

ACTION UPDATE

Inter-Agency Working Group



September 05, 2017

New IAWG Members

Since the last newsletter was issued, the Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) has seen several changes in leadership and welcomed new members to the team. Our newest members include: Brady Nelles, Director, and Leslie Payette, Operations Manager of the Compliance Department from Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy; Adam Neil, Environmental Manager from Splatsin; and Jo-Ann Aldridge, Sr Environmental Specialist from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). The IAWG has continued to work on the goals to ensure safe drinking water levels within the Hullcar Valley.

FLNR Update

The Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNR) contacted residents participating in the Hullcar Ambient Groundwater Quality Monitoring Network in August, and continued the annual well sampling program.

Upcoming Events

September 21—IAWG Meeting

September 28—MOE Sampling Steele Springs Drinking Water

TBD - Community Meeting at Hullcar Hall

ACTION UPDATE



The BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy orders review of Hullcar Aquifer on August 2, 2017

Agricultural practices have contributed to contamination of the Hullcar aquifer, and there is a paramount need to ensure safe clean drinking water for British Columbians. In order to gather the information necessary to set a path forward, government wishes to conduct a review with the purpose of documenting lessons learned and informing approaches to future decision making by statutory decision makers, agricultural operators, health authorities, and provincial agencies.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, George Heyman, has announced a new review of the Hullcar Aquifer with the end goal of ensuring agricultural practices are consistent with the provision and protection of clean, safe drinking water.

An independent, respected national water and governance expert has been commissioned to support the review of the pollution in the Hullcar Aquifer. Oliver Brandes, the co-director of the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance at the University of Victoria's Centre for Global Studies, will provide strategic advice and oversee aspects of the review. The review will look at decisions and actions taken to-date with respect to pollution in the Hullcar Aquifer. Calvin Sandborn, legal director with the University of Victoria's Environmental Law Centre will serve as special advisor to the reviewer.

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The review is expected to provide forward-looking recommendations to help inform best practices for the agricultural sector and improvements to regulations that can be applied province wide.

The Intended outcomes from the review are:

- Information that will inform short and long term strategies for improving the environmentally sound and economically beneficial management of agricultural nutrients in the North Okanagan, while ensuring the protection of drinking water.
- Recommendations to inform statutory decisions under provincial statute related to the Hullcar aquifer and to inform decisions regarding agricultural waste management more broadly.
- Information that will inform the review of the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation and informing the development of policy with regards to the protection of drinking water by the improved management of agricultural wastes.
- The review will be released to the public proactively and will be available on the ministry website.

Findings from the review will be posted publicly on the ministry's website.

Hullcar Review

An independent, respected expert is being commissioned to lead the review, which will be due to government by the end of September 2017.

ACTION UPDATE



Interior Health Authority (IHA): Private Well Sampling

The Inter-Agency Working Group has been conducting a sampling program in the Hullcar area. The purpose of the project is to test private wells in the area for nitrates, total coliforms and *E.coli* to gather up to date information in order to:

- ⇒ Determine the concentration of nitrate in private wells
- ⇒ Provide accurate water quality information and advice to residents about their drinking water

Sampling Update

Nine (9) properties were sampled in August for nitrate, total coliform, and *E.coli*. Participants will be notified by IHA of their results.

This program is in addition to any other sampling initiatives in the area, such as the Ambient Groundwater Monitoring Network Program conducted by FLNR. Sampling was conducted by Interior Health staff. The program was voluntary and there was no cost to those who volunteered.

Residents will be provided with the results for their well and relevant public health advice based on the result. If you live in the Hullcar area and your water supply is a private well, to arrange a sampling please contact: **Chris Russell** | 250-549-6359 | chris.russell@interiorhealth.ca.

Residents who wish to have their information contributed to helping understand nitrate levels across the Hullcar Valley can have their sample results added to the provincial database by completing a consent form. This is optional and not a condition of sampling. Participation in this sampling program will not only provide you with valuable information about your drinking water, but it will also give the IAWG more detailed information about nitrate levels in the area. This will help ensure that information and advice about drinking water safety is as accurate as possible.

ACTION UPDATE



Steele Springs Nitrate Sampling

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy has been sampling the Steele Springs Water District (SSWD) overflow site for the last three months. The results from the SSWD overflow are provided in the table to the right. The slight drop in the June sampling is due to mixing source waters at SSWD.

SSWD Nitrate Results

April 24 — 13.8 mg/L

May 09 — 13.9 mg/L

May 23— 12.3 mg/L

June 19— 8.75 mg/L

July 17—12.3 mg/L

Ministry of Agriculture Update: Hullcar Irrigation Efficiency Project

Water use impacts the potential for nutrients to move throughout the soil profile. As part of the Nutrient Management Planning funding, an irrigation water use and efficiency project is currently being done. A Certified Irrigation Designer is performing irrigation assessments by working one-on-one with agricultural producers, gathering information through interviews and visiting the farms. Reports will be sent to each producer outlining their irrigation practices and options for improved management, including different system types and scheduling equipment. The end result will help producers with their irrigation management decisions and improve water use efficiency, thereby decreasing the potential for nutrients to leach through the soil.

ACTION UPDATE



Goals of the IMWG

To ensure safe drinking water for all residents of Hullcar and Steele Springs Water District (SSWD)

To build public trust and demonstrate collaboration among ministries

To determine possible sources of nitrate in the Hullcar Aquifer

To foster sustainable economic development for the agri-food sector

Additional info can be found here:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/site-permitting-compliance/hullcar-aquifer>