News Release

Water Regulations Required to Secure Supply

Sechelt, BC—November 7, 2022— The Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is continuing work to secure water supply for users on the Chapman Water System. An update on our current water supply situation is below.

The SCRD is seeking an extension of the State of Local Emergency (SOLE) due to the uncertainty of our water supply in the coming months.

Chapman Water Supply
While recent rains temporarily recharged Chapman Creek, the Chapman watershed is not recharging at the rate required to lift Stage 4 Water Conservation Regulations.

This year we have moved from an extended drought period to snowfall in just two weeks. Usually, there is more time between dry summer weather and freezing temperatures at Chapman Lake, which allows the watershed to recharge and the lake to fill before it freezes. As you can see from the image below, taken this morning, the lake is nowhere near full and the ground, exposed due to summer drought is frozen and under snow.

[Image of Chapman Lake, November 7]
There has been no change in the lake level in the past few days, and there is currently two and a half feet of snow on the ground.

The two pictures below give a sense of how much water is required in Chapman Lake for water regulations to be scaled back. The image on the left was taken last year on September 20, 2021 when Stage 4 Water Conservation Regulations were rescinded. The image on the right is from the same vantage point on November 1, 2022. The water in the channel and in the lake is significantly less in the image on the right.

You may have seen Chapman Creek roaring after the recent rain last week, but once the rain stops or falls as snow, creek levels can drop dramatically,” explained Remko Rosenboom, Emergency Operations Centre Director. “In winter, we rely on water running through the watershed into the lakes and water overflowing from our lake reservoirs, both of which we cannot count on this year due to extended drought this past summer and October.”

There are times in winter, under normal conditions, when it is challenging to meet both water demand and Environmental Flow Needs requirements for aquatic life. Staff continue to monitor watershed conditions and water supply closely, and should there be a risk to our water supply, staff will proactively implement additional restrictions.

Weather Forecast
While clearer weather is due this week, temperatures will likely remain below freezing in the upper watershed. The Edwards Lake and Chapman Lake siphons have been turned off due to freezing conditions.

Emergency Operations Centre Actions
Bringing the new Church Road Water Treatment Plant online is delayed until early next week due to freezing conditions and issues associated with recent storm damage on the Sunshine Coast. This temporary emergency initiative will add 15% water supply to the Chapman Water System.
Leaks
As staff continue to work to secure water supply, efforts are ongoing to resolve leaks on properties. At this time, this is a priority for the SCRD as leaks are contributing to a significant amount of use on the Chapman Water System. Staff visited properties with leaks this past weekend with more visits planned this week. To find out more about our leak resolution program, visit https://www.scrd.ca/fix-a-leak

Open burning restrictions
Open burning restrictions issued by the Gibsons, Roberts Creek, Sechelt and Halfmoon Bay fire departments have been rescinded. Please check with your respective fire departments for campfires and backyard burning regulations in your area.

Community Use
Last week, on the most part, community use was below 8.5 million litres per day. Thank you to everyone who has reduced water use at home and work.

“Despite recent rainfall, we remain cautious about securing adequate water supply into the winter months. Our recent drought period has brought many unknowns about how our watershed will recharge,” says Rosenboom. “I want to once again thank our community for your support in conserving water and ask that it continues as our staff work to provide water to the community.”

Diversifying the water sources of the Chapman Water System is required to provide safe and reliable water supply to the community. The SCRD is currently working on multiple groundwater projects to bring further redundancy to the Chapman Water System. Learn more about current water supply projects at letstalk.scrd.ca/water

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