

MEDIA RELEASE

22 July 2020 – For Immediate Release

Shuswap Watershed Council awarding five grants for water quality improvement

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) is awarding five grants this year to help farm businesses in the Shuswap watershed improve nutrient management, and ultimately protect water quality by reducing nutrient-loading to creeks and rivers.

The total value of the grants being awarded is \$65,470. The expense was approved at the June 17th SWC meeting, with grants being awarded to the recipients pending site visits to the farms.

“We’re very excited to be launching our Water Quality Grant Program. We’ve been working toward this for several years,” says Paul Demenok, Chair of the SWC. “We’ve recently completed a three-year research project with UBC-Okanagan, the results of which were important for directing water quality improvement and our grant program.”

See [Shuswap Watershed Council releases new report on nutrients and water quality, launches new water quality program.](#)

“Nutrients are an important factor of water quality and soil health,” explains Erin Vieira, program manager for the SWC. “Our goal with the grant program is to help farmers keep nutrients on the land and in the soil, not running off or leaching into nearby creeks and rivers.”

Vieira explains that research conducted by UBC-Okanagan revealed that the majority of nutrient-loading to the Shuswap River and Salmon River, the two largest tributaries to the Shuswap Lake system, is coming from agricultural and urban lands in the valley bottoms. The results also show that nutrient-loading to the lakes is trending upward, since about the 1990s.

“The research findings are consistent with other similar studies done in other parts of the world,” Vieira says. “Agricultural and other land-use impacts on water quality aren’t unique to the Shuswap, it’s been happening around the world for decades. It’s a process called cultural eutrophication.”

“As a Council, we wanted to learn more about this and intervene so that we can help prevent excess nutrients from reducing water quality. Our water quality here is still quite good, and through working together we hope to keep it that way,” states Demenok. “The last thing we want is to look back, 10 or 20 years from now and think, ‘We really should’ve done something sooner.’”



The SWC's grant program is being rolled out concurrently to a new *Agricultural Environmental Management Code of Practice* being implemented by the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. The Code introduces new regulations to protect water quality and air quality.

The SWC grants are being awarded to the following five recipients: Lakeland Farms (Mike Schroeder); Hillside Dreams Goat Dairy (Merel and Barrie Voth); Swaan Farms (Neil Swaan); Grass Root Dairies (Gary and Kathy Wikkerink); and BC Cattlemens Association in partnership with Splitsin First Nation. Grant funding will go toward enhancing on-farm nutrient management practices such as manure storage, manure effluent capture, riparian restoration, livestock exclusion fencing, and cover crop demonstration.

"I appreciate the Shuswap Watershed Council partnering with me to complete an effluent run-off collection project," says Neil Swaan, a dairy farmer and one of the grant recipients. Swaan is putting grant funding toward the installation of a 'Harvestore' system that pumps effluent from a manure pile into a tank on his farm. "Not only is it a benefit to the environment by keeping run off out of the water, it's also a way for the farm to collect nutrient-rich effluent for appropriate use later."

A summary of the nutrient research done in partnership with UBC-Okanagan can be found at www.shuswapwater.ca.

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

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