



### **Air quality monitoring remains top priority**

By Jools Andrés, Executive Director

Sunshine Coast Clean Air Society

In the *SCCAS Winter 2015 Newsletter*, SCCAS Director Louis Legal outlined areas that require baseline air quality data collection and ways that the Society can work toward securing funding for designing and establishing SCCAS's *Baseline Air Quality Data Collection for Howe Sound* project. (That article has been adopted as a position paper by SCCAS.)

Since its publication, several events of note have helped to shape strategic approach and AQ monitoring project development as SCCAS moves forward in its efforts to ensure clean air for Sunshine Coast residents.

**BC CLEAR** – After successfully passing The Fraser Basin Council's BC Clean Air Research Fund (BC CLEAR) Phase I application for funding long-term air quality data collection and monitoring for the Sunshine Coast and Howe Sound, the Phase

II proposal was rejected because of weakness in methodology; however, FBC invited SCCAS to reapply in the following grant cycle. To that end, the Society is now working closely with AQ meteorologist Dr. Douw Steyn, Professor of Boundary Layer Meteorology, Mesoscale Meteorology, and Air Pollution Meteorology at UBC. The next BC CLEAR program was announced hours before this publication; deadline for submission is October 30, 2015. A preliminary meeting with Dr. Steyn, Louis Legal, and ED Jools Andrés is scheduled for late September.

**Health Impact Symposium** – SCCAS coordinated and hosted an AQ symposium on April 25, 2015 at the Seaside Centre in Sechelt (*Keep Our Air Clean – What We Can Do*). Although there was a modest turnout (approx. 45), in part due to concurrent community events, excellent content from our speakers and strong engagement from attendees was encouraging. A summary of our report is featured on page 3 and a detailed report sent to our major funder (the Sunshine Coast Regional District, 2014 Rural Grants-In-Aid

*New funding is needed to help the Society to continue efforts to establish long-term AQ monitoring on the Sunshine Coast.*

*Climate Action  
Committee formed!  
See page 4.*

program, \$1,500), is available on request.

**Further funding** – This spring and summer the SCCAS has been successful in securing support to refine project methodology for long-term AQ data collection in the region (Sunshine Coast Regional District, \$1,300); and for overall Society operations and BC CLEAR grant application and administration costs (BC Ministry of Environment, \$5,000).

**Research assistance** – UBC's Dr. Douw Steyn is connecting SCCAS with graduate students in meteorology to explore mutual benefit by combining their doctoral research with the Society's AQ monitoring project objectives. Look for more on this exciting development over the next months.

**Other programs** – The BC Ministry of Environment has announced that the provincial Wood Stove Exchange program funding will be renewed for 2016; SCCAS will know their funding amount before the end of the year. (In 2015, SCCAS was awarded \$15,000 and administered 30 exchanges.) In addition, the District of Sechelt has granted SCCAS \$1,500 to augment rebates to those replacing old wood stoves with non-wood burning options. See page 4 for more information.

**Connecting** – Please check our website and social media pages for regular updates on these and other matters (see links below).

#### **SCCAS welcomes financial contributions, large or small.**

Even though SCCAS has been able to keep small grants coming in, private contributions are still needed to keep our organization running productively. Contact SCCAS Treasurer Valerie Thorsteinson at [info@cleanaironthecoast.com](mailto:info@cleanaironthecoast.com) if you would like to help.

*donations  
welcome*

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## Citizen engagement crucial to prevent air quality degradation

**Louis Legal, SCCAS Director, interviews UBC AQ expert Dr. Douw Steyn, Professor, Boundary Layer, Mesoscale, and Air Pollution Meteorology, UBC**

*LL: As an air quality expert, is air pollution a real problem worldwide? What about locally, in the Sunshine Coast/Howe Sound area?*

*DS: Air pollution is one of the grand environmental problems we face today. It ranks with global warming and the attendant effects on terrestrial and marine ecosystems, pollution of fresh water, desertification, [and] destruction of natural habitat and the resultant extinction of species. It has local (especially urban), regional, and global expressions. Most concerning is the hemispheric distribution of long-lived pollutants. When compared with badly polluted jurisdictions, Sunshine Coast / Howe Sound does not suffer from degraded air quality.*

*You have been involved in a number of air quality research projects in Howe Sound. What were your major findings in this regard?*

The partial de-industrialization of Howe Sound has resulted in a marked improvement of air quality, especially reduced sulphur from pulp mill operations. During particular meteorological conditions, Howe Sound is the recipient of photochemical smog from sources in the Lower Fraser Valley.

*Government cutbacks have reduced the monitoring of air quality on the Sunshine Coast to the point where the only continuous monitoring is done by Howe Sound Pulp & Paper in Langdale. How important is it to establish continuous ongoing air quality monitoring for Howe Sound and the Sunshine Coast (think local fire in Sechelt this summer)?*

In order to protect its status as a relatively unpolluted region, and especially in the context of planned industrial expansion (LNG operations and municipal solid waste incineration), it is imprudent to not monitor air quality widely in the Sunshine Coast/Howe Sound area in order to establish baseline conditions and to



*The Old Sechelt Mine forest fire created dense smoke and extreme conditions on the Sunshine Coast and beyond this summer. This photo was taken at 9:30 am on July 5, 2015. Streetlights are on due to lack of sunlight on solar switch sensors. James Pawley photo.*

protect against any deterioration of air quality.

*What's the most important thing that we can do as citizens of the Sunshine Coast to ensure that the air we breathe is safe?*

Take control of your own air by getting citizens engaged, develop citizen initiatives such as SCCAS, and ensure that regulators are aware of your concerns about your air quality.

*As a Society where should we be concentrating our efforts with respect to air quality?*

SCCAS should engage all Sunshine Coast/Howe Sound residents and help them understand the importance of not allowing industrial development that needlessly degrades air quality. Work to reduce emissions from existing industrial sources, [and] engage with conservation, tourism, and other groups to develop a collaborative strategy to protect your air quality.



## Symposium report

### Keep Our Air Safe - What We Can Do

**Date/time:** April 25, 2015 – 10 am – 4 pm  
**Location:** Seaside Centre, 5790 Teredo St., Sechelt, BC  
**Speakers:** **Dr. Douw Steyn**, Air Quality Meteorologist, UBC, Department of Earth Sciences  
**Dr. Paul Martiquet**, Medical Health Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health, Sunshine Coast  
**Julie Saxton**, Environmental Specialist, Air Quality Planner, Metro Vancouver  
**Ruth Simons**, Executive Director, The Future of Howe Sound Society  
**Dr. James Pawley**, SCCAS Director, Prof. Emeritus, University of Wisconsin  
**Attendance:** 45 – 50  
**Audience:** Primarily concerned seniors; industry representatives (Howe Sound Pulp and Paper, Gibsons Recycling); local and regional politicians; residents of the Sunshine Coast, North Shore, Powell River, and Gambier and Gabriola islands were in attendance.  
**Media:** Sustainable Coast Magazine  
 The Tye  
 Coast Reporter (pre- and post-event coverage)

**Initiatives identified:** Attendees participated in a panel discussion facilitated by SCCAS board and speakers, then explored specific topics in breakout groups and identified the main focus for SCCAS activities as follows:

- collaborate with other organizations protecting Howe Sound from industrial air pollution, particularly LNG operations and waste incineration;
- work with the SCRCD to ban backyard burning throughout in Area A;
- educate the public about the health hazards of wood smoke;
- continue to support Vancouver Coastal Health's effort to pass an Enhanced Smoking Bylaw in Gibsons and Sechelt; and
- continue to reduce air pollution through the provincial Wood Stove Exchange Program.

**Sponsorship:** The main sponsor for this event was the Sunshine Coast Regional District, Rural Grants-In-Aid Program (2014). Additional private donations were also received and paid for some of the operational expenses and a catered lunch. The SCCAS is very grateful for this support and the educational opportunity that came about as a result.



The Sunshine Coast Clean Air Society also wishes to express heartfelt thanks to the participating speakers for generously sharing their time and expertise.

## Keep informed...

...link up with us online on our website, on Facebook, and on Twitter.

Membership in the  
 Sunshine Coast Clean Air Society is **FREE!**  
 Sign up on our website by clicking on the  
 Get Involved > Become A Member menu options  
 on the main page.

## Upcoming meetings

### Next board meeting, November, 2015

Date, time & location TBA

### 2016 AGM, January or February, 2016

Date, time & location TBA

Check our website and social media (see links below) for details when they become available.



## Wood Stove Exchange program - 2015 & 2016

Funding from BC Air Quality's 2015 Wood Stove Exchange program allowed SCCAS to provide 30 rebates to those replacing old, highly polluting wood-burning appliances to new, efficient, low-emissions models. Thanks are due to our participating vendors, Paul's Chimney, Sechelt Fireplace, Cozy Homes, Clean Sweep, and Home Hardware. We couldn't implement this program without you!

The Ministry of Environment, who allocates funding from the province for this program, announced new funding and proposal requirements for the 2016 WSE program on August 25, 2015. See the BC Air Quality website for details ([bcairquality.ca](http://bcairquality.ca)).

### WISE HEATING OPTIONS

*Want to make the best decision for both our health and environment and save on costs over time? Check out the SCCAS Home Heating Buyers Guide on the [cleanaironthecoast.com](http://cleanaironthecoast.com) website.*



### Non-wood burning heating is best

#### — SCCAS offers extra incentives!

The Sunshine Coast Clean Air Society recognizes that any wood-burning appliance creates particulates that can cause negative health and environmental impacts. To encourage those making home heating upgrades to choose non-wood fuels, SCCAS applied to the District of Sechelt for funding to increase rebates to those who qualify within the WSE program, but choose to use electric appliances. We are pleased to announce that an additional \$250 will be made available to five Sunshine Coast participating residents who upgrade to non-woodburning heating on a first-come-first-served basis. Please check our website for an announcement in mid-December.

SCCAS is grateful to the Ministry of Environment and to the District of Sechelt for their commitment to clean air.



### August board meeting action highlights

~ A mobile air monitoring unit on the south end of the Sunshine Coast and a continuous monitoring unit to assess wood smoke in Pender Harbour are being researched by directors Louis Legal and Ryan Logtenberg in conjunction with MoE air quality specialist Graham Veale.

~ **Director** Ryan Logtenberg will prepare and send an email to send to members regarding the board decision to form a new **Climate Action Committee**. Ideas for campaigns were discussed; committee goals are being defined and an initiative announcement could be released before the end of 2015.

### New SCCAS Board structure

Elizabeth McNeill stepped down from her position as SCCAS board president in May; Directors Ryan Logtenberg and James Pawley have taken on the role of co-chair vice-presidents.

Thanks and kudos to Elizabeth for her amazing energy and leadership as president. She will continue to be actively involved (whew!) and will serve as SCCAS Secretary.

Louis Legal, Joe Harrison, Valerie Thorsteinson (treasurer), and Jeff Hoag continue to actively and generously serve in their director roles.

don't take your clean **Air** for granted...

### Clean air means...

- lower asthma rates
- fewer lung-related diseases
- increased enjoyment of the outdoors
  - a healthier planet

### SCCAS

### mission statement

To educate our community on the importance and benefits of clean air and thus to enhance the quality of life for future generations.