

SIMILKAMEEN WATERSHED PLAN – PHASE 1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

The Similkameen watershed is under multiply jurisdictions; International (Canada/USA), federal, provincial, regional (Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) - Areas B, G & H) and includes lands under jurisdiction of the Town of Princeton, the Village of Keremeos, the Upper Similkameen Indian Band and the Lower Similkameen Indian Band. There are also six irrigation and improvement districts that operate under the authority of the B.C. Local Government Act.

Cawston Irrigation District (CID)	Fairview Heights Irrigation District (FHID)
Keremeos Irrigation District (KID)	Similkameen Improvement District (SID)
Hedley Improvement District (HID)	Allison Lake Improvement District (ALID)

There are two additional Community Water Systems:

Olalla Community Water System, operated by the RDOS and Princeton Community Water System operated by the Town of Princeton

Other water systems in the Similkameen Watershed include: The Tower System (Eastgate on the north side of Hwy 3), Missezula Water Works District, The Apex Circle Water System, Apex Mountain Water System, Lower & Upper Similkameen Band Water Systems [community wells], Rock Ridge Canyon Camp, Princeton and Portage the Crossing in Keremeos.

Waste Water Systems in the Similkameen watershed include: Village of Keremeos on Boundary Rd, Portage, Rock Ridge by Wolf Creek, Trees to Me located outside the Village of Keremeos to the north, close to Keremeos Creek and Apex Mountain Waste Water System.

In addition to the governing bodies, a society was formed to further the interests of communities in the valley– the **Similkameen Valley Planning Society (SVPS)**. It consists of membership from the seven local governing bodies: the Municipalities of Princeton and Keremeos, the Upper and Lower Similkameen Indian Bands and Areas B, G & H of the RDOS.

The **SVPS** initiated a multi-part **Sustainable Similkameen Project**. With funding from the BC Real Estate Foundation, the RDOS and the municipalities of Princeton and Keremeos, the **SVPS** sponsored the report **STRATEGY for a Sustainable Similkameen Valley (2011-2020) (April 2010)**. The Strategy’s mission statement reads:

To establish a socio-cultural, economic and environmental sustainability strategy for the Similkameen Valley, that will maintain and enhance the quality of our rural and small town lifestyle.

Strategic Aim 2 of the Strategy is to; “Sustain and rehabilitate the Valley’s environmental and natural resources health”, which includes

Strategic Means 7 of the Strategy is to; *Improve water management significantly and integrate management into Valley-specific climate change, and*

7.1 – Complete inventory of Valley water quality and quantity, and

7.2 – Formulate a Water Management Action Plan (including assessment and action for water impoundment and strengthening of international coordination).

The first step **SVPS took toward achieving** Strategic Means 7.1 was the commissioning of Summit Environmental Consultants to undertake an initial assessment of the information base needed to develop a watershed plan for the Similkameen Valley. The report, the ***Similkameen River Management Plan Part 1– Scoping Study*** was completed September, 2011. This study identified information gaps and made recommendations on how to proceed with the planning process for a full Watershed Management Plan.

To begin the process for achieving Strategic Means 7.2, the SVPS requested the RDOS to apply for funding from the Gas Tax Strategic Priorities Fund – Capacity Building Projects, for a **Similkameen Watershed Water Quality / Quantity Sustainability Plan**. This application was made by the RDOS and on January 5, 2012, the RDOS received approval for an award of \$500,000 toward this project.

Phase 1, as recommended in the Summit Scoping Study, initiate a consultation process via a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC), seek input from Technical Advisors and First Nations and prepare a Draft Terms of Reference for a “Similkameen Watershed Water Quality / Quantity Sustainability Plan” which has been renamed the **Similkameen Watershed Plan**.

PHASE 1 – Terms of Reference for the Similkameen Watershed Plan

RDOS contracted Janice Johnson, with A Footstep Closer, as Facilitator/Coordinator to carry out the following:

- Formation of a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC)
- Formation of a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Consult with Kettle River, Nicola Valley and Okanagan Basin water planning representatives
- Determine Objectives/Tasks of SAC & TAC
- Prepare a Draft Terms Of Reference for the Similkameen Watershed Plan

NOTE: The SVPS is pursuing a NON-regulatory Similkameen Watershed Plan and along with the RDOS, are leading the process. The ultimate purpose of the SWP is to provide guidance for decision making authorities, resource managers, water users and residents to help make more informed and integrated decisions that include considering the future, downstream and cumulative impacts.

PHASE 2 – Drafting of the Similkameen Watershed Plan