



Courtney Zimmerman  
Corporate Director, Environmental Public Health  
Interior Health  
Sent by e-mail to [courtney.zimmerman@interiorhealth.ca](mailto:courtney.zimmerman@interiorhealth.ca)

8 November 2023

**Re: Algal bloom recommendations and responsibilities**

Dear Ms. Zimmerman,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC), the City of Salmon Arm, the Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSR), the District of Sicamous, and the Village of Chase to thank you for the joint meeting on May 5<sup>th</sup> to discuss algal bloom response. While we appreciate the time you took to speak with us, we want to let you know that we remain unsatisfied with recent changes to algal bloom recommendations and responsibilities.

Over recent years, responsibilities for monitoring water quality at beaches for the assurance of public health has shifted to local governments. New recommendations, as explained to us in the meeting on May 5<sup>th</sup>, are now placed upon local government to collect water samples from our respective managed beaches on a weekly basis to be tested for the presence of harmful algae. Furthermore, local governments are now being asked to interpret the results of water tests (with support from IH staff) and potentially decide to post a cautionary advisory at beaches impacted by algae.

We completely agree with the need for regular water quality monitoring at beaches and alerting beach-goers to potential risks associated with harmful algae. However, we disagree with this responsibility being placed on our organizations. Local governments do not have a health mandate, and these recommendations and responsibilities create significant additional expenses and workload on our staff.

In our view, Interior Health is responsible for monitoring and communications where public health is concerned. Our suggestions from our January 2023 letter remain the same:

- IH should be the lead agency for monitoring beach water quality and algal blooms. This includes the collection and analysis of water samples, and posting advisories based on the results of water tests.
- IH should be the lead agency for communicating to the public about algal blooms. There is a great demand for this information, and several platforms should be considered including websites, social media, and news media. Local governments and the Shuswap Watershed



Council can amplify these communiques through their social media platforms to help increase the reach.

- Advisory notices should state the location of the algal bloom as precisely as possible, and be updated regularly to reflect changing conditions.
- IH staff should be available to respond to inquiries about algal bloom advisories. Having a staff person on-call on weekends would be very beneficial for providing clarifying information about advisories.

We thank you for your consideration of these recommendations and for the ongoing cooperation with Interior Health.

Sincerely,

Jay Simpson  
Chair, Shuswap Watershed Council  
250 517-9578 | [jsimpson@csrd.bc.ca](mailto:jsimpson@csrd.bc.ca)

Alan Harrison  
Mayor, City of Salmon Arm  
250 803-4034 | [aharrison@salmonarm.ca](mailto:aharrison@salmonarm.ca)

Kevin Flynn  
Chair, Columbia Shuswap Regional District  
250 804-8342 | [boardchair@csrd.bc.ca](mailto:boardchair@csrd.bc.ca)

Colleen Anderson  
Mayor, District of Sicamous  
250 517-7820 | [canderson@sicamous.ca](mailto:canderson@sicamous.ca)

David Lepsoe  
Mayor, Village of Chase  
250 679-3238 | [david.lepsoe@chasebc.ca](mailto:david.lepsoe@chasebc.ca)



## About the Shuswap Watershed Council

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) was established in 2014 as a watershed-based partnership of several organizations with an interest in or responsibility for protecting water quality. There are up to 22 members that represent three regional districts, two municipalities, the Secwepemc Nation, three Provincial government agencies, and Shuswap communities. The SWC is a collaborative, non-regulatory group that focuses on strategic initiatives to protect, maintain, and enhance water quality and promote safe recreation in the Shuswap. The SWC works alongside organizations that have regulatory roles in managing the Shuswap watershed, complementing their work and carefully avoiding duplication.