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# THE TOWNSMAN



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QUESTION OF THE WEEK

**Do you agree with the federal government's passage of Bill C-19, that lead to the abolition of the federal gun registry and having the records destroyed?**

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## How Cranbrook's water travels from creek to home

FROM A TRICKLE TO A ROAR: PART TWO



JULY 27, 2011

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I am on a tour of Cranbrook's twin water collection basins, Gold Creek and Joseph Creek, with director of public works Joe McGowan. Already I have tracked water from the tip of Gold Creek watershed, on the top of Cranbrook mountain, down to where it flows out of the basin as a creek and into the old Gold Creek dam.

We follow the pipe line from the dam to the city's diversion structure beside Gold Creek Road. The pipe was replaced a decade ago; before that we had concrete pipes with no gaskets.

"Three to four times as much water escaped as made it out. If we needed 1 million gallons, we needed to take 3-4 million," says Joe.

We go inside the diversion structure, which is kept under lock and key to protect from vandalism.

It's very loud inside the tin building. Instead of a floor, there are metal pathways over the three creeks that converge here. As well as the Gold Creek water piped here, it's the natural convergence of Joseph Creek and Baker Creek.

The city has no interest in Baker Creek, Joe explains.

"Baker Creek runs alongside Gold Creek Road so we don't use it for fear of contaminants."

It is diverted straight through the structure and out the other side, from south to north. To the west, Joseph Creek flows in above ground. In the middle, it meets up with the water from Gold Creek. To the north, the water the city does not need flows out: Baker Creek, Joseph Creek and Gold Creek as one. Right now, that is 4,242 imperial gallons a minute. That stream is what we know as Joseph Creek when it reaches city limits.



Philips Reservoir holds 500 million imperial gallons of water year-round.

Related Links:

- How you can conserve water
- How Cranbrook gets its water
- What Cranbrook's future could look like
- Woman rescued from flooding Joseph Creek
- Mark Creek rises two feet with rain
- Joseph Creek watch begins again
- Water conservation education underway
- Cold weather drops Joseph Creek level
- Joseph Creek floods
- Joseph Creek floods
- Cranbrook's Joseph Creek on flood watch

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- Localized flooding possible in Cranbrook, City warns

"What you see of Joseph Creek through the city is what we don't take," explains Joe.

But, flowing east out of the structure is water to the Phillips Reservoir, that mighty body of water that holds the city's combined water supply.

Beside a wall of the structure sits an electrical box. It can be controlled right here, but also remotely anywhere with internet. This is how the city can choose which creek it takes water from - back to the snow-melt watch we were talking about early. Press a button and all of Gold Creek goes to the overflow. Press another and it's Joseph Creek instead.

Soon we are at the Phillips Reservoir, which holds 500 million gallons of water, to meet water quality operator Kyle Videto. They take me into a structure below the reservoir, down some stairs and into a narrow, 375-foot long tunnel underneath the water. "I hope you're not claustrophobic!" Joe queries. I'm not, which is lucky because above us is 100 feet of dirt and water.

Through the tunnel runs a 30-inch diameter pipe that takes water from the reservoir into the city. The pipe turns vertical at the end of the tunnel, which I can barely see. It rises 20 feet into the water and ends in a 10-foot by 10-foot cage. Here the water sucks out of the reservoir and continues its journey to the homes and businesses of Cranbrook.

There is a valve here that can turn off the water supply if you have the right tools and know-how, Kyle tells me. It would take a strong man 20 minutes of the hardest physical effort he has ever given to do it, but it can be done.

Next the pair take me into another building by the reservoir, where chlorine and fluoride are added to the water. The recipe is 1 part chlorine for every 1.8 million parts of water, I'm told.

"Chlorine attacks bugs by oxidising them. Bugs have a mucous membrane. The chlorine strips away the mucous and the oxygen in the water kills the bugs. If there are a lot of bugs, we increase the chlorine," says Joe. "But the amount of chlorine in your tap water almost never changes."

Water is manually tested here constantly, as it is at a myriad of other places through the system. And those manual tests are merely double-checking the continuous instrument measurements that have already been taken.

It's the end of the tour but Joe explains that from the reservoir, the water travels along a 30-inch pipe into the city. From there, it branches in to smaller pipes and passes through 13 pressure-reducing stations.

"If we did not reduce water pressure, depending on where you are in town, you would stand in front of your shower and the shower head would blow a hole through your chest," he dramatically explains.

There are also three wells inside the city, each around 300 feet deep, that together can supply three million gallons a day. Joe calls it a redundant water supply - we almost never use it but it's important to have a Plan B.

As we return to the city, I'm struck with the thought that we have abundant access to water here in Cranbrook. That's true, Joe says.

"Cranbrook is very fortunate with respect to its geographic location and geological make-up. It's remarkable. Couple that with our forefather's foresight and we have got something any city would be lucky to have."

So why is conservation of water so vital? That's a question for another day. See Wednesday's Townsman for Part 3 of From A Trickle To A Roar.

## Comments

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