



**REPORT TO REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY COMMISSION
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2008**

SUBJECT 2008 PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

PURPOSE

To gauge the attitudes of residents in the Capital Region about water use and water conservation practices.

BACKGROUND

Venture Market Research Corporation was hired to undertake a Public Opinion Survey to gauge the attitudes of residential water users connected to the municipal water supply in Greater Victoria, Western Communities, Sooke, and serviced portions of the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area about water use and water conservation practices. This is the fifth survey in a series of surveys since 1997 (1997, 1998, 1999, and 2004). This year's survey was intended to compare consumer behavior and actions regarding their water conservation efforts with surveys conducted in previous years and identify any trends or shifts in attitude and practices.

The telephone interviews were undertaken from July 7 to July 15, 2008. The margin of error for a sample size of 506 is at most $\pm 4.4\%$, 19 times out of 20.

Although information is similar to earlier surveys, the 2008 survey has new sections to obtain a baseline on irrigation systems and knowledge of educational and rebate programs.

Key Findings

Some of the key findings of the survey are:

- Nine in 10 residents think it is important for the CRD to encourage water efficiency.
- Like in past surveys, almost 9 in 10 residents believe it is important to use water efficiently in the home, while 8 in 10 believe it is important to use water efficiently outdoors.
- The use of front loading washing machines has increased significantly as have the use of 6 litre toilets while modifying toilets to reduce water use is down.
- Similar to past surveys, turning off the faucet while not in use and taking short showers are the two most common ways people conserve water around the home.
- A total of 54% of those with a lawn water it and, of those with a lawn, 26% have an underground irrigation system. Of those with a lawn, 99% water it during the 7 p.m. to 10:00 a.m. time period.
- Of those with a garden, 66 % (same as 2004) use drought tolerant plantings.
- Approximately three-quarters are aware that the watering restrictions take place between May 1 and September 30 and 9 in 10 support the watering restrictions.
- Fifty-six (56%) percent of respondents were aware CRD offers rebates to install water efficient fixtures. While fewer residents were aware of the Fixture Replacement rebate, more were aware of the SmartWash rebate.
- Awareness that the Sooke Reservoir is the water supply for Greater Victoria is down significantly (58% compared to 72% in 2004) while 27% were aware that CRD had recently purchased the watershed lands around the Leech River.
- A vast majority of people (9 in 10) were satisfied with the quality of piped water supplied to their home.
- Fewer residents (20% vs 32% in 2004) say they drink only bottled or filtered water, while significantly more (40% vs 33% in 2004) drink tap water in addition to bottled or filtered water.
- Significantly higher (80% vs 68% in 2004) are respondents that drink either a combination of bottled, filtered and tap, or only tap water.
- Overall, 6 in 10 households say having the two-tiered water rate in summer is acceptable.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

SUMMARY

A full copy of the survey will be made available on the CRD's website at www.crd.bc.ca/water, or a hard copy may be obtained by contacting Margaret Montague at Water Services. Survey Highlights and Conclusions are attached (Attachment 1).

RECOMMENDATION

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

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Concurrence