

MEDIA RELEASE

24 May 2018 – for immediate release

Playing it safe on the water this summer

It's summer in the Shuswap! It's a time for relaxation, enjoying lake views, boating, paddling, and swimming.

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) is reminding everyone on the lakes and rivers this summer to play it safe, and be prepared for every outing on the water.

"We have six tips that we encourage all recreationists to follow," says Erin Vieira, program manager for the SWC, which is a watershed-based organization that works on water quality and safe recreation in the Shuswap. "The number one tip of course is to wear a lifejacket or PFD every time you go on the water. In the event of an accident or capsizing, a lifejacket will keep you afloat and buy you time before getting rescued. Just as important is to always have a sober skipper."

There are twelve lifejacket loaner stations located around the Shuswap, equipped with child-sized lifejackets, for parents to borrow on the honour system. The loaner stations are an initiative of the Royal Canadian Marine Search & Rescue, and supported by various community sponsors including the SWC.

"Our other safety tips relate to boating preparedness, and practicing extra caution in cold and/or swift water," Vieira adds. "There are lots of apps out there that boaters can download that include equipment checklists."

In early summer during high water, boaters are advised to watch for floating and partially submerged debris. "The Shuswap is surrounded by forest. It's not uncommon to see large debris out there in the lake. Anyone doing tow sports needs to be especially vigilant," Vieira adds. During high water, boaters should go very slowly near shorelines to avoid creating wake and damaging shorelines.

The final piece of advice from the SWC is to watch – not only listen – for trouble on the water. "A lot of people don't realize that drowning is silent," Vieira explains. "A struggling swimmer can't wave their arms or call for help. Swimming with a friend is the safest, and parents and caregivers need to keep a watchful eye on their young children. Don't be distracted by a phone, tablet or book."

More information on staying safe on the water, as well as a map of lifejacket loaner stations, can be found on the SWC's website www.shuswapwater.ca.

-30-

Contact: For more information, please contact Erin Vieira or Mike Simpson c/o the Fraser Basin Council in Kamloops at 250 314-9660.