

BCLSS Newsletter

Volume 4, Issue 3

"Furthering Lake Stewardship Through Communication and Education"

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BCLSS Fourth Annual Conference

WILLIAMS LAKE - The BC Lake Stewardship Society (BCLSS) held its fourth annual conference at Chimney Lake (near Williams Lake) June 2 & 3. This year's conference theme was "Partnerships for Quality Lakes" and was co-hosted with the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (formerly Environment, Lands & Parks), Cariboo Region.

The conference was a great success with 50 people attending on Saturday and 15 people at the Sunday Riparian Zone (lakeshore) Stabilization workshop. The conference was packed with information by way of presentations and poster/booth displays.

The presentations addressed a broad range of topics including lakeshore protection, stewardship activities, fisheries, and watershed assessment. Cariboo area stewardship groups that gave presentations were the Lower Bridge Creek Watershed Stewardship Society, Quesnel Area Lake Stewardship Societies, Bouchie Lake Stewardship Society, Milburn Lake Stewardship Society and the Chimney Felker Water Quality Committee. These different societies all demonstrated their dedicated interest in water quality and hard work toward maintaining and improving it through the achievements their respective societies have made over the years. All the groups emphasized the importance of keeping people (especially lake front property owners) informed on how they can affect the quality of their lake water and what they can do to improve it. The Tabor Lake Clean-up Society, from the Prince George area, also demonstrated how working with the University of Northern BC is leading to increased research (at no cost to them) enabling the group to directly tackle the highest priority issues facing their lake.

The conference had a session that profiled the Chimney-Felker Lakes Watershed and included presentations on fisheries management, water quality testing, a watershed assessment of the Upper Chimney Creek Basin, a phosphorus management implementation plan for the

watershed, and a field trip to view stream restoration work on Chimney Creek. This session nicely complimented the conference setting overlooking Chimney and Felker Lakes.

The poster/booth display room was filled with information through the use of posters, pamphlets, reports, a running water display of a watershed, and even a live display of local native plants suitable for the lakeshore riparian zones. Many of the attending stewardship groups provided posters, pamphlets and even photo albums demonstrating their society's efforts in watershed protection over the years.

The conference overall was an excellent opportunity to learn more about watershed health and to connect with other people who are either interested in, or are already engaged in scientifically monitoring lake quality. The proceedings are available for those who could not attend through contacting the BCLSS at (250)717-1212 or e-mail at bclss@hotmail.com. The BCLSS is looking forward to holding conferences at different locations throughout the province in the future.

Citizens Demonstrate a Commitment to Lake Stewardship: The Milburn Lake Outhouse Project

What can a group of determined lake stewards accomplish when facing difficult obstacles in their quest to protect lake water quality? The following story describes what Gordon Crick and a group of lake stewards near Quesnel, BC have been able to bring to a reality.

Milburn Lake (aka Nine Mile Lake) is a small lake located approximately 10 km west of Quesnel off the Nazko Road. The lake is stocked annually with rainbow and eastern brook trout, which brings in many fishermen year round. There is a main boat launch off Milburn Lake road and a rustic campsite approximately .3 km prior to the launch. Due to the high volume, year-round (all day) uses of the lake and the availability of a campsite, a toilet facility for this area was desperately needed.

In 1997 Lucille and Sheila Crick attempted to contact local and regional organizations along with Provincial and Federal Environmental/Health departments to have an outhouse installed at Milburn Lake. All avenues investigated were dead ends and ultimately, they decided to discontinue this funding quest.

On April 20, 1999 the Milburn Lake Stewardship Society formed. Their purpose was to become knowledgeable about the lake's fragile ecosystem and to learn how to maintain and/or improve it. One of the major issues addressed at their first meeting was the need for a public washroom at the main boat launch to Milburn Lake.

Gordon Crick, appointed chair of this society, wrote a letter to the Quesnel Cariboo Regional District (CRD) requesting installation of a public washroom. At the next Society meeting a representative of the CRD attended with the disappointing news that unless property taxes increased, the CRD had no funding for this project.

Gordon did not quit there but instead wrote letters and telephoned the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Highways (who stated they would try to locate a toilet), Bouchie Lake Recreation, Baker Creek Enhancement Society, Ministry of Environment (both Provincial and Federal levels) - Pollution Prevention, and Ministry of Forests. Although he received support for the

idea, no financial backing could be provided by any of these departments.

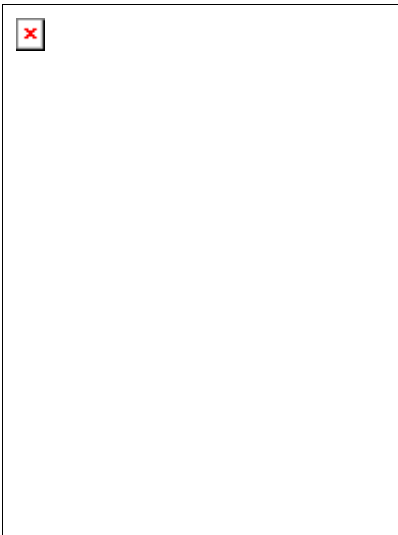
Due to family health matters this project was unable to proceed any further and was put on hold until April of 2000. At that time the Cariboo Regional District was contacted again with the response that they have no objection provided the necessary setback requirements were met and that the approval from the Cariboo Community Health Services Society and the Ministry of Highways were obtained. Gordon followed all the necessary procedures and acquired these mandatory permits.

Gordon was then again busy phoning and writing letters now to get sponsorship for the project. He contacted Darrel Collins, local President of the Big Game Guide and Outfitters of Quesnel, with the favourable response of a \$1,000.00 donation. Through the Milburn Lake Stewardship group, Rick and Leslie James provided 10 hours of backhoe service; Gordon and Lucille Crick together with Ted and Luara-Ann Neville donated \$750.00. Other contributors included Rod Zacharias who helped attain the services of United Concrete to provide gravel to set the holding tank and toilet on, Leo Rutledge helped through his contact with Argo Road Maintenance to supply a garbage barrel and a one year supply of plastic garbage bags, Wayne Boudreau received assistance from Tolko Industries through their contribution of an industrial toilet paper holder, as well as the toilet paper and Dave Visrari assisted with the toilet purchase from Pre-cast cement in Quesnel.

After years of inquires, hours of telephone calls, letter writing and filling out forms, the Milburn Lake Outhouse Project was finally completed. On March 7, 2001 the concrete toilet with sealed holding tank at the public access to Milburn Lake was finally installed. The volunteer maintenance and cleaning will be provided by local residents and is currently being looked after by Ted Nevel, a member of the Milburn Lake Stewardship Society. This is a tremendous example of a practical, beneficial lake stewardship activity carried out by concerned local citizens

The never-give-up strategy led by Gordon Crick and followed though by concerned citizens and members of the Milburn Lake Stewardship Society, enabled the Milburn Lake outhouse project to become a reality.

The Milburn Lake Stewardship Society has also been conducting water quality testing as part of the Cariboo Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program with the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection.



Simple Actions Conserve Water

VICTORIA - Shut that tap! Cut those showers! Save a little water for the fish and the flowers! Some Canadians refer to western British Columbia as the "Wet Coast," but that doesn't do justice to the variations in the area's rain and snowfalls. For one thing, most precipitation falls in autumn and winter, while peak water use is in the drier summer months.

This year, the southern part of the province faces one of the driest summers on record. Latest measurements, by the River Forecast Centre of the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks show the snowpacks that replenish B.C.'s streams each year are far below normal in much of the province. Water restrictions are already being imposed in some areas, the threat of wildfire is increased and spawning fish are at risk.

Canadians are the second-largest users of water per person in the world, and British Columbians rank among the top consumers in Canada. Adjusting the habits picked up in times of abundance, will conserve water in the dry years. Here are some tips:

In the bathroom:

- Turn off the tap when you brush your teeth or shave. This could save seven to 12 litres of water a minute.
- Toilets account for as much as 40 per cent of indoor water use, and older toilets use up to 30 litres per flush. Don't use your toilet as a wastebasket. Retrofit your toilets with water-saving devices. New, low-volume toilets use only six litres per flush.
- Toilets are notorious for hidden leaks and can waste hundreds of litres of water a day. Check worn parts to see which ones need replacement.
- Take shorter showers and save six to 19 litres a minute. Installing a low-flow showerhead can save as much as 10 litres a minute.

In the kitchen and laundry room:

- Do only full loads in dishwashers and washing machines. Or you can get adventurous and do dishes the old-fashioned way - by hand. Each machine load uses from 170 to 190 litres.

- Wash vegetables and fruit in a pan instead of under a running tap. Remember, a tap uses seven to 12 litres each minute it's running. Use the water left in the pan to water houseplants or your garden.
- Instead of running a tap to get cool water, keep a jug of water in the fridge.
- Dripping taps can waste as much as 300 litres a week. Changing tap washers can reduce that loss.

Outside the home:

- If local restrictions allow you to wash your car, use a bucket and sponge or spring-loaded nozzle on the hose. This could save 300 litres of water or more.
- Choose drought-tolerant native plants for your garden. This not only saves water but provides habitat for local animals, birds and beneficial insects.
- Water your garden using a watering can or spring-loaded nozzle. This can save 10 to 35 litres a minute. The best times to water are early in the morning or late in the evening when evaporation rates are low.
- If local restrictions allow you to water your lawn, one hour or less in the early morning or evening, no more than twice a week, will do. Mow your lawn less often, raise your mower blades or both- longer grass reduces loss to evaporation and requires less watering.
- Use mulch and compost to reduce evaporation, promote plant growth and control weeds. Aerate your lawn to allow better absorption of water.
- Capture rainwater off the roof for use in your garden.

These few tips are a drop in the bucket. For more tips and other information on water conservation, visit the ministry's Web site at <http://www.elp.gov.bc.ca/wat/>.

==== **A message from the 'watercaucus' discussion list** ====

Here is a quick rundown on some of the strengths and weaknesses of the new Act. Like any law, it will depend on the willingness of regulators to use it in order for it to make a difference. On balance, we at WCEL think it is an improvement and should be supported.

BILL 20 -- 2001, DRINKING WATER PROTECTION ACT

The new law changes the status quo, primarily by setting standards for the operation of water systems and for the people who operate the systems, and by creating a new type of official, the drinking water officer, who will have strong powers to make preventative and remedial orders. The officers will be able to overrule existing authorizations, something that is not legally possible now.

Strong Points:

- Bill gives drinking water officers strong new powers to make preventative and remedial orders, and override other provincial authorizations, approvals, licenses etc. s. 25-28 so, these powers MAY be used to override forestry, mining, agricultural activities if the officer thinks they pose a threat to safe drinking water.
- It protects drinking water officers against liability so that if they do use their new powers, they can't be sued for exercising them properly, (for example, by forest

company whose activities are restricted) s.43

- It sets standards for the construction and operation of water supply systems AND for the people who construct and operate these systems, a response to Walkerton, where the system was operated by seriously unqualified people. s. 7-9.
- Right to know provisions in s. 14,15,21,25, 26,34 requiring assessments, water monitoring results, orders, and emergency response plans be made public
- New groundwater regulation under amendments to Water Act, Part 5, Wells and Ground Water Protection. These amendments set standards for well construction, operation, closure and flood proofing, and enable qualification requirements to be set for well drillers. No requirement for licensing of new wells. Section 78 (2) of the amended Water Act is important and says that: A person must not operate a well in a manner that causes or is likely to cause the intrusion of salt water or contaminated water into an aquifer or other well or is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the quality of the ground water in that aquifer, or the existing uses made of the ground water from any well that draws from that aquifer.
- Funding has been promised by this government, according to their press release: "The legislation is backed by over \$11 million in new funding this year to help protect drinking water supplies in B.C."

O.K. points:

- gives public limited new right to request investigation into drinking water,
- s. 29 - gives local governments new powers to control activities, which might affect drinking water, but only if Cabinet approves delegation of powers and local government requests powers, s. 38, so local governments COULD in theory also be granted powers to override harmful activities already authorized under other laws - drinking water officers may be independent, if appointed by Minister, s. 3(2) Government has promised to set high standards for these officers
- Regulations will require comprehensive one time testing of water from all systems. The regulations will be passed by Cabinet when Bill 20 passes, according to the government's press release "... the government also plans to make immediate amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Regulation. Amendments will introduce new treatment and water quality standards that are among the strongest of any jurisdiction in Canada, and these will be enforced based on the professional judgment of medical health officials. It is intended that the new regulation will come into force at the same time as the passage of the legislation."

Legally binding standards are much more inclusive, but exceedances do not necessarily result in strong action. Three tiers of standard are created.

The first tier involves microbiological contaminants (e-coli and coliform) that pose an immediate health threat. If these parameters are exceeded, medical health officers (MHO) must notify users, undertake more monitoring, obtain an independent report providing specific recommendations for correcting the problem and/or correct the problem.

The Second Tier is Health Related Chemical Standards. For chemicals in water that pose a long

term health threat, the MHO must notify users and undertake further testing (to see if the problem is recurrent) and may order steps to remedy the problem. If parameters are exceeded in subsequent monitoring, the MHO must either order independent studies of the potential health risk or order a correction to the problem. If the MHO thinks that the exceedance poses a significant health risk he must order the purveyor to take measure to reduce the risk. (Unfortunately, there is no duty on the MHO to take steps that will cure threats to source water.)

The Third Tier is called additional chemical and physical standards. It includes several parameters that may have health impacts (toulene, several benzene compounds, and turbidity). The MHO can (but is not required to) take steps refered to above.

Weak points:

- The order making power is designed to deal with threats caused by a limited number of persons (e.g. Company x is discharging excess effluent) and is not well suited to systemic problems (e.g. farms throughout an aquifer applying excess manure).
- For systemic threats it relies on planning process to create drinking water protection plan, which must be approved by Cabinet

Not Covered:

- Bill 20 does not refer to the common law riparian right to water quality. Courts in BC have not yet ruled definitively on this, and many experts believe that these common law rights still exist.
- Bill 20 does not prohibit harmful activities in domestic watersheds.

2001 Secchi Disk Dip-In

The 2001 Secchi Disk Dip-In was between June 30th and July 15th. This is a reminder to send in your information if you have not already. Yellow forms were sent out this year by Kent State University. If you never received one, you can either email BCLSS and ask for a electronic copy, or you can send in your information over the net by going to the Dip-In web site at <http://dipin.kent.edu>. If you do not have access to the internet, you can mail your information to us and we will make sure a form gets filled out. Please remember to include your contact information so that we can contact you if we need to ask you a question. Our program ID number is 626.

Once again we would ask that you help make our program a success by sending in your information. If you have not participated in the Dip-In in the past and would like to, you can contact our office and arrange to get a disk for next year and we will gladly add you to our mailing list.

TASK Recreational Shorelines and Waterways Report available

Attention: Tourism Action Society of the Kootenays (TASK) Advisory Group members, and those interested recreational, environmental and tourism-based activities:

The deliverables for the winter recreational project, "Environmentally Responsible Recreation on Our Shorelines and Waterways in the Canadian Columbia Basin" are now available to view

from the TASK's website: www.taskbc.bc.ca.

Under the heading, 'Shorelines and Waterways', you may view the current project Backgrounder, as well as the various project outcomes, including the Final Summary (74 pages) Report, which is also listed.

During early April 2001, TASK was successful in obtaining further funding and support by the Columbia Kootenay Fisheries Renewal Partnership, to continue a second Phase of work regarding commercial recreational stewardship in the Columbia Basin.

Phase II will endeavour to build on the activities that were initiated and developed during Phase I, through delivery of a stewardship communications strategy. This strategy is provided as one of the deliverables which has been posted on the website.

For those who contributed input, time, and advice towards TASK's project, it was most gratefully appreciated by the TASK Board and myself as their contractor. Please do look forward to hearing further information, later this spring/summer time regarding Phase II.

Thank you very much.

Margaret A. Birch, R. P. Bio.

(Contractor to TASK for the Shorelines and Waterways Project)

Monsanto Lusts After World's Water

Over the past few years, Monsanto, a chemical firm, has positioned itself as an agricultural company through control over seed--the first link in the food chain. Monsanto now wants to control water, the very basis of life.

In 1996, Monsanto bought the biotechnology assets of Argacetus, a subsidiary of W.R. Grace, for \$150 million and Calgene, a California-based plant biotechnology company for \$340 Million. In 1997, Monsanto acquired Holden seeds, the Brazilian seed company, Sementes Agrocerus and Asgrow. In 1998, it purchased Cargill's seed operation for \$1.4 billion and bought Delta and Pine land for 1.82 billion and Dekalb for 2.3 billion.

According to Mr. Robert Farley of Monsanto, "what we are seeing is not just consolidation of seed companies, it's really a consolidation of the entire food chain. Since water is as central to food production as seed is, and without water life is not possible, Monsanto is now trying to establish its control over water."

More information can be found @ <http://www.nalms.org/bclss/www.canadians.org>

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