

D R A F T

## WATER CONSERVATION: THE NEW NORMAL

As our weather changes, becoming warmer year-round, we have to face the reality of a 'new normal' when it comes to how we use water. It is so easy to turn on a tap and get a seemingly endless stream of clean, drinkable water. It's probably too easy, because we rarely take time to think about where that water comes from and where it goes as we let the tap run to get hot water, brush our teeth or rinse the dishes.

But the truth is that water is an infinitely precious commodity and a finite resource. We all need to be much more conscious of where our water comes from and how we use it. We all need to do our part to conserve and be water wise.

In Ladysmith, we rely on what is termed surface water for our water supply. That is, our water comes from lakes and creeks in the hills surrounding our community. Ladysmith's water is supplied in part by Holland Lake and the Holland Creek watershed, which enters the water supply system at the Chicken Ladder Intake, as well as from Stocking Lake, located south of the Town. Water from both of these supplies is piped directly to the Arbutus Reservoir, where it is chlorinated and distributed by gravity to the entire Ladysmith service area, the Diamond Improvement District and portions of neighbouring Stz'uminus First Nation lands. We can also divert water from Banon Creek if required to help fill Holland Lake. In addition, a separate pipeline ties in to the main pipeline just south of Stocking Lake, and feeds the Saltair water system, operated by the CVRD.

The Town commissioned the 2014 Watershed Modelling Report to verify the ability of the Stocking, Holland, and Banon Watersheds to provide a reliable source of domestic water to the Town for the medium- and long-term future, taking into account population and climate change projections. The report concluded that, if we manage our water properly and ensure that we have the capacity to store it for use in the dry summer months, we should have an adequate supply for the medium term. In the long term, additional storage will be required in the Holland System to provide for adequate supply storage during unusual drought years.

The Town is acting on a number of fronts together with other local governments, First Nations, community groups, concerned citizens and businesses on the water management front. Initiatives underway include:

- Council has established "Water Supply and Watershed Protection" as a focus area for 2015, and asked staff to investigate options for future additional water storage, explore more incentives and rebates to encourage lower water use, reduce water use in municipal facilities, and encouraging greener development that takes the natural water cycle and rain water into consideration
- We have set a new residential water consumption target of 20 per cent less than the published Canadian residential average. And let's give ourselves a pat on the back here – with our water use at 246 litres per person, per day, we are already below the B.C. water

consumption average and leading the rest of the Cowichan Region. However, we still use much more water than almost any other country in the world, so there is still room for improvement

- Ladysmith is working with the other communities in the Cowichan Valley Regional District, as well as Stz'uminus First Nation and Cowichan Tribes, on a region-wide water reduction and public awareness campaign. For the first time ever, we are implementing the same water restrictions, at the same time
- We are also very pleased to be working alongside neighbours and community members to establish a Watershed Management Round Table, with representatives from Stz'uminus First Nation, the Town, industry, the community and the regional district working together to preserve and protect our watershed

There are many local resources offering tips on how we can all reduce water use at home and at work. I encourage you to visit the Water Conservation page on the Town's website at [www.ladysmith.ca](http://www.ladysmith.ca) as well as the CVRD's New Normal site at [www.cvrldnewnormalcowichan.ca](http://www.cvrldnewnormalcowichan.ca). Whether it is as simple as collecting rain water to water your plants, installing a low-flush toilet, or installing high efficiency drip irrigation for your garden, try making a few changes and share them with your friends and neighbours. Every drop counts, literally.

Preserving the environment and protecting our water sources must be a priority. Water security will continue to be a major focus of municipal, regional, provincial, federal and even world organizations. Managing water wisely now, and investing in infrastructure, will help ensure there is enough water to meet projected demands and preserve the ecosystems around us.

Mayor Aaron Stone