

Presentation to the SCRD on September 10, 2015 for the SCCA

George Smith

My message today will be brief and to the point.

Please diversify our water supply:

It is not rational to put all our eggs in one basket, in one creek, one watershed. The Chapman watershed has a history of serious slope instability with over 300 slides in an earthquake prone zone. What is our fallback if Chapman Creek is blocked or compromised? Proper engineering means building redundancy into the system.

A problem as I see it, is that your consulting firm and your water management staff have not really presented options which effectively look beyond the Chapman headwaters and creek system. Nor have they truly considered the larger ecological picture within which our water supply is positioned. One cannot make good decisions unless one really knows about one's options. You have been receiving partial information, shy of the larger, water, ecological and climate change picture.

Good community water supply depends not only on quantity but also on quality. The best water comes from naturally functioning forest ecosystems. At about 3% of our forest district, the Sunshine Coast has less protection of our natural habitat than virtually any district in BC. Most of the Chapman Creek Valley is still recovering from the serious impacts of logging. Chapman Lake is at the heart of Tetrahedron Provincial Park - perhaps the best natural habitat we still have.

Please maintain the ecological integrity and water quality of Chapman Lake and Tetrahedron Park as much as possible. Installing an emergency siphon mechanism while we improve our water supply system is one thing. But drawing down Chapman Lake an additional 5 metres by trenching or by introducing a fossil fuel pump system into the heart of our water supply are different matters entirely. Once installed, deep lake drawdown will likely become a permanent fixture. The bathymetric shape of the lake is deep only for a small portion of its surface area. The repeated exposure of lake bottom and silts will likely lead to a diminution of water quality and will impact biodiversity.

There are options available. You already have our suggestions for short and long term solutions from our presentation last September (copy attached). I will mention only one option today.

Aquifers: Gibsons found out through an intensive aquifer study that their aquifer can provide water for 10,000 people. The consultant also suggested that other vital aquifer options are likely available further west and east in the district. No detailed study by the Regional District has been undertaken. Let's find out. Please examine in detail the potential of aquifer supply in Elphinstone, West Howe Sound, in Wilson and Grey Creeks and other areas in the SCR D.

Thank you.