



## NEWS RELEASE

Date: March 19, 2013

For Immediate Release

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### **CVRD Response to the Ministry of Environment Posting a Draft Waste Discharge Permit in the Shawnigan Lake Watershed**

**Duncan, BC:** The Ministry of Environment posted a draft Waste Discharge Permit on March 19, 2013 for the South Island Aggregates contaminated soils facility in the Shawnigan Lake Watershed. In response to this action, the Cowichan Valley Regional District has sent the attached letter to the Honourable Terry Lake, Minister of Environment.

For more information please contact:

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March 19, 2013

File No.:

Minister of Environment  
PO BOX 9339 STN PROV GOVT  
VICTORIA BC V8W 9M1

*via email: ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca*

**Attention: Honourable Terry Lake**

Dear Minister Lake,

**Re: South Island Aggregates Contaminated Soils Facility  
in the Shawnigan Lake Watershed**

Today your Ministry posted a draft Waste Discharge Permit that when finally approved will see hundreds of thousands of tons of contaminated soil being dumped in the headwaters of the Shawnigan Lake Watershed. This same watershed is the source of drinking water for more than 7,000 people in the Shawnigan Lake area.

As you know the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) and Shawnigan Community are vehemently opposed to the South Island Aggregates (SIA) Contaminated Soils Facility application because it places a major public water supply at long-term risk. Accidents, mislabeled materials, seismic events, liner failure, ownership change, or future negligence are each possible in the circumstances, however unlikely they may appear at present or are minimized in the applicant's proposal. Oversight is largely delegated to the self-reporting scrutiny of the private owner. Once contaminated soil is placed in the ground the risks will have been taken. Perhaps it will be ten years maybe a hundred years, unfortunately, history dictates that inevitably problems will arise and there will be no way to remediate contamination of aquifers or to take back pollution of Shawnigan Lake.

Over the past year the CVRD has subscribed to the collaborative approach to dealing with the existing contaminated soil dumping issue in the Shawnigan Watershed. We sincerely appreciate what has been accomplished to date by your staff and the CVRD with sampling of dump sites and the hundreds of recently trucked materials. We are working with your ministry to solve a long-term environmental management problem by working together on mutually supportive local government bylaws and provincial regulations. We have offered to work with your ministry to identify a site or sites within the CVRD that could accommodate contaminated soils without compromising a community watershed. All of this positive work is likely to be overshadowed and for not by the anticipated approval of the SIA proposal.

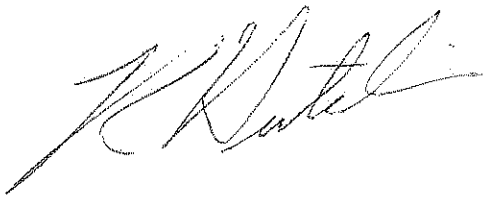
Significant doubts have been raised about the location and character of underlying aquifers in the vicinity of the SIA quarry. Water users concern about risk is not a knee-jerk NIMBY reaction, but one founded on realistic assessments of the geological and hydrological uncertainties of the watershed area raised by independent professionals. These are not theoretical concerns, but ones based on science.

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The situation that Shawnigan Lake faces has become urgent. There is no competent authority dealing with cumulative environmental impact and what authority does exist is highly fragmented among agencies that are not well integrated in practice. The SIA application should not be considered in isolation from the overall context of the watershed. Shawnigan residents stand to live with the absurdity of officially sanctioned contaminated soil in their headwaters basin and the potential negative effects on public health and property values for the fleeting financial enrichment of others.

We cannot believe that a properly considered government decision would at the same time be willing to countenance a risk to a major public water supply, ignore the overwhelming concerns of the largest unincorporated population in the province, dismiss technical concerns from highly competent independent professionals and set aside the explicit opposition of a cooperating local government. We urge you to take the precautionary steps necessary, before the risks come due, to protect a public water supply. Please deny the SIA application before the damage is done.

Yours truly,



Rob Hutchins  
Chair

WJ/ann

pc: Premier Christy Clark  
Bill Routley, MLA  
CVRD Board of Director

File: ADMINISTRATOR/Correspondence/Directors/2011 - 2013/to Minister Lake SIA Waste Discharge Permit March 29 2013