

**Green Issues Forum 2011 (S.C. Conservation Assn.) Questions for Candidates
Answers from Donna Shugar
November 3, 2011**

Question 1.

The Joint Watershed Management Agreement (JWMA) was recently renewed, a Source Area Response Plan (SARP) is under development, and new documentation shows that the public supports drinking water source area protection more strongly than ever: "We Envision One Coast" (www.onecoast.ca/files/File/Sustainability%20Plan-%20low%20res%20PDF.pdf) and "Vital Signs 2011" (sccfoundation.com/vitalsigns/). Steps are being taken to achieve water conservation (sprinkling regulations, water metering in Gibsons, etc.). During the last 3 years, the Sunshine Coast Community Forest (SCPI) has continued to press its case for logging in the Chapman and Gray Creek watersheds, the region's principle source areas of drinking water. What is your understanding of and position on the Joint Watershed Management Agreement?

As a regional director, how would you respond to the Sunshine Coast Community Forest? Other watersheds also contribute to the public's drinking water supply, how do you propose to achieve or enhance protection of these smaller watersheds? The Joint Watershed Management Agreement (JWMA) is a very important document and I am proud to have been a signatory when it was renewed in 2010. The JWMA is an agreement between the Sechelt Indian Band and the SCR D to share the stewardship of the Chapman and Gray Creek watersheds. The partnership between the SCR D and the SIB makes this a very powerful statement to other orders of government and the public about our intention to bring the protection of this vital water supply under local control. It is one of the tools we are using to lobby the Province to grant local control over the watershed. It is doubly important because the SCR D is the purveyor of water to the majority of Sunshine Coast residents and because the SIB considers this watershed to have immense significance. At the Union of BC Municipalities convention in September, I and other Board members, including the SIB Director Jordan Louie, presented the JWMA to the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations reiterating our request that it be recognized by the Province.

Important as it is, simple control over the management of the watershed is not enough. The Source Assessment Response Plan (SARP) is being developed by the SCR D in response to an order by the Drinking Water Officer. The SARP looks at all the risks to our drinking water (not just industrial activity) and recommends what should be done to mitigate those risks. This kind of analysis and planning is essential for whoever has control over or conducts activity of any kind (including recreation) in the watershed. Where there are doubts about our ability to mitigate impacts of human activity, the precautionary principle should prevail. I have been the SCR D Board's liaison on the SARP Technical Working Group. In that capacity I have insisted on the issue of local control of the watershed and recognition of the JWMA being included in the document. I have also pushed for strong language

about creating special standards particular to this watershed. I have supported the inclusion of a recommendation to create a Watershed Protection Officer for this area.

It is really important to keep lines of communication open with other orders of government and with the other stakeholders in the watershed. The Sechelt Community Forest has chart in the watershed, AJB owns land in the watershed and BC Timber Sales may have interests. Facilitating meaningful dialogue and negotiation is to me the most effective way to get those stakeholders to move to more sustainable ecosystem based analysis and action.

There have been suggestions that the Community Forest be given other chart in exchange for their tenure in the Chapman/Gray. I have serious concerns about that approach. Would the most reasonable exchange be for chart on Mt Elphinstone where the timber values are high and the CF is already active? I would hate to see that happen. The watersheds of Mt Elphinstone are as important to people in Roberts Creek as the Chapman/Gray! Over 300 households in upper Roberts Creek do not have access to regional water from the Chapman/Gray system and depend on their own wells. A healthy forest on the Mt Elphinstone uplands is essential to ensure that these residents continue to enjoy clean drinking water from their private systems. The same principles of ecosystem based analysis and planning should be applied to Mt Elphinstone and other watersheds. I sat on the Elphinstone LRUP for six years trying to get an ecosystem based plan for the mountain. Such a plan would designate where and what kind of activity could take place with the primary objective being the ecological health of the forest. Such a plan would provide the constraints on activity beyond general best practices to include much more specific prescriptions. I would support that project being revisited so that we get a strategic approach to activity in the Mt Elphinstone watersheds instead of the random ad hoc approach we have today.

I have been encouraging the SCRD to negotiate a communications protocol between the SCRD and BCTS. This would put us more in the loop regarding their activities and provide some clear lines of communication regarding their forestry plans. I have been invited by the SCCF to advise them about the Terms of Reference for the Coastal Watershed Assessment Procedure for the Wilson Creek Watershed. This important watershed has had a huge amount of disruption, but has never had a proper analysis. I am encouraging the Community Forest to go beyond a simple analysis of hydrology issues and to examine all the impacts of historic and future activity in this watershed from an ecosystem based perspective.

Question 2.

The SCRD has initiated a coast wide discussion about sustainability entitled: "We Envision One Coast" (www.onecoast.ca/files/File/Sustainability%20Plan-%20low%20res%20PDF.pdf). Has this discussion changed your understanding of what the word sustainable means and how we go about achieving it? How do you intend to contribute to this important discussion? How will you show leadership responding

to urgent climate change issues at the regional level?

Rather than changing my understanding of the meaning of the word 'sustainable,' the 'We Envision' document has reinforced my faith in the interconnection of all things, my conviction that we must balance the needs of the environment, the economy, and human social and cultural requirements and my belief that limitless growth on a finite planet is not an option. The principle of sustainability means that our actions today will not compromise our descendants' future. We will create a future that is as good for our children's children as it has been for us.

It is important that these principles become embedded in the actions and decisions that are made by local government on an ongoing basis. The development of strategic plans as well as responses to crises and day to day demands must use the principles of sustainability as their foundation.

It is just as crucial for us in our semi-rural environment to address climate change issues as it is in urban centres. But the types of actions we have available and their degree of impact will be different. The rural nature of our electoral areas makes transit more difficult and expensive, creates challenges for energy efficient infrastructure, and makes the shift to denser, more walkable communities much slower. But there are some opportunities that are not available in more urbanized areas. We have the opportunity to capitalize on our unique natural environment by ensuring that new developments infill the denser community nodes instead of taking up new undeveloped areas. We can ensure that our forests remain as carbon sinks. We can enhance local food production. We can ensure that our response to sea level rise does not create increased damage to our shoreline ecosystems. We can work together as a region on making the Sunshine Coast a "zero waste community."

It is important that all the local governments on the Coast band together in a shared commitment to adhere to the principles and actions of the 'We Envision' document. I am committed to fostering a culture of collaborative leadership and consensus building amongst local governments, local businesses, community groups and the public. The Climate Change issue is the most urgent crisis we all face. It is only by working together that we will find solutions we can all embrace.

Question 3.

Waste management, reduction, recycling, and diversion of resources into recycling streams, etc., are all important issues with regard to climate change mitigation and regional sustainability. Substantial progress has been made over the last 3 years but we haven't achieved all that is needed or possible. The debate has often been heated and sometimes divisive. What are your views about how to continue making progress with our regional goal of Zero Waste?

In October a very important step was taken with the adoption of the new Zero Waste Management Plan by the Regional District. The debate has centred less around

the goals of the plan and more around the timing, order and potential cost of its various components, specifically depot based vs curbside collection systems. The message I have received from the citizens in Roberts Creek, anecdotally as well as through surveys and other public consultation tools, has been that the majority of people in Roberts Creek want to see a curbside program in our community. It is felt that curbside pick up of recyclables would provide the convenience that many working people, seniors and those with young families need to increase their participation in recycling. However, working together with the other areas on the Coast, it has become clear that other areas prefer to see an enhanced depot system come first. With new packaging Extended Producer Responsibility Programs on the horizon it may in fact be better to wait until those are developed at a provincial level before implementing a curbside program which mainly addresses packaging materials (glass, plastic, cardboard, paper.) So I have come to accept that a system of enhanced depots in 3 areas on the Coast (Gibsons, Sechelt and Pender) will be the first program that is tackled. By enhanced depots we mean a program that both collects, sorts and delivers recyclables to market and also manages the repurposing and redistribution of reusables that can remain in the community as resources rather than waste products.

Dealing with organics and green waste is another important component of zero waste management. During my first term I brought in the Roberts Creek Smoke Control Bylaw which curtails the burning of yard waste. It is important to manage the large volume of green waste that is needing to be recycled in the most efficient and cost effective way possible while ensuring that invasive plant materials such as roots and seeds are not allowed to regenerate.

A food scraps composting program is another high priority. The question of course is always whether to provide public education or some form of responsible municipal collection program or both. I feel that both are important, particularly because of growing issues with wildlife. Backyard composting is a viable option for most organics and should be encouraged through public education programs. But for things which cannot be composted that way, some sort of organics program should be implemented.

Public education programs, land fill bans for certain materials, working with the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors are also important components of any waste reduction plan. It is important to set out the actions in priority order so that they can be introduced in a fiscally manageable way and in a sequence which has the maximum impact on participation rates.

Question 4.

The Province's "Species At Risk" Task Force has published its findings and recommendations (www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/documents/SAR%20Paper%20January%202011%20FINAL.pdf) on the urgent issue of biodiversity loss on local government and privately owned lands. The SCRD has shown leadership on old growth retention and protection of species at risk in the past. What can you, as a

local elected representative, do to further biodiversity protection for species at risk on local government and privately owned land in our region?

There is a lot we can do both on our own lands and on private lands to protect biodiversity.

On our own lands we can create greenways and protected areas within our parks. For example, the SCRDC is working on a third party protective covenant for Cliff Gilker Park in Roberts Creek to enshrine the wild areas of the park and protect them from development. We should be strategic in our parks acquisition so that important ecosystems and sensitive areas are protected through park dedication. The SCRDC has a no pesticide policy within its parks. This should be continued. Control of invasive plant species is a new area of interest. The SCRDC has recently become a member of the Coastal Invasive Plant Committee and will be actively seeking the best ways to prevent and control the spread of invasives in SCRDC parks without resorting to chemical applications.

The SCRDC can work with community groups to protect and enhance or restore certain sensitive habitats within its parks. For example, turtle nesting sites in some SCRDC parks in Pender Harbour are given special protective treatment during nesting season.

The protection of biodiversity on private land requires a different set of actions. Regional Districts do not have the power to ban the cosmetic use of pesticides. However, the Provincial government is looking at Province wide legislation to ban or curtail this use on private land. I have been an advocate in favour of such legislation and have taken opportunities such as at UBCM to make these views known to Provincial authorities. I have advocated for the SCRDC to respond in favour as well.

Invasive plants are just as much of a concern on private land. I support the SCRDC taking an active role in educating the public and garden business owners about the dangers of invasive plants and how best to control or eradicate them. Regional Districts also have a suite of land use planning tools that can be used to assist with biodiversity protection. Sensitive ecosystem mapping and habitat mapping are important first steps. I assisted a local group with grant funds for eel grass mapping in Roberts Creek so that now we know where those important sites are located.

Official Community Plans should include provision for open space conservation development where development is clustered on a property to create more green space protection. OCPs can also include Development Permit Areas to protect sensitive ecosystems and habitats. The Draft of the new Roberts Creek OCP contains provision for density bonusing in exchange for biodiversity protection. Roberts Creek also has a Shoreline Bylaw which designates the entire shoreline of Roberts Creek as a development permit area with special regulations designed to

protect the sensitive shoreline ecosystem.

Wise land use patterns can ensure habitat connectivity, protection of wetlands and of shorelines.

Sustainability checklists can be offered to property owners to help guide development to prevent unnecessary damage to species at risk habitats. Best management practices in sensitive areas can also be an important educational tool.

The Islands Trust offers a Natural Areas Tax Exemption Program that reduces property taxes for landowners who have a signed conservation covenant to protect natural areas on their property. At my suggestion, the SCRD recently proposed a resolution at UBCM to ask the Province to extend this provision to other areas outside of the Islands Trust.

Public education is another role that local governments can play by working with and supporting local stewardship groups such as Stream Keepers. Habitat and biodiversity protection is yet another area where local Sunshine Coast Governments can collaborate on regional planning, ecosystem mapping, harmonization of bylaws and incentives, assistance to stewardship groups, and public education.