

## City signs on to Englishman River study

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The City of Parksville has decided on its participation in a pilot project to study the effects of development and climate change on surface water and groundwater feeding the Englishman River.

The three-month study, proposed to council in January by the BC Conservation Foundation, is one of three on Vancouver Island funded through the BCCF by Natural Resources Canada and the Living Rivers Trust Fund.

It will be completed in April and be linked to the City's Official Community Plan review as appropriate.

The proposal was made to council in mid-January by Craig Wightman of the BCCF, Gilles Wendling of GW Solutions Inc., and Kim Stephens of the Partnership for Water Sustainability Society.

The group proposed to select an area within the city limits (the Regional District of Nanaimo's Water Protection Service suggested the Parksville Industrial Park) and to model the effects of different types and scales of development on such things as the health, quality and quantity of surface and groundwater.

They asked the City to be a partner in the study but a report to council Monday from Planning Director Blaine Russell and Engineering Director Bob Harary said "staff resources are very limited to participate with this initiative."

Following a meeting between City staff and the proponents Feb. 6, they agreed that the proponents can make a presentation to the OCP Advisory Committee; that up to four City staff can attend a Water Balance Model forum in Duncan March 28; that up to four City staff will attend a half-day "knowledge transfer workshop" on groundwater and water balance science; that the proponents will prepare a "primer" on integrated rainwater and groundwater management for lands adjacent to the river; that the City engineering department will propose to undertake an update of its city-wide Master Drainage Plan with technical input from the BCCF and its partners; and that the City will further collaborate with the proponents as staff resources permit.

The report said the collaboration as outlined should result in a more-informed OCP process and Master Drainage Plan update, provide a better understanding of the hydrology of the land near the river, and result in policies to better protect surface and groundwater resources.

The report noted the City is getting all this "at nominal cost to the City."

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