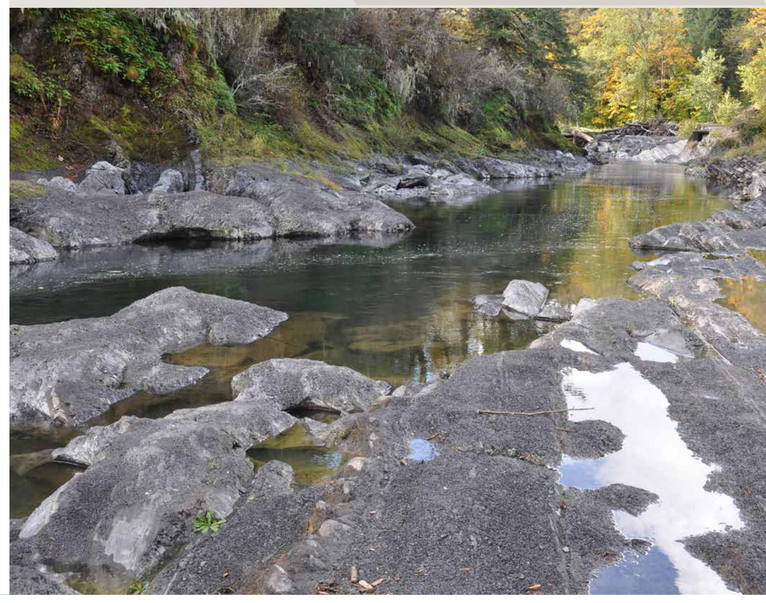
WATERSHED STRESS
Cowichan issues



Changing climate conditions, growing populations and increasing demand are putting stress on the Cowichan watershed.

The state of the watershed

- Clearing land, building roads and other hard surfaces, and filling creeks have altered streams and wetland systems, and impacted the absorption of water into the landscape
- Low flow in Cowichan River in summer jeopardizes:
  - Agricultural productivity
  - Groundwater supply
  - Industrial operations, sewage dilution and fish survival
  - Drinking water supply to the town of Crofton
- During drought conditions:
  - Water temperatures rise and fish are stressed
  - Fire risk increases and water supply for fire fighting is limited
  - Wells are stressed and may lose capacity
  - Recreational access to lakes and rivers is impacted due to low water levels
  - Water temperatures increase and trigger algae blooms impacting both drinking water and safe recreation

Cowichan watershed's 'new normal'

- Not enough water during summer months to meet both human and ecological needs
  - Summer rain is projected to decrease an average of 17% by the 2050s
- A growing population, coupled with climate projections for drier summers, suggest that demand for water will be far greater than supply
- The high rate of groundwater extraction in the region increases pressure on an already-limited summer water supply
- Average inflow to Cowichan Lake has decreased by 33% since the weir was built

Did you know?

Salmon returns to the Cowichan are an important factor in setting the number of fish that can be caught under the US/Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty. Low water in late summer and early fall prevents or delays their critical migration and results in poor returns.

CVRD

WHAT ROLE DO YOU WANT THE CVRD TO PLAY?

Tell us what you think at **cvrd.bc.ca** or join the conversation on **PlaceSpeak**

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