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Independent review makes numerous recommendations in North Okanagan drinking water case

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Manure is spread on a field above the Hullcar Aquifer in summer 2015.  
Image Credit: Al Price

November 30, 2017 - 10:32 AM

NORTH OKANAGAN - A report into a contaminated drinking water aquifer in the North Okanagan has several take-away recommendations for fixing the problem and preventing it from happening again.

The independent review "[From Crisis to Solutions: Toward Better Source Water Protection and Nutrient Management in the Hullcar Valley](#)" makes nine recommendations, according to a news release issued by the provincial government today, Nov. 30. It was the province that ordered the review last summer.

The polluted aquifer has been a longstanding issue in the area for years. A water quality advisory has been in place since 2014 because of elevated nitrate levels, which can be harmful to human health. About 250 people get their water from the Hullcar Aquifer.

The report calls for independently verified monitoring and reporting of aquifer and soil nutrient status, incentives for beneficial management practices and innovative technology, and governance and regulatory updates. It also recommends a targeted and temporary moratorium on liquid manure spreading in areas of concern, including providing a safety buffer in nutrient application.

"Our government's goal is to ensure agricultural practices are consistent with the provision and protection of clean, safe drinking water," George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, says

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in a media release. "The report shows the way forward with a set of clear, thoughtful actions based on the best available information. The government is listening and we have already begun to implement the report's recommendations."

The report also recommends, as a long-term reform, reviewing sustainable governance structures for water utilities in the area in partnership with the Splatstin people and the Township of Spallumcheen.

"Splatstin acknowledges Minister Heyman's commitment to the protection of safe drinking water," Splatstin Chief Kukpi7 Wayne Christian says in the release. "The report outlines a number of recommendations that will lay the groundwork for a robust government-to-government process that will create solutions to the ongoing contamination of the Hullcar Valley aquifers. Splatstin looks forward to the implementation of the recommendations."

Along with the results of the review, the province also released an intentions paper today, Nov. 30, for amending the agricultural waste control regulation.

"We are hopeful that this process will lead the government to help remediate the nitrate-contaminated aquifer and to finally proactively protect all of B.C.'s surface and groundwater for future generations," Brian Upper of Steele Springs Waterworks District says.

[Find past stories on Hullcar aquifer here.](#)

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