

MEDIA RELEASE

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Shuswap Watershed Council releases new report on nutrients and water quality, launches new water quality grant program

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) has just released a new report summarizing the results of a three-year study done in partnership with scientists at UBC – Okanagan.

The primary study objective was to determine the sources of nutrients in the Shuswap watershed.

“Nutrients are an important factor of water quality,” explains Erin Vieira, program manager for the SWC. “We tend to think of nutrients as a good thing. And they are – when they’re balanced. However, more nutrients in a lake – especially phosphorus – means more plants and algae. And, with too much, algae growth will impact water quality,” adds Vieira.

The research team at UBC-Okanagan collected and analyzed water samples from 100 different sites along the Shuswap River and Salmon River, over three years. The results of the study show which regions of the watershed and which land-use types contribute the highest concentrations of nutrients to the two rivers.

“Completing this study is a great accomplishment for the Council,” says Paul Demenok, Chair of the SWC. “The results show us where new nutrient management initiatives would be most effective.”

The research results indicate that in the valley bottoms, there are small streams, ditches, groundwater, and surface water run-off contributing nutrient-rich water to the rivers.

“These water sources are called ‘incremental flows’,” explains Vieira. “They are more nutrient-rich than large tributaries or the head-waters.”

The results also indicate that agricultural land-use types contribute more nutrients on a per-hectare basis than urban or forested land types.



With results in hand, the SWC is now considering new ways to protect water quality by cutting nutrient inputs via incremental flows.

“We have up to \$100,000 available to pay for costs associated with new nutrient management activities,” explains Demenok. “We are now inviting applications for grant funding from agriculturalists and landowners. We look forward to creating new partnerships in the Shuswap to keep phosphorus on the land, and out of the water. This will be a win-win for everybody.”

The SWC’s report and grant program comes less than a year after the Provincial government introduced a new [*Agricultural Environmental Management Code of Practice*](#), with new requirements for nutrient management planning and soil testing on farms in BC.

More information about the grant program, and the new report on nutrients and water quality, are available at www.shuswapwater.ca. The application period closes on April 30th.

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About: The Shuswap Watershed Council is a watershed-based partnership that works on water quality and safe recreation in the Shuswap.

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