 Click to Print

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Hydrological illiteracy stops utilizing of valuable resource

By [Judie Steeves - Kelowna Capital News](#)

Published: **October 29, 2010 11:00 PM**

Planet earth is actually planet water, since it's 70 per cent water—97 per cent of that is ocean salt water, two per cent is trapped in glaciers—and only one per cent is fresh water.

The water cycle and the life cycle are one and same, and both depend on your ability to maintain them. All creatures, including humans, are largely water.

Your water supply is your watershed, your water production machine, explained Brock Dolman, director of the Watershed Advocacy Training Education and Research Institute, or WATER Institute.

Those who believe in getting their water from a bottle are willing to trash their watersheds, he added.

He was the keynote speaker at a workshop called From Rain to Resource, managing stormwater in a changing climate, in Kelowna Friday and talked to the 100 delegates from around the province about Thinking Like a Watershed.

He reminded the civic council members, engineers, planners and consultants of the importance of water with the succinct reminder: "No water, no food."

Unfortunately, he said people on this continent suffer from "hydrological illiteracy. People don't even know about the water cycle," he said.

While the volume of water is finite, the potential for renewal is infinite, he noted. On a seasonal basis, water cycles through periods of high and low precipitation, alternately filling waterways and then drawing them down.

Although he hails from California, Dolman said the Okanagan Basin Water Board's slogan 'One Valley. One Water.' illustrates its understanding that there is a hydrologically-defined boundary of this community. And, he was impressed with the Okanagan Waterwise website created by the board.

The workshop was organized by the OBWB and the B.C. Water and Waste Association.

Dolman likened the valley to a lifeboat and advised those within it to leave the city rivalries behind and work together to keep it afloat.

People and their attitudes are the problem, he said, with their historic tendency to try and get rid of water following a storm, instead of looking on rainfall as a resource to be stored and meted out when the weather is dry.

"There is no 'away' when it comes to water," he advised. It can only be moved from one place to another, despite the illusion of its disappearance into a storm drain underground and out of sight.

He warned about decreasing water well levels and noted that groundwater is the oldest water, and the least connected to the annual income allowance of water through precipitation.

Yet, he noted, in B.C. its use is not even regulated. "That makes no sense," he said bluntly.

In order to conserve more water, we need to think in terms of concave versus convex land systems, in order to attract water instead of forcing it to run off the land.

Designers should ask: "What would water want? when designing landscapes. The result would be better than what we have," he said.

Low Impact Development, or LID, is the current buzz-word for ways of designing, engineering, building and landscaping for green management of stormwater.

For instance, one inch of rain falling on 1,000 square feet of impervious surface can result in collection of 600 gallons of water which could be stored for a drier period.

"Rather than a water-scarce area, it should be considered a water storage-scarce area," he explained, since there are lots of opportunities for harvesting rainwater for dry periods.


His mantra is 'slow it, spread it, sink it' referring to how best to manage stormwater.

He recommended development of regional plant palettes for rain gardens, where runoff water can be directed to drain back into the ground from asphalt and concrete and rooftops (see story on A8).

Land use planning, he reminded planners, is water use planning.

jsteeves@kelownacapnews.com

© Copyright Black Press. All rights reserved.

 Click to Print

