

From: Alix Hodson Deggan <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, November 1, 2024 9:32 AM
To: northinfo
Subject: Water Budget Study for Gabriola

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Date: October 26, 2024

To: William Shulba, Islands Trust Water Specialist, Trustee Susan Yates and Tobi Elliott.

From: Alix Hodson-Deggan

According to May 3, 2024 Trust Policy Statement Draft Policy 3.5.3 states: Islands must be self-sufficient in their supply of freshwater.

Without exception, potential water or its shortage is of major concern for the greater majority of the Gulf islands, and in particular, Gabriola Island.

In 2022, the water shortage on Gabriola had become too severe to ignore. I brought this matter to the Executive Committee (EC) attention in an email that referenced an FOI from the City of Nanaimo and an interview with another Nanaimo water hauler. The data sent to the EC clearly showed that Gabriola's own water demands were exceeding its water supply. Residents were hauling over 9,000,000 liters of potable water to the island annually. The information provided to the EC and accompanying calculations showed the volume of water that was hauled to the Island from the City of Nanaimo in 2021. Ms. Sue Ellen Fast the Trustee of Bowen Island recognized my letter and recommended that it be shared with the whole Council. Additionally in September of 2022, Friends of the Gulf Islands made a presentation on hauled water to the Trust council.

Even in 2019, the State of the Islands Indicator Project: Final Report stated on page 19 that Gabriola had so much natural area converted to human that it was close to exceeding that needed for ecosystem health.

Future projections for the groundwater use based on existing (but not yet built) densities show that demand for groundwater on the island will only increase. Waterline (RDN Regional Groundwater Level Analysis 2021) has already stated: Gabriola aquifer #709 is in large decline. Lack of groundwater is also a threat to ecosystem health because groundwater supports streams and wetlands through the dry months. This report is now two years old. Perhaps now the situation is even worse.

This drinking water report in combination with the millions of liters of water being hauled to the island on a yearly basis, shows that the island is not self-sufficient in water. To continue to expand the population when there is already not enough water, increases our vulnerability. There is no guarantee that other areas will not eventually need to keep their own water and no longer make it available for our use.


Given that the dire situation is already known, why is our Local Trust requested \$50,000 for a "Water Budget Study" (WBS). Now is the time for action, not more studies. Is this study being done just to show that "something" is being done when taking stronger action is hard. An explanation is needed. Otherwise, it looks like another waste of the tax payer's dollars, especially, when the Trust has had an extensive history of not acting upon its studies?

Since it seems that regardless of the above concerns, another study will be done, I request the study to include:

1. data collected to be current, not more than 2 years old
2. data collected by experienced hydrogeologists from a variety of locations across the island
3. maps that show which neighborhoods have wells with inadequate water for residential use (households that are dependent on importing water from off island or utilizing cisterns)
4. a map showing stressed aquifers as determined by other agencies such as the Nanaimo Regional District
5. considering the projections for climate change, groundwater demands at the present level and at future build-out of current zoning
6. an accurate map of groundwater recharge areas
7. testing for water quality and quantity including testing for the presence of forever chemicals, pharmaceuticals, nitrates, fecal coliform and other toxic substances

For any study to be useful and valuable its data must be current and comprehensive with the end result being the protection of the groundwater supply for the island ecology and its residents. The WBS needs to be followed up by the creation of new freshwater and natural environment policies that restore and maintain natural ecosystems while reversing development trends that create an overdemand for this precious resource. Without new policies for groundwater protection and the necessary directives for enforcement any study is meaningless, toothless, devoid of consequence and a waste of our money.

Sincerely,
Alix Hodson-Deggan

 Gabriola Island.