

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

WHEN THE WELLS RUN DRY: FANNY BAY FIGHTS FOR ITS GROUNDWATER

Community invites Vancouver Islanders to October 24 event with CBC's Bob McDonald, groundwater expert Dr. Mike Wei and an online silent auction to protect a resource we cannot live without.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | October 13, 2026

FANNY BAY, BC — What happens when families who have depended on their wells for generations suddenly find themselves running out of water, while commercial water users seek long-term rights to the same groundwater resource?

In the small Vancouver Island community of Fanny Bay, residents are not waiting to find out.

They are organizing to protect their groundwater — and inviting their neighbours to join them for a special event on Saturday, October 24, featuring CBC science broadcaster Bob McDonald, groundwater expert Dr. Mike Wei, a harvest lunch and an online silent auction.

For several consecutive summers, residential wells that once reliably supplied Fanny Bay families have been running dangerously low. Some have run dry. And this is happening earlier each summer.

Meanwhile, two commercial groundwater users — Natural Glacial Waters, which bottles water for domestic and export markets, and Mitsubishi-owned Cermaq Hatcheries, which raises Atlantic Salmon smolts for their open-net fish farms — have applications before the Province for groundwater licences.

According to a November 2024 letter from the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, Natural Glacial Waters has applied to withdraw 1,892,160 cubic metres of groundwater annually — more than five million litres a day.

If issued, these groundwater licences would exist in perpetuity, without a fixed expiry date. Although they could later be reviewed, amended or cancelled under provincial law, the licences would not automatically expire; associated water rights would transfer to new owners. That makes the decisions now before the Province especially consequential.

Whether existing and proposed withdrawals can be sustained without compromising residential wells, streams and local ecosystems is a question the community believes must be answered before long-term licensing decisions are made. What could these licensing decisions mean for the long-term sustainability of Fanny Bay—and for communities throughout British Columbia?

A community takes action

Formed in 2025, the Fanny Bay Groundwater Collective is a grassroots, not-for-profit organization working to protect the aquifers on which local families, farms and ecosystems depend.

"Our concern isn't simply who uses the water today," says Collective member Wendy Holm. "It's whether there is enough groundwater to sustain our community, our ecosystems and future generations — and whether the people who depend on that water have a meaningful voice in decisions about its future."

The Collective is seeking a two- to three-year pause in the Province's licensing review process to allow for scientific investigation, assessment of cumulative impacts, public engagement and meaningful opportunities for local First Nations to participate.

Its longer-term objective is a community-based Water Sustainability Plan under BC's Water Sustainability Act, providing a durable framework for watershed protection and sustainable groundwater management.

The Collective has received financial support from West Coast Environmental Law's Environmental Dispute Resolution Fund to help pursue its legal objectives and is raising matching funds through donations and community fundraising.

Why Fanny Bay matters to all British Columbians

Groundwater is out of sight, but it is central to life in British Columbia. It supplies household wells, supports agriculture, sustains wetlands and streams, and helps maintain healthy ecosystems.

As climate change brings longer dry periods and increasing pressure on water resources, how we allocate and protect groundwater becomes an increasingly important public policy question.

Fanny Bay Groundwater Collective's concerns point to a larger challenge for BC: How can we make responsible decisions about groundwater allocation without adequate scientific information, assessment of cumulative impacts and meaningful participation by affected communities?

"We cannot afford to discover the limits of our aquifers only after the water has been allocated," says Holm. "Fanny Bay may be a small community, but the questions we are asking matter to communities throughout British Columbia."

Celebrating water, science and community — October 24

To bring these issues to a wider audience, the Collective is hosting a special day of learning, family activities and fundraising at the Fanny Bay Community Hall on Saturday, October 24.

Bob McDonald, host of CBC's Quirks & Quarks, will take audiences on a journey through the universe to explore how fortunate Earth is to have water. University of Victoria groundwater specialist Dr. Mike Wei will use a groundwater model to demonstrate how water moves beneath our feet — and why protecting aquifers matters.

The day begins with a free children's program, Groundwater and Granola Bars, followed by presentations for the broader community and a harvest lunch prepared by Chef Craig Rogers.

The Collective's online silent auction features original artwork, stained glass, handmade ceramics, gift certificates and local goods and services donated by artists, businesses and neighbours. Bidding is already open. Items will be displayed at the Hall on October 24, and online bidding closes at 2 p.m. Every bid helps fund the Collective's legal work to protect local groundwater.

"This is about more than a fundraising event," says Holm. "It's about neighbours coming together to learn, to enjoy themselves, and to stand up for something that belongs to all of us. Water is a public resource, and protecting it is a shared responsibility."

EVENT DETAILS | SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2026

Fanny Bay Community Hall • 7793 Island Highway South, Fanny Bay, BC

9:30–10:30 a.m.	Free children's program: Groundwater and Granola Bars, with Bob McDonald and Dr. Mike Wei
11:00 a.m.	Bob McDonald: A Planetary Perspective, and Dr. Wei's groundwater demonstration
12:30 p.m.	Harvest lunch by Chef Craig Rogers
2:00 p.m.	Online silent auction closes

Event tickets and registration: https://www.zeffy.com/en-CA/ticketing/save-our-groundwater-fun-raiser

Browse/bid silent auction: https://www.zeffy.com/en-CA/ticketing/fanny-bay-groundwater-collectives-silent-auction

Learn more, donate or become a member: https://saveourgroundwater.ca/

Media contact: Wendy Holm | Fanny Bay Groundwater Collective | 604-417-2434 | wendy@saveourgroundwater.ca

— 30 —