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Food outlets probed in sewage blockage

Hillside targeted after waste spilled into creek

CAROLYN HEIMAN *Times Colonist*
cheiman@tc.canwest.com

Twenty-three food-service outlets along Hillside Avenue have been inspected recently by the Capital Regional District in an effort to pinpoint who is dumping grease into the sewer system.

The inspections were ordered after a sewer-line blockage caused toilet paper and human waste to spill into Bowker Creek. The sewage forced the Vancouver Island Health Authority to issue a warning for people to stay away from the water.

CRD manager Laura Taylor said seven food outlets in the area were found not in compliance of the region's Food Service Practice Code, which sets out rules on how to dispose of cooking grease.

She declined to name the food services, saying the CRD initially works co-operatively with business.

Source-control inspectors will follow up to ensure that two restaurants install grease traps and five others increase their traps' size. Failure to do so could result in fines — typically in the \$150 to \$200 range. Last year the CRD issued 24 tickets for noncompliance.

In April, City of Victoria crews were called to an area at Hillside and Doncaster Drive to investigate what they initially believed was a collapsed sewer line. Closer investigation found a large sewer line serving a threeblock area was blocked with cooking grease, causing sewer water to back into Bowker Creek.

Tiny cameras spying in sewer pipes failed to locate the source of a clump of cooking grease, and the CRD was then asked to investigate.

The CRD regulates the discharge of waste into the sanitary sewer system by businesses. Under the Food Service Practice Code, restaurants are to have grease traps to prevent grease from entering the system.

Gary Pleven, stormwater quality officer, said many people are unaware that they should not put grease down their drains.

"Most people only react when their pipes plug," he said. "As long as the water keeps draining, they just keep putting it down the drains."