

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Shuswap Watershed Council will continue; hears update on multi-year water quality research project

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) will continue its work on water quality, safe recreation, and Zebra and Quagga Mussels – that’s the result of a recommendation and subsequent approval at the most recent SWC meeting in September.

Over the summer, a special committee of four SWC members and two non-members performed a review of the SWC’s work since its inception in 2016.

“This interim review was part of the SWC’s work plan,” explains Erin Vieira, the SWC’s Program Manager.

“The review committee recommended unanimously that the SWC continue with its programs,” says Paul Demenok, Chair of the SWC. “The committee conducted a detailed and thorough critical appraisal and noted items for continuous improvement, but overall it was clear that the SWC is doing a very good job in its role as a steward for the Shuswap watershed.”

At the meeting, Council members also heard an update from Megan Ludwig and Dr. Jeff Curtis from UBC-Okanagan about a nutrient research project that’s being done in the Shuswap River and Salmon River.

“Nutrients – phosphorus, in particular – have long been of interest in the Shuswap watershed because of their importance to lake health and productivity, and their ability to trigger an algal bloom,” says Vieira. “Aquatic ecosystems need nutrients, but we know they ought to be in a balance. At what point do you have too much, and water quality is compromised? That’s what we’re trying to determine.”

“The SWC is working on a three-year research project in partnership with UBC-Okanagan to determine the sources of nutrients in the [aforementioned] rivers, which ultimately deposit those nutrients into Mara and Shuswap Lake,” adds Demenok. “We have a growing body of knowledge about nutrients and water quality in our watershed. The results will help inform decisions to protect water quality.”

The results to-date indicate that groundwater, seasonal streams and ditches flowing into the lower reaches of the Shuswap and Salmon Rivers contribute the most nutrients per hectare of land. “These aren’t surprising results,” says Ludwig, an M.Sc candidate at UBC-Okanagan who is one of the leads on the research project. “These areas are impacted by agricultural and urban development. That said, the amount of nutrients they’re contributing is within the normal range for those types of land uses. However, the Shuswap watershed is sensitive to these inputs because it’s otherwise very low in nutrients due to its soil types and forested land base,” she explains.

The research is ongoing and will be complete next year.

In the meantime, residents can learn about water quality in the lakes and rivers of the Shuswap in the SWC's recently released 2017 Water Quality Summary. It summarizes water quality monitoring results from several organizations in a single, easy-to-read format. It can be read on the SWC's website, [www.shuswapwater.ca](http://www.shuswapwater.ca).

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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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