

Reference: 393157

March 2, 2023

Jay Simpson, Chair
Shuswap Watershed Council
Email: jsimpson@csrd.bc.ca

Dear Chair Simpson:

Thank you for your letter of October 12, 2022 and January 12, 2023, regarding the water quality in the Salmon Arm of Shuswap Lake. I appreciate your concerns regarding the occurrence of recent algal blooms in this lake that is used for drinking water and has important recreational and tourism values. I apologize for the very lengthy delay in responding.

I appreciate the leadership that the Shuswap Watershed Council plays in promoting water quality improvement and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy will continue to work in partnership with the council. I understand that staff from the ministry have recently reached out to you and that ministry staff will be attending the upcoming quarterly meeting of the Shuswap Watershed Council. It is my expectation that we will continue to prioritise monitoring and regulatory actions to address the issues raised in your letter.

With your support and in partnership with the Adams Lake Indian Band, Splatkin and Little Shuswap Lake Band, the province established water quality objectives last fall for Shuswap Lake. These objectives will now be used to evaluate water quality monitoring data. The ministry will continue to investigate causes where water quality in the lake is not meeting these objectives. The Ministry will also continue to monitor two locations in Shuswap Lake as part of a long-term water quality trend program.

I understand the concerns you raised about the increased frequency of algal blooms and its impact on the local community. The monitoring, conducted in the spring and late summer each year, will help us understand how the nutrients in the lake are changing over time in relation to both land-based activities and climate change and how water quality influences the occurrence of algal blooms in Shuswap Lake. We expect that climate change will make algal blooms more likely in areas that have warmer climates and are prone to flood events in the spring.

The Province will also continue to work with local health authorities and citizens through the [Algae Watch](#) program to provide information and report observations about algal blooms. We understand the need to improve communications on beach conditions and the ministry hopes to work with the Shuswap Watershed Council and others to improve on messaging about algal blooms.

As mentioned in your letter, the Ministry has recently assessed the water quality of the Salmon River. As a result of this work, the Ministry will be further investigating the sources of nutrients within the Salmon River Watershed and Salmon Arm basin. Additional monitoring and assessment may be part of this work. Once the specific sources have been more clearly identified, the Ministry will work to reduce nutrient inputs where possible.

The Ministry takes a risk-based approach to enforcement of the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Code when responding to complaints and assessing compliance. The province has undertaken education and promotion through the Ministry of Agriculture and Food who

continues to work with the agricultural industry, local agriculture industry associations and with the Ministry of Environment to support the regulation of and communications with producers. The Compliance and Enforcement Division is aware of the concerns in the Salmon River watershed and is planning focused compliance work in the watershed in 2023.

I appreciate the work the Shuswap Watershed Council has done to educate citizens in the watershed about the protection of water quality in Shuswap Lake, including best practices in your recent Phosphorus Action Plan. The Ministry will continue to work with the Shuswap Watershed Council to support changes to land use activities that influence nutrient inputs to the Salmon River.

Thank you again for taking the time to write and I look forward to our continued collaboration on protecting this valuable resource in British Columbia. If you have additional questions, please contact Kym Keogh, Section Head, Regional Operations Division, Environmental Protection Division at 250 302-3589 or Kym.Keogh@gov.bc.ca.

Sincerely,

George Heyman
Minister

cc: Honourable Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Kym Keogh, Section Head, Regional Operations Division, Environmental Protection
Division, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Erin Vieira, Program Manager, Shuswap Watershed Council