

B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

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

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May 14, 2008

Presentation to Metro Vancouver Water Committee, May 14, 2008, by Will Koop, Coordinator, B.C. Tap Water Alliance.

Below are my written comments for Metro Vancouver's Water Committee. Due to its length, I will provide an oral summary of these comments in my five minute-long delegation, accompanied by a sample of photographs of a logging road tour taken during the summer of 2000 with members of the roads sub-committee of the Regional Water Advisory Committee.

Overview

Last November 14, 2007, I gave an oral and written presentation to the Water Committee with respect to the recent Drinking Water Management Plan (posted as of today on our website). A decision to hold a public meeting to review this DWMP plan in late November was cancelled. Consequently, this meeting was moved to be held in tandem with the Water Committee meeting.

In my presentation I raised a number of issues that dealt with public concerns and deficiencies about the DWMP, including a request to continue with my access into the Greater Vancouver watersheds.

At the end of the meeting, the Committee referred my comments and presentation to administration staff for a response. Staff responded via Stan Woods' February 13, 2008 two-page report to the Water Committee, *Public Comment on the Progress Report for the Drinking Water Management Plan*. However, as I was not notified of staff's report, I only recently became aware of it. After reviewing the comments, I decided to make a second appearance.

Four Issues

There are four issues I would like to address in response to the staff report, and further comments with respect to my November 14, 2007 presentation:

- the Hollyburn access road above Capilano Reservoir;
- the delayed 175 total kilometer logging road decommissioning process;
- continued access to the Greater Vancouver watersheds;
- turbidity and precipitation data.

1. The Hollyburn access road

As I pointed out in my presentation, I want to understand “the rationale behind the Hollyburn upgrade”. There are no comments provided in staff’s report about the reasons for upgrading 2.4 kilometers of the Hollyburn road. Why was it necessary to upgrade the road, and using funds that could otherwise have been used for road deactivation elsewhere?

Secondly, of the \$250,000 spent, the report does not distinguish between the amount allocated to upgrading and deactivation for 7.1 kilometers of road. Please provide the breakdown for each category.

2. The delayed 175 total kilometer logging road decommissioning process

Regarding the concerns I brought forward in my presentation, staff failed to mention anything about the pre-scheduled five-year road deactivation program described in the 2002 DWMP.

175 kilometers of “non-essential” roads were programmed for deactivation. Yet only 4.7 kilometers of this total were deactivated on the Hollyburn road. What happened to the other remaining 170 kilometers? Why was nothing reported about this by staff? I would request staff to name and identify all of the roads that were earmarked as “non-essential”.

I would ask the Committee to request staff to provide a data table to be released to the public that lists all of the road deactivation projects in the watersheds by the following categories:

- watershed
- sub-watershed
- road name and identification number
- length of road deactivated
- date of deactivation
- cost of deactivation.

For the Water Committee’s interest, I have attached a copy of an October 29, 2002 letter by Elaine Golds (a member of the Regional Water Advisory Committee) with the Burke Mountain Naturalists, containing comments about the 2002 DWMP. Point number seven in that letter summarizes the importance of the road deactivation program.

3. Continued access to the Metro Vancouver Watersheds

At the end of my presentation on November 14, 2007, a Water Committee member asked staff about the concerns I raised regarding continued access to the watersheds. Tom Heath, Manager of Operations and Maintenance, simply replied that it was against Metro Vancouver Board policy to do so. I am concerned he has not fully imparted to the Water Committee my previous open access to the watersheds (in the company of staff).

I am concerned because it appears that the **open and transparent policy** (last point in the five part resolution adopted as part of the special two-hour long Metro Vancouver Water Board meeting on November 10, 1999) may no longer be being followed.

In order to provide a brief history of public access to the watersheds, let me provide you with this summary.

Sixteen years ago in 1992, I requested access to the watersheds to monitor the logging road and former logging activities. Initially, former watershed operations manager Ed Hamaguchi provided me with such a schedule beginning in October 1992, when I was given a tour of the Coquitlam watershed. However, by May 1993, following Mr. Hamaguchi's sudden departure, in a private meeting with the new operations manager Bob Cavill he immediately cancelled my access schedule from continuing, and such opportunities were lost over the next 6 years.

Subsequently, following numerous requests, staff continued to advise Metro Vancouver Directors against my access, citing, as did Tom Heath and Stan Woods, that I have "no business" in the watersheds and "access permission is not consistent with Board policy". These statements were typically made when members of the public inquired about road failures and landslide events that staff failed to properly document to the Water Committee and the public. In response, staff continued to state that there was no relationship between logging activities and water quality, statements questioned by many members of the public.

After many years, following a March 1999 Water Committee delegation, Water Committee members finally overruled staff and provided me with a three-month watershed visitation schedule, which the Metro Vancouver Board also agreed to at the March 1999 monthly meeting.

During the following two to three months, staff provided me with a tour of each watershed over some seven visitations. During these field trips from April to June, I regularly documented the road network and clearcutting practices and repercussions with both still and video cameras. On one of the visits to the Daniels Creek drainage in the Capilano watershed, we witnessed multiple and severe erosion events that occurred over the winter to the steeply sloped logging road, which included a number of landslides into Daniels Creek. This information was then made public. The point about this episode, and others like it, is that at the time forestry and engineering staff were not reporting such matters to the public and public confidence in the manner in which their drinking watersheds were being managed diminished considerably.

A half a year later, at the November 10, 1999 Metro Vancouver Water Board meeting, I presented the Board with a slide show accompanying a lengthy report, *Silty Sources*. In the executive summary were three future planning recommendations, the first of which called for logging road deactivation:

Road deactivation is an important consideration for the future management of the watersheds, a subject which is strangely lacking in the ecological inventory reports. The Scientific Review Panel also acknowledges this in their latest October 1999 report, where "roads receive inadequate attention". They go on to state that "analysis might reveal that a significant portion of the road system is no longer needed, making a deactivation schedule, balancing maintenance and deactivation costs, an important element in the management plan" (page 12).

On this particular topic, we suggest that the GVRD consider forming a public Greater Vancouver Watersheds Road Committee to identify the problems with the existing road structures and to come up with an immediate and long term road deactivation program. The City of Seattle, for example, is developing a long term road deactivation plan for its Cedar River watershed, and has already set aside funds for this project.

What followed in the year 2000 during a meeting of the Regional Water Advisory Committee was an invitation extended by Metro Vancouver staff for me to participate on the Committee. That occasion began a new period of cooperation, a symbol of peace-making. As a result, I helped form a logging roads sub-committee, where members of RWAC made recommendations to the Water Committee following tours of logging roads before and during their being decommissioned.

I was also told by staff that whenever I wanted to enter the watersheds I would simply have to contact staff, and a suitable time for staff to accompany me would be arranged. This was all part of the new peace arrangement and readjustment period, where relations were very amicable and enjoyable. This is what continued to occur until November 2006 when I was provided with a tour of the Capilano watershed following the heavy rainstorm events. Following the broadcast of video footage by the media from my trip, I was told that a senior administrator had temporarily suspended my visitation privileges.

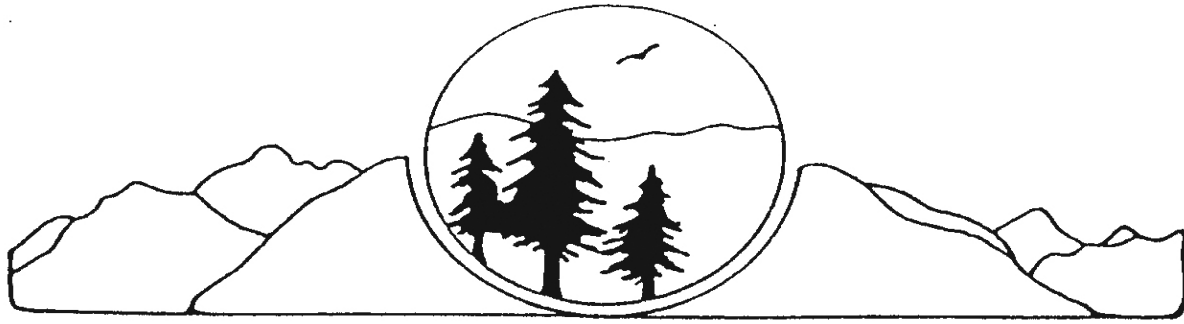
Metro-Vancouver senior staff is saying, as they did in the 1990s, that I no longer have “Metro-Vancouver business” to conduct informational visitations of the watersheds. I would suggest to the Water Committee and to the Metro Vancouver Water Board that, as much as I had in the past, I do continue to qualify as having “business” in the public’s watersheds, and that I represent the concerned public in so doing.

Continued access to the watersheds is part of the necessary “transparency” of information as stated and agreed to in point number five of the five-point Greater Vancouver Watersheds Declaration of November 10, 1999.

4. Make turbidity and precipitation data public

Staff failed to respond to my concerns about precipitation and turbidity data collected in the Metro Vancouver three watersheds, Capilano, Seymour and Coquitlam. I request the Committee recommend staff make this information available to the public in an accessible digital format. This is valuable public information for both academics and a small but engaged public audience.

Drinking watershed management in the 1990s became a highly contentious issue which received considerable media attention in part because of the GVRD’s closed door policy which prevented members of the public from knowing what was happening in the watersheds. It would be unwise to return to such a policy. Moreover, this is contrary to the commitment made to public transparency in 1999.



Burke Mountain Naturalists
PO Box 52540, RPO Coquitlam Centre, Coquitlam BC V3B 7J4
“To Know Nature and To Keep It Worth Knowing”

October 29, 2002

Greater Vancouver Regional District
Communications and Education Department
4330 Kingsway
Burnaby, B.C. V5H 4G8

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Support for Five-Year Implementation Plan for GVRD Watersheds

On behalf of our society, I submit the following comments regarding the draft implementation plan for the drinking watersheds. In general, we support the plan as written and are pleased with the direction taken. We found the report to be informative and especially appreciated the inclusion of several detailed maps. As mentioned at the RWAC meeting on October 23, it would be very helpful to provide cost estimates and a priority ranking for the projects. Our specific comments follow:

1. Climate Change: The implications of climate change should be noted throughout the report. Global warming may cause less rainfall and drier forest conditions in the watershed during certain periods of the year as well as an increased frequency of erosive storm events. Increased levels of water monitoring and forecasting as well as more erosion control projects may be required.
2. Extend Season for Bird Nesting: We strongly support the policy of minimizing impacts to the ecosystem by having construction and related operations performed outside of the nesting season and fisheries window (page 19). However, the bird-nesting season actually extends from approximately the beginning of March to the end of July. Resident birds begin to establish nests in the very early spring (often by late February) whereas neotropical migrants typically do not arrive until mid-May to begin nesting activities. We recommend that clearing take place outside the nesting season. To avoid impacts on nesting birds, the best time to undertake such work is in the fall. We recognize that there will be very little clearing required under the new management regime.
3. Include Glossary: We recommend that a glossary be included to increase the readability of the report for the general reader (e.g., BEC units as used on page 25).
4. Forest Ecosystem: We recommend that, as part of a biodiversity index, remaining areas of old growth be identified and monitored. As most of the remaining old-growth areas outside of protected areas in the

province will be harvested over the next few years, these areas within the watersheds are likely to be of increasing interest to scientists. For example, these ancient forests may provide habitat for species of insects and arthropods not found in less mature forests. Map 3.1 shows rare or imperiled ecosystems but the characteristics of these ecosystems are not explained well in the text.

5. Fire Management: We recommend that the report more clearly describe the various types of forests found throughout the province with respect to their fire hazard rating and explain that the types of forests found in our drinking watersheds are not as susceptible to fire as those found elsewhere.

6. Or Creek: The Or Creek drainage is considered within the implementation plan although it does not drain into Coquitlam Lake. We support the GVRD maintaining it as a closed area as we believe it provides a valuable buffer between heavily-used recreation areas on Burke Mountain and the Coquitlam drinking watershed. However, the report is insufficiently clear about the drainage of Or Creek. We understand that an erosion control project is under consideration for Or Creek but this project does not appear to be mentioned in the draft plan. If the intent of the GVRD is to develop a separate plan for Or Creek, perhaps this should be indicated in the draft plan.

7. Road Deactivation: We strongly support the road deactivation plan as presented. As a member of RWAC, I was pleased to have an opportunity to view the de-activation work done in the Daniels Creek drainage in Capilano. Given the erodible soils and the necessity of operating around the fisheries window, careful monitoring and possible remediation may be required in this area in the spring.

8. Fish and Wildlife: We are pleased to see that the GVRD is developing partnerships with volunteers to monitor biodiversity in the watersheds. Members of our Society appreciated having a field trip to assist in gathering data on the species of birds found in looper-infested areas in the Coquitlam watershed. We look forward to future opportunities. The apparent disappearance of the endangered spotted owl from the watersheds is troubling. We recommend the GVRD undertake additional survey work to confirm this status. If such surveys are to be conducted, it could be worthwhile to also assess the presence of barred owls – a species which might, in part, be a contributing reason for the apparent absence of spotted owls. We recommend that the report specifically mention the extinct sockeye salmon from the Coquitlam watershed. The demise of this population was documented in the report entitled “Red Fish Up the River” prepared for the Kwitwetlem First Nation by Will Koop and funded by BC Hydro.

9. Sponsor a “Watershed Research Forum”: In addition to providing raw drinking water, the watersheds are also a valuable resource to scientists studying forest ecosystems. In turn, the findings of these scientists provide useful information to the GVRD at little or no cost to taxpayers. We are pleased to see the number and type of projects currently being conducted within the watersheds. In order to facilitate communications between staff, scientists and the public, we recommend that the GVRD sponsor, either on an annual or biannual basis, a “research day” at which scientists have an opportunity to present their findings to each other, staff and interested members of the public. Such presentations provide excellent opportunities for graduate students to present their findings and would help to maintain accountability to both the GVRD and the public.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely yours,

Elaine Golds, Ph.D.
Past President and Conservation Chair