includes collecting information from existing sources and reports, completing technical assessments and gathering input at community mapping events. The baseline report, watershed atlas and water balance model will be used to create potential scenarios for the future of the watershed, with the preferred scenario selected based on the vision of the stakeholders. A detailed implementation strategy will be developed based on best water management practices and strategies used elsewhere, with the intent of achieving the vision.

3. Water Uses in the Watershed

Members were asked to identify uses of water in the watershed. Uses identified include:

- Drinking water
- Industry (salmon farm)
- Agriculture
- Trees / plants
- Biodiversity
- Supports food sources (salmon, shellfish harvesting)
- Spiritual
- Cultural
- Animals
- Recreation
- Estuary and foreshore area

Mr. Cole noted that the CO₂ fertilisation effect (resulting from climate change) is such that trees will use water more efficiently, decreasing the amount of water used by trees in the upper watershed. The growing season for trees will also be longer.

4. Water Issues in the Watershed

Members were asked to identify water issues in the watershed. Issues identified include:

- Climate change impacts (higher intensity rainfall, higher frequency of short duration rainfall, increased erosion, more sediments in stormwater runoff)
- Water licences (no one knows how much water is actually being used)
- Agriculture (surplus of water, lack of drainage)
- Industrial impacts (log sorting and loading facility – Shoal Island)
- Transportation (15,000 Trans Canada Highway users per day, lack of drainage, number of bridges, potential for spill along the highway to enter Bonsall Creek)
- Flooding impacts on wells
- Pollution from agricultural run-off
- Water quality may be an issue
- Ditch maintenance (beaver dams, weed growth)
- Administrative barriers (many approvals required)

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Mr. Goeller indicated that changes to the *Water Act* could have implications for water use management. It was noted that a number of rehabilitation projects have been implemented in the past. Ducks Unlimited owns property in the study area. Ms. Sowa noted that Island Health has a beach sampling program in effect.

5. Vision for Watershed

Members were asked to identify a vision for the watershed. Vision elements identified include:

- Integrated / coordinated approach to water management
- Improve and define salmon spawning habitat
- Healthy ecosystems
- Improve fish and wildlife habitat
- Healthy beaches
- Maintenance of agricultural drainage
- Being able to harvest clean shellfish
- Improve surface water quality
- Best practices for ditching and road maintenance
- Access for sport fishing
- Recreation and trails access

Ms. Sowa indicated that Island Health may have ground water quality data for the study area. Weather data may be available from the Mt. Sicker weather station.

6. Public Open Houses

Public open houses are scheduled for November 27, 2014 and November 28, 2014. It was noted that local stewardship groups could be invited, including Ducks Unlimited and the Cowichan Valley Naturalists. Mr. Lawrence will provide a list of local groups. The advertisement could also be distributed at the Chamber of Commerce meeting. Members suggested that open house attendees may have data to provide to SSG.

7. Next Steps

Mr. Murphy provided an overview of the next steps. Completion of the baseline report is expected for January or February 2015. Following the baseline report, a water balance model will be developed. The possibility of a watershed tour for the AWG was discussed.

8. Next Meeting

The next AWG meeting will be scheduled following completion of the baseline report in the new year.

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