

Comox Valley Drinking Water Reference Guide 2011



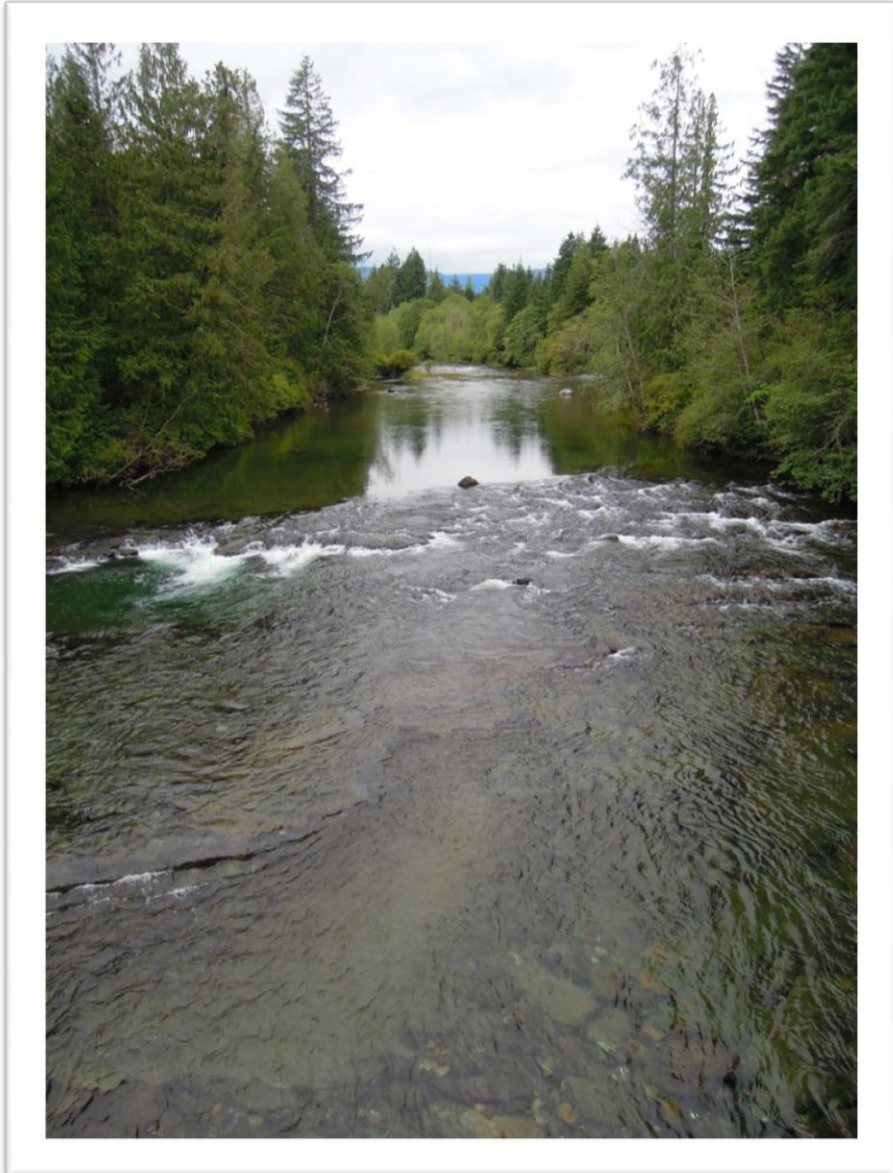
*Photo: Nelson valve box
Photo credit: Kama Corbett*

**Prepared by: Sonya Jensen
For: Vancouver Island Water Watch Coalition
Comox Valley, BC Canada
September 2011**

Dedicated to Ruth Masters

A passionate environmental advocate who has inspired generations of Comox Valley residents to preserve, protect and respect our mother earth.

Thank you Ruth!



*Photo: Stotan Falls
Photo credit: Kama Corbett*

Authorization/ disclosure

This is the updated edition of the Comox Valley Drinking Water Reference Guide. The 2007 edition was mainly an electronic document with select print copies distributed to libraries in the North Island region of Vancouver Island. The 2011 version will be a print and digital distribution to post-secondary institutions throughout British Columbia.

This guide is to be paired with the Port Alberni Drinking Water Reference Guide, which was published in 2011 and modeled after the original 2007 version of the Comox Valley Drinking Water Reference Guide.

Copyright © 2007, 2011 Sonya Marie Jenssen, Courtenay, BC, Canada V9N 9S1.

All rights reserved. Printed in Canada. This publication is protected by Copyright and has been registered with the Canadian Intellectual Property Office. Permission to copy, alter, or redistribute in part or whole in any form or by any means electronically, in presentation or in print must be obtained by the author. For information regarding permission, please write to: sonya.jenssen@gmail.com

Acknowledgements

Funding for the 2007 edition was provided by the Vancouver Island Water Watch Coalition, Project Watershed and the Council of Canadians, Comox Valley chapter. Funding for the 2011 edition was provided solely by the Vancouver Island Water Watch Coalition.

This project has been 100% supported by Comox Valley based individuals, organizations and businesses.

As the Comox Lake watershed falls under the jurisdiction of the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) all images used from the CVRD were obtained within the public domain.

Jasmine Badrin offered editorial comments from the perspective of a North Island College student.

Project Watershed provided Map 2 *Groundwater wells and licensing* in Chapter Six. For more information about their services, see www.projectwatershed.ca.

All photos have been taken by Kama Corbett, with the exception of the title page photograph as used in all chapters, which was taken by John Waters. Photographers may be contacted at kamawaters6@gmail.com and climberjohn@shaw.ca, respectively.

The Union Bay Improvement District provided access to Langley Lake and the water distribution system within their jurisdiction for project photography.

Special acknowledgment to Wedler Engineering LLP for daily support, project consultation and administration. Gratitude to Ross McLean for editorial assistance, Andrew Gower for technical review, and Camille Nero for formatting.



#211 - 2459 Cousins Avenue
Courtenay, BC, V9N 3N6
t: 250.334.3263
f: 250.338.2296
e: courtenay@wedler.com

Abstract

Understanding the source to tap routing of one's drinking water is a complex task. This guide intends to simplify a multi-faceted process without losing the complexity involved in the protection, treatment, maintenance, and monitoring of drinking water supply systems.

The management of a drinking water system touches all government jurisdictions, the municipal, provincial, and federal each with some level of responsibility for water quality and quantity. An extensive legislative framework and subsequent practice is in place to ensure that Canadians receive safe drinking water; even so, concerns continue to arise over the governance and management of water quantity and quality. Specific areas of concerns include climate change impacts, the use of chlorine, water quality on First Nation's reserves, emergency preparedness, and water conservation measures.

This guide is designed to move readers through the source to tap path that drinking water travels everyday to households. Examples will be taken from Comox Valley water suppliers to highlight the working nature of legislation pertaining to water sources, along with the treatment, maintenance, and monitoring of our drinking water.

Ultimately, this guide hopes to inspire and inform the reader about the complexities involved in providing safe, clean drinking water to your taps at home and work. The next time you drink a glass of water take a moment to reflect upon the matrix of ecological and human ingenuity necessary in ensuring that each and every glass of water does indeed sustain your life.

“Water is life's mater and matrix, mother and medium. There is no life without water”.

~Albert Szent-Gyorgyi 1893-1986, Hungarian Biochemist, 1937 Nobel Prize for Medicine

Sonya Marie Jenssen, M.A.
Water Policy and Research Specialist

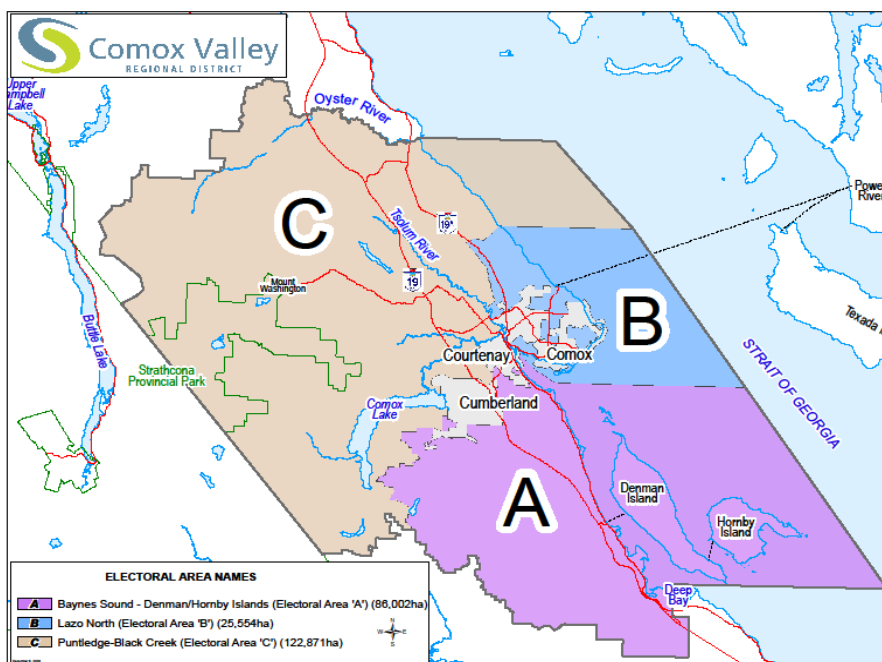
Introduction

Background

The *Our Water, Our Future* water conference held in Qualicum in November 2006 led to the formation of the Comox Valley Water Watch Coalition. Their first formal meeting was held in December 2006. It was identified that an overview of current water legislation and practices at a regional and provincial level was needed in order to raise the public's awareness of watersheds that are used as a source for drinking water. The objective of the 2007 version of this reference guide was provide a synthesis of available information about the legislation governing drinking water management and drinking water supply systems in the Comox Valley. While there was some initial discussion over whether or not this type of guide already existed, it was agreed upon that there is no document that compiles the information in this format for the public of the Comox Valley, which made the 2007 version the first drinking water guide in the region. Port Alberni has produced a similar guide, with much of the material derived from the Comox Valley version. Changes have occurred during the four year span and the updated version will include a wider discussion on drinking water treatment methods, legislation pertaining to First Nations on-reserve water supplies, and a review of local technical memorandums. This updated version reproduces material from previous guides and the Regional Water Supply Strategy.

Geographic focus

In 2007, the Comox-Strathcona Regional District included Oyster River and a region of the mainland. The separation into two districts created the Comox Valley Regional District and the Strathcona Regional District. The geographic focus of this guide is the Comox Valley, which includes the City of Courtenay, the Town of Comox, the Village of Cumberland, and electoral areas A- Baynes Sound, B- Lazo North, C- Puntledge/ Black Creek, and K- Denman and Hornby Islands.



Comox Valley
Regional District
boundaries as
accessed from
www.comoxvalleyrd.ca

Project Methodology

The initial 2007 report is based on information gathered from a range of sources that included semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, academic journals and books, newspaper articles, reports, and websites. The focus of the report on legislation and water supply systems required interviewing government employees, water operators, academic researchers, and non-governmental organizations and coalitions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person or over the telephone. Questionnaires were administered to all water operators in the Comox Valley in person or over the telephone followed by a fax or email; not all chose to answer the questionnaire. There was no compensation offered for interview participants. Information for the 2007 guide was provided in interviews or questionnaires by the following:

- Sandwich Improvement District
- Ship's Point Improvement District
- Union Bay Improvement District
- Mount Washington Ski Resort Ltd.
- Graham Lake Improvement District
- Islands Trust
- Ministry of Environment
- Vancouver Island Health Authority
- H2O Environmental Ltd.
- NSERC Industry Research Chair Program, Water and Watershed Research, University of Victoria
- Rutland Waterworks
- Vancouver Island Water Watch
- Forest Ethics
- Dogwood Initiative
- Friends of Clayoquot Sound
- BC Tap Water Alliance

The 2011 edition was mainly a literature review and some follow-up questioning with:

- Vancouver Island Health Authority
- North Island Labs
- Union Bay Improvement District
- Sandwich Waterworks District
- City of Courtenay
- Comox Valley Regional District

Target audience

The intended audience for this guide are post-secondary students looking for ideas and support for research papers. The 'water for thought' column is meant to trigger discussion and/ or prompt awareness of potential areas to explore as possible paper topics.