

## Experts propose to study how development impacts water

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The BC Conservation Foundation wants to study the impacts of land use on Parksville's surface and groundwater resources.

The three-month study, one of three on Vancouver Island funded through the BCCF by Natural Resources Canada and the Living Rivers Trust Fund, would be completed in April and form part of the City's Official Community Plan review.

The proposal was made to council's committee of the whole Monday by Craig



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Water experts (from left) Craig Wightman, Kim Stephens and Gilles Wendling following their presentation to Parksville council Monday.

Wightman of the BCCF, Gilles Wendling of GW Solutions Inc., and Kim Stephens of the Partnership for Water Sustainability Society.

The group is proposing 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.

The results could also be used to study the impacts of climate change on water resources, they said.

Specifically, the study will look at how development effects how water enters and flows through the land, since groundwater recharge is important to flow levels in the Englishman River.

When buildings and parking lots cover the surface, Wendling told council, less water soaks in, the water table drops, and flows to the Englishman River decrease.

If you modify the land, he said, you modify the aquifers and you modify the river.

Stephens said Wendling has done "pioneering work" in quantifying flows in the Englishman River watershed "beyond motherhood statements" so the actual goals are known in achieving a "water balance."

The study will look at ways of implementing a "water balance model" of "designing with nature," linking planning and engineering decisions to such considerations as climate change, stream erosion and rainwater harvesting.

Wightman said the proposal has already been discussed with the City's planning staff and with the RDN's Water Protection Service.

The study would form part of an inter-regional educational initiative that involves four Island regional districts: the Capital Regional District, the Cowichan Valley Regional District, the RDN and the Comox Valley Regional District.

The trio asked City staff to participate in the study at no cost other than staff time and the OCP consultant's time in organizing a related OCP workshop.

Fred Manson, the City's Chief Administrative Officer, said he'd like to determine how much staff time will be needed and will bring the matter back to council next month.

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