

Oceanside Coalition for Strong Communities

**Oceanside Coalition for Strong Communities  
presents "Our Water Our Future"**

November 3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> 5<sup>th</sup>, the Oceanside Coalition for Strong Communities, in partnership with almost a dozen community groups in the mid-Island region, will offer a rare opportunity to Vancouver Islanders to hear and discuss with water experts the importance of water to our communities and to the ecosystems in which we live. At the Qualicum Civic Centre, attendees will be able to participate in workshops, bus tours and even a social event with entertainment.

The evening of Friday November 3<sup>rd</sup> will feature superb evening entertainment provided by the Todd Butler Show and an opportunity for the public to meet organizers, some of the speakers and workshop presenters, and view information displays.

Saturday November 4<sup>th</sup> will have a full day of keynote speakers, and a wide-ranging selection of workshops – from local issues on Vancouver Island to the global story from Mexico.

Sunday November 5<sup>th</sup> will provide an opportunity for residents to see for themselves the situation in a major watershed in this region, or, alternatively, tour the Chef Creek Habitat Restoration Project, a successful, cooperative effort between landowner, government agencies and citizen groups – a lesson in how to restore a healthy watershed, piece by piece.

Featured guest speakers at the conference will include Tony Clarke, renowned author and co-author of several books in which he makes the case that water be treated as a human right. Clarke has also written extensively on global trade agreements and the impacts these agreements have on people and environment. The OCSC is also proud to have Severn Cullis-Suzuki (daughter of David Suzuki), well known for her tireless activism and broad knowledge on environmental issues. Also presenting is Claudia Campero Arena, founding member of COMDA a Coalition created to fight water privatization in Mexico. Claudia will also bring an international perspective to the conference. She will speak about her involvement in organizing internationally through COMDA.

Organizers for the event say, "Water privatization means losing control of the most valuable resource a community has--we don't think water should be treated as a commodity. Everything in our environment depends on water to sustain life-- it has to be kept in the public trust. "

This conference is the Oceanside Coalition's main event for the year and they expect strong attendance from most of Vancouver Island. Anyone interested in attending should book early--seating is definitely limited.

Rick Sullivan, chair of the planning team, said, "The Coalition wants the public and our politicians to understand that there is very strong support on Vancouver Island for publicly managed and delivered water and wastewater systems. This conference is intended to reinforce our commitment to those principles." He added that the Coalition fully supports a regional public water supply program that ensures our grandchildren and future generations have the benefits we enjoy today – in a healthy and thriving environment. A November 2005

poll done by Ipsos Reid said that 88% of British Columbians believe 'water is a basic public service and should always remain in public hands'. "Our Coalition supports those findings," explains Sullivan.

The Oceanside Coalition for Strong Communities represents a broad section of the community, says another of the organizers, Hans Kratz of KAIROS. (KAIROS unites eleven churches and church agencies in faithful action for justice and peace.) "Our group often works with the Coalition in order to enhance all people's quality of life by ensuring we have strong communities in which to live." Kratz explained keeping water safe and keeping it from becoming a good to be bought and sold is a nation-wide campaign of KAIROS. "It's important to our environment and our communities. Both deserve and need protection," Kratz said.

The conference planning team includes The Oceanside Coalition for Strong Communities, Parksville Qualicum KAIROS, Arrowsmith Watersheds Coalition Society, CUPE Island Water Watch, Englishman River Watershed Recovery Plan, Mid-Island Streamkeepers, French Creek Residents' Association, Parksville Qualicum University Women's Club, and Council of Canadians Chapters in Port Alberni, Comox Valley, and Mid-Island.

For detailed conference information and registration, please visit the Coalition website at [www.oceansidecoalition.org](http://www.oceansidecoalition.org)

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##### **Information and contact for keynote speakers:**

- Photographs and biographies are in the attached e-files.
- To arrange a telephone interview with Severn Cullis-Suzuki, please contact Rick Sullivan
- Tony Clarke can be reached at 613.237.1717 or [tclarke@polarisinstitute.org](mailto:tclarke@polarisinstitute.org)

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