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## **WATER EXPERT WILL OUTLINE COAL MINE CONCERNS AT PUBLIC MEETING**

### **Dr. Gilles Wendling will speak Sept. 13 at Fanny Bay Hall**

A water expert who is warning that a proposed coal mine could have a severe impact on drinking water for Baynes Sound residents will be the guest speaker at public meeting Sept. 13, 7 p.m., at the Fanny Bay Community Hall.

Dr. Gilles Wendling, a Nanaimo-based professional engineer who specializes in ground water and aquifers, will outline the potential impact of the proposal for a massive underground coal mine which would be located on Cowie Creek, between Buckley Bay and Fanny Bay.

The public meeting, sponsored by CoalWatch Comox Valley, will also include updates on the federal and provincial environmental assessment processes.

The first public comment period for the federal environmental assessment is currently underway, and hundreds of submissions have been posted, the vast majority of which express concern about both the mine and the proposed trucking route to Port Alberni.

"The overwhelming response from the public shows that there is very deep concern about all aspects of the coal mine," says CoalWatch chairperson John Snyder. "I think this demonstrates the need for the federal and provincial governments to establish a rigorous independent expert review panel with full public hearings.

"The strong public response also shows that it is vitally important to complete comprehensive mapping and modelling of the aquifers throughout the region before any further consideration is given to the coal mine. How can we possibly conduct a meaningful environmental review without a clear understanding of the relationship between aquifers and ground water in this area?"

Snyder said he is pleased that the federal environmental review has already garnered such a strong public response, but he is encouraging even more people to make submissions.

"If we want to ensure that we have the most rigorous environmental assessment possible, and a full mapping of the aquifers, the public is going to have to speak out strongly and clearly for these measures," he said.

The deadline for submissions in the first round of public comment is Sept. 20.

CoalWatch has received copies of the submissions submitted to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency from July 19th to August 30th. To view the submissions, or to get details on how to make your own submission, visit [www.coalwatch.ca](http://www.coalwatch.ca)