

SLIPP opts to move ahead



By Salmon Arm Observer

Published: **June 18, 2013 05:00 PM**

Updated: **June 18, 2013 05:285 PM**

SLIPP may not be sliding away, after all.

Environmentalists were concerned the Shuswap Lake Integrated Planning Process (SLIPP) would disappear beneath the waves of criticism and contention at the end of this final year of a three-year pilot project.

Concerns were heightened with the recent release of a draft water-quality report that reveals the lake is deteriorating – particularly in Salmon Arm Bay.

At a SLIPP steering committee meeting held June 10 in Sicamous, members agreed in principle to recommend the Thompson-Nicola, Columbia Shuswap and North Okanagan regional districts continue to work together on water-quality and safety issues in the Shuswap watershed in

2014 and beyond.

The project has faced criticism on several fronts over the past two years. Chief among them has been realizing concrete value for the dollars partners contributed, as well as who has anted up the bigger share.

The committee's recommendation is subject to the completion of a new governance model and detailed discussions on cost-sharing, funding approvals and a comprehensive work plan.

"I am really happy to see an agreement in principle to move SLIPP, in some form, down the road," says Paul Demenok, CSRD South Shuswap director and newly appointed steering committee chair. "We were unanimous in support of the program in terms of both water-quality monitoring and remediation."

"I believe the water-quality monitoring program, when completed, will give everyone a very good picture of the conditions and the sources of pollution into the lake," he said, noting the information will form the basis of future plans and initiatives to remediate and improve water quality. "There have been detrimental changes to the water quality in Salmon Arm (Bay) due to a variety of factors."

Demenok says data indicates agricultural effluent both from surface run-off and the Salmon River, the sewage treatment plant, the depth of the bay and lack of water circulation are factors.

"I think the people of Salmon Arm should be concerned for the long-term quality of Salmon Arm Bay," he says.

Salmon Arm Mayor Nancy Cooper agrees that, as part of the CSRD, the city will continue to be involved in the SLIPP process.

As to funding expectations, Cooper says she spoke to a member of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, who advised her grants might be available.

"There will probably be a tax implication to everyone in the CSRD, so I will be bringing all the information to council," she says, pointing out some councillors have been opposed to funding SLIPP in the past. "I think it's best that regional districts are running the program because the issue involves the entire watershed."

Cooper says that while Salmon Arm's drinking water is good, she, like many people is aware the bay is a problem, but seeing the scientific data to prove it is crucial.

"I think we have to look after our water, so I'm glad to see we'll be moving ahead," she says, noting data on the Salmon Arm Bay was collected in 2011. "Where is 2012? Here we are halfway through 2013 and we don't have it."

Demenok meanwhile encourages residents to attend educational open houses that will be held in August.

"It's our drinking water reservoir and a fundamental pillar of economic well-being."

While saluting the committee for continuing to support SLIPP, Shuswap Water Action Team (SWAT) president Ray Nadeau says the Okanagan Basin Water Board has made tremendous improvements in its 40-year history.

"I believe it's an appropriate time for SLIPP to be remodelled into a permanently funded Shuswap Watershed Board," he says. "Previous surveys clearly showed the majority of the watershed public would be supportive."

Find this article at:

<http://www.saobserver.net/news/212072761.html>