

From: Sakinaw Lake Community Association [mailto:slcalake@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, March 14, 2011 4:54 PM
To: Living Water Smart ENV:EX
Cc: info@scrd.ca
Subject: Living Water Smart - Submission for Water Sustainability Act

March 14, 2011

Water Act Modernization
Ministry of Environment
Water Protection and Sustainability Branch
PO Box 9362
Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9M2

Re: Water Sustainability Act

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on water use and regulation in BC. The Sakinaw Lake Community Association is a not-for-profit society representing property owners and residents on and around Sakinaw Lake in the Pender Harbour area of the Sunshine Coast.

The purpose of the society is to promote, facilitate, coordinate, support and undertake activities that protect or enhance the environment of Sakinaw Lake and the quality of life of its residents. We have been a registered society since the mid 1980's. We have a strong commitment to our community and the environment which makes our lake so special.

Most of us draw water from the lake for consumption in our cabins. Many owners have Domestic Water Licences and many others are currently taking out licences at the strong urging of the Association. Use of water and water licensing has been a very active subject on our lake for several years principally because the Sunshine Coast Regional District has applied for a licence to remove a large quantity of water from Sakinaw Lake. Hence your proposed changes to the regulation of water use is of significant interest to our Association.

We only became aware of the opportunity for input very recently through a BC Government Twitter post and hence our comments will be very brief. We would appreciate being added to your mailing list for future notices (slcalake@gmail.com). Our comments are based on the Policy Proposal for a Water Sustainability Act dated December 2010. We trust this is the current document.

1. Protect Stream Health and Water Environments

We strongly agree with the approach to protect all water resources - surface and ground - and would support a holistic approach to developing and applying guidelines and regulations.

2. Consider Water in Land Use Decisions

We would consider this is a basic premise in protecting water resources. Before water licensing decisions are made, long range land use plans should be carefully and fully developed within the watershed (and beyond) such that the impacts of the current and future licensing decisions are fully studied and carefully considered. Above all, the Precautionary Principle should be paramount because water decisions are usually long lasting and irreversible. With the impacts of global warming far from being understood, caution is the key.

3. Regulate Groundwater Use

Although groundwater is not a significant issue within our area, we would agree that regulation is appropriate and consideration of the cumulative impacts should be paramount.

4. Regulate During Scarcity

The FITFIR policy should be maintained unless there is a clearly demonstrated need to vary this policy. Any contemplated change should be subject to full consultation with the impacted licence holders.

5. Improve Security, Water Use Efficiency and Conservation

Water conservation should be emphasised at all levels, by all users. Conservation measures should be the first priority before any large licences are granted.

6. Measure and Report

We agree that reporting by individual Domestic Water Licensees should not be considered at this time in watersheds where supply is not an issue. This would simply become a bureaucratic process and likely lead to false reporting.

7. Enable a Range of Governance Approaches

Shared responsibility with local governments for water shed and water planning is appropriate however we strongly feel that the Province should maintain ultimate responsibility for water allocation decisions.

Fresh water is our most precious resource. We appreciate the efforts the Ministry is taking to ensure this resource is properly protected and managed for the generations to follow.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Belich
Co-Chair
Sakinaw Lake Community Association

Bill Sievewright
Director, Environment Committee
Sakinaw Lake Community Association