

Fanny Bay Groundwater Collective



...unceded traditional territory of the Sahloot ('sath-loot), Sasilla (sa'seet-la), leeksun (eye-'ick-sun), Xa'xe ('ha'hey) and Pentlatch peoples, who together, make up the K'omoks Nation...

June 10, 2026

The Honourable Randene Neill
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
By email

Dear Minister Neill;

Request to Pause Review of Two Existing Use Groundwater License Applications

We first wrote to you last September, asking that your Ministry's review of the Existing Use Groundwater License applications of Natural Glacier Waters and Cermaq be paused to allow us time to adequately assess their impact on community and groundwater sustainability. A Briefing Note was appended to our correspondence. (<https://saveourgroundwater.ca/sept-10-2025-letter-and-briefing-note-to-hon-randene-neill-minister-of-water-land-and-resource-stewardship/>)

In our community, household wells have been running dry earlier each summer. Our fragile aquifers already bear the impact of upstream logging practices and climate change (low snowpack). The Existing Use Groundwater License applications of Natural Glacier Waters and Cermaq would, if granted, confer rights to remove substantial volumes of groundwater from our community aquifers in perpetuity.

A pause in the application review process would not be harmful to the applicants, who continue operating as they have been under temporary permit. It would be very beneficial to our community, as it would allow us to draw on important work being undertaken by Beaufort Watershed Stewards in association with the University of Victoria to better document the capacity of our local aquifer(s) and the impact these licenses might have on the sustainability of our community and its eco-systems. This ties directly into our community's medium to long term objective to develop and implement a localized Water Sustainability Plan (WSP) as envisaged under Division 4 of the Water Sustainability Act (Act).

In her November 13, 2025 reply, Deputy Minister Lori Halls referred us to Dexter Kotylak, Water Management Branch, to discuss the application review process. (<https://saveourgroundwater.ca/nov-13-2025-reply-from-deputy-minister-bc-ministry-of-water-land-and-resource-stewardship/>)

On February 10, 2026, I spoke with Mr. Kotylak and was relieved to learn a) that neither license application had yet been assigned, and b) that our concerns were substantively recorded on both files.

On May 26, 2026, I wrote Mr. Kotylak requesting copies of the Existing Use Groundwater License Applications of both Natural Glacier Water and Cermaq. (<https://saveourgroundwater.ca/letter-to-water-management-branch-may-26-2026/>). Unfortunately, Mr. Kotylak advised he has been transferred but would pass our letter on to those responsible. We have yet to hear from anyone.

We were therefore *very alarmed* to learn - just last week, after inquiring via Front Counter BC - that the Existing Use Groundwater License applications of both Natural Glacial Waters and Cermaq have now been assigned and are in the process of evaluation.

We request your urgent attention to this matter.

Kind regards,

Wendy Holm, Chair, Fanny Bay Groundwater Collective
<https://www.saveourgroundwater.ca>
604-417-2434

Cc: Chief Nicole Rempel, K'omoks First Nation
Chief Michael Recalma, Qualicum First Nation
Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Josie Osborne, MLA, Mid Island-Pacific Rim
Gord Johns, MP, Courtenay-Alberni
Daniel Arbour, Director Comox Valley - Baynes Sound, Denman/Hornby
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