

Shuswap River

Stakeholders to develop river strategy

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Problems around increased usage of the Shuswap River in Enderby will be the focus of an upcoming meeting.

A wide spectrum of river stakeholders are meeting Feb. 18 to discuss the many issues that have arisen or been exacerbated in recent years due to the river's expanding popularity with different users.

Everyone agrees it is too late to turn back the clock but there is also sincere resolve to take steps to address the difficulties faced by the community.

"We'll talk about the problems we had on the river last year and what we can do to mitigate those problems in the future," said Enderby Mayor Dee Wejr. "These types of issues are not going to stop. We're not going to be that sleepy little town all the time anymore."

Tate Bengtson, Enderby and District Chamber of Commerce executive director, saw the increased river usage because the chamber office is beside the river, making it an ideal access spot for tubers, canoers and kayakers. Mr. Bengtson and his staff saw some problems first-hand and heard from users and residents about other issues.

"We saw a range of problems develop last year from pollution and waste disposal to traffic management to accommodate increased usage to issues around property owners that border on the river."

Other problems expressed over the years include bank erosion, habitat destruction, unsafe boating and trespassing.

Some problems increased

when a shuttle service for tubers began operating last year, but many were on the rise simply because the Shuswap River is ideal for varied recreational activities.

The river's pristine nature and its proximity to the community also mean people are passionate about safeguarding its future.

Mr. Bengtson said the community has strong ties to the river and a lot of positive work is being done to protect and preserve the river and educate users.

"We want to make sure we build on that sense of local ownership," he noted.

Mayor Wejr said people in the community will be key to the success of any plan developed to tackle problems.

"Volunteers can create a huge impact. I think we can use all the volunteers we can get."

The stakeholders' meeting is the first step toward a plan, though.

"I think the meeting is key because everybody wants to find short-term solutions and we all want to commit to a long-term, sustainable and efficient management plan on the Shuswap River," said Mr. Bengtson. "I anticipate the meeting will be very solution-orientated and constructive."

"It's a prime opportunity to bring everyone to the table and talk about what we can do instead of what we can't do."

Mayor Wejr agreed. "We need cooperation between all agencies so we can have something happen when we need it to happen."

Area F Director Herman Halvorson said the river problems are vast and complicated so the meeting will work well to bring things into focus. The issues are also seen differently by different people so Mr. Halvorson stressed the need to hear from the public.

"You've got to have input from the people."

Mayor Wejr said the only way to be effective is to include everyone in the discussion.

"We will use this meeting to come up with terms of refer-

ence. After that we'll hold a meeting for everyone who wants to take part. I think it's crucial to give people the opportunity to be heard on something so important to the community."

Next week's meeting will include Ms. Wejr, Mr. Bengtson and Mr. Halvorson. Also attending are representatives from the City of Enderby, North Okanagan Regional District, Riverside Hall, Mara Hall, Kingfisher Interpretive Centre, Grindrod Hall, Splatin First Nation, Kingfisher Hall, Lower Shuswap Stewardship Society, Enderby and District Fish and Game Society, Safe Communities, Tube Taxi, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, RCMP, Mara River Group, Ministry of Environment, Transport Canada and Ministry of Highways.

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