

## Hydrology Reports – Preliminary Findings

The District recognizes that water is our community's most important natural resource. As such, we are developing a long-term strategic plan to ensure that we manage this resource sustainably.



As a first step, in 2013, the District engaged Kerr Wood Leidal (KWL) consulting engineers to prepare hydrology reports for both St. Mary

and Maxwell Lakes that include estimates of available supply under current and future climate forecasts, comparison of water availability with demand and recommendations for future water management. The preliminary results of both studies indicate that we have already reached the finite capacity of these lakes to supply water to the District. This means that the District will not be able to obtain further licences to withdraw water. For this reason, there is currently a moratorium on new services within the District as we evaluate the situation and gather more information.

We understand that the implications of these reports are serious and far-reaching. For that reason, we will ensure that the reports have been thoroughly reviewed and verified prior to public release. When the District is satisfied that the reports are complete and accurate, they will be made available on our website.

The District is committed to sustainable water management and the hydrology reports are just the beginning of the work that will need to be done to manage this resource effectively. Monitoring of water quality, quantity and climate will be ongoing. Next steps will include increased source protection as well as development of conservation and drought management plans.

## Spring Referendum

The NSSWD Board and staff are anticipating the arrival of the detailed design for the St. Mary DAF treatment plant in February. With savings realized through the downsizing of plant capacity and other design changes, it is expected that a significant cost reduction will be reflected in the new estimate. As the Detailed Design is being paid for out of reserve funds that cost will further reduce the amount we need to borrow. Therefore, the District plans to revise Borrowing Bylaw #264 to reflect the new figure and take the approval process for borrowing back to you, our ratepayers, for approval via referendum early this spring on a date to be announced.

It is important to note that the referendum is only about financing the project, not about the design of the plant. The plant has been designed by an experienced team of engineering professionals at KWL, who specialize in water treatment plant design. The result of a rigorous and ongoing review by the board and management, which has included a variety of site, operational, design and regulatory assessments, the plant has been designed to meet the District's long-term supply and operational needs, as well as addressing site constraints and all regulatory requirements. The Board feels that the design being prepared will best meet the needs of the District and community at large.

### **Why we need a new plant – Your health is important!**

The District must build a new treatment plant on St. Mary Lake for four key reasons:

1. The current plant is at the end of its useful life and is not capable of meeting Island Health's drinking water standards. As the largest of 15 island water systems, NSSWD supplies over 50% of island residences and businesses, schools, the hospital,

and the assisted living facilities. The current plant is not able to meet all water quality concerns which could negatively impact the community's health.

2. In the case of another toxic cyanobacterial bloom, the current treatment may not be able to remove toxin in the treated water which would render the water undrinkable for the duration of the bloom as chlorine is only effective against certain types of toxin.
3. Without the DAF process we cannot remove organics that combine with chlorine to form potentially carcinogenic by-products in our treated water. Current levels of trihalomethanes and haloacetic acids are sometimes above health guidelines.
4. In 2008, the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA, now Island Health) amended NSSWD's operating permit mandating that NSSWD construct a Dissolved Air Flootation (DAF) Water Treatment Plant by 2011 to comply with current and future drinking water standards as per their *4-3-2-1 Policy*. Island Health extended the original deadline requiring the plant be commissioned by January 1st 2016 — The District is still using this as our target date but a further extension may be required.

#### **Why can't NSSWD get any infrastructure grants?**

In 1989 the provincial government's Ministry of the Environment, Lands and Parks decided to encourage the phase-out of improvement districts, mainly by refusing them access to grant money, which they believed would force districts to amalgamate with regional districts or municipalities. There were 327 improvement districts in 1989, and there are 240 now (administered by the Ministry of Community, Sport and Recreation) serving a population of 247,000 provincial/federal taxpayers.

In 2008, all provincial systems serving more than 500 customers were ordered by the Ministry of Health to update their water treatment systems to meet the *4-3-2-1 Policy* for drinking water treatment. (Island Health is responsible for systems on Vancouver Island and its surrounding islands.) However, although one

Ministry has mandated that new treatment plants be built, the other Ministry still refuses to provide access to grant funds to those ordered to build, limiting the ability of districts, like ours, to raise the necessary funds. NSSWD has twice appealed directly to Minister Oakes for an exemption to the policy and been refused both times. Our MLA, Gary Holman, has also met with her twice on our behalf, without success.

#### **Could We Join the CRD?**

Several years ago NSSWD explored the possibility of the District becoming a service area of the Regional District but with no grants available at that time it was felt this was not an option. Also, as all assets and liabilities would be turned over to the CRD, the District's ratepayers would lose control over any projects or operational costs now or in the future. It should be noted that we have determined that even with a surcharge for the new treatment plant, the average NSSWD ratepayers' total yearly payment for water, tax and surcharge will still be lower than that paid by some of the island's other districts. In addition, as grants per community agency are limited, joining the CRD would not guarantee access to grant money.

#### **Open House - March 12th**

During the referendum process ratepayers will again be given the opportunity to meet the design team leader, the board and management at an open forum to ask any questions they may have about the design for the plant and project financing. Our Open House is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup>.

Ratepayers always have an open invitation to visit or call the District office any time during office hours to ask questions. Information and FAQs are also available on our website.



#### **Drought Management**

NSSWD plans to pass a Water Conservation bylaw in the near future to assist with drought

management over the summer months. Beginning this summer, it is expected that sprinkling will be restricted as necessary based on lake levels and drought conditions. Details will be provided soon.