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MEDIA RELEASE

AAAS-SFU research: Ground water security compromised?

February 17, 2012

[Tweet](#) [Facebook](#) [Pinterest](#) [Email](#) [Print](#)**Contact:**Diana Allen, 778.782.3967, dallen@sfu.caCarol Thorbes, PAMR, 778.782.3035, cthorb@sfu.ca[Photo on Flickr](#)

Diana Allen, a Simon Fraser University expert on climate change impacts on groundwater systems, will speak at *Water Security in Canada*, a public forum, at the world's largest science fair in Vancouver tonight.

The forum runs Feb. 17, 7:30 to 9 p.m. in Room 109, the West Building of the Vancouver Convention Centre (VCC), at the 2012 *American Association for the Advancement of Science* (AAAS) conference. It's on until Feb. 20 at the VCC.

In her presentation about the fate of groundwater, Allen, an earth sciences professor, will address this conundrum: "Globally, groundwater extraction has facilitated significant social development and economic growth, enhanced food security and alleviated drought in many farming regions," says Allen.

"But groundwater development has also depressed water tables, degraded ecosystems and led to the deterioration of groundwater quality, as well as created conflict among water users.

"In Canada, there are no widespread declines in groundwater levels, as observed in India via satellite technology, but there are very localized problems close to home, for example in Langley and the Okanagan."

Allen's research shows nitrate contamination is compromising groundwater quality in many Fraser Valley areas, such as Abbotsford. She has also found road salt application and rising salinity in coastal areas, such as the Gulf Islands, are contaminating groundwater supplies.

"The path towards providing reliable clean groundwater for current and future generations, while protecting ecological integrity and resilience, lies in establishing long term, multi-generational plans, based on solid values and goals," says Allen. "We must stick to achieving those goals."

This public forum is geared to presenting views on present and future water supply, access and safety in Canada.

Allen will also moderate an afternoon seminar today, *Water Security: Multidisciplinary Responses to a Global Challenge*, from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m., Room 217-218, VCC West Building. This session explores the links and trade-offs between water, energy and food security. Six speakers will identify key threats to water security and debate appropriate responses.

Diana Allen is one of seven SFU scientists involved in presentations at the AAAS.

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