

Symposium on freshwater issues

*Held in collaboration with Alexandra Cousteau
and Expedition Blue Planet*

July 20th, 2010



Invited Speakers

Facilitator: Dr. John Nightingale, President, **Vancouver Aquarium**

Blue Legacy – Alexandra Cousteau, Founder and President

Ducks Unlimited Canada – Andrea Barnett, Head, Industry and Government Relations

Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup (Vancouver Aquarium) – Jill Dwyer, Manager, GCSC

Pacific Streamkeepers Federation – ZoAnn Morten, Executive Director

WWF-Canada – Tony Maas, Director, Water Program

David Suzuki Foundation – Jay Ritchlin, Program Director, Marine and Freshwater Conservaiton

Watershed Watch Salmon Society – Craig Orr, Executive Director

Pembina Institute – Matt Horne, Director of B.C. Energy Solutions Program

Metro Vancouver – Tim Stevenson, Chair, Metro Vancouver Water Committee

Ministry of Environment – John Yap, Minister of State for Climate Action



Summary of Issues

Each invited speaker was given 3 minutes to provide their insights on the top 3 issues facing the region and the country. This document summarizes the issues under 5 headings:

- Myth of Abundance
- Protection
- Policy
- Public Engagement
- Climate Change



Myth of Abundance

Despite being a province with a larger supply of freshwater than other regions in the country and the world, freshwater issues continue to exist here. There is a need for:

- British Columbians to adopt a new perspective on water
- A culture of caring
- A system of water evaluation
- Proactive plans for sustainability
- Awareness that demands for water increases with growing demand for food



Protection

Protection of critical aquatic ecosystems from negative impacts of development and from pollution is important.

- Impacts on wetlands, tributaries, watersheds, groundwater
- Impacts on aquatic species at risk
- Aquatic debris, trash have impact
- Low level human pollutants impact the ecosystem



Policy

Modernising the Water Act was raised as a key piece moving forward, and ensuring its comprehensibility in order to;

- Coordinated regulatory framework
- Develop incentives for water conservation, update laws
- Use plain language in policies
- Deal with the oversubscription of water licenses
- Consider that all water (fresh, ocean, surface, ground) be managed holistically, not separately



Public Engagement

Involving the public in all aspects of water conservation is key to success.

- Education needed
- Can not rely on technology to solve problems
- Reduce water consumption



Climate Change

Climate change has current and future impacts on water.

- Availability for human use versus availability for the ecosystem
- Need initiatives that move away from fossil fuel use; example, oil sands use large quantities of water to extract oil
- Reconcile our need for renewable electricity (hydro power) with the ecosystem's needs
- Adaptation strategies are needed as the climate changes



The Challenge

Common themes emerged from the presentations of the invited speakers. We all have an opportunity to contribute as the Province of B.C. works towards modernising the Water Act and begins to formulate plans to deal with climate change. Our organizations can work together with governments to help shape policy, protect waterways, engage the public and banish the myth of abundance.



Future Opportunities

As an organization committed to conserving aquatic life, the issues raised during the freshwater symposium clearly align with the Aquarium's mission. The value of having so many individuals engaged in the discussion of the importance of water issues is profound. The Aquarium is proud to take advantage of collaborative opportunities that further our mission. Please feel free to contact Eriko Arai, Acting Director of Public Engagement Programs, at eriko.arai@vanaqua.org if you have an idea or opportunity that you think would be a good fit with the Aquarium's mission.

