

Water watch

Local group says conservation is key.

- The Guardian (Charlottetown)
- 9 Aug 2014
- BY DAVE STEWART dstewart@theguardian.pe.ca [Twitter.com/DveStewart](https://twitter.com/DveStewart)



Bruce Smith, co-ordinator with the Winter River-Tracadie Bay Watershed Association, uses a small V-shaped dam to measure the depth and calculate the flow of streams and springs in the watershed. July's dry weather has taken a toll on the flow.

The group that watches over Charlottetown's sole source of water says residents need to be extra vigilant about consumption.

George Coade, chairman of the Winter River-Tracadie Bay Watershed Association, says five of the six springs that they monitor on the Brackley branch of the river had stopped flowing prior to Wednesday's rainfall.

The association has asked to meet with officials with Charlottetown Water and Sewer Utility to highlight their concerns and emphasize the current seasonal water restrictions that are in place. "Our springs are starting to dry up and that's a huge concern because it will impact us down the road until we start getting more rain," Coade said.

The month of July was especially dry.

Linda Libby with Environment Canada told The Guardian that 44 millimetres of rain fell on Charlottetown in July, about half of what it normally gets for the month.

Coade said more dry weather like that and conditions will be as dire as they were in the summer of 2012 when drought-like conditions forced the city to act and bring in water restrictions.

"We've sent the city a letter of concern . . . so that we could sit down and talk to them about it. We hope there aren't any lawns getting watered."

Charlottetown is in the process of developing a new water source in Miltonvale but it won't be on stream until 2016.

Coade said the association has a good working relationship with the city, saying he knows the city cares about what is going on.

Coun. Eddie Rice, chairman of the city's Water and Sewer Utility committee, said that meeting will definitely happen.

"We're both on the same wave length and we're both concerned about one thing — water from that area," Rice said.

The councillor noted that the city has been educating people the past couple of years on the benefits of water conservation, with rebate programs for things like low flow showerheads and toilets.

He said the city has reduced what it draws from the watershed by six per cent last year and nine per cent in 2012.

"It shows me that we have gotten the attention of the people of Charlottetown," Rice said. "The fact winter was so heavy, people automatically assumed the water went into the ground. We're in a dry spell right now but we are monitoring it, as always, every day."

Bruce Smith, co-ordinator for the watershed, says the springs in the Brackley branch were flowing at one litre per second prior to Wednesday's rainfall "which is very small" and had increased to 2.9 litres after the rains stopped on Thursday.

Smith said the dry weather and extraction issues are also hurting the habitat in the watershed.

"We're hoping once Miltonvale comes on it makes a big difference," Smith said. "We can't lay all blame on the city. It's not an easy answer."

Rice said not only is the city working on the Miltonvale project but it has also begun looking for yet another source.

"We're not stupid enough to believe that Miltonvale is going to be the answer to everything. We have already sought out five other locations for yet another field," Rice said.