

**REPORT TO REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY COMMISSION
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, 20 JUNE 2007**

SUBJECT 2007 PUBLIC TOURS

PURPOSE

Each year during National Drinking Water Week, Capital Regional District (CRD) Water Services provides free public tours of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area. This report summarizes the results of the 2007 public tours.

BACKGROUND

For the past 18 years, CRD Water Services has been providing members of the public with the opportunity to tour the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area. The tours are held on six days during National Drinking Water Week, the first full week in May.

The purpose of the tours is to provide participants with a better understanding of the characteristics and protection of the Water Supply Area and source water reservoirs, water treatment and distribution, and the continued need for water conservation. The tours are typically five hours long and stop at the north basin of Sooke Reservoir, Rithet Creek (the main tributary to the reservoir), Sooke Dam, Goldstream Reservoir, and the ultraviolet disinfection facility. Each year the tours are adapted slightly to highlight new facilities or key management issues.

Two tents are set up at Sooke Dam to provide a covered lunch area and to house displays on the water supply and distribution system, water quality, and water conservation. A Demand Management staff person is on hand at the display tent to distribute information and answer water conservation questions.

Prior to 2003, the tours involved one bus per day. The strong demand in 2003, with the completion of the Sooke Reservoir expansion program, necessitated adding another bus each day for the entire week. Demand has remained strong and two buses per day have become the norm, allowing up to 84 per day to attend the tour. In 2007, 450 participated in the tours over the six day period.

The public tours are led by the General Manager, Senior Managers and professional staff familiar with the Water Supply Area. The tours provide an opportunity for staff to interact directly with water customers and gain a first-hand appreciation of their perceptions and concerns.

A questionnaire is provided to tour participants to solicit feedback on the public tours. In 2007, 80% of the participants who completed the questionnaire were attending a tour of the Water Supply Area for the first time. Of those who completed the questionnaire, 100% thought the tour provided useful information about the water supply system, 99.6% were happy with the tour information package and the knowledge of the guide, 98% thought the tours were just the right length, and 100% would recommend the tour to friends.

Some sample comments from the 2007 tours included:

- "Public engagement is to be highly commended as is the engineering, watershed preservation, quality and delivery of our precious water."
- "The tour was informative, educational and fun!"
- "I appreciate learning about the high quality of our water supply."
- "I will enjoy drinking my water now more than in the past."
- "I believe our water system is in good hands judging by the enthusiasm and knowledge of the staff."
- "Everyone should take the tour."
- "I feel that the fire control emphasis is very wise with the new development" (near the Sooke Main Gate).
- "I have renewed respect for the work done by the CRD."

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ALTERNATIVES

No alternatives are presented.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funds for the annual public tours of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area are part of the operating budget of the Regional Water Supply.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Regional Water Supply Commission receive the staff report for information.

Joel Ussery
Manager, Resource Planning
(Tour Coordinator)

J. A. (Jack) Hull, P. Eng., MBA
General Manager, Water Services