

Shawnigan Water Issues

I read, with interest, the letter from Doug Prenevost concerned with septic systems around Shawnigan Lake.

I remember the famous hamburgers that were named after Doug and his brother when their family owned the Galley. Times were simpler then. Yes, there were outhouses and the odd failing septic system. Wildlife also contributes E.coli and coliform. These are bacteriological pathogens that (very infrequently) cause illness. They are flushed out as part of the water cycle and can easily be rectified by treatment or boiling. This claim is backed up by the fact that the Health Authorities have never issued a "Boil Water" advisory for Shawnigan.

The toxins allowed by the Ministry of Environment permit for the contaminated waste facility are a much more serious threat. They cannot be removed by boiling and are deposited in the sediment. Heavy metals, dioxins, furans, PCBs, PAHs, and the like, are persistent. They accumulate over time and the effects are sinister. This is backed up by the recent "Do Not Use" advisory, issued as a precaution, after a breach at the site. It is worth visiting the facility at Stebbings Road; walk around the back perimeter and judge for yourself if there will never, ever, be a problem.

The argument that the lake is so compromised by other problems that the contaminated soil facility will make little difference is false and misleading. It is often promoted by people who have a financial or other connection to the proponents.

It is alleged that the MOE decision to award the permit was based on misrepresentation and conflict-of-interest. I am confident that the courts will confirm this and the permit will be overturned. Community efforts can then focus on working towards a positive vision for Shawnigan which includes a vibrant economy based on sustainable, ecological values.

Regards,
Dave Hutchinson