

# Reservoir levels hit by lack of rainfall

## Dry autumn leaves water supply at two-thirds capacity

By Bill Cleverley December 19, 2008

Greater Victoria needs rain -- and not just because you don't have to shovel it.

The Capital Regional District's water reservoirs are languishing near 66 per cent when they should be inching toward capacity.

There's no need to panic, CRD water division manager Jack Hull said yesterday, as levels aren't so low yet that the CRD will have to step up watering restrictions next summer.

"As it stands right now, if this continues, we're not anticipating having to go beyond Stage 1 [restrictions] next summer but there's a few 'ifs' on that in terms of the additional rain we get this winter and what sort of summer we have next year," Hull said. Stage 1 restrictions, which go into force automatically on May 1 and run until Sept. 30, limit people to watering their lawns twice a week within restricted morning and evening hours.

"At this point we're not anticipating a problem. But we would like to see some more rain."

Only 38.3 mm of rain has fallen at the Sooke reservoir in December -- just 13 per cent of the monthly average of 301.1 mm. And total rainfall since the rainy season began in September is 378.1 mm, only 60 per cent of the 634.7 mm that would normally fall.

"Unless the weather pattern changes significantly, we're not going to fill the reservoir next year," Hull said. "We're well below average precipitation so far for the wet season from September on."

Even at 66 per cent, the CRD has slightly more water in storage than it did prior to raising the reservoir.

"What we have is fine," said CRD water commission chairman Nils Jensen. "It's more than we would have had in the old reservoir. The old reservoir is the equivalent of about 60 per cent full of our new reservoir. So we're above that."

The reservoir was expanded in 2002, with the dam raised and new lands flooded in a \$20-million project. It increased the holding capacity by 78 per cent to 92.7 million cubic metres from 52 million cubic metres.

While many Victorians are losing their sense of humour about the snow, Hull said it would take substantially more snowfall to have any impact on the reservoir.

"It's a 10-to-one ratio. Ten inches of snow gives you one inch of rainfall, so it doesn't do a lot for us," he said.

[bcleverley@tc.canwest.com](mailto:bcleverley@tc.canwest.com)

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