

Fanny Bay Groundwater Collective submission to August Fanny Bay Flyer (498 words)

As most of you know, the Fanny Bay Groundwater Collective has been calling on the provincial government for almost a year now to pause their approval of Existing Use Groundwater licenses for Cermaq (commercial hatchery) and Natural Glacial Waters (commercial bottling plant) to allow time for informed community input into this crucial public policy decision. Why crucial? Because we rely on groundwater to supply our homes, grow our crops and ensure fire protection. Because many of our local wells are running very low or dry during the summer months. And because, if these licenses are granted, rights to divert groundwater from our community aquifers will be tied to the land forever. (What today is a hatchery could be sold and tomorrow become another bottling plant exporting community water overseas.)

We were hopeful. In a Briefing Note sent last September to the BC Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, we explained all this, calling for a pause in the license approval process to allow our community time to prepare and present evidence through local public hearings to better inform public policy. We explained we have a lot at stake and have a lot to offer. We explained that thanks to Beaufort Watershed Stewards and the important research they are undertaking in association with University of Victoria to map our community aquifers, we are developing a solid understanding of their capacity and characteristics. We explained that this knowledge will provide our community with critical information and tools we need to support our development of a Water Sustainability Plan as envisaged under the Water Sustainability Act. We explained that “forever licenses” to divert our limited groundwater supply would effectively tie our hands going forward.

We communicated with Ministry staff over the winter and spring and when we learned the license review process was proceeding, again wrote the Minister on June 10, 2026 asking for her intervention. Copied to federal, provincial and local politicians and both K’ómoks and Qualicum First Nations.

Well, we finally received an answer. But not the one we hoped for. In her July 21, 2026 letter, Minister Neill turned down our request for a PAUSE, saying they intend to complete decisions on Existing Use Groundwater License applications before considering proposed Water Sustainability Plans.

Yee Haw! Luckily, thanks to West Coast Environmental Law and wonderful community support, we have a lawyer and a growing legal fund and are saddle-ready to head out in pursuit of options. Here’s what you can do right now:

Donate: Send an eTransfer to donate@saveourgroundwater.ca or donate via our website saveourgroundwater.ca.

Become a Member: Send a \$5 eTransfer (see above) to become lifetime Member. (Please include your name and email address in the message) or sign up at our booth August 8 at the Fanny Bay Fair.

Come to our “fun-raiser” on Saturday morning October 24! Dr. Mike Wei and CBC’s Bob McDonald talk about groundwater. Yummy harvest lunch by Chef Craig Rogers. Kicked off with a special children’s program at 9:30. Fabulous Silent Auction.