

Aug 16, 2019

Strathcona Regional District Protects Valuable Ecological Resources

CAMPBELL RIVER, BC – For the last year, the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) has been in negotiations with the Strathcona Regional District (SRD) to secure access to an additional groundwater well within the Oyster River Nature Park, for properties serviced by the Black Creek Oyster Bay (BCOB) water system.

At the SRD's July Board Meeting, the SRD Board made its position clear and is not prepared to entertain any actions that would facilitate additional development and threaten delicate ecosystems related to the Oyster River.

To protect the interests of all Area D residents, the SRD has been reluctant to provide support to the CVRD for the development of an additional well within the Oyster River Nature Park without knowing the long term capacity of the well, the development demand requirements of the CVRD, and the effect on the Oyster River ecosystem.

The SRD continues to support the development of an additional well that could provide water security to the existing users of the Black Creek/Oyster Bay water system, but is taking steps to ensure there is no negative impact to the fish habitat that the demand of additional connections will put on the Oyster River.

"The delivery of quality services to SRD constituents is a fundamental commitment expressed through the SRD Board's mission statement" says Strathcona Regional District Chair Michele Babchuk. "The SRD has always been prepared to work with the CVRD to find solutions to servicing issues however the SRD is not prepared to compromise its standards for protecting public assets or the environment."

The Oyster River Nature Park (ORNP) is a well-loved park by the community as well as a valuable asset to all SRD residents. The SRD has an obligation to protect and preserve the park assets encompassed by the Oyster River Nature Park as well as the Oyster River itself.

A ground water assessment study commissioned by the CVRD identifies that the ORNP aquifer is hydraulically connected to the Oyster River and that the current licenses on the Oyster River are greater than the river's summertime flows. Therefore, if the existing licenses were utilized to their limit in the summer, this would have a significantly negative impact to the lower reaches of the Oyster River and the cutthroat trout habitat.

"The importance of ensuring that existing users have a sufficient supply of water while at the same time protecting the environmental concerns of the Oyster River, is the SRD's position" says Strathcona Regional District Chair Michele Babchuk. "The SRD is committed to water security for the long term and will not compromise the interests of all SRD residents, the Park or the River for purposes of additional connections and expansion to the water system."

The Strathcona Regional District is a partnership of four electoral areas and five municipalities providing services to approximately 44,000 residents.

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Media contact:

Elaine Popove
SRD Communications Coordinator
250-830-6724 | epopove@srd.ca