

ABOUT THE GREATER VANCOUVER WATERSHEDS

Over one half of British Columbia's population, about 2 million residents, derive their source of water from the three Greater Vancouver watersheds (this statistic first appeared in the Ministry of Environment's October 1980 *Guidelines for Watershed Management of Crown Lands Used as Community Water Supplies*, pages 1-2).

The three watersheds (drainages, catchments) of the Greater Vancouver Regional District municipalities are, in order from east to west, the Coquitlam (20,461 hectares), Seymour (12,375 hectares), and Capilano (19,535 hectares). In addition are the off-catchment lands of the Lower Seymour Conservation Reserve, an area formerly known as the Seymour Demonstration Forest from 1987-1999 (see: Seymourgate report in the Greater Vancouver watersheds report section) which total some 5,600 hectares in area, and the Or Creek watershed in the southeast area of the Coquitlam watershed.

Each watershed, or catchment, has a reservoir, the largest of which is in the Coquitlam, a former natural lake of some 11 kilometers in length and first dammed by the B.C. Electric Railway Company in 1905, and then heightened and expanded to its present capacity in 1913. The other two reservoirs were constructed by the Greater Vancouver Water District for water storage purposes: the Capilano in 1954; the Seymour, originally as a small reservoir in 1928, was greatly expanded in 1960. In all, these three reservoirs, for now, are ample supplies of water for the burgeoning metropolis, except for the fact that B.C. Hydro has the rights to almost all of the Coquitlam's water runoff (see: Coquitlam History report in the Greater Vancouver watersheds report section).

The settlement of the Greater Vancouver area was first and rapidly established in the late 1800's. At that time, the main settlements of Vancouver and New Westminster began looking for good and reliable sources of water and by the late 1880's had incorporated separate Water Works companies. Vancouver first ran a pipeline from the Capilano in the late 1800's and from the Seymour in 1908. New Westminster ran a pipeline from the Coquitlam in the late 1800's, and by 1910, the B.C. Electric Railway Company, which then owned the Coquitlam Water Works Company, had federal legislation passed to protect the watershed from any and all logging activities.

After pressure from the City of Vancouver and from medical health officers, the provincial government established watershed reserves on all Crown Lands in the Capilano and Seymour in 1905 and 1906, respectively, restricting the disposition, or alienation, of all government-owned (Crown) lands. Private lands were purchased prior to 1905 and 1906, and it is in these alienated lands that the controversy over logging began in 1918 with the Seattle-based Capilano Timber Company, with the threat of imminent logging in the Lower Seymour watershed, and with the possibility of mining production around the same time.

With the accelerated skyline and railroad logging of some of the tallest and finest forests on British Columbia's coastline in the Capilano Valley, the provincial government initiated several investigations and recommendations for Greater Vancouver's future water supplies. They concluded that logging was ruining their water supply and by 1931 the Capilano Timber Company left the scarred and spoiled terrain to mend itself, a process which after 70 years is still showing signs of instability.

The Greater Vancouver Water District was established in early February, 1926 (initially established through legislation in December, 1924), with a mandate to end all logging and to purchase all the private lands to prevent further logging. By 1927, the Water District negotiated a long term contract lease for 999 years with the provincial government under specific provisions in the *Land Act*, effectively giving the Water District complete control over the watershed lands for an entire millennium, for a rental fee of one dollar per year, per watershed.

After a series of collaborative events in the 1950's to influence the Water District's policy against logging, Water District administrators eventually revised the agreement with the provincial government in 1967 (see Amending Indenture report in the Greater Vancouver watershed report section) to permit the systematic roading and liquidation of its old growth forests, some of the last remaining and magnificent low elevation stands in southwestern B.C. Most of the logging arrangements and rationale were done surreptitiously, behind closed doors. The Water District's no trespassing policy, which wisely prevented the public from creating mischief and possibly contaminating the water supply since 1927, now prevented the public from scrutinizing what the Water District was actually doing in the watersheds.

Prior to 1960, the only roads present in the three watersheds were a narrow and rugged "tote road" to service B.C. Hydro's transmission lines in the Capilano watershed, and the access road through the Lower Seymour to the dam site. There were no access or logging roads above the intakes in the Seymour and Coquitlam watersheds, forests that were in a natural state. After 1961 to 1992, over 300 kilometers of roads were constructed in the three watersheds, mostly through ancient forests, over and alongside creeks, through steep mountain slopes. After and including the road right-of-ways, the forest was clearcut, about 5000 hectares in total.

Water District engineers and Foresters in the Water District rationalized the logging operations by stating that forest management activities were enhancing and improving the water quality, statements which are strangely contrary to consistent findings in the evolving and interrelated sciences of soils and forest hydrology. When water quality parameters were continually beginning to raise concerns in the early 1980's, the Water District began to hold committee enquiries and to produce reports which carefully skirted the relationship between logging and the generation of turbidity:

As a community, we have a collective interest in protecting water quality ... and preserving water supplies for future use.... Protecting Greater Vancouver's source waters is crucial to the future quality of our water. The three watersheds are highly dynamic environments. With their steep terrain and heavy rainfall, these areas are prone to large scale natural erosion occurrences. (Pamphlet: *Water, A Community Resource, Greater Vancouver Regional District*, December 1997, page 14.)

Since late 1999, the Greater Vancouver Water District has dramatically altered its position on these issues, and has developed progressive plans to de-build logging roads and to end logging. However despite its promise to deactivate 175 kilometers of logging roads by 2008, almost nothing was done

After a public campaign by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee in 1988 to bring attention to the logging issue in the Greater Vancouver watersheds, and with some attending public forums on the matter, the Water District finally conducted a quasi-public enquiry in 1991 on the history and future of logging in the watersheds. As a result, logging was extremely curtailed, and by 1995 had come to a halt. Even though Water District administrators were anxious to continue logging during

these years, public advocacy groups, such as the Society Promoting Environmental Conservation (SPEC), the Burke Mountain Naturalists, the Friends of the Watersheds, and the B.C. Tap Water Alliance had been closely monitoring the activities of the Water District and the orchestrated public process for decision making regarding the future of the watersheds, effectively quashing the unsubstantiated logic for additional logging proposals.

Since late 1992, under the mandate of the GVRD, the Water District has been conducting an expensive “ecological inventory” of the three watersheds, with a total budget for consultants of \$6.7 million to date. In early 1997, the Water District contracted a scientific review panel, consisting of three members, Peter Pearse, Everett Peterson, and Rolf Kellerhals, to collectively determine the future management of the watersheds in relation to comments from public forums and comments from the scientific community. The ecological inventory process ended in October, 1999, after presentations to local government officials with the Greater Vancouver Regional District, and after a long public process where recommendations by the public stressed the full protection of the forests in the three watersheds. On November 10, 1999, after a two hour meeting of the mayors on the Greater Vancouver Water District Administration Board, the Board passed a five point resolution to end logging in the Greater Vancouver Watersheds.

1. The primary purpose of watersheds is to provide clean, safe water.
2. The watersheds will be managed to reflect and advance the commitment to the environmental stewardship and protection of those lands and their biological diversity.
3. The management plan will be based upon the minimum intervention absolutely necessary to achieve objectives.
4. The management plan will contain policies to return areas disturbed by human activities as close as possible to the pre-disturbance state consistent with the primary goal of protecting water quality.
5. The decision-making process will be transparent and open to the public.

On Friday, February 8, 2002, members of the GVRD’s Water Committee unanimously passed a recommendation for the GVRD Board to cancel the Amending Indenture, the 1967 logging license agreement with the provincial government. This is the final and significant step by the Greater Vancouver Water District to return to its former policy of full protection of the lands and forests in the Greater Vancouver Watersheds.

GREATER VANCOUVER WATERSHEDS – INFORMATION
(table information below)

1. Land Status and Policy History

1905	Provincial government reserves Crown lands in Capilano from alienation.
1906	Provincial government reserves Crown lands in Seymour from alienation
1910	Federal Order-In-Council protects Coquitlam watershed from all logging.
1927	The Greater Vancouver Water District acquires a 999 year <i>Land Act</i> lease agreement (called the Indenture) for Crown lands in Capilano and Seymour from the provincial government, to protect the forest lands from future logging and private land alienation.
1930	Water District obtains legislation to protect the watersheds from future mining.
1942	The Coquitlam watershed is protected under the 999 year Land Act lease agreement.
1967	The Water District amends the 1927 lease agreement (called the Amending Indenture) which requires the District to log the watersheds forests under the authority of the Ministry of Forests. The Water District can cancel the Amending Indenture at any time.
1999	November 10 - The Greater Vancouver Water District Administration Board passes a five point resolution to protect the Greater Vancouver Watersheds.
2002	February - The Greater Vancouver Water District's Water Committee recommends canceling the 1967 Amending Indenture with the provincial government.

2. General Watershed Information

	CAPILANO WATERSHED	SEYMOUR WATERSHED	COQUITLAM WATERSHED
Watershed area (on and off-catchment lands)	19,535 hectares (ha.) (48,250 acres)	12,375 ha. (30,566 acres) - Lower Seymour Conservation Reserve off- catchment: 5600 ha. (13,832 acres)	18,370 ha. (45,374 acres) - Or Creek off catchment: 2,091 ha. (5165 acres)
First Water license date	1886	1907	1886
Dam (reservoir) history	Capilano Dam - 1954	Seymour dams - 1928 (first) and 1960	Coquitlam dams - 1905, 1913 (Hydro electric dams for power station at Indian Arm)
High elevation reservoirs	Palisade dam - 1928	Burwell dam - 1928 Loch Lomon dam - 1928	---
Early logging (above intake)	Capilano Timber Company railway logging 1918-1931: about 3200 ha. (7900 acres).	No logging prior to 1962. Lower Seymour off catchment logging to 1935: about 1600 ha. (3952 acres).	Almost no logging prior to 1972 (1940 trespass in south west area)
Recent logging	1964-1994: about 1250 ha. (includes road right-of- way), on 76 cutblocks. Roads built 1964-1992: about 100 km	After 1962: about 1300 ha. (3200 acres), with about 100 km of roads built 1962-1992. Area logged in Lower Seymour 1961- 1992: about 800 ha. (1976 acres), with about 20 km. of roads.	Area logged 1972-1993: about 1400 ha. (3458 acres) on 82 cutblocks. -Total roads built 1972-1992: about 100 km.