



Our 'Regional Team Approach' is founded on 'Sustainable Partnerships'

Julie Pisani
Program Coordinator, Drinking Water & Watershed Protection (DWWP)
Regional District of Nanaimo
July 2015

"Voters have equipped us with the ability to provide a dedicated service to understand and protect our drinking water and watersheds, funded by a parcel tax of \$8 per property per year. This sustainable funding source is obtained from, and applied back to the urban municipalities and the rural electoral areas alike. Foundationally, the program looks at understanding and managing water on a regional, watershed scale. Partnerships between the municipalities and the rural areas are a crucial part of this."

"Through the DWWP program, we are able to raise awareness and public involvement across the region, collect data and monitor our water resources, and in turn use this public awareness and scientific data to inform policy and planning decisions that protect water."

"We receive guidance from our Technical Advisory Committee, with representation from forestry companies, stewardship groups, provincial ministries, local water purveyors, academic institutions and the public-at-large. This results in a collective intelligence that steers the program, making us more nimble and able to have a well-rounded perspective on the key issues and courses of action. The connectivity across organizations that has been built through the co-participation in the DWWP program has opened doors to collaboration to achieve shared goals and pool resources."

"As we continue to focus on public education as well as science and data collection, we become better equipped to protect our water through sound planning and policy. There are questions that drive us: How much groundwater do we have? How is it recharged? How can we adapt to a changing climate? What is the current water demand? How can we improve water conservation efforts in our communities? What is the health of our creeks and streams? Can we do a better job of managing rainwater and stormwater? How do our land use decisions impact our water availability and water quality? What are better ways of developing our land while minimizing impact on water?"

"These questions are far reaching and are not something the RDN can answer alone, hence our reliance on partnerships, sustained over the long-term, to truly get to the heart of these matters. It's one thing to ask the right questions, yet another thing to respond in an effective way. We need a diversity of tools, perspectives and approaches if we are to be water resilient in our region."

"Among the many partners it takes to tackle these issues, the First Nations in our region are likely the most important. The traditional knowledge and indigenous value of the land and the water is a realm of knowing that our scientific method does not touch. Water is a resource, but it is much more than that too. It is a life force; a spiritual force. If we are to ultimately succeed in our region in managing our actions on the land so that we may protect and preserve our water, we must sustain partnerships that collectively make us much more effective together than in isolation."

"We have started building relationships in an effort to foster trust and collaboration, and it always starts with stories. Conversations about what we care about, stories about the past which help us understand the present, and dialogue about the future and positive vision about what that may look like."