
Action Plan for Safe Drinking Water in British Columbia

Presentation to Cabinet

June 19, 2002

Overview

- Committed to comprehensive groundwater legislation (New Era) and Drinking Water Protection legislation (Throne Speech)
- First step: appoint independent panel, chaired by David Marshall, in fall 2001.
 - Evaluated unproclaimed DWPA, reported to government earlier this year.
- Builds on: Provincial Health Officer Report, 2001; Auditor General's Report, 1999

Government is Taking Action

- Majority of British Columbians already benefit from high quality drinking water.
- Action plan proposes a number of improvements with the goal of making a good system better.
- Takes the recommendations from recent reports and centres action around 8 key principles for safe drinking water.

Safe Drinking Water Principles

1. The safety of drinking water is a health issue.
2. Source protection is a critical part of drinking water protection.
3. Providing safe drinking water requires an integrated approach.

Safe Drinking Water Principles

4. All water systems need to be thoroughly assessed to determine risks.
5. Proper treatment and water distribution system integrity are important to protect human health.
6. Tap water must meet acceptable safety standards and be monitored .

Safe Drinking Water Principles

7. Small systems require a flexible system with safeguards.
8. Safe drinking water should be affordable, with users paying appropriate costs.

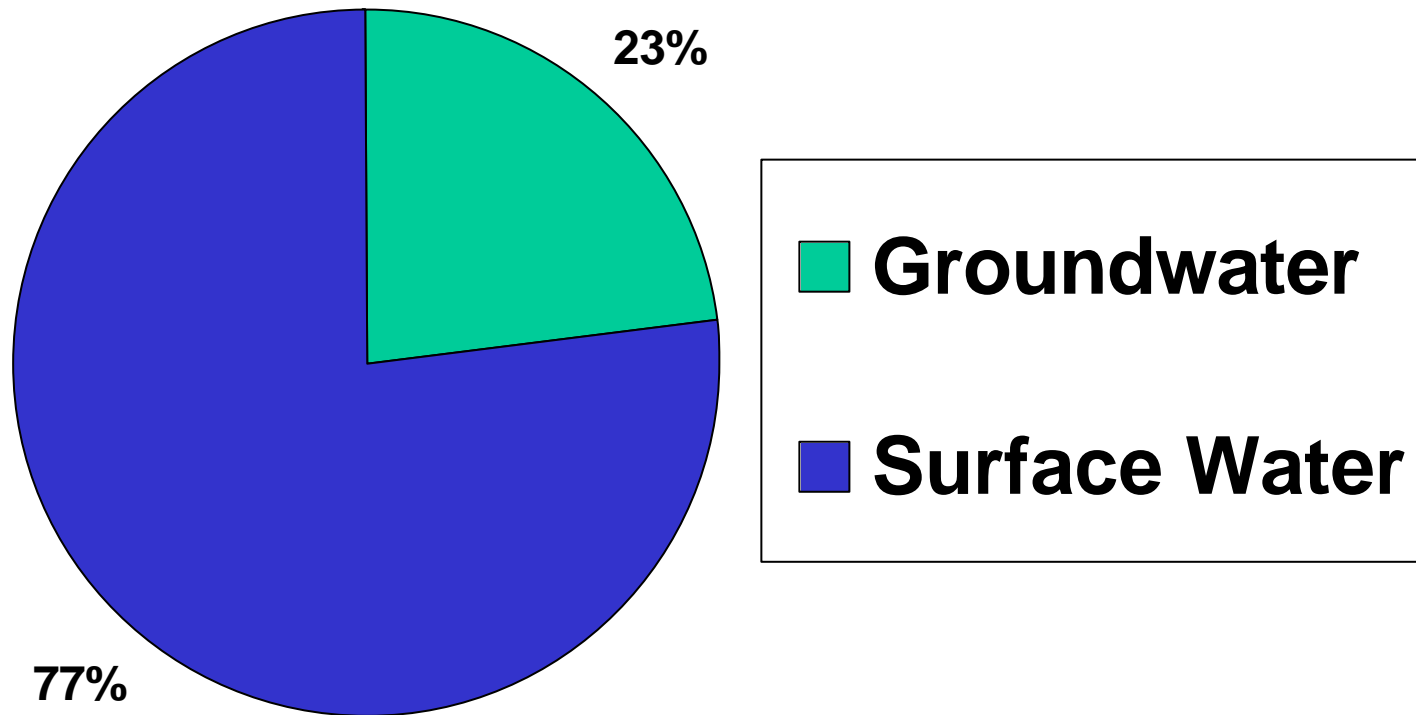
Drinking Water is a Health Issue

- Health Services Ministry: lead ministry for BC's Drinking Water Action Plan.
- Provincial Health Officer will oversee drinking water protection network.
- Health Authority Medical Health Officers work with PHO and oversee:
 - Public Health Inspectors and Engineers
 - New Drinking Water Officers.

An Integrated Approach

- Protecting water from source to tap.
- Health Services lead, but resource ministries will continue to fulfill their obligations to protect water sources.
- Inter-ministry committee to be established.
 - To identify emerging issues.
 - Develop integrated policy, as needed.

Source Protection is Critical



Source Protection is Critical

- Water, Land and Air Protection:
 - Establishes standards, monitors, and undertakes compliance and enforcement to protect surface and ground water quality.
 - Has increased funding for drinking water quality monitoring and maintained technical capacity in regional offices.
 - Introduce comprehensive groundwater legislation as per New Era commitments

Source Protection is Critical

- Establish Groundwater Advisory Board
- Develop a government plan for water conservation
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries will provide leadership on environmental farm management; committed, with its partners, \$4.4 million to increase manure storage capacity.

Source Protection is Critical

- Source protection is an important factor in land use planning.
- Drinking water protection plans can be prepared if necessary to protect human health.
 - Upon recommendation of PHO to the Minister of Health Services and Cabinet.
 - With socio-economic analysis performed to advise Cabinet of full impact on community.

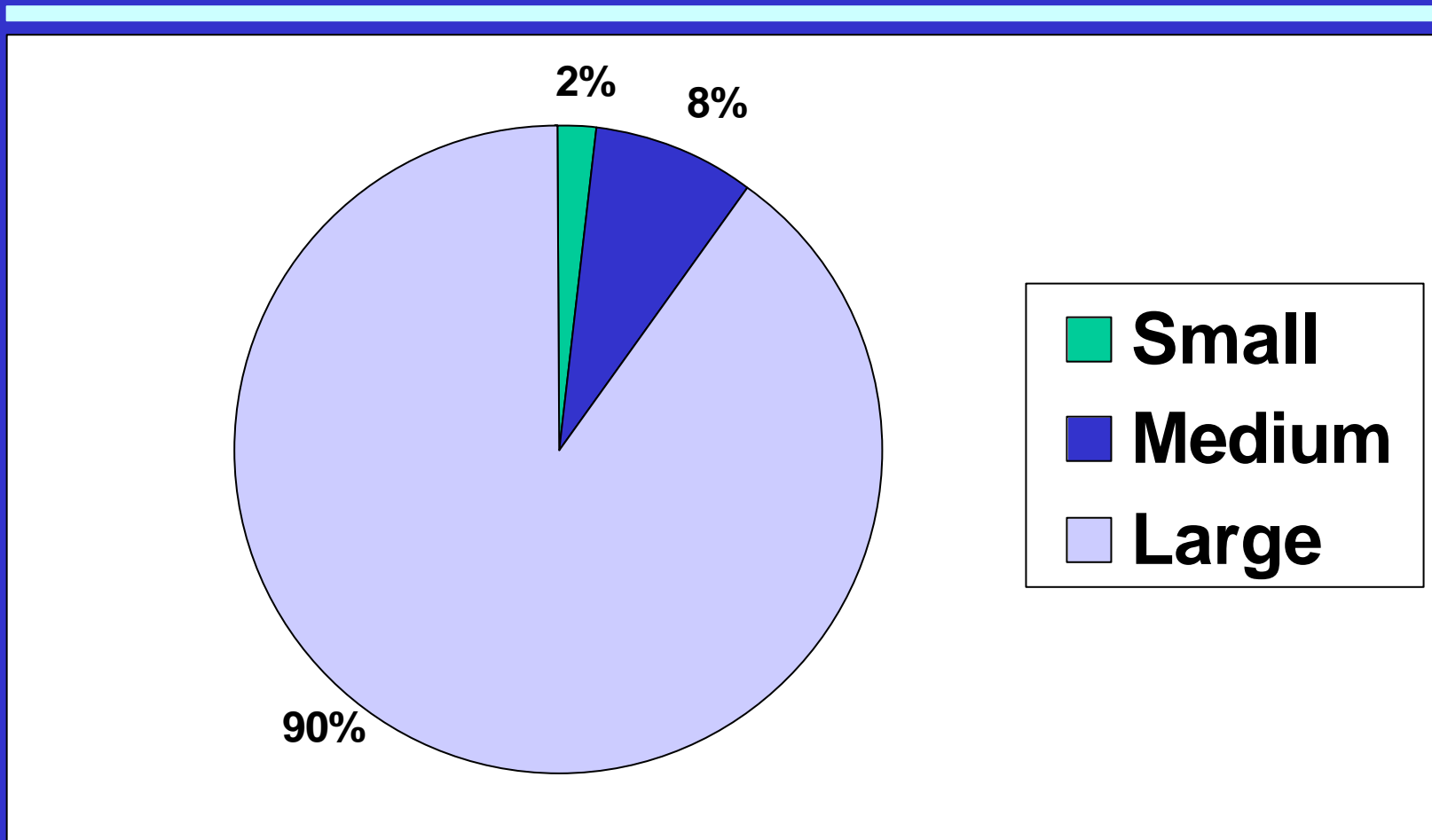
Source Protection is Critical

- MSRM will ensure land use plans deal with drinking water issues in a proactive manner.
- Work co-operatively with other agencies to determine necessity of protection plans.
- Results-based Forest Practices Code will strengthen obligation to maintain water quality.
- Goal: avoid the need for unilaterally imposed drinking water protection plans.

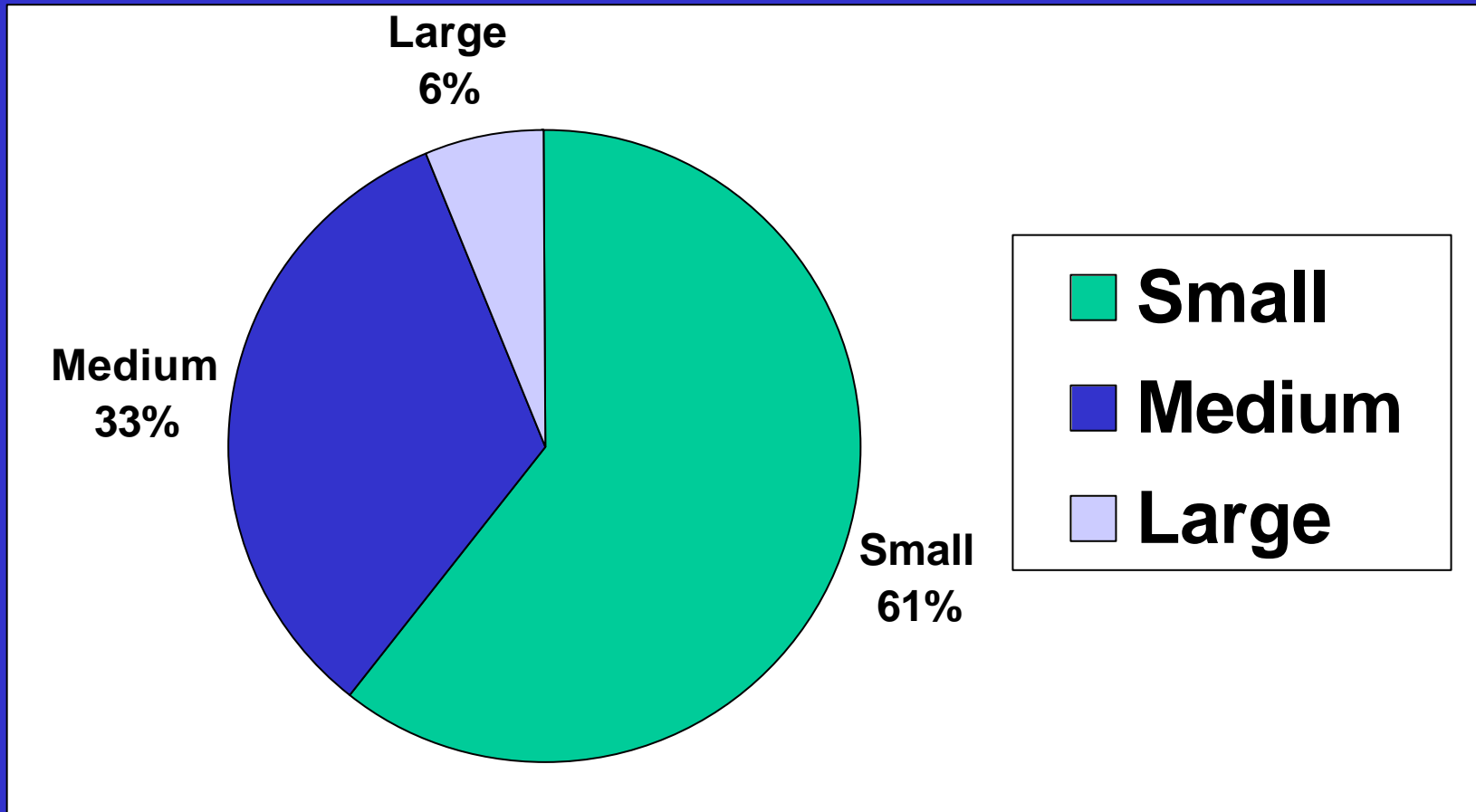
Protecting Our Water Systems

- Thorough assessments of water systems.
- Infrastructure investments to improve water treatment and maintain integrity of the system.
- Establishing and monitoring tap water standards.

Population by Water System



Breakdown of Water Systems



Sensitivity to Small Systems

- 3,300 systems in BC.
- Vast majority – 2,000 - are small systems (less than 15 connections).
- 1,100 medium sized systems (15-300 connections).
- 200 large sized systems (more than 300 connections). Majority of British Columbians served by large systems.

Cost Implications

- User pay principles recommended in reports – safe drinking water is not free.
- Short term costs associated with Action Plan - \$16 million annually.
 - Work with stakeholders on cost recovery options.
- Long term costs associated with future infrastructure needs.
 - Further analysis required on on-going basis, as Action Plan implemented.

Investments in Infrastructure

- To date, government has announced:

42 Water Projects

Worth \$109 million

Infrastructure Projects Across British Columbia

- Thompson/Okanagan and the Kootenays: 17 projects valued at \$53 million.
- Northern B.C.: 8 projects worth \$9 million.
- Vancouver Island/Coast: 7 projects for \$19 million.
- Lower Mainland/Southwest: 10 projects for \$27 million.

Safe Drinking Water

A priority for all British Columbians