



This series of Water Limited will be based on interviews with various sectors of our community. You will read their thoughts and ideas about water management in our region.

Tourism and water - how do they mix?

How are changes in our water supply affecting those trying to deliver a quality experience to our visitors? They try to save water in their business, but most say that water use is a fact of life.

Attractions vary, but many rely on colourful landscaping to interest potential visitors. Mini-golf is a popular past time and when it is mixed with an assortment of flowers, grass and bumper boats, water use can't be avoided. So says Susan La Fauci, Manager of Paradise Mini Golf.

Susan is concerned about the increase in the price of water and the negative effect on the attraction and their clients. The managers of Paradise Mini Golf do what they can to control their water use, including the recirculation of water in the water park portion of the course. The RV park attached to them however, requires "a fair bit of water" even though individually the RV crowd are not big users.

Different from an attraction, a high end accommodations facility comes with its own issues of water conservation. Mike Anderson, General Manager of Sunrise Ridge Waterfront Resort, is up for that challenge. He "wants to be here for a while" and so Sunrise Ridge cuts back on their own use when they can. For example they use their own wells to water lawns so they are not drawing on the city supply.

Geothermally heated, the resort pulls water 500 feet from below the surface, processes it and "spits" it out into the wells. From there, it travels through approximately 60 feet of gravel, back into the earth and out to the ocean.

Promoted as an environmentally friendly establishment, many clients choose the resort because of their green cleaning supplies, use of local suppliers and water conservation. For the most part the visitors also expect to participate, and so are open to staff tactfully supporting guest water conservation.

In yet another part of the tourism industry, Gary Murdock, CEO of Pacific Rainforest Adventures is very concerned about the water. Nature tourism is an important draw for visitors to this region. These people come to see eagles, bears and big trees, all of which are dependent on salmon. Without enough water, there are no salmon. As a business the only way he can adapt to less water is to lead fewer tours. This can only have a negative

impact on his business, and also the accommodations and restaurants where his clients stay and eat.

Asked about solutions, Murdock points out that water conservation at home is a good start but only part of the picture. He suggests that the community needs to look at the bigger picture too. For example, logging companies are now permitted to take trees out of the riparian zone that were once protected. Gary, a retired forester, points out that the resulting reduction in shade will likely increase evaporation, and so diminish the amount of water in the river. He suggests the solution is to “move to logging based on the Merv Wilkinson model that people can see in action, in nearby Cedar”.

Each of the companies interviewed expressed concerns about the impacts of logging and development on the water supply and the watershed. These tourism operators also conserve water at home, and try to be part of the solution. As Ms. La Fauci says “the supply of water should be a great concern for everyone.” Clearly it is not just the residents that are impacted by changes to our water supply.

This edition of Water Limited will explore community perspectives on our water supply. It is funded by the Georgia Basin Living Rivers Program and Mid Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society (MVIHES). Articles are written by Michele Deakin, but are not necessarily an endorsement of ideas and views expressed by those interviewed.. MVIHES coordinates the Englishman River Watershed Recovery Plan, and conducts education, restoration and monitoring projects throughout the mid island area. MVIHES also work to support healthy watersheds and shorelines, and continuity of our biodiversity as a way to contribute to protection and conservation of salmon habitat.

