

**REPORT TO REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY COMMISSION  
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2019**

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**SUBJECT      SUMMARY OF THE 2019 PUBLIC AND SCHOOL TOURS OF THE GREATER  
VICTORIA WATER SUPPLY AREA AND WATER SUPPLY FACILITIES**

**ISSUE**

To provide a summary of the 2019 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 has provided bus tours of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area and Water Supply Facilities. The public tours (see Appendix A) 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;
- how source water is disinfected;
- the value of water conservation; and,
- water pricing

As in recent years, 2019 public tours were offered on a schedule of weekday and weekend dates, and for a third year, school tours were targeted to local grade five classes, linking the tour and activities in the water supply area with the school curriculum. With a 0.5 FTE increase dedicated to GVWSA tours approved by the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board in 2018, the number of school tours was able to be expanded.

**2019 TOURS AND PARTICIPATION**

**Public Tours**

Public tours were offered four days per week (Thursday to Sunday) in June and July except for the Canada Day long weekend. Only "long" five-hour public tours were provided following the path of drinking water from source to treatment (short tours were not offered this year based on past participant feedback and logistic challenges).

An improved online registration system for 2019 resulted in fewer "no shows" with more wait-listed participants being accommodated. The number of participants on a public tour ranged from 26 to 45 with an average of 36.5 per tour. The number of people on a waitlist ranged from 0 to 18 with an average of 3.3 waitlisted per tour.

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The following table compares tour participation statistics from the last 4 years. In 2019 the number of public tours offered remained the same while participation increased by 7 %.

Tour Type	2016		2017		2018		2019	
	Tours	Participants	Tours	Participants	Tours	Participants	Tours	Participants
School	4	129	13	390	18	426	<b>26</b>	<b>770</b>
Public	18	567	18	490	16	547	<b>16</b>	<b>584</b>
<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>

#### School Tours

There were 26 grade 5 school tours provided over a span of seven weeks; typically four tours were per week. 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. There were 682 students that attended the tours with 88 accompanying adults, for a total of 770 individuals.

The table above shows the expansion of school tours over the last four years and the corresponding increase in participation.

Elementary schools that participated in sending one or more classes in 2019 include: Marigold, Kelset, Cloverdale, Frank Hobbs, Strawberry Vale, Tillicum, Sir James Douglas, View Royal, Prospect Lake, Quadra, Hillcrest, Doncaster, St Joseph's, Margaret Jenkins, Sooke, Keating, Lakehill, Macauley, Deep Cove, and Millstream.

The school program covered the following topics:

- Water on a global scale & what is a watershed?
- Learning about our forest and native plants
- The risk of a wildfire to our water supply
- Where our drinking water comes from and how its delivered to our homes
- How our drinking water is disinfected
- What we can do to conserve drinking water

#### Technical Tours

Technical tours are offered throughout the year and vary in focus and length. In 2019 so far, eight technical tours were provided to:

- Camosun College (Civil engineering)
- University of Victoria (Geography; Hydrology; Environmental Restoration)
- Simon Fraser (Water Resource Management)
- BC Water and Wastewater Association (as part of Victoria conference)
- Local First Nations
- City of Victoria engineering staff

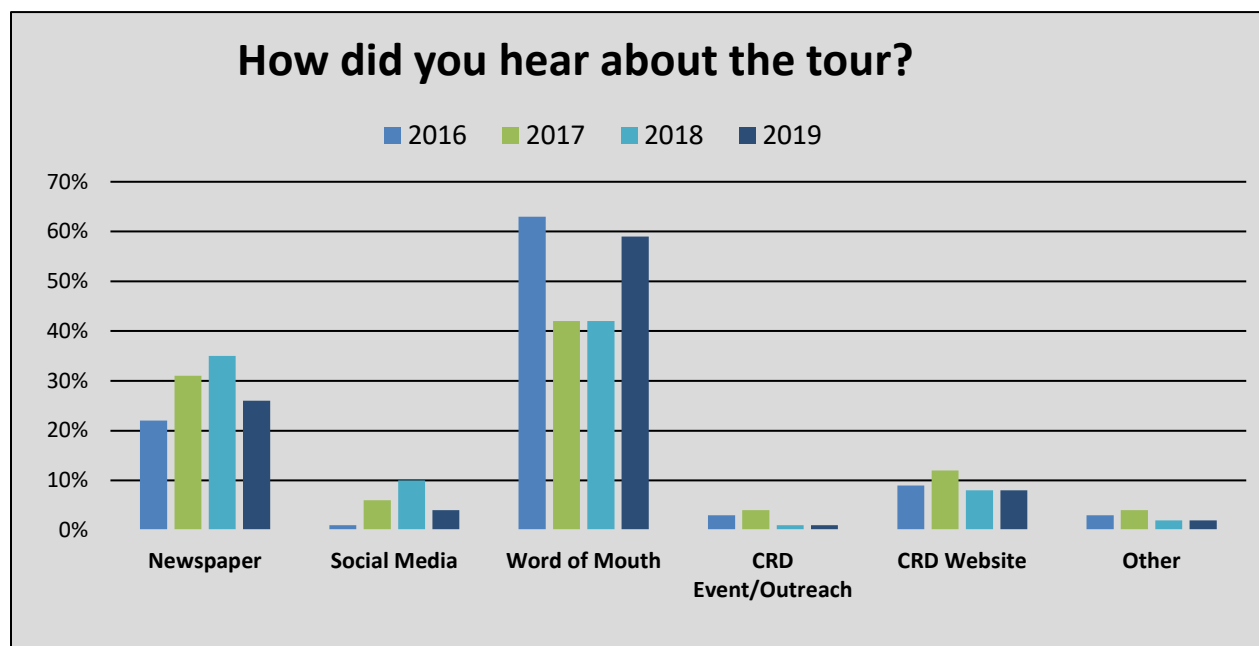
A special tour of the water supply disinfection facilities and emergency water supply vehicles and equipment was also provided to members of the CRD Board, Regional Water Supply Commission, and Water Advisory Committee in June.

### **BUDGET**

The cost to deliver the public and school tour programs in 2019 totalled \$64,000 (\$65,500 budgeted) not including the time of the dedicated 0.5 FTE which is fully funded through the Watershed Protection operating budget.

### **ADVERTISING**

A variety of media and methods continue to be used to advertise the public tours. As in previous years, word of mouth and newspaper advertisements are still the most successful methods to reach tour participants.



### **PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK**

A tour survey was completed by 425 individuals or 73% 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 93% of those surveyed rating the tour as “excellent”. The aspects respondents enjoyed most were the forest walk, information presented during the tour, seeing Sooke Lake Dam, wildlife and the opportunity to tour an otherwise restricted area.

The vast majority of 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. The only complaint was regarding transportation, some found the school bus uncomfortable and the dust from the gravel roads bothered some.

To date, feedback has been received from three teachers about the 2019 school tours. All were extremely positive.

### **PLANS FOR 2020**

Having met the 2019 goal of expanding the school tour program while maintaining the same level of public tours, in 2020, the goal is to further expand the public tour program within established budgets. This may include re-introducing short tours and/or providing tours over an expanded period into August and September.

The display and handout materials will be reviewed and revised prior to 2020 tours. A goal moving forward is to provide more local First Nations knowledge of the lands, animals and plants of the GVWSA.

### **CONCLUSION**

The 2019 “Get to Know Your H<sub>2</sub>O Tours” of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area met goals for increasing grade five school children participation and were well received by both schools and the public. A total of 1,354 public and grade five children participated in one of the 42 tours that were provided. A high percentage of public tour participants and children were on a tour for the first time. Word of mouth and newspaper advertising remains the most important method of advertising the tours. A moderate expansion of the public tour program is being considered for 2020.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Regional Water Supply Commission receive this staff report for information.

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Attachments: 1

- Appendix A: Tour Brochure