

FRESHWATER PERSPECTIVES

2021 Public Benchmark Survey Results

Presented to City of Nanaimo Council

January 17, 2022 | Julie Pisani

RDN Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program Coordinator



Background & Objectives

The main objective of the research was to gain a better understanding of community perspectives, behaviours, and priorities concerning freshwater resources in the region.

- Measure the importance of local freshwater issues
- Understand the reasons for conserving water
- Determine water conservation and preservation habits, behaviours, and actions
- Identify barriers to outdoor water conservation
- Measure awareness of local rain gardens
- Measure awareness of and involvement in the Regional District of Nanaimo's Drinking Water and Watershed Protection program
- Measure awareness of drinking water sources and watersheds
- Obtain suggestions for things the Regional District of Nanaimo can do to preserve and protect the local freshwater supply



www.rdn.bc.ca

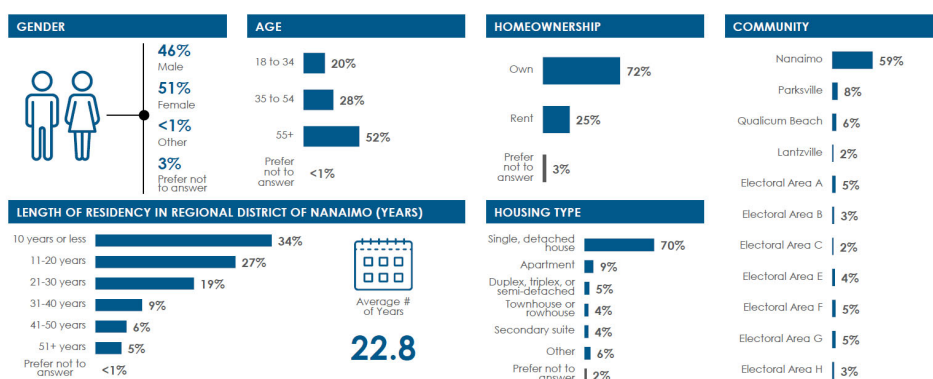
Methodology

- Mixed methods both telephone / online survey.
- Conducted between June 28 – August 2, 2021 by professional market research firm Ipsos.
- Random digit dialing by area (focus on municipalities).
- Randomized mailout with survey URL by postal code (focused on Electoral Area 10,000 sent).
- Residents who received a phone call could opt to complete online instead.
- Total 800 completed by telephone, 593 completed online.
- Aim to strike a balance across age, gender, location, demographics.



www.rdn.bc.ca

Weighted Sample Characteristics



www.rdn.bc.ca

Summary of Results – City of Nanaimo

- **361** surveys were completed by City of Nanaimo residents out of the total **1,393** completed across the region.



www.rdn.bc.ca

Summary of Results – City of Nanaimo

Awareness of Drinking Water Source

- A large portion of City of Nanaimo respondents incorrectly identified their drinking water provider as the Regional District of Nanaimo (47%).
- 24% of respondents correctly identified their drinking water as coming from the municipally operated system.
- 19% report that they don't know where their drinking water comes from (the highest of all Areas/Munis).

Awareness of Watershed

- Similarly, 34% of respondents from City of Nanaimo incorrectly identified that they live in the Nanaimo River watershed.
- 25% correctly identified either Millstone River, Chase River, Departure Creek or Walley Creek as the watershed they live in.
- But the largest portion of respondents (38%) indicated that they did not know what watershed they live in.

Awareness of DWWP Program

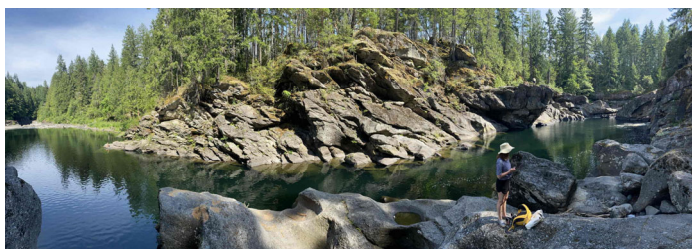
- 40% of City of Nanaimo respondents cited that they were aware of the RDN's Drinking Water and Watershed Protection program.
- 36% percent reported that they had participated in at least one DWWP activity (i.e. sharing regional water information, accessing water reports, attending an event or workshops, applying for rebates, volunteering in a local water monitoring network).

www.rdn.bc.ca

Summary of Results – City of Nanaimo

Priority Issues

- The vast majority City of Nanaimo respondents **ranked all of the freshwater issues listed as important.**
- City of Nanaimo stood out from the other areas with the **highest response rate citing the importance of access to recreational freshwater** locations.



www.rdn.bc.ca

Summary of Results – City of Nanaimo

Water Conservation Behaviours

- Surprisingly, the City of Nanaimo had the **lowest response rate in the region for engaging in water conservation behaviours** indoors and outdoors.
- 19% of respondents “don’t know” what the main barrier preventing them from conserving more water is.
- And, 24% state that there “are none (barriers) / is nothing” preventing them from conserving more water.

Water Protection Behaviours

- City of Nanaimo had the **highest response rate identifying awareness of rain gardens** on the property of nearby private businesses (8%).



www.rdn.bc.ca

Summary of Results – City of Nanaimo

Suggestions for RDN

- City of Nanaimo respondents were the **most likely to cite “more public education /awareness / advertising”** as the one additional thing that RDN could do to preserve and protect local freshwater (15%).
- Most (31%) responded that they didn’t know what more the RDN could do.



www.rdn.bc.ca

Overall Findings

Generally, the findings point to:

- positive uptake of water conservation behaviours in the region;
- some awareness and participation in RDN DWWP activities;
- widespread care for freshwater issues.

There is **more work needed to be done to enhance public literacy on their drinking water source and home watersheds** amongst residents

There is **room to improve uptake of certain water conservation behaviours** already encouraged through RDN rebate programs such as drip irrigation and soil improvements.

There is also opportunity to expand the prevalence and knowledge of rain gardens as well as increase riparian planting among streamside landowners.

www.rdn.bc.ca

Next Steps

- This analysis will be used to help tailor DWWP program implementation to best suit the needs of and address the gaps present in the various communities.
- The 2021 survey will act as a benchmark against which follow up surveys can be compared to gauge change and progress.
- The Regional District of Nanaimo anticipates conducting a total of two follow up surveys in 5 year increments.



www.rdn.bc.ca

Thank You. Questions?

Final Report is posted online at
www.getinvolved.rdn.ca/team-watersmart

www.rdn.bc.ca