

Council Member Motion

Notice given on: Wednesday, August 21, 2024

Meeting Date Wednesday, September 4, 2024

From Councillor Justice

Subject Watershed Plan

Background

The recent fish kill in Somenos Lake highlights the lake's ongoing issues and the insufficiency of current efforts to address them, especially given the increasing pressures from land development, climate change, invasive species, and nutrient pollution.

Although the province is primarily responsible for lake health, this issue affects us locally, and the municipality must step up. We need to work to ensure the province—and others—pay attention to our specific challenges amid many other concerns.

The widespread reporting of the fish kill has drawn the province's attention and sparked public interest, which presents a chance to garner political support for our cause.

It's important that we publicly share information about the municipal efforts, in conjunction with the Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society, to monitor and improve lake health. Additionally, it is crucial for Council to actively lobby the province to address these issues.

Just as the Capital Regional District has effectively advocated for lake health in its region, the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) has the opportunity to advocate more strongly for Somenos Lake. The Cowichan Watershed Board, which focuses on the overall health of the watershed with a particular interest in salmonids, might also be encouraged to take a more active role, given the lake's significance for Cowichan salmon production.

Recommendation

THAT Council:

1. direct staff to provide a report detailing what we know about the recent Somenos Lake fish kill event, listing the ongoing steps that are being taken to improve the water quality of Somenos Lake, and to include suggestions for advocacy that the municipality could take to improve the water quality; and
2. authorize the Mayor to send letters to the Province of BC, the Cowichan Valley Regional District, and the Cowichan Watershed Board urging them to take the necessary actions to address the issues that cause the "fish kill" events in Somenos and Quamichan Lakes.

Attachment: <https://vancouversun.com/news/mass-fish-die-off-north-cowichan-lake>
