

What Can We Do to Conserve Water?

Summary of A Community Conversation organized by the Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre and the Cowichan Watershed Board About the Drought in the Koksilah Watershed

July 17, 2019 @ the HUB

Water belongs to everyone, we all need it and we all have responsibility to look after it. Once again watersheds on the east side of Vancouver Island are experiencing a severe drought that is affecting drinking water supplies, fisheries, farming, recreation etc. The Koksilah Watershed is in a particularly critical low flow situation and so the community gathered to learn about the contributing factors and share ideas on actions individuals could consider.

Thank you to Alicia Taylor, Tom Rutherford, David Slade and Sierra Robinson for inspiring talks about community, ground and surface water in the Koksilah watershed and permaculture farming/gardening. Below is a summary of the community conversation that followed those talks. Three questions were discussed (notes below) and many other thoughts and concerns were expressed relating to the state of our watersheds, water policy and regulations, government action, conservation incentives etc.

Question 1. – What Water Conservation actions are working well for you?

- Overall:
 - Change habits - Turn off the tap
 - Check for leaks everywhere
- In the Garden:
 - Water more deeply and less often
 - Drip/micro irrigation
 - Water at night
 - Mulch
 - Reuse Grey water in garden
 - Collect rainwater in cisterns and rain barrels
 - Mechanical and digital timers for watering
 - Do not water the lawn
 - Swales to hold water
 - Ponds to store water
- In the House
 - Plan to shower and do laundry only once a week
 - Abstinence, bathe only when necessary
 - Full laundry loads only – invested in machine that uses minimal water
 - Capture laundry discharge for the toilet or garden
 - Shower with friends
 - Keep a bucket under the shower and kitchen tap to collect cold water while waiting for hot water to come
 - Low flush and composting toilets
 - Yellow let it mellow

Question 2. – What else would you like to do to conserve but haven't yet?

- Get a composting toilet
- Advocate to change the legislative paradigm
- More Permaculture Techniques– create swales and pond storage; cisterns, tanks to collect rainwater from roof
- Sue forest companies and use proceeds for ecological restoration

Question 3. – What do you think will help support more community action on water conservation?

- Education:
 - Information on water use and real risks of running out
 - Promotion of water restrictions and regulations
 - Help with environmental farm plan and permaculture
- Government subsidies directed to community and household conservation initiatives (not fossil fuel industry) for:
 - Rainwater/cistern storage barrels
 - creating water reservoirs
 - water meters on private community water systems
- Use positive language from the heart
- Allow grey water use
- Align industrial use with need to conserve
- Advocate directly with your governments :
 - Ian Morrison, Chair CVRD chairperson@cvrd.bc.ca
 - John Horgan, Premier@gov.bc.ca
 - Sonia Furstenau, MLA Cowichan Valley Sonia.Furstenau.MLA@leg.bc.ca
 - Alistair MacGregor, MP Cowichan-Malahat-Langford Alistair.Macgregor@parl.gc.ca