**UNBC 2021 Meeting Note:**

**Meeting with FLNRORD RE: Watershed Protection for Gibsons Aquifer**

**Thursday, September 9th at 1150AM**

This meeting is a follow-up to the meeting held in September 2020.

**Attending:**

Mayor Beamish and Councillors: Croal, De Andrade, Ladwig

SCRD Chair Pratt

Staff: Mark Brown, CAO, and Dave Newman, Director of Infrastructure Services

**For FLNRORD:**

Allan Johnsrude, Regional Executive Director – South Coast

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**Discussion:**

Mayor Beamish led the discussion by reminding Mr. Johnsrude of the previous meeting, September 17, 2020, with him wherein this issue was also discussed with reference to concerns about development activities in the watershed; and, requested an update on what the Ministry has done since that meeting with respect to the Towns 2014 application for aquifer-watershed protection.

The discussion also included reference to logging in the watershed area and Mayor Beamish expressed the view that trees in the watershed and on the aquifer protect the recharge and should be treated in a similar way that trees are within riparian areas adjacent to streams or lakes.

Mr. Johnsrude was unable to provide any update on our 2014 application which Mayor Beamish stated that the Town considers to be an active application which should receive ministry priority, especially since the SCRD will shortly rely on the same aquifer and recharge area for the Church Road Wells that are under development in Granthams landing.

Chair Pratt reiterated the importance of this area to the SCRD and to protection od the recharge area for wells being developed to service the SCRD which is currently at Stage 4 Water Restrictions and receiving water from the Town (1000m3/day).

Reference was also made to the meeting held with the Ministry of Environment on September 8, 2021 to discuss a similar issue of watershed protection.

Mr. Johnsrude was informed that Waterline Resources is currently updating the 2013 Aquifer study and this work will be completed early in 2022.

**Action:**

It was agreed that this matter is a priority for the Town and for the SCRD and that the Town will arrange a meeting with FLNRORD in October or November 2021 to continue this discussion and keep the application active. This meeting should also include representatives from the Ministry of Environment, Vancouver Coastal Health, Squamish Nation, the SCRD, the Town of Gibsons, Waterline and other stakeholders in the area.

2020 UBCM Ministerial Meetings – **Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Operations**

Thursday, September 17, 2020 (9:10 am)

**Dial: 1 888 952 9304 Passcode: 264790828**

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**.

I would now like to ask Chair Pratt or Mayor Siegers if they wish to add any comments.

After this meeting we will share with you information about our regional water governance proposal and natural asset management.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Attachments:

* Considering the Future of Watershed Management and Governance for the Sunshine Coast – February 2018
* Options for Pursuing a Regional Approach to Watershed Management and Governance: *Recommendations for the Sunshine Coast Region – January 2019*