Hullcar Aquifer Inter-Ministry Working Group Updates

Core Ministry Team Members:

Director Lead:
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Ministry of Environment
Deputy Director, Regional Operations Branch

Technical Team Lead:
Orlando Schmidt
Ministry of Agriculture
Regional Manager, Coast and Interior

Goals of the Inter-Ministry Working Group:

* To ensure safe drinking water for the residents of Hullcar Aquifer and Steele Springs Water District
* 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 local agrifood sector

Environmental Impact Assessments

Ministry of Environment, Director for Waste Management approved the environmental impact assessment terms of reference and work plan for Ken and Brenda Regehr. The environmental impact assessment must be completed by November 7, and the results/report must be submitted to the Director by December 16.

Post-Harvest Nitrate Study

The Ministry of Agriculture is transitioning from planning to execution of a project with the short title, “Post-Harvest Nitrate Study.” The main objectives of this project are twofold: 1) to describe the distribution of 40 fields over the Hullcar Aquifer with respect to post-harvest nitrate levels, a measure of the soil nitrogen not used by the recently harvested crop, and 2) to better understand whether nitrate moves down within the 0-90 cm depth from the post-harvest period to May 2017. The approach is adapted from previous soil nutrient studies with similar objectives. Currently, fields are being selected to address each of the 2 objectives, and an agreement is being finalized with a contractor to conduct field sampling and have the soils tested, starting as soon as the last week in September. The Ministry will provide oversight with the contractor’s activities and plans to report findings in December 2016 and July 2017. For further information about previous soil nutrient studies, check out:

http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/soil-nutrients/nutrient-management/technical-reports/soil-nutrient-studies
**Spreading manure during the months of November to February may result in extreme risk of contaminating surface and drinking water.**

**Manure Spreading Advisories**

The BC Environmental Farm Plan supports farm operations to complete agri-environmental risk assessments. For producers, manure spreading advisories provide guidance about the ‘right time’ and the ‘right place’ for responsible manure spreading. Monthly guidelines for manure spreading are provided that reflect seasonal changes in climate. Producers are responsible for decisions regarding manure spreading and interpretations of these guidelines for their individual circumstances. The table below is a summary of manure spreading practices in the Interior Region.

Excerpted from the BC Environmental Farm Plan: Reference Guide, Table 6.12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Manure Spreading Practices in the Interior Region</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September and October</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Risks of Contaminating Surface and Drinking Water</strong></td>
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<td>Low rainfall hence low risk.</td>
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<td><strong>Spreading Practices</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spreading on crops is acceptable if soil is not frozen, as most of the manure nutrients will be available for the crop next spring.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not acceptable to spread on bare land (harvested corn, vegetables, berries, etc.) or cover crops that emerged after September 1st.</td>
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<td>Avoid wet areas.</td>
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Manure not to be spread within 5 m or more of wet ditches or wet watercourses, or 3 m or more from dry ditches or dry watercourses (suggested) – increase buffer width to avoid any contaminated runoff based on soil, soil cover conditions, slopes greater than 5%, and sensitivity of area being protected.
Did you know?

The Ministry of Agriculture has developed many resources pertaining to the management of nutrients in the Agricultural sector.

Check out the guide at:

Upcoming dates of interest:

October 17  Next Steele Springs water sample


November 2  Technical Communications Working Group Meeting

More info can be found at:
http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/site-permitting-compliance/hullcar-aquifer