

CONSERVATION

Gibsons moves to protect 'world's greatest water'

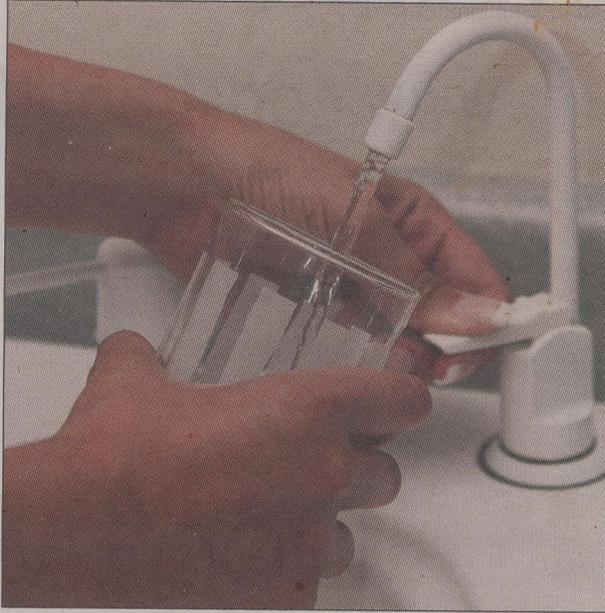
Low-flow showerheads, rain barrels, drought-resistant trees and plants — when it comes to saving water, every household and business in Gibsons can truly make a difference.

But how do we ensure that our town's water supply will stay pure and plentiful enough for future generations? And what does a sustainable approach to water conservation look like in a town that's been voted both the World's Most Livable Community (2009) and one with the Best-Tasting Water (2005)?

"We're proud of our water system and aquifer and feel highly motivated to protect the world's greatest water," said Mayor Wayne Rowe. "We've designed our policies and infrastructure with a strong conservation goal in mind, yet we also need our community members to recognize the important role they play in determining our rate of water usage."

The Town of Gibsons has initiated these recent projects to promote efficient, cost-effective water usage:

The Town has invested \$100,000, along with a \$400,000 grant from the



METRO CREATIVE PHOTO

In light of recent drought concerns on the Sunshine Coast, the Town of Gibsons is offering residents tips to ensure that the town's water supply stays pure and plentiful for future generations.

province, to launch a state-of-the-art aquifer mapping project. This will enable Gibsons to understand the sustainability of the aquifer's water supply and create a complete water budget to assess the present and future demand and stress on the aquifer, which

provides two-thirds of the Town's water supply.

This project allows the Town to better understand the relationship between the aquifer and the creeks and how the groundwater is being used.

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More conservation needed

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By March 2013, Gibsons will have significant new data available to indicate the exact baseline water levels in the aquifer and how factors such as weather, sea-level rise and water usage directly affect this supply.

Since August 2012, the Town of Gibsons' non-chlorinated water no longer flows into and mixes with the chlorinated Sunshine Coast Regional District supply. This not only improves the town's water quality, it reduces pumping costs and equipment wear and tear and allows better control and monitoring.

The new water-metering system enables Gibsons to better target where leaks exist in its supply system. By the end of 2012, the town will have replaced 750 metres of leaking galvanized pipe. New data from meter readings also help the town identify how much

water is truly being used and to set appropriate rates to cover the costs for maintaining, operating and renewing water infrastructure.

Water storage is not a sustainable or responsible solution when conservation is an option, said Dave Newman, Gibsons director of engineering. It would take a reservoir the size of a soccer field and over two storeys high to store water for two weeks of use by Gibsons' residents. This would be prohibitively expensive to build and maintain.

"We are very fortunate to have such high-quality, untreated [unchlorinated] water available at our taps," Newman said. "But we need to be responsible users of this water supply that we have and, as a community, to recognize that we are stewards of this valuable commodity."

Find water conservation tips at www.gibsons.ca/water-conservation-tips.html.

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