

# **B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE**

**Caring for, Monitoring, and Protecting  
British Columbia's Community Water  
Supply Sources**

P.O. Box #39154, 3695 West 10<sup>th</sup> Ave.,  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. V6R-1G0  
Email – info@bctwa.org  
Website – www.bctwa.org



November 14, 2007

## **PRESENTATION TO METRO VANCOUVER WATER DISTRICT'S WATER COMMITTEE**

**Re: Public comments related to the Drinking Water Management Plan Progress Report**

### **Introduction**

My name is Will Koop. I am the Coordinator of the B.C. Tap Water Alliance formed in February 1997 as a public watchdog over activities in BC's drinking watersheds, and as a public advocate for their collective protection. We maintain a website with much information: [www.alternatives.com/bctwa](http://www.alternatives.com/bctwa). It includes a section on the Greater Vancouver watersheds (under "Community Watershed Issues") with all the reports I wrote in the 1990s. In June 2006 I self-published a book, *From Wisdom to Tyranny: A History of British Columbia's Drinking Watershed Reserves*, on the history of drinking water protection which the Water Committee was provided a complimentary copy of in September 2006.

Today, I am not only speaking on behalf of the BC Tap Water Alliance, but also as a concerned citizen of Metro Vancouver. In addition, I have also been asked to speak on behalf of, and provide brief written comments from, two other public organizations, and one individual, who were unable to attend this meeting: Elaine Golds with the Burke Mountain Naturalists; Ross Muirhead with the Friends of the Watersheds; and Chad Day, the now former chair of Metro Vancouver's Regional Water Advisory Committee. These members, and myself, will provide longer written comments regarding the DWMP for the present review process.

### **Comments on the DWMP Progress Report**

#### **Comments from Friends of the Watersheds**

Dear Metro Vancouver Directors,

I have read the 2002 and 2007 Watershed Reports and find a glaring lack of information in the '07 report. Details such as current forestry and road building operations seem to have been omitted whereas this information would have been useful to know from our point of view. It is thus requested that the Board instruct Staff to go back and provide complete information in these areas.

Yours Truly, Ross Muirhead, Director, Friends of the Watersheds, North Vancouver, BC (email, November 13, 2007)

## Comments from the Burke Mountain Naturalists

Summary Comments to Water Committee from Burke Mountain Naturalists (BMN)

BMN is unable to have a representative available to make a presentation at the Water Committee meeting because of when this meeting is being held. Unfortunately, the November 20 Public Meeting mentioned in the Minutes of the October Water Committee meeting was cancelled. BMN will submit written comments by the end of the month.

We are disappointed that RWAC will be terminated. However, with the end of RWAC some form of public oversight is needed for watershed management so that the public can be confident the watersheds are being appropriately managed. We suggest an ad hoc committee be struck comprised of representatives from Burke Mountain Naturalists, Western Canada Wilderness Committee, BC Tap Water Alliance, and the Society Promoting Environmental Conservation; that a meeting be held at least annually for an update on management activities and that, at least, an annual tour be held.

We are disappointed the progress report is so brief especially as regards watershed management. For example, the report suggests that road deactivation in higher risk areas is “on schedule” yet it makes no mention of the recent upgrades to the Hollyburn road which is definitely in a higher risk area.

We support the return of sockeye salmon to Coquitlam Lake and recommend a plan be developed over the next few months to ensure that any returning adults next summer will be returned to the Lake so that they may have an opportunity to spawn for the first time in approximately a century.

Elaine Golds, Burke Mountain Naturalists (email, November 13, 2007)

## Common Concerns

The main concern that we all share is that the Progress Report is deficient in updated and detailed information about Metro Vancouver’s three watersheds. In the 8-page Report is only one page about the watersheds. No information is provided on a number of important issues. From what we understand, the Metro Vancouver public was to be provided with updated and detailed management reports on the watersheds every five years.

The Plan describes nine implementation programs that are consistent with the five Principles in the area of water monitoring and forecasting, forest ecosystem management, fire management, erosion control, road network, water system infrastructure, communication and education, watershed security and emergency preparedness. The purpose of the Five-Year Implementation Plan is to provide the necessary guidance to ensure that management activities are implemented to reflect the management strategies as described in the Plan. The Five-Year Implementation Plan describes the proposed management activities over the 5-year course of the Plan. The Five-Year Implementation Plan will be updated in each successive year of the Plan.

The Five -Year Implementation Plan is updated annually, to provide detailed maps and work schedules prioritizing the activities proposed for the next five years in the watersheds. Designs and prescriptions are included for the management activities for implementation in each year and receive input from public and advisory committees. Results of the management activities and identified issues are documented in an annual report that describes the state of the watersheds. (Executive Summary, pages 1-2, *Five Year Implementation Plan*, 2002)

## **Road Deactivation Program**

### **5. Road Network Implementation Program**

Objective: Reduce the amount of roads in the watersheds to a level consistent with the Goal and Principles of the Watershed Management Plan.

Activities:

- a) Undertake road maintenance activities such as roadside brushing, grading and drainage structure maintenance as required.
- b) Conduct annual assessments of roads to identify problems that may have developed during storms.
- c) Utilize a risk management approach to complete the road deactivation schedule.
- d) Implement and further develop best management practices for the road network.
- e) Monitor and evaluate the road maintenance and deactivation activities. (Page iii, *Five Year Implementation Plan*, 2002)

As Committee members can see, the previous report of 2002, *Five-Year Implementation Plan for Capilano, Seymour and Coquitlam Watersheds*, was quite detailed and some 100 pages in length. In that report was a road deactivation program (pages 44-53) which described how 175 kilometers out of a total of 300 kilometers of existing access and former logging roads were described as non-essential – that 175 kilometers of road to undergo deactivation over a five-year period. Deactivation was defined as roads “re-contoured to the natural slope”. This is a critical program and phase on the future integrity of the watersheds, yet no updated details about this program are provided to the public. Yesterday morning I left a telephone message with Operations and Maintenance manager Bob Cavill to provide me with these details.

## **Hollyburn Road Upgrade**

One matter related to the road deactivation program has given me some concerns. Earlier this year on March 14, 2007, a citizen contacted and informed me with photographs about the Hollyburn access road being reconstructed and updated. When I tried to contact a staff member at the Operations department about these concerns and left messages on his voicemail - no return calls were received. When this citizen contacted me again, twice in fact, I told him that no one was responding to my concerns. Due to other pressing matters at the time, I was unable to pursue these concerns. I recently re-examined the 2002 *Five Year Implementation Plan* (page 44) which stated that this road was necessary as search and rescue access for Cypress Bowl. However, this stretch of road experienced many problems in the past which I often reported and spoke about to the Water District. I would ask the Water Committee to make an inquiry with the Operations Branch on the rationale behind the Hollyburn upgrade, including information on the funds necessary for this program. Instead, why couldn't a trail have been built for emergency purposes, with a few small openings for helicopter rescue purposes, much like the trail system that the Water District had long before logging roads were built in our watersheds. The Water District once maintained a strict policy against road construction.

## **November 2006 Storm and Turbidity Events**

There is no report information in the Progress Report on last year's significant rainstorm events responsible for overloading the Water District's distribution system with turbid waters, and the closure of the Capilano Reservoir. During these rainstorm events, I was provided with a tour of the Capilano watershed. I should clarify to members of this Committee that after the watersheds were protected by the Board in November 1999, in 2000 I was extended an invitation by Metro Vancouver staff to become an honorary member of the Regional Water Advisory Committee, which I accepted. During this time, I helped form a sub-committee devoted to the inspection of the road deactivation program in the watersheds. And, it was during this time that arrangements were made for me to enter the watershed with Operations staff to inspect the roads and related matters upon my request. I, and occasionally members of RWAC, did so, respectfully, and presentations were made to RWAC about the deactivation program. The reason for my access was related to the olive branch extended to me and my function as an independent representative of the public, to provide

the public with a measure of accountability. For those who may be unfamiliar with the previous history of watershed management, this type of representation was sadly absent before 1999.

When the turbidity events occurred in November 2006, I was contacted by members of the public and some media on what was occurring and if I could provide them with information. I therefore arranged for a tour of the Capilano watershed, which was provided for almost immediately by staff. However, when I provided details of some of the information I video recorded and photographed to the media, I was informed that someone in Operations had officially suspended me from re-entering the watersheds with staff.

I want to say on record, that at no time did I provide the media, or the public, with errant information. I did my interpretive homework on the logging history in the area above Sisters Creek (old aerial photos, maps, etc.) which I have much information about, and carefully stated the facts to everyone.

What I was very curious about at the time were the numerous details and incidents observed and collected by Operations staff about all the related landslide and erosion events in all three watersheds. On November 15<sup>th</sup>, I accompanied Ross Muirhead on a visit he arranged with a staff member to examine detailed map information staff had pinpointing the location of the numerous types of erosion and landslide events. When I asked if I could take a photo of this map, I was told that I couldn't, that I would have to make a written request to do so. I reluctantly agreed, and then later emailed the staff member requesting this information – I was never provided a response to my request. I'm not here to make a scene (perhaps the staff member never received the email), but to inform you that this information should have been provided to me at the time. I don't know what happened to the map information. If the information is still available, I would ask the Committee to have someone kindly make it available to me for my records.

I would also ask this Committee to consider reinstating my previous arrangement to access the watersheds with staff from time to time. This is very important, and will provide the public with confidence that they have at least someone to represent them to inspect what is occurring in the watersheds, to occasionally observe what might be otherwise unavailable for their knowledge on the sources of their drinking water. The public has a right to know, and everything should be done to freely accommodate such an opportunity.

## **Precipitation and Turbidity Data**

Another critical issue absent in the Progress Report is analytical report information on turbidity over time. Aside from its value to inform staff of daily occurrences, such information could be important for understanding if there has been a noticeable decrease of turbidity into our reservoirs since logging ceased in the watersheds (1968-1994), including the possible linkage with results from the initial road deactivation program. This comparative information from data over the decades should be carefully detailed and updated on, so that the public may understand this important relationship. We've had many turbidity stations placed in our watersheds, and it is important that this information be assessed and made available.

One of the difficulties that I experienced in late 2006 following the turbidity events was in obtaining precipitation and turbidity data from each watershed. Unfortunately, at the time this information was largely restricted to staff through exclusive software or proprietary on-line computer access. As a result of the storm events in early November 2006, I was interested in analyzing all the data and making a comparative analysis for a report. Because I was only given some information, I discovered there were significant turbidity spikes in the Coquitlam watershed in the Cedar Creek drainage, a drainage that was heavily logged in the past. Though I had wanted to, I never got an opportunity to visit the Cedar Creek site because of my visitation suspension. I also discovered that the rainstorms often operate in isolated storm cells, and there are different rainfall events in each watershed. For instance, from the headwaters station it recorded a total of 9 inches of rainfall in upper Capilano Creek.

In summary, the Water District has ample information about turbidity precipitation events, and there should be some form of accountability and availability (ready access) of this information to the public.