

## Hullcar Aquifer Inter-Ministry Working Group Update of Key Activities and Actions

The Ministry of Environment May 19, 2016 Nitrate sample from Steele Springs drinking water overflow was 11.7mg/L. The next sample was collected on June 22 and results are expected June 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Action Plan Activity 3: Review of *Environmental Management Act, Drinking Water Protection Act, Health Act* instruments to encourage collective action for improvement of water quality.**

### Pollution Prevention Orders

On June 7 and 8, 2016, the Ministry of Environment issued pollution prevention orders (with requirements specific to the particular operation) to two agricultural operators in Hullcar Valley. The purpose of these orders is to further prevent agricultural waste from entering Hullcar Aquifer 103 as the usefulness of the groundwater from the aquifer is currently compromised due to level of nitrate in Steele Springs drinking water. All orders can be found on the Ministry of Environment Hullcar Aquifer web page located at: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/regions/okanagan/envman/hullcar-aquifer.html>

### Interior Health Authority

On May 27th, Interior Health met at the Vernon Health Unit with members of the Save the Hullcar Aquifer Team and Splatshin Nation councillors and First Nations Health. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the history of contamination of the Hullcar Aquifer 103, the request by SHAT for Interior Health to write a Drinking Water Protection Act Section 25 Hazard Abatement and Prevention Order to cease fertilization of the “field of concern” and to discuss the health effect of Nitrates.

Interior Health has concluded that it does not have enough evidence at this time to issue a Section 25 Order to Jansen’s Dairy. Interior Health will continue to review evidence as it is submitted and to inform the public of any changes to their investigation of the Hullcar Aquifer 103 contamination.

**Action Plan Activity 6: Develop an integrated cross ministry monitoring plan including identification of sampling points, by whom, schedule of samples, etc.**

### Integrated Monitoring Study

The Monitoring Sub-group has posted the request for proposal (RFP) to the [BC Bid site](#) (BC Government’s procurement website). The RFP is open until June 28 and all bids will be reviewed by the sub-group at the end of June and the contract will be awarded early July. Phase I report is expected at end of September 2016 and the Phase II report is expected at the end of February 2017.

## Post-Harvest Nitrate Study

The Ministry of Agriculture is moving forward with plans to complete a post-harvest soil nitrate study in the fall of 2016. In the next few weeks, Ministry staff will be writing up the procedure for how the study will be conducted and will be engaging landowners to seek their participation in the study. Ministry staff will also be collaborating with the Monitoring Sub-Group to ensure the soil nitrate study is complementary to the Integrated Monitoring Study.

### **Study Objective:**

- to describe the distribution of agricultural fields over Hullcar Aquifer 103 with high or very high amounts of soil nitrate
- to describe the downward movement of nitrate through the soil between 2 growing seasons (2016/17)

### **Expected outcome**

Results will provide evidence to suggest whether there is a single “field of concern”, or if multiple landowners need to improve nitrogen management practices with their crops to abate pollution. The results may also provide information suggesting nitrate concerns do not all come from the cropped areas tested. Individual growers will have a better understanding of the success of their 2016 nitrogen management and how much nitrogen they can expect to be available for crop use the following year.

### **Other Information**

#### Draft Letter of Intent with Splantsin

Kukpi4 Christian and Christa Zacharias-Homer met on June 15, 2016 to discuss a draft Letter of Intent with Splantsin, Interior Health Authority and the Province of BC. The purpose of the Letter of Intent is to outline a draft government to government framework for engaging and communicating on the Hullcar Aquifer water quality issue. The final Letter of Intent will be posted to the Ministry of Environment Hullcar Webpage once complete.

#### Ministry of Agriculture – New Staff

Effective June 13, **Brent Barclay** has started work as the Regional Manager for the Interior for the Ministry of Agriculture. Brent is based out of Prince George. However, to provide continuity with the Inter-Agency Working Group, Orland Schmidt will continue to be the Ministry of Agriculture’s key representative on the inter-ministry working group.

In addition, Ministry of Agriculture has hired Laura Code as the new Regional Agrologist for the North Okanagan. Laura starts her new role on July 4 and will be located in the Vernon office. This position will increase the frontline capacity to support a growing sustainable agrifood sector and respond to issues within the region.

### Ministry of Environment – New Positions

The Ministry of Environment, Environmental Protection Division, Regional Operations Branch received additional budget and approval to hire additional positions for the Compliance Team. One of these positions is a Community Resource Technologist which will be based out of Vernon. The principle responsibilities of this position will be to liaise with facility operators, First Nations, and interested parties to ensure there is an awareness of regulatory requirements and best practices, as well as to provide local knowledge to develop options and recommendations for case specific solutions. This position will be posted externally on the [BC Government Hiring webpage](#) within the next week.