



North Salt Spring Waterworks District

Be water savvy – Use only what you need!

July 2015

Thank You!

Thank you to all of our customers who are on board with the District's conservation regulations! We know it's been a challenge, but it really is making a difference and remember "every drop counts"!!!

Level 4 Drought Declared July 3rd

The ongoing drought has the lakes well below historic levels for this time of year, and the long range weather forecast predicts little relief for some months yet. On July 3rd, the Province announced that the Gulf Islands had reached drought Level 4, causing the District to immediately implement our Level 4 conservation measures.

For the complete details, penalties and exemptions view Bylaw 268 on our website in the Documents section.

In response, the District is in the process of applying for a special license that will allow us to draw St. Mary Lake down below the current allowable lower limit in order to continue providing drinking water to our customers should these drought conditions persist.

We would like to remind everyone that our Conservation Regulations as laid out in Bylaw 268 are mandatory, **not voluntary**. Penalties, including an interruption in your service, can apply. The bylaw can be viewed on the Documents section of our website and an overview of Level 4 conservation regulations follows below.



Water Conservation Level 4- Comprehensive Water Ban

- All outdoor sprinkler watering is prohibited including newly seeded and sodded lawns.
- Vegetable gardens, shrubs, trees and flowers are restricted to a hand held container or a hose equipped with a shut-off nozzle system between the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and for no more than one (1) hour total in duration per watering day. A micro-irrigation or drip-irrigation system may be used by odd numbered civic addresses on odd numbered days and even numbered civic addresses on even numbered days for a maximum of 1 hour per watering day during the specified watering times.
- All other watering is banned, including vehicle washing.

Water Licenses

The District would like to clarify how our water licenses work as there seems to be some misunderstanding with respect to the District's role and responsibilities for lake management, particularly at St. Mary.

The District currently has a license to withdraw water from St. Mary when the lake level is between 40.0m and 40.7m above sea level (asl). Should the lake level fall below 40.0m asl, the District will be non-compliant with the conditions of our withdrawal license. Please keep in mind that the District does not have access to all the water in the lake as there are other license holders and a great deal of water is lost to evaporation during these long hot days. No licensee is permitted to drain the lake.

The consequences of failing to meet the conditions of our license are loss of fisheries flow, negative impacts to water quality, potential fines and suspension or cancellation of the licence. At this time, the lake level is rapidly declining and will likely fall below the 40.0m well before summer's end. The District is actively working with Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations staff and consultants to develop a management plan that best meets the competing needs for water.

The District also has water licences that permit withdrawals from Maxwell Lake and specify the minimum permitted lake level; however, the risk of not refilling is high at Maxwell and operational needs mean the District must maintain the lake level higher than the minimum permitted by license.

The big questions from the District and ratepayers perspective are: Will there be enough water to get us through until the rains begin again? What will the impact be to lake water quality? Will there be enough water to support fish in the creek?

As work progresses during this unprecedented challenge to our water supply, the website will be regularly updated to keep you informed.

Water quantity

If the lake levels fall to such an extent that they are not refilled during the winter, the conservation measures will stay in effect and are likely to become even more stringent. For example, even hand watering may need to be curtailed. In such an extreme situation, protecting public health and safety will be the first priority for the District.

Water quality impacts

Should St. Mary or Maxwell Lake drop to extreme low levels, the shoreline will become exposed further than seen during normal summer drawdown. Loss of riparian vegetation could occur, which can lead to increased soil erosion when the rains finally come. When sediments are washed into the lake, the result is higher turbidity and nutrient concentrations.

At Maxwell Lake, forest fire is also a serious concern. Forest fires can result in both short and long-term impacts to water quality. The most serious impacts typically occur in the first year after wildfire; however, it can take as long as a decade for a watershed to recover. We would again like to remind everyone that Maxwell is private property and not open to the public. The District appreciates your help in protecting this valuable resource.

Raising the Weir - Why?

The North Salt Spring Waterworks District will be applying for a license on St. Mary Lake to store additional winter runoff water. This will require raising the Duck Creek weir by 0.30m or about 12" to a height of 41.0m elevation GSC. The entire lake shore has been surveyed to determine how this will affect the St. Mary lakeshore property owners. The District has begun a dialogue with lakeside property owners that will continue over the next several months with the goal of raising the weir during the summer of 2016. Visit our website for more information.

This added capacity will enable the District to withdraw the entire licensed volume on St. Mary Lake as well as meet our obligation to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for fish flows, and ultimately better serve our island community which includes the hospital, care facilities, schools, hotels, parks and the island's downtown business core. As you are all aware, an adequate supply of potable water is vital to our island's economy and the last three summers, and especially this one, have only highlighted how critical it is to increase storage in St. Mary.

Staff-Tested Water Conservation Tips

- Make a dusty vehicle a Salt Spring status symbol – wait till fall to wash your car, boat or RV.
- Let your lawn go golden! Mulch around your plants and bushes to help prevent evaporation.
- Turn off the tap while you're brushing your teeth until you're ready to rinse.
- Only flush when it's necessary – when it's brown let it go down!
- Take shorter showers or use less bath water.
- Recycle "Greywater"
 - Use a dish pan to capture water when rinsing your hands, veggies and washing your dishes – you'll be amazed how much water you capture in a day – water your shrubs and garden with it (wash greasy items the regular way though). Use a bucket to empty your bath so you can reuse this water in your garden too.
 - Stand in a carry tub while showering and use the water for your garden shrubs and flowers.

