

BACKGROUND – TOWN OF GIBSONS

Resolution Re: Risk Assessments of Potential Threats to Natural Assets that Provide Essential Services

The Town of Gibsons is seeking adequate protections for the Gibsons Aquifer recharge area and has made applications to the province for a watershed reserve and a community watershed designations and have also engaged our regional colleagues, including the Shíshálh and the Squamish nations, on a proposal for a regional watershed governance model for the Sunshine Coast.

Since making applications in 2014, and having subsequent discussions with Ministry and BCTS staff, there has been limited progress. The aquifer is extensively monitored by the Town of Gibsons and provides drinking water to most of our citizens and businesses.

From 2009 to 2013, the Town of Gibsons conducted an aquifer mapping study to develop a better understanding of aquifer boundaries, hydraulic properties, and aquifer recharge and discharge. This study identified three significant aquifer recharge mechanism for the watershed, and includes mountain block recharge, creek recharge and recharge through Alluvium deposits. An update to that work is expected in 2021.

During this same period we have noted that there has been increased industrial, commercial and residential development occurring within the Regional District which is over our aquifer recharge area as mapped. This includes, gravel mining, and cement making and batch plant, a large manufactured home park and other commercial operations and residential construction, all of which are un-serviced by sewer. Additional logging is also planned on this area."

Over the last several years, Gibsons has made substantial investments in improvements to our water distribution systems, including metering all properties and as a result have greatly reduced water consumption in the community, over 50 percent reduction, which has allowed us to serve 100 percent of our water needs from the aquifer.

In that time, the Town pioneered an approach, natural asset management, that considers the role of nature, and the ecosystems services it provides, as a fundamental component of a municipal infrastructure system and also in the ability of local governments to manage the impacts of climate change in terms of floods, droughts and sea level rise. The Gibsons' approach is now being replicated across Canada and even internationally.

Beginning in 2018, local governments on the Coast agreed to collaborate on a regional water governance approach and have agreed to work together on two key initiatives:

- The development of an integrated, regional watershed management approach, with supporting management strategies, programs, projects, bylaws, policies and tools.
- The examination of models for regional watershed governance that would provide an opportunity for collaborative governance by bringing together relevant rights holders and stakeholders.

Given the significant water management challenges, complexities of land use, interests and rights holders in our region, we think that future proofing the Sunshine Coast’s social, ecological and economic prosperity requires closely examining our options for both **integrated watershed management planning and watershed governance**.

