



Health Protection

Drinking Water Report, Winter 2014

Welcome to Interior Health's (IH) Drinking Water Report. This quarterly newsletter provides information about key activities, projects, and policies relating to the IH Drinking Water Program. Previous issues can be found at <http://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/DrinkingWater/Pages/Resources.aspx>.

Our Large Water Program Strategy

We have completed strategic planning for our large water systems program (see our [Winter 2013 Newsletter](#)). The resulting key program goals and objectives (see attached) reflect the general theme from our consultations: "Regulation is not something we do to our large water suppliers; it is something we do with them". We have already started to implement the strategy and work towards our goals. A big thank-you to all who took the time to provide input and feedback throughout this process.

We Need Your Input ... Small Water System Strategy

As reported in our [Fall 2013 Newsletter](#), we are currently developing a strategic plan to guide our work with small drinking water systems. We want to hear from you: What have we done to support improvements? Are there initiatives or actions that didn't work? Are there opportunities we could be taking advantage of? Send your opinions and ideas by e-mail to Laurie.Bourdin@interiorhealth.ca or complete the short, confidential on-line survey at <http://fluidsurveys.com/s/healthprotectionsmallwatersystems2013/>. Input will be accepted through March 16th 2014. Key themes from your feedback and the resulting plan for our small water systems program will be shared in our Spring 2014 newsletter.

BC Drinking Water Treatment Objectives for Surface Water

As reported in our [Summer 2012 newsletter](#), the provincial government has set specific criteria for treatment of surface water sources. Our staff assessed all large water system treatment plants in the region against these new objectives. Results of the assessments are now being shared with the respective water suppliers to allow for comments prior to making the results available to the public on our website. If you have any questions about the new provincial objectives or how they apply to your system, please contact your DWO.

Guilty Verdict in Antwerp Springs Contamination Case

The Regional District of North Okanagan has been found guilty on all four counts brought by the Crown relating to the January 2010 contamination of the Lavington water distribution system. In his reasons for rejecting the due diligence defence argued by the Regional District, Judge McKimm points out that relying on operational and management barriers (e.g. monitoring, disinfection, emergency response) is not sufficient when other risks to human health have been identified. Judge McKimm expressed that more effort could have been made to reduce all risks at the site (e.g. mitigating potential cross connections, closing artesian wells). The judge has yet to pass final sentencing. A complete copy of the decision can be found at <http://canlii.ca/t/g0s9l>.

Do You Know Your DWO?

Your Drinking Water Officer (DWO) is the best person to talk to about IH Drinking Water Programs. If you don't know who your DWO is please find out. Contact information for our regional offices and other details on the program can be found on our website at <http://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/DrinkingWater/>.

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Natural Hazards: Preparing and Dealing with Floods and Fires

Being prepared for a natural disaster will help to safeguard you, your family and pets, and your water system. Having the right information before and during the event helps to reduce a disaster's impact and speeds up your emergency recovery. IH staff support emergency management by helping to develop water system specific response plans to minimize the effect emergencies have on the public. IH also provides a variety of support tools and materials pertaining to various emergency issues that you might find useful on our website at <http://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/EmergencyPreparedness/Pages/default.aspx>.

BC Drinking Water Treatment Objectives for Surface Water

We've completed the review of large water treatment plants discussed in our [Winter newsletter](#) and have shared those results with water suppliers. Of the 84 treatment plants assessed, 24 already demonstrate that their treatment achieves or exceeds provincial objectives. There are a number of systems well on their way to meeting these objectives, and some that have considerable work to do to achieve the objectives. Of the 60 systems currently not meeting the objectives, 51 rely on a single form of disinfection. These results have reaffirmed our commitment to continue working with water suppliers to develop plans to improve infrastructure and ensure clean, safe, and reliable tap water for their communities.

We have decided not to publicly release these results at this time to allow for further consultation with key local and provincial stakeholders. Raising public awareness of water quality and safety remains a key goal of our program and we will continue to explore how best to increase public awareness and ultimately support for water system improvements.

Small Water System Strategy Report

The report looking into our work with small water systems discussed in [Winter newsletter](#) has now been submitted to our leadership team. Based on the feedback we received from internal and external consultations, the report recommends refocusing resources to raise awareness and capacity of key stakeholders as a means to address vulnerabilities and reduce risk. The report also highlights opportunities identified by external stakeholders as options for meeting program goals. These include:

- 1) developing and implementing standardized, comprehensive risk-based assessments;
- 2) coordinating technical assessments to support local government budget cycles;
- 3) aligning regulatory approaches and service objectives with system type/size;
- 4) establishing a safe drinking water task-force/committee to advise on issues; and
- 5) employing a progressive approach to reducing risk (i.e. not just compliance).

The leadership team will be using the report to help draft specific goals and objectives for the program. This plan will then be submitted to IH senior leadership for endorsement. Thank you to everyone who took the time to provide input on where we've been and suggestions on where we should be going.

Do You Know Your DWO?

Your delegated Drinking Water Officer (DWO) is the best person to talk to about IH Drinking Water Programs. If you don't know who your DWO is please find out. Contact information for our regional offices and other details on the program can be found on our website at <http://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/DrinkingWater/>.



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Boil Water Notice rescinded for Anglemont

On August 1st the long-standing BWN for the Anglemont Water System was rescinded. The system has been a focus for us since 2003, including the first full prosecution under the *Drinking Water Protection Act* in BC. The Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD) persevered through the public meetings, engineering studies, and referendum needed for improvements, ultimately taking over the system, securing funding, and completing substantial upgrades. We commend the people of Anglemont and the CSRD for their dedication to providing clean, safe and reliable tap water for their community. Complete project details are available on [the CSRD website](#).

Pre-purchasing UV treatment systems ... not a good idea

As with any treatment infrastructure, it is essential that UV equipment is appropriately designed to meet the needs of the specific water source and system. For smaller systems this means using NSF 55A certified equipment. Unfortunately, there have been a number of recent instances where equipment has been purchased for large systems before the appropriate source characterization and detailed design work was completed. This has resulted in thousands of dollars in additional costs for revalidation, reprogramming and re-engineering, and extended timelines. When considering adding UV please confirm adequate time is allowed to select and validate based on your source quality, the reactor control strategy, and system capacities.

Whatever happened to the Southern Interior Regional Drinking Water Team?

In 2007 the province established multi-agency Regional Drinking Water Teams for each regional health area to improve coordination and protection of drinking water. In 2009 it was agreed that the Southern Interior region would be better served if responsibilities were further divided into Kootenay-Boundary, Thompson-Okanagan, and Cariboo sub-regions. With the provincial restructuring now complete we are working directly with the provincial land-use managers in each sub-region to better integrate drinking water source protection into planning and approval processes. If you have a concern with land-use and/or want to bring a topic to the Regional Drinking Water Team, please contact your EHO.

City of Kelowna Wins the Tap Water Challenge

We thought it tasted pretty good, too. Congratulations to the City of Kelowna for winning the "[Best of the Best](#)" tap water taste test at this year's BCWWA conference!

Do You Know Your EHO?

Your Environmental Health Officer is the best person to talk to about IH Drinking Water Programs. If you don't know who your EHO is please find out. Contact information for our regional offices and other details on the program can be found on our website at <http://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/DrinkingWater/>.

Health Protection Drinking Water Report, Fall 2014

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Boil Water Notices in the Interior Health region

One in every six small water systems in our region is on a Boil Water Notice (BWN). Positive coliform results and inadequate treatment are the two most common reasons for BWN having been issued. Many of these BWNs remain in place for months or even years. Since the [2008 BC Ombudsman's Report – Fit to Drink](#), IH has focused on reducing the number of BWNs in our region. Small water suppliers have removed BWNs at a rate of approximately 19 systems per year. Despite many success stories (e.g. Mable Lake Provincial Park, Echo Lake Resort, Shuswap Marina, Sorrento Place) the total number of BWNs in place increased over this same period, in large part due to efforts to document previously unregistered small water systems.

Interior Health's Small Water Strategy

As reported in the [Spring 2014 newsletter](#), we've developed a new strategy to guide our work with small water systems to make improvements and reduce public health risk. A focused Small Water Team (see the next page for names and office locations) has been formed to implement the strategy and provide services to the 1,238 small community water systems in our region. The Small Water Team has begun work on the key deliverables necessary to ensure quality, consistent service while helping to increase capacity of small water system stakeholders throughout the region.

Exploring Amalgamation in the North Okanagan

Like many rural areas, the North Okanagan is challenged to meet provincial regulations and ensure clean, safe and reliable tap water for small water system users. In fact, the longest standing BWN in the province (over 25 years) belongs to a system just outside Armstrong in the Township of Spallumcheen. Elected officials and staff in these two communities have recently committed to an Inter-Municipal Water Agreement to improve services in the area. This includes evaluating amalgamation with the City of Armstrong water system, which recently completed upgrades to achieve provincial treatment objectives. IH has commended this initiative and, through a letter to the Province, we've offered our support to meet the goals of the British Columbia *Drinking Water Protection Act and Action Plan for Safe Drinking Water*.

Learnings from the Frontline

Since its release in 2004, Dr. Steve Hrudehy's book [Lesson from Recent Outbreaks in Affluent Nations](#) has been a go-to reference for drinking water risk managers in Canada. We've also benefited from Dr. Hrudehy sharing his perspective on southern interior community water systems as a member of the 2011 IH Drinking Water Audit committee. His latest publication, [Ensuring Safe Drinking Water: Learning from the frontline experience with contamination](#) provides an update on the state of drinking water safety, including his "ten commandments for safe drinking water".

Do You Know Your EHO?

Your environmental health officer is the best person to talk to about IH Drinking Water Programs. If you don't know who your EHO is please find out. Contact information for our large and small water teams is provided on the following page.