



Cowichan Valley Regional District | 2016

Living the New Normal: Lesson's from the Cowichan Valley Regional District's Drought Communication Strategy

Outline

- Background / context
- Purpose of strategy
- Overview of New Normal
- Water Restrictions
- Water use reporting
- Logistics
- Successes
- Challenges





Drought in a rainforest?

- 80% October - March

- 20% April - September



- Little snowpack
- Not enough storage
- Increasing demand – residential, agricultural, industrial

Cowichan Lake & River

- Focal point of water issues
- Competing demands for water
- Limited storage



Climate Change

- Issue of drought goes beyond Cowichan watershed
- Region-wide concerns about water supply
 - 45 community water systems
 - 10,000 homes outside serviced areas
 - Agricultural users
 - Industry (1 million m³ per week)
- Climate predictions are for hotter summers with less precipitation, less winter snowpack
- Links between rivers and aquifers are poorly understood

Why a drought communications strategy?

- Summer of 2014 – drought conditions
- Multiple agencies attempting to respond
- Resources spent dealing with immediate crises, rather than advance planning
- CVRD was asked to take the lead on a drought communications strategy



New Normal Drought Communications Strategy

Purpose

Raise awareness of drought issues and the need for water conservation in the CVRD



Objective

Unified communications vehicle to address time, capacity and scope challenges as a organization

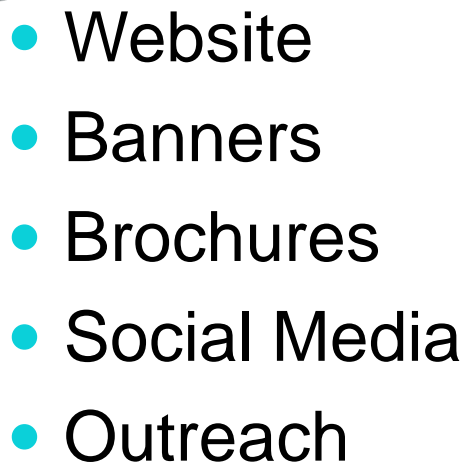
Vision

Engaged citizens who *think and act* in accordance with the “new normal.”

Values

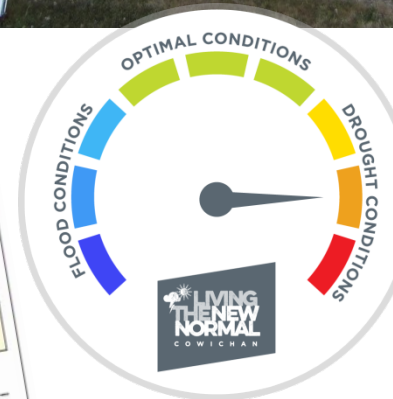
- Promote collaborative and cascading engagement
- Adopt consistent, coordinated messaging
- Provide clear, accurate and up-to-date information
- Understand and respect a variety of viewpoints





Vancouver Island water basin - Drought Level 2 - Dry
Cowichan Valley watersheds - Drought Level 3 - Very Dry
Stage 1 Water Restrictions in effect throughout Cowichan Region

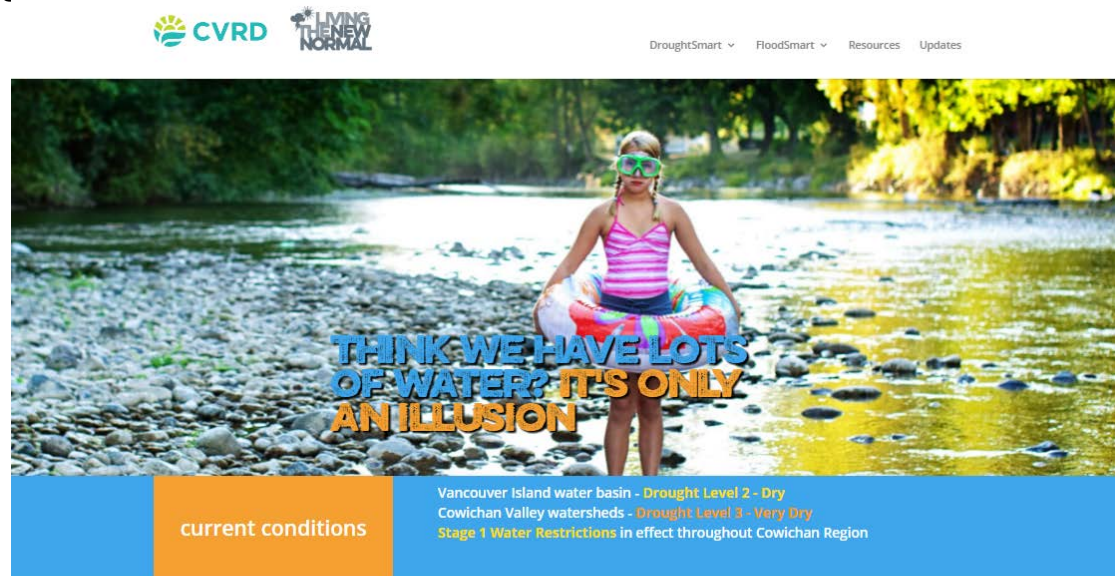
Summer drought and winter flooding are the 'new normal' in the Cowichan. We all have a role to play in managing our water supply to help our economy and our ecosystem. This website is intended to provide easy, clear information and tools that make adapting to the 'new normal' easier. [LEARN MORE »](#)

[illegible]

newnormalcowichan.ca

NewNormalCowichan.ca

- One-stop for drought (and flood) information
- Information on current conditions
- Resources
 - Water conservation
 - FireSmart
 - Links to partners



It's a **new normal**, Cowichan.

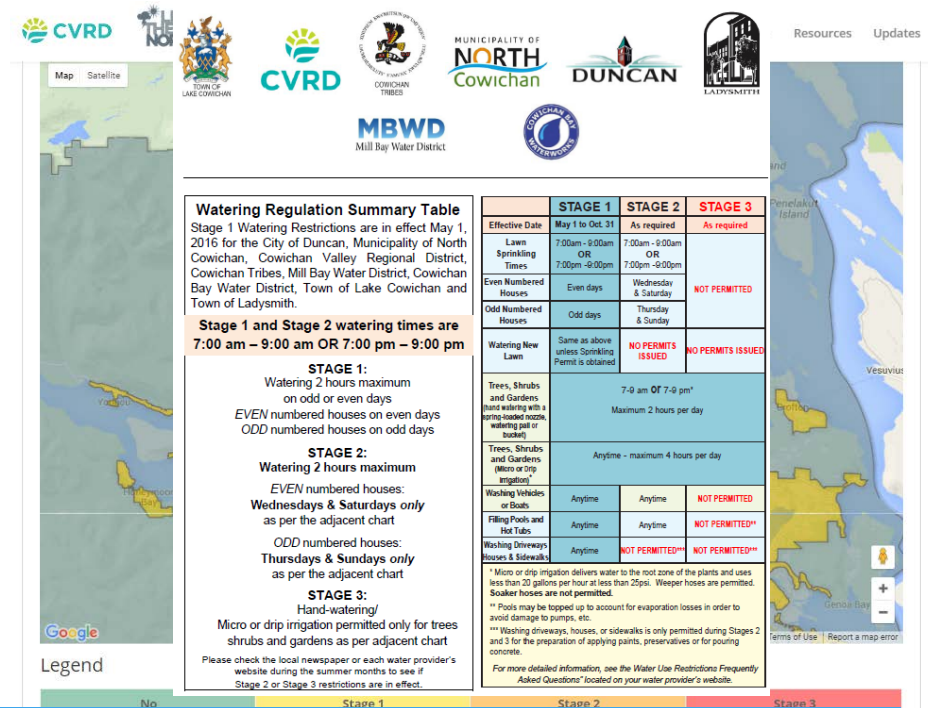
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[Click here for details about current water use restrictions?](#)



Water Use Restrictions

- Co-ordinated across all CVRD and municipal water systems
- Ideal
 - Less confusion, easy to communicate
 - Status bar, newspaper ads
- Actual
 - Local conditions required increased water restrictions for some systems
 - Leads to more complex messaging – maps to identify current conditions



Vancouver Island water basin - Drought Level 3 - Very Dry
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Stage 1 Water Restrictions in effect throughout Cowichan Region

Weekly Water Use

- Page comparing weekly water use for each water system

North Cowichan – South End (Graph)

71,161 m³

North Cowichan – Chemainus (Graph)

25,004 m³

North Cowichan – Crofton (Graph)

6,553 m³

↓-1% over prior week

Last updated: 25-May

System Information

Duncan (Graph)

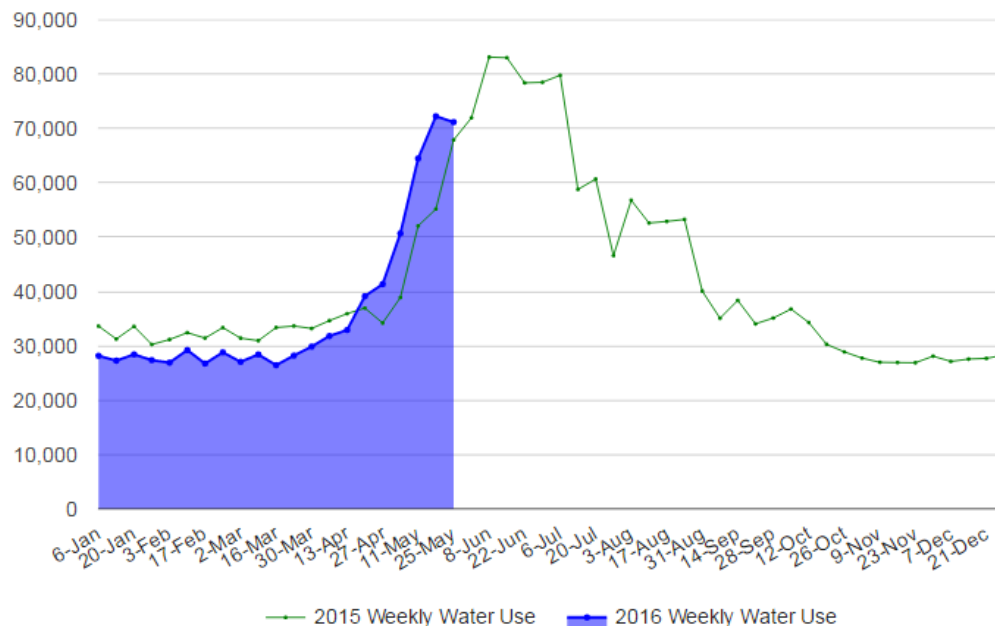
65,713 m³

↑35% over prior week

Last updated: 7-May

Volume (cubic Metres)

2015 Weekly Water Use - South End (North Cowichan)



Prior week

25-May

System Information

Duncan (Graph)

65,713 m³

Prior week

25-Mar

Other Web Resources

DROUGHTSMART TOOLS



TOOLS FOR HOME

DroughtSmart Brochures

Check out the following brochures full of practical techniques for saving water around your house and yard.

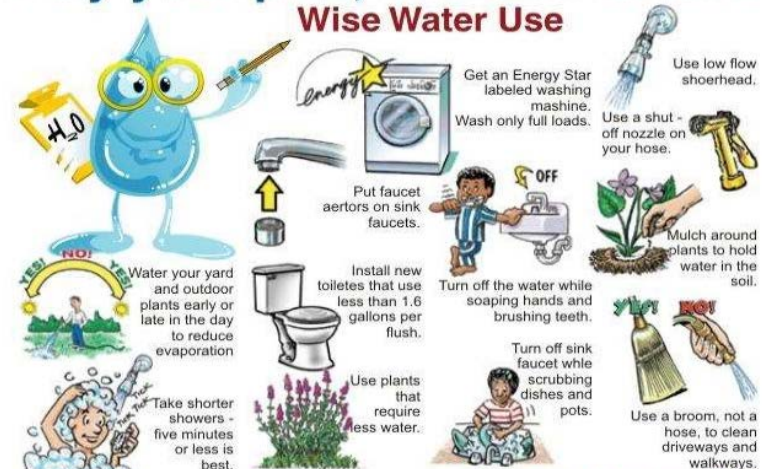
In your home



In your yard



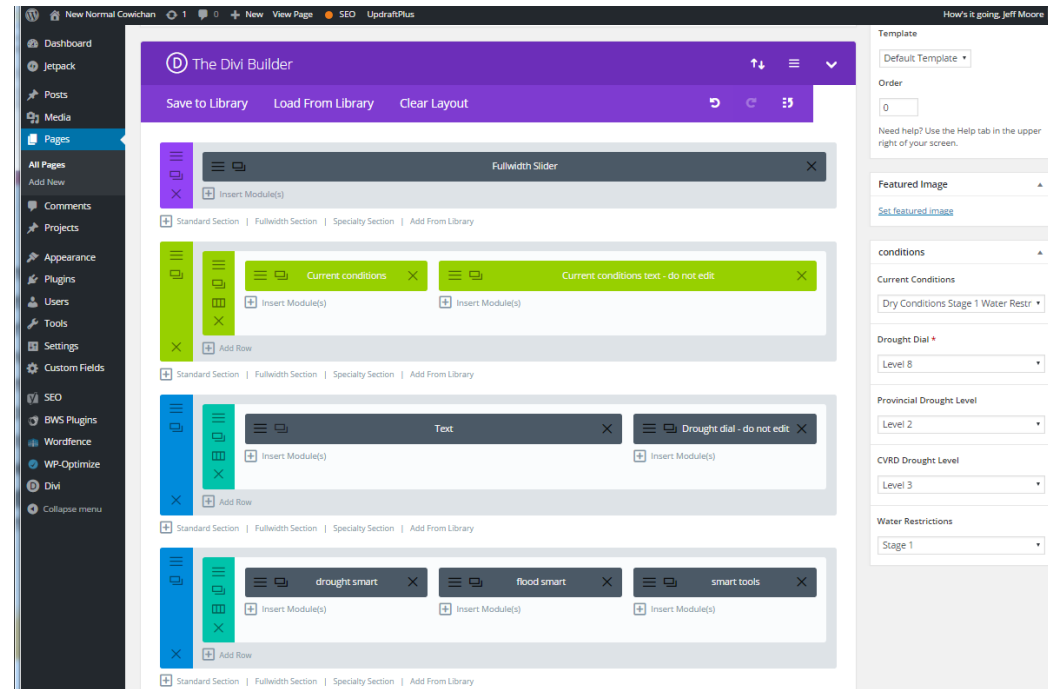
Play your part, be water smart! Wise Water Use



Save it, or do without it!

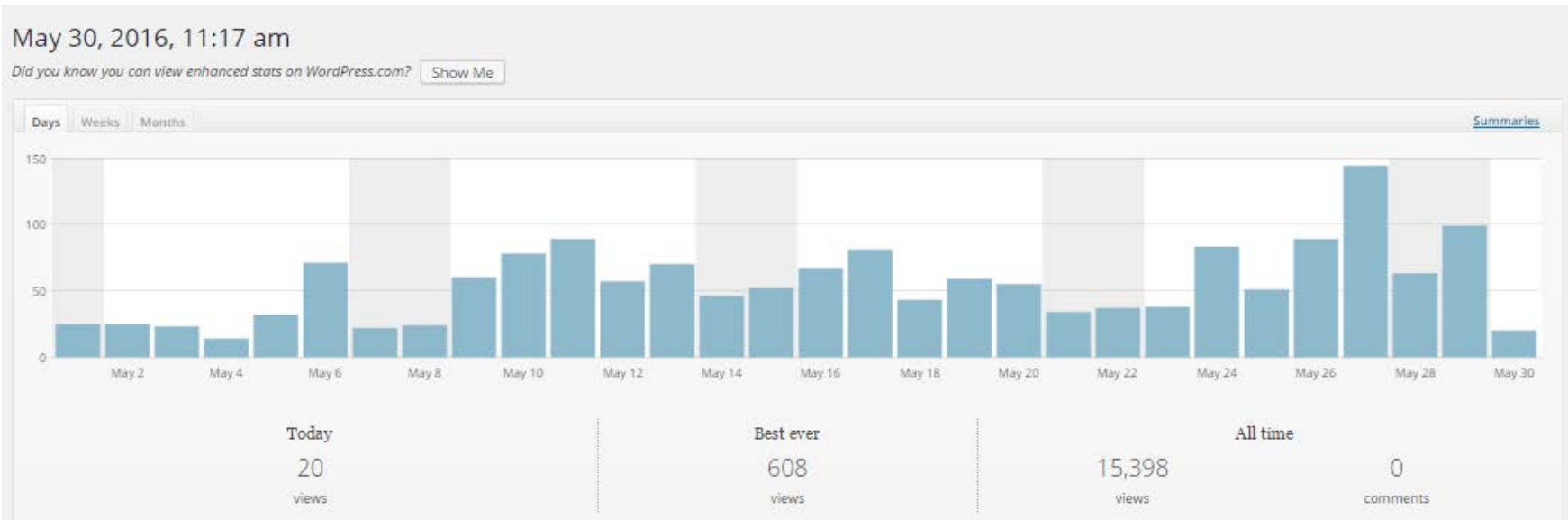
Logistics

- Website built on WordPress platform
 - Designed by web-designer, then maintained by CVRD
 - Easier to use than CVRD website
 - More features available
 - maps, graphs, toggles, etc.
 - Emphasis on automation

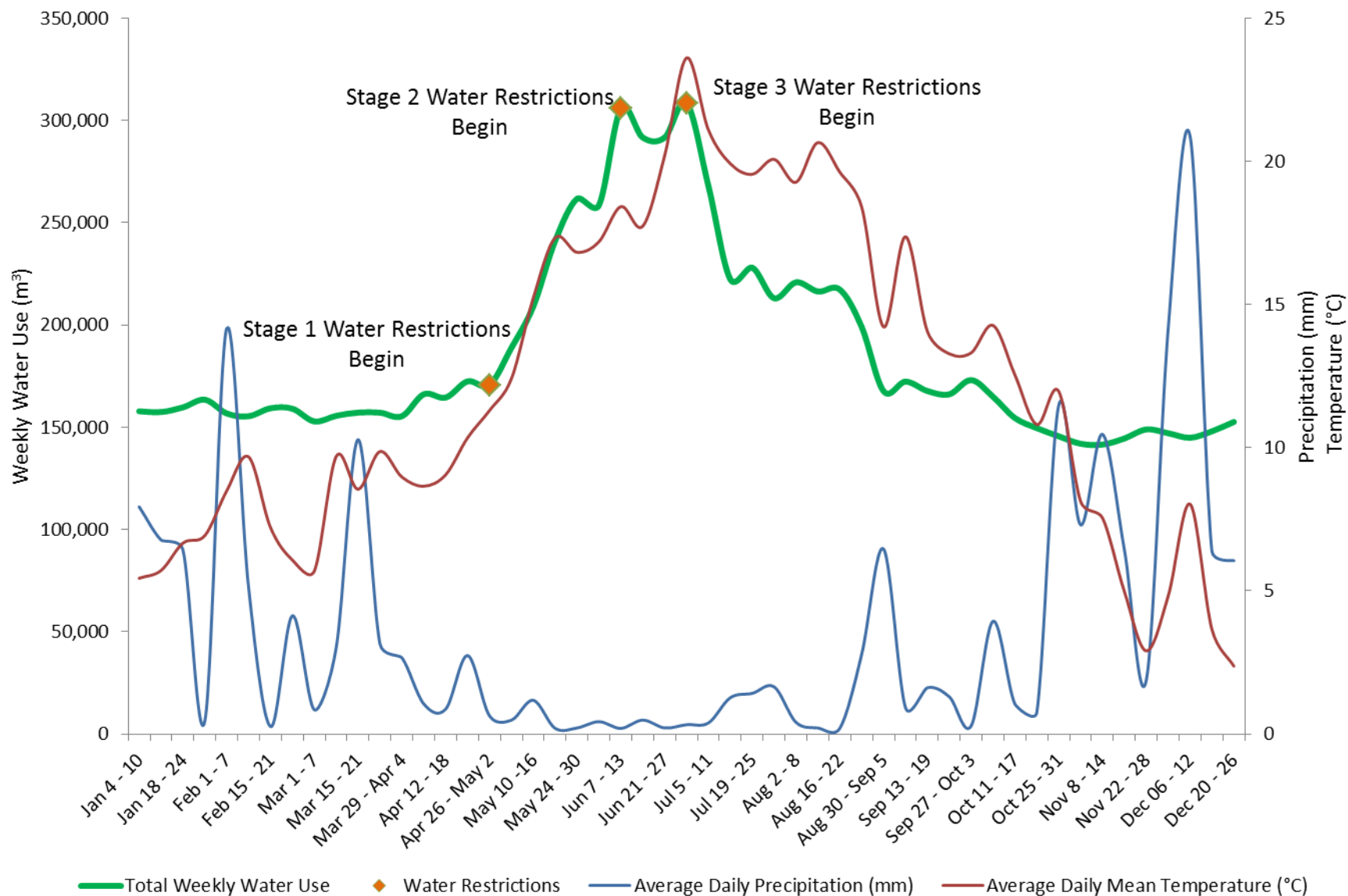


Metrics

- Site visits
- Pages viewed
- Referrers
- Search terms used



2015 Weekly Water Use, Temperature and Precipitation for the Cowichan Valley



Challenges

- Mixed support from the Board
 - Support campaign, but no dedicated budget or staff time
- Co-ordination of water restrictions
 - Different water sources and types of systems lead to differing opinions on when to move to a different stage
- Maintaining currency of website
 - Staff time
 - Reliance on partners to provide data

Questions

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CVRD