



Partnership for Water Sustainability urges communities to integrate “water balance solutions” into land use decisions

ANNOUNCEMENT: *Partnership for Water Sustainability publishes guidance document on how to achieve “Sustainable Watershed Systems”*

In 1995, UBC global fisheries scientist Dr. Daniel Pauly coined the term “shifting baseline syndrome”. In the urban setting, this describes how failure to pass on inter-generational understanding of historical ecological conditions has played out as an incremental and imperceptible eroding of expectations and standards for ecological protection.

Over the past two decades, however, a series of teachable moments caused by droughts, forest fires and floods has set the stage for local governments in BC to implement a “whole systems” approach to community planning and infrastructure servicing. Also known as “designing with nature”, this approach has the potential to re-set the ecological baseline along the east coast of Vancouver Island and in the Lower Mainland.

Branded as Sustainable Watershed Systems, the approach is the culmination of a building blocks process which cross-pollinated Washington State and BC research and innovation. The genesis was the Coho salmon crisis in the early 1990s. Now, **Sustainable Watershed Systems: Primer on Application of Ecosystem-based Understanding in the Georgia Basin** connects past and current research, and explains why restoring “the water balance” is key to achieving a water-resilient future and restoring aquatic habitat in urban areas.

Written in a magazine-style to appeal to technical and non-technical readers alike, the Primer is designed to help multiple audiences – whether elected, administrative, technical or stewardship – ask the right questions and ensure that science-based understanding is applied properly and effectively in BC communities to implement solutions and practices that actually restore the water balance of watersheds.

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

Kim Stephens, Executive Director, Partnership for Water Sustainability

“Everyone learns about the water balance (water cycle) in elementary school, but by high school most have forgotten what they learned. So what does this mean for communities, the reader might well ask? Consider that: A legacy of community and infrastructure design practices has failed to protect the natural water balance (hydrologic integrity). Failure has financial, level-of-service and life-cycle impacts and implications for taxpayers. Consequences include expensive fixes.”

“Local governments are starting to recognize that watersheds are natural assets that have value, ecosystem services have a role in municipal service delivery, and so they need to be integrated into their asset management programs.”

“Watershed systems are infrastructure assets. They need to be managed and protected as such.”

Peter Law, Director, Partnership for Water Sustainability

“Implementation of ‘whole systems’ thinking would include incorporating the benefits provided by nature into the delivery of local government services.”

“Stream health and what happens on the land are connected. In the early 1990’s, the ‘Coho Salmon crisis’ raised the alarm that changes in hydrology caused by land development were resulting in small stream salmon demise. The stewardship sector was the catalyst for restorative action in BC.”

“Community-based Environmental Stewardship has been an institution in BC for a generation. From the early days of Fish & Game Clubs in the 1950’s, the role of the stewardship sector has evolved. Today, community organizations partner with local governments to monitor and restore local watershed health. These groups provide thousands of volunteer hours to restore aquatic habitats.”

TO LEARN MORE:

Download the Primer:

http://waterbucket.ca/rm/files/2016/09/Primer-on-Application-of-Ecosystem-based-Understanding_Sept-2016.pdf

Visit www.waterbucket.ca

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ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP:

*The Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC is a legal entity, incorporated in 2010 as a not-for-profit society, and delivers services on behalf of government. It originated as an inter-governmental partnership. The Partnership is responsible for program delivery for the **Georgia Basin Inter-Regional Educational Initiative**. Launched in 2012, this program involves local governments in five regional districts and is endorsed by Regional Boards representing 75% of BC’s population (Nanaimo, Capital, Cowichan Valley, Comox Valley, Metro Vancouver).*

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