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Sooke saluted for liquid waste management plan

By [Jim Sinclair - Sooke News Mirror](#)

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The District of Sooke has taken concrete steps to protect the Sooke Harbour and Sooke Basin from the environmental pressures of urban development with an innovative Liquid Waste Management Plan (LWMP) approved by the Ministry of Environment.

Sooke has exceeded provincial requirements for liquid waste management and created a rainwater management plan that makes protecting water quality a guiding principle in land use decisions. It works on three principles: protect existing water quality, prevent future damage, and remediate areas that may already be damaged. As part of the plan, the district is establishing an extensive water quality monitoring program on the community's 17 watersheds and the Sooke harbour and basin.

Rainwater will be managed through low-impact development techniques, best management practices, marine environmental protection, spill prevention and rainwater management education. The plan includes strict controls requiring each development site to manage its own stormwater.

Road design and construction will incorporate rainwater management principles, including the use of fewer impervious surfaces, while integrating low-impact design features that allow better control of the rate that rainwater flows into streams. It also puts strict controls on rainwater discharges to Sooke harbour and basin. Sooke aims to improve water quality in the harbour and basin to the point where a longstanding ban on shellfish harvesting can be lifted.

The LWMP also prohibits developments from discharging sewage into Sooke harbour and basin or to water courses leading to the harbour and basin. This will protect the environment by promoting development in areas supported by the district's Official Community Plan. A

partnership has been formed between the Ministry of Environment, District of Sooke, Capital Regional District, Environment Canada and local First Nations to provide long-term management of Sooke's aquatic environment.

This integrated approach of monitoring, infrastructure design and a multi-government partnership will ensure a high water quality standard for today and for the future.

"Sooke is just one of several communities in B.C. that are facing development pressures, and

Sooke has responded to those pressures by being a true leader in environmental sustainability," said Minister of Environment Terry Lake.

"The district's plan for managing its liquid waste is cutting-edge and a model for other communities. The leadership that Sooke is showing will have real, measurable benefits in the watershed and will lead to a healthier environment."

"Sooke is proud of its natural environment," added Mayor Janet Evans. "And as the first community in British Columbia to integrate both rainwater and sanitary in a liquid waste management plan, we now have the tools to protect the watersheds and the Sooke Harbour and Basin for future generations."

Quick Facts:

Local governments are required to submit an updated liquid waste management plan to the Ministry of Environment every five years for approval.

The ministry carefully reviews submitted plans to ensure they meet the requirements of the Environmental Management Act, which include: sewer discharges, combined sewer overflows, urban storm water runoff management, pump station overflows, and subdivision on-site disposal. The plan must address the implications of future growth and provide cost estimates per household to implement the plan.

Local governments are also required to consult the community, including local First Nations, before submitting the plan to the ministry.

Sooke met or exceeded all requirements and went above and beyond in developing a comprehensive rainwater management strategy.

The District's Corporate Officer Bonnie Sprinkling credited engineering technologist Laura Byrne for her efforts toward the plan, Byrne fielded a handful of related questions from the Sooke News Mirror.

SNM:

You were part of a committee that worked on this project, who else was involved?

L.B.

There were two separate committees, one for the sanitary sewer component and then one for the rainwater component. Each committee was comprised of members of the public, First Nations, district council and technical representatives from the CRD, Ministry of Environment, Vancouver Island Health Authority, Environment Canada, Ministry of Community Services and EPCOR.

SNM:

How much time was spent on it, over the course of how long a time frame?

L.B.

There are three stages of a LWMP and two components - sanitary and rainwater. Stage 1 and 2 (Sanitary) was initiated in 2002 and Stage 1 (Rainwater) was initiated in 2005. This component of the project was initiated in June 2008 and was approved by council for submission to province for approval in March 2010.

SNM:

In your opinion what were the major challenges in completing the plan?

L.B.

Balancing the guidelines for LWMP set out by the Ministry of Environment with the ideology of the technical members and the practicality of the members of the public to produce a responsible and practical plan that will guide the district. Rod Vowles and Dave McClimon (members of the public) played instrumental roles ensuring that the plan was both sensible, useful and affordable.

SNM:

What part of the process gives you the most personal gratification?

L.B.

Producing an innovative plan that tells the province that Sooke is doing it's best to protect its natural beauty and resources. This plan provides clear guidance for the next 10 years with every aspect of rainwater and sanitary sewer management: monitoring, management, watershed stewardship groups, policy and guidelines. I am proud that I had a hand in developing the strategies to protect the environment for my community, knowing the results will be a legacy for my child(ren) and future generations.

SNM:

I see that municipalities are required to come up with updated plans every five years. Do you have any idea what may be altered by the time the next one comes due, and when will that be?

L.B.

The plan sets clear goals and timelines for implementation. The plan will require updates on its accomplishments and challenges in 2016. Issues that were deferred in this plan (i.e. bylaw regulating the maintenance of private on-site septic systems).

SNM:

Have you heard from other municipalities hoping to emulate the DOS's success in this matter?

L.B.

We have been the model for other communities since we started the process and are looking forward to helping other communities learn from the District of Sooke's experiences.

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