

## MEDIA RELEASE

19 October 2022 – For Immediate Release

### Shuswap Watershed Council calls for more action from Province on algal blooms

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) has written a letter to George Heyman, Provincial Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, calling for more action and intervention from the Province to prevent future algal blooms in Shuswap Lake.

The letter – which was sent to the Minister last week – explains the SWC’s concerns about deteriorating water quality in the Salmon Arm of Shuswap Lake, as evidenced by two widespread, long-lasting algal blooms in that part of the lake over the last three years. Salmon Arm Bay, Tappen Bay, and downstream toward Canoe and Herald Provincial Park were impacted by algal blooms in 2020 and this summer. The letter mentions the SWC’s concerns about the overall health of the lake, as well as how algal blooms could be impacting fish and wildlife, the safety of drinking water, recreational enjoyment of the lake and the tourism economy. Also expressed are the SWC’s concerns about the potential for algal blooms to become toxic – which, fortunately, didn’t occur in 2020 or 2022 as demonstrated by regular water quality monitoring by various agencies.

The SWC’s letter points to the importance of nutrient management in protecting water quality and preventing future algal blooms.

The SWC is doing its part by administering a grant program that provides financial assistance to farms and stewardship groups to improve nutrient management, thereby retaining nutrients on the landscape, not washing off or leaching into creeks and rivers that flow into Shuswap or Mara Lake. Additionally, the SWC just published a Phosphorus Action Plan to provide guidance to everyone in the Shuswap about what they can do to minimize their ‘phosphorus footprint’ and help protect water quality. Both of these initiatives were informed by a [water quality research](#) project carried out by the SWC in partnership with UBC-Okanagan.

See [Shuswap Watershed Council publishes Phosphorus Action Plan](#).

“We’ve done water quality research, created a grant program to support better nutrient management, and most recently we’ve published an educational Phosphorus Action Plan for the watershed,” says Jay Simpson, Chair of the Shuswap Watershed Council. “However, we’re not a regulatory group. We don’t have any authority over pollution or nutrient-loading. That’s where the Province must act.”



The SWC's letter asserts the Province's lead role in protecting environmental water quality through regular water quality monitoring, setting water quality objectives, investigating and responding to spills and pollution, and ensuring compliance with regulations to protect the environment. The letter specifically mentions the SWC's concerns about nutrient contributions from the Salmon River – a large tributary to Shuswap lake flowing into Salmon Arm Bay – and requests that the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy act quickly to investigate and correct water quality problems to restore Shuswap Lake to a healthy state.

The SWC's letter to Minister Heyman can be viewed on the SWC's website, [www.shuswapwater.ca](http://www.shuswapwater.ca).

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Attachment: Letter from Shuswap Watershed Council Chair Jay Simpson to Hon. George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, dated October 12<sup>th</sup> 2022. The letter can also be found on the SWC's website, [www.shuswapwater.ca](http://www.shuswapwater.ca) – on the left-hand menu bar click on 'Advocacy for Watershed Health'.

About: The Shuswap Watershed Council is a watershed-based partnership organization that works on water quality and safe recreation in the Shuswap.

Contact: For more information, please contact Erin Vieira or Alex de Chantal c/o the Fraser Basin Council in Kamloops at 250 314-9660 and visit [www.shuswapwater.ca](http://www.shuswapwater.ca).