

February 2024 Newsletter and Annual Report of the Chair

Overview

The impact of the drought on water supplies across the Province was top of mind with the trustees in 2023, and continues in 2024. And it was busy year trying to understand why we continue to have issues with manganese removal in our treatment, and sorting out how the District will manage its day-to-day operating tasks. I would like to thank my fellow trustees Tim Slaney and Peter Reiner for their dedication on all of our behalf, Jean Eastman who administers our billing, and North Salt Spring Waterworks staff who make sure everything is running properly.

Watering Restrictions

The winter rains have been enough to re-plenish the groundwater trapped in underground cracks in the rock that provide our water supply. There are currently no Watering Restrictions.

But another extended period without rainfall will again stress our groundwater supply and Watering Restrictions may become necessary as we move toward summer. The District is planning the installation of a sign near the ferry terminal to inform residents of active Watering Restrictions.

2024 Toll Structure

The trustees have been concerned that some residents do not fully appreciate our delicate water supply situation and did not respond to last summer's need for Watering Restrictions.

To drive home the message, the trustees are planning to put in place revisions to the toll structure which would place a premium on water used during the shortage months of summer, and increase the tolls for water consumed at levels above 3,500 gallons per month.

Specifically, the changes that the trustees are contemplating will change the volume of water included with the minimum bi-monthly bill in the months from May to October from 5,000 gallons to 3,500 gallons. Further, trustees are also planning to increase the toll for water consumed over 5,000 gallons/2 months from \$0.07 per gallon to \$0.20 per gallon, and to \$0.50 per gallon for water over 7,000 gallons per 2 months.

These changes will have no impact on more than 2/3rds of residents, and are designed to encourage everyone to conserve the water in our collective aquifer so that there will be sufficient amounts available to service everybody's home in the face of expected drought conditions this summer. If you have any particular concerns, please contact the trustees.

NSSWD Contract Operations

North Salt Spring Waterworks District has been providing operation and repair services on Scott Point for over 20 years.

However, back in August they served notice that they will no longer continue after December 31, 2023. After several discussions with the trustees, NSSWD has agreed to extend operations until June, 2024, while the District continues to examine alternative arrangements, including changes that might allow NSSWD to continue providing service beyond June.

Water Quality

The full Annual Water Quality Report will be completed and circulated prior to the April Annual General Meeting.

However, a couple of residents have called trustees reporting brown water at their tap. This has been written about before and a note is included in the Permanent Advisory posted on the website. What is being observed is manganese, a naturally occurring mineral in our groundwater. Treatment removes most of the manganese, but at times it can exceed new water quality guidelines and can persist as a film in water mains then released after sudden changes in temperature. We rely on the annual flushing program to remove it, but this is not scheduled until later in Feb. And we have engaged an engineer to give advice on treatment improvements to deal with it.

It is harmless, but troubling to look at. Residents experiencing brown water should run taps until water runs clear. It is also recommended that formula for infants be made from alternate source of water.

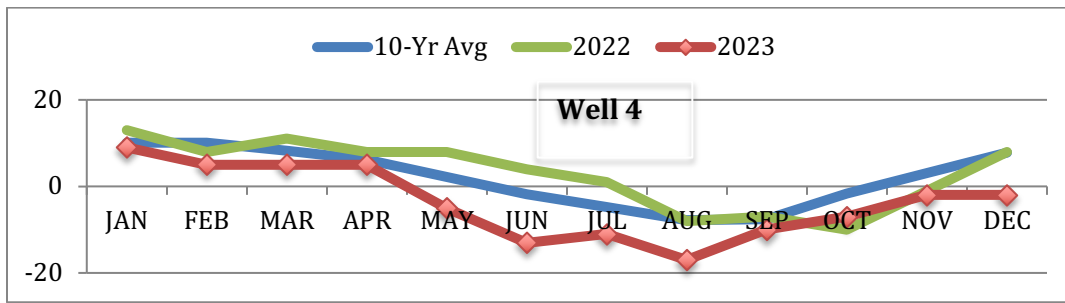
Maintenance & Capital Work Planned for 2023 and 2024

Larger non-routine and capital work completed in 2023 included the replacement water meters at 10 premises (now reading in Litres) as the start of a multi-year program, and change out of the RO membranes as they are prematurely plugging up due to problems with manganese pre-treatment.

Work planned for 2024 includes the installation of a tank to accept water deliveries by truck (should future droughts get even worse), change out of the treatment media at Welbury Well 3, installation of a storage building at the water tower for chemicals and spare pumps, some minor repairs to the water tower, and continuation of the meter replacement program.

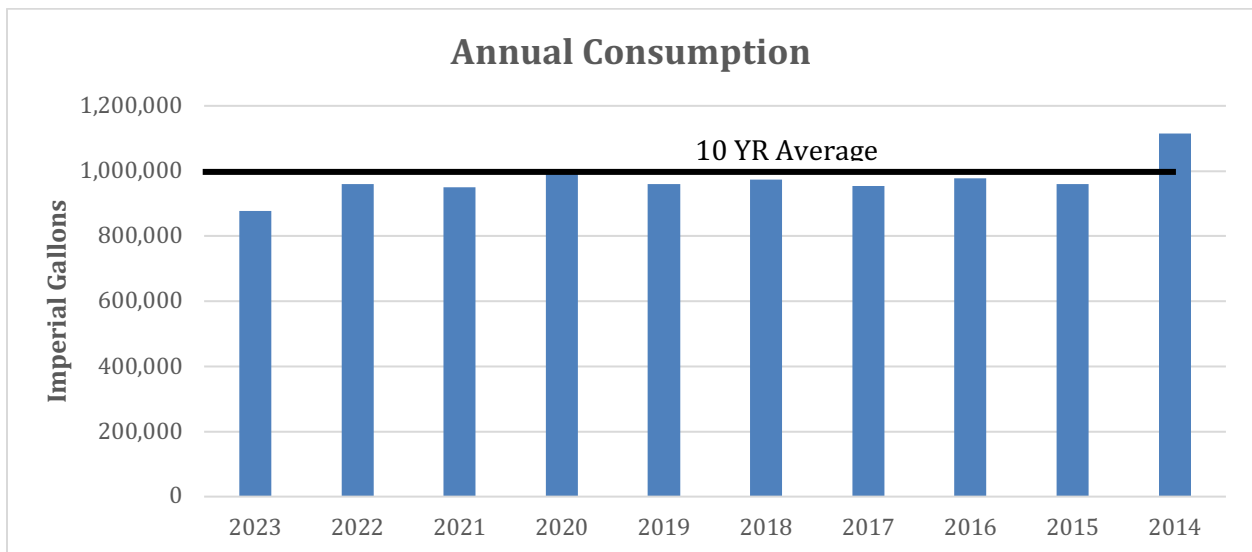
Annual Water Consumption and Leakage

As many residents are aware, 2023 was a particularly troubling year from a drought perspective. The seasonal rains ended in early April and the Province declared most of B.C., including our area, to be Drought Level 5 – severe. The impact of this was particularly felt at the District's Well 4 (our main well on RVYC property) where well levels were well below 10-year averages.



This led the trustees to declare increasing Watering Restriction Levels, culminating in declaring Stage 4 restrictions on August 1.

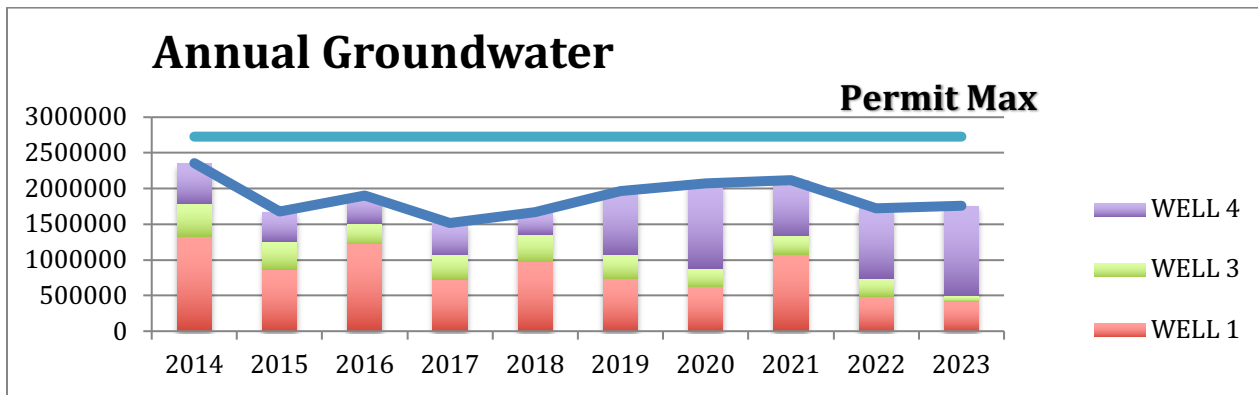
Most residents altered their water consumption behaviour during the summer and annual water consumption was noticeably lower than 2022 and the 10-year average. In fact, water consumption for the calendar year, at 808,000 gallons was the lowest annual consumption in past 10 years. But the consumption for the drier summer months, particularly at a few premises was higher than it could have been.



We did manage to limit the time at the most restrictive stage to 5 weeks. However, there were a few residents that did not seem to get the message, and reduced the overall water savings from the actions taken by most. This is a key reason that the Trustees are planning to put in place the revisions to the water toll structure described above.

Groundwater Production

Matching the lower consumption was slightly lower production of groundwater from the District's three wells.



However, a troubling impact of the drought in 2023 was the impact on Well 3 (Welbury) level; the well had to be turned off in July and did not resume operation until the well level recovered after fall rains started.

The trustees closely follow the leakage from the system, a key indicator of the health of the water main and valves. For the calendar year, the leakage rate was 8.7%, against the long-term average of 10.3%. While this seems like good news, a portion of the lower number may be attributed to inaccurate meters. In addition to the program for changing meters at premises, meters are being replaced at the three water treatment plants.

Encroachments

A number of fences, other encroachments, and work over the water main has occurred over the years without the District's permission.

Scott Point Waterworks has become a member of **B.C. One Call** giving homeowners and contractors a single point of contact for underground utilities to be located prior to work commencing and preventing unintended encroachments. B.C. One Call can be contacted at <https://www.bc1c.ca/homeowner/> or call **1-800-474-1886**

Residences should be aware that in the event that homeowner work impacts the distribution system, Bylaw 117 Water Use Regulations protect the District from the costs of damage to the system caused by work, and the cost of removing encroachments should maintenance activities require it.

Rich Ballantyne, Chair