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ISINTOK LOOKING DAM GOOD

Completed repairs on Summerland's Isintok Dam an important part for District's water supply in the face of climate change

Casey Richardson - Jul 20, 2022 / 4:00 am



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VIDEO LINK: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNTC_LzO-Jc

One of Summerland's key dams has been repaired and reopened after an issue was found in 2013 with one of the outlet pipes.

The upgrades to the Isintok Dam got underway in 2021 and were completed back in January. Mayor and council were present on Tuesday afternoon, alongside MLA Dan Ashton to officially mark the opening.

Mayor Toni Boot said the importance of getting this done was to not only make sure the dam follows the safety levels established by the provincial government, but also to protect the residents of Summerland if any flooding were to occur.

"It's just really important for people to know that with the ongoing monitoring, and the work that has been done in here over the last few months, that it all contributes to the safety not only for the people that are living here now but also for the people in the future," she said.

The Isintok Dam is one of 12 dams that are on the Trout Creek system.

"It's really important to make sure that we're protecting that, and that we have the water that we need, whether we're in a very dry period like we experienced last year, or if water is more plentiful, then we're able to store it," Boot said.

Anna Warwick Sears, the executive director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, said the dam work is important in a time of protecting the environment and focusing on climate change solutions.

"What we're getting is a whole lot more variability in year-to-year differences and how much precipitation we're getting. We're having years with tremendous amounts of water years with nowhere near enough water," she said.

"Not only does it help provide water for agriculture and for drinking water for the community of Summerland, but it also provides water that can be released for fish to help maintain the aquatic health of the stream."

Work completed will not only continue to supply water to the residents of Summerland but is an improvement for flood protection by withholding water back when needed.

The dam currently holds 1.3 million cubic metres of water, which equates to 529 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

"We're very, very fortunate that we live in an area where we have this the capability of having this mountainous watershed," Boot added.

The budget for the project was estimated at \$2.4 million, with \$1.8 million coming from provincial and federal government funding.

The final cost was under budget, arriving at over \$2 million. This means that instead of \$600,000 being contributed by the district, they had to spend just over \$225,000 and the rest will go back into capital reserves for another project in the future.

Sears said that the District of Summerland working with an existing reservoir is a good solution for increasing the water supply, especially at a time when there aren't really a tremendous amount of locations for new reservoirs. Often dams all over B.C. suffer from neglect.

"We're really lucky to be able to live here and have this amazing supply of clean water."

Work isn't done yet at the Isintok Dam, as another project will need to be started to expand the spillway.

"For the capacity of this dam, the spillway is quite a bit smaller than it should be," Boot said. "In this upcoming budget process, which will be at the staff level for it to start next month, we'll be looking at adding this to our capital projects for next year."

"There's that extra safeguard if there is an unexpected influx of a huge amount of water. And in this time of our changing climate. We just don't know."