



**REPORT TO REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY COMMISSION  
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JULY 20, 2022**

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**SUBJECT**    **Greater Victoria Water Supply Area 2022 Public and School Tours Summary**

**ISSUE SUMMARY**

To provide a summary of the 2022 public and school tours of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area (GVWSA) and Water Supply Facilities.

**BACKGROUND**

For the past 30 years, Integrated Water Services (IWS) has provided bus tours of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area and Water Supply Facilities. The public tours provide participants with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of:

- where Greater Victoria's drinking water comes from
- the high quality of water in source reservoirs
- the characteristics of the water supply area and drinking water infrastructure
- the care taken to safeguard the drinking water resource
- future plans for the water supply area with regards to climate change and population growth
- how source water is disinfected
- the value of water conservation
- water pricing

The tour programs for 2020 and 2021 were impacted by Public Health Orders due to COVID-19. The spring and summer tours that are usually offered to the schools and public were cancelled and technical tours were also suspended. Public Health Orders relaxed enough in the fall of 2021 that IWS was able to provide 18 school tours (grades 4 and 5) in the fall (September 23 – November 5).

With the easing of COVID public health orders in early 2022, school and public tours were again planned for the 2022 season.

**2022 Public Tours**

Public tours were offered four days per week (Thursday to Sunday) in June. The five-hour tour followed the path of water from source to tap, with stops at the North Basin Viewpoint, Rithet Creek, a forest walk, Sooke Dam and the Goldstream Water Disinfection Facility (viewing of the ultraviolet disinfection pipe gallery). The tours also offered a chance to inform the participants of the new Water Supply Master Plan and the opportunity to provide comment online.

The following table compares tour participation statistics from 2016 to 2022 (no tours offered in 2020 and only school tours in 2021). Participation in public tours decreased from an average of 37 participants per tour in 2019 to 29 participants per tour in 2022. Maximum available seating per tour was 42 on school buses. An online registration system was used for 2022 as in 2019, and this year there were no participants left on a waitlist.

Tour Type	2016		2017		2018		2019		2021		2022	
	Tours	Participants	Tours	Participants	Tours	Participants	Tours	Participants	Tours	Participants	Tours	Participants
School	4	129	13	390	18	426	26	770	18	467	23	641
Public	18	567	18	490	16	547	16	584	0	0	16	467
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>880</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>973</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>1,354</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1,108</b>

The decrease in public tour participation is thought to be caused by general COVID precaution and no-shows due to COVID-19 and other illness (during this time there was higher than usual absenteeism in workplaces due to COVID and other colds and flus). In general the demographic on tours was younger and more participants were on a tour for the first time.

Another factor may have been a lack of community awareness of the tour opportunities. Advertising was conducted consistent with efforts in 2019 but much participation is still generated from word-of-mouth; and given a gap of two years, many may not have been aware that tours were again being offered.

### 2022 School Tours

There were 23 grade 4 and 5 school tours provided over a span of seven weeks with three to four tours per week depending on the school calendar. As in 2021, the tours focused on the same topics, but viewed Japan Gulch Reservoir rather than Sooke Lake Reservoir. This allows more time outside rather than long bus rides where it is difficult to keep the students' attention.

New this year was the Capital Regional District (CRD) Education Newsletter that went out in February advertising the spring school age programs offered by the CRD. Online registration information was sent to all schools (public and private) in the Greater Victoria area and bookings were made on a first come, first served basis. Two classes were left on a waitlist; it is not known how many others may have found the tours full and not left their name on the waitlist. There were 550 students that attended the tours with 91 accompanying adults, for a total of 641 individuals.

The elementary schools that participated in sending one or more classes in 2022 were: Marigold, Oaklands, Campus View, Sir James Douglas, Doncaster, Braefoot, Crystal View, View Royal, Keating, Deep Cove, Rogers, Eagle View, Lakeview, Torquay and a group of home learners.

The school program covered the following topics:

- water on a global scale & what is a watershed
- the water cycle
- learning about our forest and native plants
- the risk of a wildfire to our water supply
- where our drinking water comes from and how it's delivered to our homes
- how our drinking water is disinfected
- what we can do to conserve drinking water

### 2022 Technical Tours

Technical tours are offered throughout the year and vary in focus and length. In 2022 so far, three technical tours have been provided:

- Restoration of Natural Systems Program at the University of Victoria
- BC Institute of Agrology
- BC Water and Wastewater Association

*A fun temporary sign for tour participants to gain a sense of scale of the Regional Water Supply System components:*



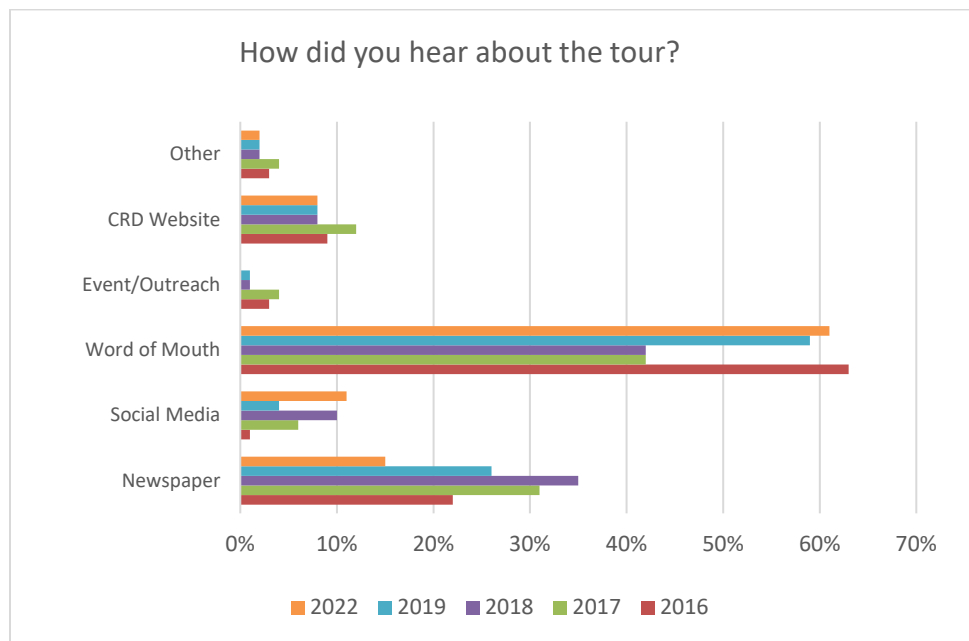
**Budget**

The cost to deliver the public and school tour programs in 2022 totaled \$52,000 with approximately half the cost spent on buses and the rest on auxiliary staff time, advertising, a sanitation facility, display materials and an escort vehicle.

**Advertising**

The tours were initially advertised on the CRD website, social media and in the local papers owned by Black Press. To gain more participants, the tours were also advertised midstream in the Times Colonist and again on social media. Tour information postcards were distributed to recreation centres, public libraries and municipal offices in the Region.

As in previous years, word of mouth and newspaper advertisements are still the most successful methods to reach tour participants, followed by social media and the CRD website. The decline in the influence of newspapers in tour registration may be related to the limited advertising in the Times Colonist in 2022.



**Feedback**

A tour survey was completed by 316 individuals or 68% of the public tour participants. Of those who responded, 84% were on a tour for the first time. As in previous years, the tours were well

received with 85% of those surveyed rating the tour as “excellent”. The aspects respondents enjoyed most were the forest walk, information presented during the tour, knowledge of tour leaders, seeing Sooke Lake Reservoir Dam, wildlife, and the opportunity to tour an otherwise restricted area.

Most respondents did not think there was any aspect of the tour that needed improving. However, some wished for more public tour dates and the opportunity for tours in the fall. A few respondents expressed a desire for a longer forest walk or other opportunities to do more walking. Several respondents expressed interest in a history focused tour and/or a more comprehensive tour of the Goldstream Water Disinfection Facility.

The only complaint was regarding transportation, some found the school bus uncomfortable and/or the dust from the gravel roads on the final drier days of the tours. In addition, there were several days when the contract bus did not have a working microphone/speaker, and respondents commented that it was difficult to hear the tour leader on the bus. This is being addressed with the bus provider.

To date, feedback has been received from seven teachers about the 2022 school tours. All were extremely positive.

#### Plans for 2023

The focus in 2023 will be a return to the level of tours provided in 2019, pending pandemic or other external conditions, and to increase awareness and participation in the public tours.

A goal moving forward is to develop permanent display structures for the Sooke Lake Dam lunch stop and to provide more local First Nations knowledge of the lands, animals and plants. An effort was made through the CRD First Nations Relations group in 2022 to gain information from local First Nations to include on the tours; but no results are yet available.

### **CONCLUSION**

The 2022 “Get to Know Your H<sub>2</sub>O Tours” of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area were enthusiastically received by both schools and the public. A total of 1,108 public and grade 4 and 5 children participated in one of the 39 tours that were provided. A high percentage of public tour participants were on a tour for the first time.

The goal for 2023 will be to return to 2019 levels of public and school tours, to increase advertising effort and participation levels, and to improve the display materials at Sooke Lake Dam.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

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