

A NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED EXPRESSLY FOR THOSE WORKING IN THE SEWAGE INDUSTRY

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## The Nature of Wastewater Has Changed

*Curt Kerns, M.S., R.P.Bio., C.F.S.*

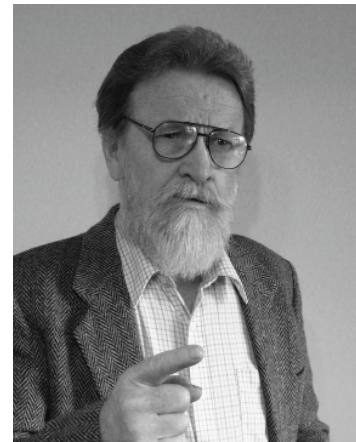
Among the growing global problems we have is that sewage is a different beast than it was even 50 years ago. It was once largely akin to a dilute manure solution. Now it is still that, plus being a devil's brew of trace contaminants of endocrine disruptors, prescriptions, and personal care products (EDC/PPCPs) resulting from our science and consumer culture. Recent research has found that conventional municipal treatment does little to remove contaminants which have inimical ecological consequences at parts per million, parts per billion, and even parts per trillion levels<sup>1</sup>.

The centralized model is increasingly flawed. With huge quantities of wastewater all discharged (or dumped to be more accurate) in one place surface discharge is what is typically done. The ever increasing trace contaminant loads are having an ecologically devastating effect upon surface waters. With freshwater it has long been nutrient over loading, and with marine waters it is harmful algae blooms. Now increasing trace contaminant loads are wreaking additional ecological havoc. Consequently we must move towards ceasing direct surface water discharge of even advanced secondarily treated wastewater if we want any semblance of aquatic species arrays that were once the norm to exist. The use of capital and energy intensive advanced physiochemical-electrical treatment is also a dead end path due to their huge ecological footprint, consequently contributing towards global climate change.

It's not a secret: raw sewage in vast quantities flows into our water ways all too frequently from centralized, municipal treatment plants. We all know about our capital city, Victoria. It does not have sewer pipes as sewer pipes lead to treatment plants. All they have are pipes! What is not common knowledge is how British Columbia's most populous region, the Greater Vancouver Region, deals with their sewage overflows. In

a recent educational television program, The Sustainable Region, a GVRD representative stated that during every rain with runoff, raw sewage is automatically directly discharged to the surrounding surface waters<sup>2</sup>.

In the event of a failure of a treatment system, the environment much better off with failed onsite system vs: centralized. A failed onsite system releases small quantities of primary-treated sewage into the ground in a localized area. With centralized, every time it rains as well as when there are mechanical problems, dilute raw sewage flows into our surface waters in ever increasing volumes carrying ever increasing ecologically inimical contaminant loads. Aquatic ecosystems have not evolved receiving such substances



in such quantities.

Global warming is not our only global issue. We must move towards decentralized, distributed manage-

ment of our wastewaters with beneficial reuse as the most desirable use, due to further contaminant removal inherent in reuse.

1. There Is No "Away." Pharmaceuticals, Personal Care Products, and Endocrine Disrupting Substances: Emerging Contaminants Detected in Water. by Susan Holtz. Senior Policy Analyst, Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy. <http://www.cielap.org/pdf/NoAway.pdf>

2. <http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/TV/TheSustainableRegion.htm>



Editor and Publisher:  
Liz Stewart-Jones

Through the incredibly busy building season of 2007 the industry has continued to mature and change and so has BCOSSA. As a result of the organization's growth the BCOSSA board decided that change was in order, this change included reorganization of the board and its functions.

The board has changed from an Administrative Governing board that directly decides what the organization will do, like a foreman on a job, to a Policy board which determines the direction the organization will go and allows an executive director or executive committee to make day to day operation decisions.

The objective of this change is to allow for volunteer staff, and paid staff to share and distribute the work load. This has the distinct advantage of allowing staff and volunteers to focus on specific projects or aspects of the organization. As a result of this change BCOSSA has developed the following standing committees to take on specific work for the membership:


- Finance committee whose role is to oversee the BCOSSA budget
- Education and Curriculum Committee whose role is to oversee the development and delivery of WOWTC course material.

- Technical Review committee whose role is to assist with the development of the Standard Practice Manual, encourage and carry out research and develop technical bulletins
- Member Services and Communications committee whose role it is to produce the BCOSSA annual general meeting and Conference, the Innovator news letter, manage the website and develop other services for members

These standing committees report directly to the Executive Director whose role is to coordinate the organization's activities and support the standing committee with staffing or other resources as needed. In turn, through the reports of the standing committee chairs and the executive director, the BCOSSA board adjusts and makes new policy direction for the association.

This organizational structure provides for flexible and clear management of the activities of the association and opens up opportunities for our members to participate in activities that interest them.




If you wish to participate in any of the standing committees please contact the BCOSSA office.



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## WOWTC Improving Onsite Training

Ron Hein, BCOSSA Education and Curriculum Committee Chair

The Westcoast Onsite Wastewater Training Centre, through the hard work of the Education and Curriculum committee, has been busy this summer developing new courses and venues for improved onsite training. As a result of the organization's move from Royal Roads University and due to changes in the industry, WOWTC is redeveloping many of the courses required by practitioners and professionals in our industry.

The newest course offering is WOWTC 101 the introductory course, this course has seen significant content and layout improvements which will allow students to become familiar with the industry through an easy to use and read manual.

Many of the new courses are split into two parts. For the first part, each student will receive a course manual by mail upon booking for the course. The student will be expected to have read through and be familiar with the manual before attending the classroom. Advanced level students may choose the "fast track" approach, which allows them learn at home through the advanced material.

For the second part, the student has a choice of attending the classroom portion of the course by calling to reserve a position in the class that best suits their schedule, or if the course description includes a "Fast Track Available" notation, the student can choose to arrange to take the exam without attending the classroom. This option should only be considered by students who have prior experience in the subject, as the classroom component is a vital part of the training program for people new to the wastewater industry.

Our fall course offerings will include a vast array of courses as described below, please contact the BCOSSA office directly for registration and consult the BCOSSA website [www.bcoffa.com](http://www.bcoffa.com) training section for schedules and locations.

## WOWTC Calendar

### THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY - KAMLOOPS

Date	Course Code	Title
October 22 - 24	WOWTC101	Introduction to Wastewater Systems in BC
October 25 - 27	ES940	Installer
October 29 - 30	ES943	Drawing Preparation & Reading
October 31 - November 2	ES940	Installer
November 3	PLAN203	Pumps & Controls
November 5 - 7	WOWTC101	Introduction to Wastewater Systems in BC
November 8 - 10	WOWTC101	Introduction to Wastewater Systems in BC
November 12 - 16	SOIL201	Soil Assessment - Theory & Practice
November 19	PLAN201	Planning Trickle Gravity Discharge Area Systems
November 20	PLAN203	Pumps & Controls
November 21	PLAN202	Planning Trickle Gravity & Dose-to Discharge Area Systems

## **Introduction to Onsite Wastewater Systems in BC** **WOWTC101**

Fee - \$700 for members of BCOSSA and \$950 for non-members  
3 days in class

Introduction to onsite wastewater that provides an overview of the history of wastewater treatment, past and present regulations, how all parts of the wastewater industry work together, basic concepts behind system planning, installation, maintenance, inspection and introduces students to the BC Standard Practice Manual and the Sewerage System Regulation.

## **Introduction to Installation**

### **INSTALL201**

Fee - \$400 for BCOSSA members and \$525 for non-members  
2 days in class

An introduction to installation theory and methods.

## **Advanced Installation**

### **INSTALL202**

Fee - \$400 for BCOSSA members and \$525 for non-members  
2 days in class

Follow-up to the concepts presented in INSTALL201 for installer practitioners in training, this course is to be taken after gaining some installation experience. Focus is on larger components such as treatment plants and more challenging sites.

## **Lagoon**

### **LAG201**

Fee - \$300 for BCOSSA members and \$375 for non-members  
1 day in class

Provides students with knowledge in planning, filings, input selection/determining lagoon location and application, introduction to pump and control systems and tips on installation, maintenance and troubleshooting, how to write the maintenance plan, maintenance items and common problems that can occur, conducting observations and methods of maintenance of lagoon systems.

## **Soil Assessment - Theory & Practice**

### **SOIL201** Prerequisites: WOWTC101 or ES910/911

Fee - \$850 for BCOSSA members and \$975 for non-members  
5 days in class

From soil identification to site assessment and methods used for determining hydraulic loading rates, this course presents the basics behind the role of soil for wastewater treatment and dispersal.

## **Soil Assessment - Theory & Practice Part 2**

### **SOIL202**

Fee - \$400 for BCOSSA members and \$525 for non-members  
2 days in class

## **Planning Trickle Gravity Discharge Area Systems**

### **PLAN201**

Fee - \$300 for members of BCOSSA and \$375 for non-members

1 day in class

This course provides the knowledge for planning, filings, input selection/determining best choice for the trickling gravity system.

## **Planning Trickling Gravity & Dosed-to Gravity Systems**

### **PLAN202**

Fee - \$300 for BCOSSA members and \$375 for non-members  
1 day in class

Provides students the knowledge for planning, filings, input selection/determining best choice for the site where gravity systems are a viable choice.

## **Pumps and Controls**

### **PLAN203**

Fee - \$300 for members of BCOSSA and \$375 for non-members  
1 day in class

This course introduces students to pump and control systems, their features, means for selection, tips on installation, as well as maintenance and troubleshooting.

## **Planning -Pressure Distribution Systems**

### **PLAN204**

Fee - \$400 for BCOSSA members and \$525 for non-members  
2 days in class

This course provides students with the knowledge to plan pressure distribution systems and concepts of timed dosing.

## **Planning-Sand Mounds and Sand Lined Trenches**

### **PLAN205**

Fee - \$300 for BCOSSA members and \$375 for non-members  
1 day in class

Provides knowledge to plan sand mounds and sand lined trenches. Students will learn about the treatment potential of sand and how to make choices on a site by site basis.

## **Planning-Drawing Preparation**

### **PLAN206**

Fee - \$300 for BCOSSA members and \$375 for non-members  
1 day in class

This course prepares students to clearly draw systems for filing purposes. This course provides students with the skill to use scale, understand measurement criteria and clearly identify system components on a plan.

## **Concepts of Maintenance and Writing O&M Plans**

### **PLAN207**

Fee - \$300 for BCOSSA members and \$375 for non-members  
1 day in class

This course covers the maintenance requirements a Planner needs to know about different types of systems, impact from different usage demands, and how to write maintenance plans for filings.

## Water Softener Discharges DO Harm Septic Systems

Mark Gross, PhD. Training Manager at Orenco Systems Inc.

Contrary to what some people say, water softener backwash poses a problem, not only to septic tanks and drainfields, but also to advanced treatment systems. When the water softener resin is backwashed two or three times a week, concentrated brine enters the wastewater stream as a slug of 38 to 112 gallons each backwash cycle. This causes two problems. One problem is that the septic tank discharges solids into the drainfield, which can cause the soil to plug and the drainfield to fail. Also, if there is a secondary treatment component, such as a media filter or ATU, it will perform abnormally. The simple solution to these problems is to route backwash brine directly into the drainfield.

Although research on the effects of softener brine was performed at NSF and the University of Wisconsin, this research did not include septic tanks and did not reflect real-world conditions. The NSF study used complete-mix activated-sludge ATUs, not septic tanks. In studies with septic tanks, which are quiescent (not mixed), the high concentration of salt introduced by backwash brine causes stratification in the tank. The salt water dives to the bottom of the tank, and the fresh water rides across the surface of the brine layer. The heavy salt water can actually lift the sludge from the bottom of the tank, washing it into the downstream components. Septic tanks that receive water softener brine have been observed to have no distinct layers of sludge, scum, and clear zone, as they should have in order to perform primary treatment. The 1978 University of Wisconsin study, which dealt only with the soil dispersal component, not septic tanks, did not conclude whether or not water softener backwash brine is harmful to septic systems, and the study suggests at least five times, that additional research is needed. Since that study, researchers have found evidence of both good and bad effects of water softener backwash brine upon soil dispersal systems. However, field observations of side-by-side dispersal systems in a shared mound showed that the trenches receiving the effluent with water softener brine formed a thick, gelatinous slime layer that clogged the infiltrative surface, while the trenches receiving no salt water discharge remained open with a normal microbial clogging layer.

Until conclusive research is performed, the evidence of observation and common sense must be trusted. Sodium concentrations over 3500 mg/L inhibit anaerobic digestion. Chloride concentrations over 180 mg/L also inhibit

microbial growth. Over the course of history, all cultures have used salt as a preservative and disinfectant. It simply makes common sense that high concentrations of salt will inhibit the growth of microorganisms used for wastewater treatment. Observation supports this assumption: a field study of 18 wastewater treatment systems in Virginia clearly showed that nitrogen removal was inhibited in systems receiving water softener backwash brine.

For these reasons, just as managers of municipal systems prohibit the discharge of salty wastes into their systems, most of the manufacturers of advanced wastewater treatment systems have clauses in their warranties voiding the warranty if water softener backwash brine is discharged to the treatment system. Homeowners who want to avoid this by rerouting the backwash brine away from the septic tank are often told that it would require cutting of concrete footings and floors at a cost of "thousands of dollars." Yet, in the Virginia field study, five water softener backwash discharges were routed out of the wastewater system for less than \$100 per home using simple plumbing components. A pipe from the softener can lead directly to the distribution box or discharge basin. This simple, inexpensive measure prevents septic tank and treatment system failure and keeps the system warranty in effect.

Given the abundant evidence for the harmful effects of brine, and given how easy it is to keep these discharges out of septic systems, it makes sense for regulators to require water softeners to be installed in such a way that they pose no problems for wastewater treatment systems.

### Giles Environmental Engineering

On-Site Sewage Treatment and Disposal  
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Your Association is a member of the Sewerage System Leadership Council and has attended all of its meetings and participated in the discussions and debates on a variety of issues that directly affect the industry and you.

The Ministry of Health have recently advised the Council that it sees the need for a complete review of the Sewerage System Regulation in terms of its wording in order to resolve several issues facing Practitioners, Professionals, Health Authorities, local governments and the public. The Ministry has re-affirmed the direction and goals of the regulation and is not considering going back in time to the old ways, but instead, to resolve the issues identified in the context of team approach, industry performance and accountability to organizations that register Practitioners and Professionals.

The Council is to be an integral part of the Regulations review process before it goes into the hands of the government's legal and legislative group for the wording changes to be approved or amended to meet legal requirements.

In addition to the "smaller" changes needed for clarification, BCOSSA has from its position put forward the "key" issues that need addressing, namely: (a) Health Authority due diligence, administration and enforcement of the Regulation, (b) Practitioner and Professional supervision and/or job site oversight, (c) Use of non-authorized persons by Professionals, and (d) improved definition of "standard practice".

On a different note, BCOSSA submitted to the Ministry of Health on February 7, 2007 the Technical Review Committee's completed Standard Practice Manual. As at the time of this writing, no release date by the Ministry of the new SPM has been announced. When the new SPM is released, the old SPM will have a life for a few months and authorized persons may use either for conducting their work. During this overlap period the BCOSSA Technical Review Committee will undertake a "roll-out" of the SPM.

Also, the Education & Curriculum Committee will revise the course content to match up to the new SPM during the overlap period.

Many of you have heard about the "Paper Audit" being conducted by the Ministry of Health through the auspices of BCOSSA. A contract has been awarded to Trax Developments Ltd. to conduct the 800 filing paper audit in accordance to the RFP. A preliminary report of the audit is expected to be provided to the Council on Sept 6, 2007 with the final report being released to the Council by the end of October.

The results of the paper audit will also play a significant role in the Regulation Review process mentioned above.

In addition, BCOSSA is working with the Union of BC Municipalities and has responded to their concerns and issues through the SPM and other activities.

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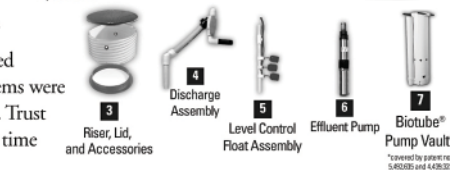
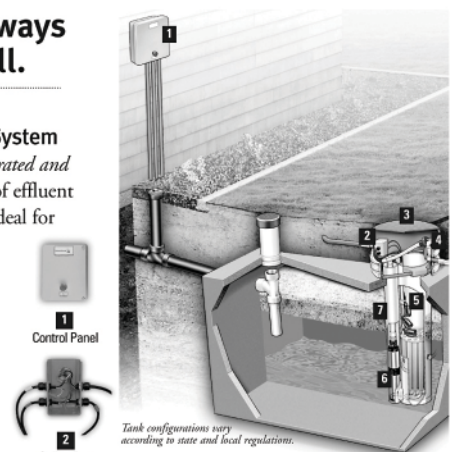
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## 12th Annual AGM Conference & Tradeshow

Betty Holtskog, BCOSSA Director

The BCOSSA AGM/Conference is set for March 14-16 at the Coast Hotel & Convention Centre, Langley BC. Our theme this year will be Communities-Onsite, Infrastructure of the Future.

We're looking forward to another great program and tradeshow!! In addition to our indoor tradeshow we are delighted to announce that larger equipment will be welcome to display outside the venue.

As we are still at the organizational stage and our program is yet to be completed we would like you to consider this a **Call for Papers!** If you or anyone you know has material that you think might be interesting to your colleagues and meets the general theme of the conference please send an outline to [john.rowse@bcossa.com](mailto:john.rowse@bcossa.com). Papers MUST BE of general interest and not designed to advertise a particular product or company!! Speakers will be given about 45 minutes to discuss their topic.

For those of you who wish to participate in our trade show please fill out the form attached and return it to BCOSSA. Don't miss the opportunity to hear and learn from our presenters, to meet suppliers and others in your industry, discover new products at the Trade Show, as well as the opportunity to network!! **Mark these dates on your calendar and book your room early!**

## Subdivision, Practitioner Roles and Responsibilities

John Rowse. BCOSSA Executive Director.

As health authorities and local governments struggle with the new realities of the onsite wastewater industry and develop new policies and procedures for land use, Registered Practitioners are being asked to fulfill a role in the development of subdivision.

Subdivision of property outside of developed areas requires the assessment of lots for the purposes of wastewater and water infrastructure. This process is subject to the Subdivision regulation and is specific to determining whether a lot can be serviced and what size that lot could or should be and is NOT the same as a site investigation as outlined in the Sewerage System regulation or Standard Practice Manual. It is also important for practitioners to know that the only acceptable porosity test under the Subdivision regulation is the percolation test.

The practitioner's involvement in the process may include: Provision of percolation test information

- Provision of soil analysis
- Identification of suitable area or areas on a proposed lot that may be used for system installation
- Provision of a report for the developer on the information obtained

Practitioners must be very cautious that they DO NOT make or imply any "recommendation" for the subdivision of the property to proceed. Additionally the practitioner should be clear that the information provided is for information to the health authority and is not a site assessment for system installation.

Work in this area can be very challenging and rewarding but may subject a practitioner to substantial risk of liability if any recommendation or warranty is made. It is the responsibility of the health authority and the approving officer to make recommendation to proceed with a subdivision under the Subdivision regulation.



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# BCOSSA

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Email: [info@bcossa.com](mailto:info@bcossa.com) WEB SITE: [www.bcoassa.com](http://www.bcoassa.com)

**March 14 – 16, 2008**

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Please register my company for \_\_\_\_ 8' x 10' spaces @ \$625.00 per space. I understand that each space registration includes 1 conference passes. (If you have registered more than one space, please provide the additional names on a separate sheet of paper and include with this registration).

Booth Includes: One Table, Draped Booth, One duplex 110V power outlet, 1 conference pass.

Total Space Fee: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$625.00 per space)  
GST # 869779199 (6%) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total Remittance \$ \_\_\_\_\_

METHOD OF PAYMENT: (check one)  Cheque payable to BCOSSA  VISA  MASTERCARD

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

The total number of booth spaces may be limited, with allocation based registration on a first come, first served basis.

Please Read & Sign the Following:

"The British Columbia On Site Sewage Association and the Cascades Casino – Coast Hotel & Convention Centre (hereinafter referred to as the "Conference Group) shall not be responsible for any losses or damages that may occur to the exhibitor or the exhibitor's employee(s) and/or quests or property from any cause whatsoever, prior to, during, or subsequent to the period covered by the exhibit contract. The exhibitor signing this contract expressly releases the Conference Group from and agrees to indemnify same against any and all claims due to carelessness of the exhibitor, which claims must be paid for by the exhibitor causing same. The Conference Group will not be responsible for damage of loss of any means whatsoever (theft, fire, etc) for any or all material or equipment used by the exhibitor. Exhibitors are therefore required to carry appropriate insurance with respect to possible damage or loss and public liability against injury to person or property of others."

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Chris Flint AON Stenhouse Insurance

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Option 2 includes Commercial General Liability and Contractor Pollution liability for \$1650 with a \$2500.00 deductible for 1,000,000.

These insurance products can only be purchased by BCOSSA members. For applications and more information please contact Chris Flint at AON Reed Stenhouse at 250-413-2214 or go to the BCOSSA website at [www.bcosa.com](http://www.bcosa.com).

## Why Advertise in the Innovator?

The Innovator is sent to companies directly interested in the onsite sewage treatment and dispersal industry.

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Membership Dues for one year \$100.00 GST(#869779199) \$6.00 TOTAL \$106.00  
NOTE: Being a member of BCOSSA reduces tuition fees for the courses required to become a Registered Practitioner as required by the new Sewerage System Regulation.

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Please indicate the sectors that best describes you:

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|---|---|-----------------------------------|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Private Inspector    | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineer             | <input type="checkbox"/> Supplier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government Regulator | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                |                                   |

If you opt to renew via credit card, please complete this section and fax to BCOSSA at 250-391-8446. A copy of the credit card debit will be forwarded to you with your membership card.

CC# \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Rec'd: \_\_\_\_\_ Previous Member  Yes  No Member # \_\_\_\_\_