



# STAFF REPORT TO THE BOARD

**DATE OF REPORT** February 3, 2025  
**MEETING TYPE & DATE** Special Board of March 12, 2025  
**FROM:** Environmental Services Division  
Land Use Services Department  
**SUBJECT:** Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program Update  
**FILE:** 5275-40

## **PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Committee on the Drinking Water and Watershed Protection (DWWP) Program.

## **RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION**

For information.

## **BACKGROUND**

The CVRD established the Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program by referendum in 2018. With an overarching goal of healthy watersheds and aquifers, the [One Water One Region](#) Strategy outlines six objectives for the DWWP:

- Safe source water for domestic supply;
- Resilient watersheds, aquifers and aquatic ecosystems;
- Protection of social and cultural values and enjoyment of recreational amenities and services derived from our watersheds;
- Preparedness for climate change effects on the region's water resources;
- Strong partnerships working together to ensure healthy watersheds; and
- Efficient use of water.

These objectives lie within three program areas: Learn; Act; Share and Collaborate. Focus in the first years of the DWWP has largely been on watershed science and information to better understand the state of our watersheds. As we move forward into actions, we look to use the knowledge gained to inform policy, land use decisions and operational activities that affect drinking water and watersheds. Concurrently, we are partnering with other organizations to share and collaborate both on data collection and watershed planning.

## **ANALYSIS**

Progress continues on the ten recommended actions summarized in the DWWP, albeit slower than expected due to continued staffing challenges which persisted through 2024. With the ongoing effort of the Environmental Services Division staff in 2024, and the recent hiring of the new Senior Environmental Analyst and DWWP Coordinator as of January 6, 2025, greater progress is expected on the remaining DWWP priority actions.

DWWP Priority Action	Status Update
Hire a program coordinator	Complete
Surface water quality monitoring strategy	Complete – <a href="#">link to Strategy</a>
Groundwater quality monitoring strategy	Under Development - support from SLR Consulting, with first draft expected Q1 2025
Hydrometric monitoring strategy	Complete – <a href="#">link to Strategy</a>
Data management strategy	Ongoing – data management recommendation provided in hydrometric strategy and further recommendations expected as part of Groundwater Monitoring Strategy
Monitoring network gap analyses and monitoring station improvements	Surface water quality and hydrometric gap analyses completed. Groundwater gap analysis pending. Ongoing monitoring station improvements and additions as opportunities present themselves (e.g. potential partnership with Coastal Hydrology Research Lab)
Establish and develop partnerships with community environmental organizations/groups	Ongoing – established partnerships include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cowichan Watershed Board (3 years)</li> <li>• Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC (3 years)</li> <li>• Shawnigan Basin Society (1 year)</li> <li>• Municipality of North Cowichan (1 year)</li> </ul>
Preliminary screening of watershed risk and existing data gaps	Complete
Support CVRD's Official Community Plan modernization process	Ongoing – as required
Establish a DWWP Technical Advisory Team	2025 priority – TAT invitations sent to necessary organizations as of September 3, 2024. Ongoing planning in 2025 with first meeting projected late March or early April
Xwu'qw'selu (Koksilah) Watershed Planning (XWP)	Participation on Collaborative Community Advisory Committee and project team
Lake Cowichan Weir replacement and mid and lower river restoration	Continued participation on Technical Working Group and communications subcommittee

The table above shows the majority of the DWWP priority actions have either been completed, or are ongoing with additional work being conducted as needed, to continue the facilitation and development of the program. The surface water sampling and hydrometric monitoring strategies have been completed, with the groundwater sampling strategy currently under development. DWWP staff are in the early stages of following up with the organizations invited to join the Technical Advisory Team (TAT) to confirm their participation.

Planning and preparation has begun on the 2025 surface water quality sampling field program, with three sampling periods scheduled for Spring, Summer and Autumn. Subsequent water quality samples are expected to be added upon final approval and implementation of the groundwater sampling strategy. Please note, sample collection is dependent on-site access and property owner cooperation. Access to the proposed groundwater sample locations may require property owner engagement and approved access agreements in advance.

Priorities for 2025 include:

- Finalization and implementation the groundwater monitoring strategy, including initiation of groundwater quality sampling;
- Establishment of the Technical Advisory Team, including 2-3 meetings of the TAT;
- Exploration of an incentive/rebate program for water conservation; and,
- Regular engagement and collaboration with community groups working in watershed management initiatives across the CVRD.

#### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The budget for the DWWP is determined by the Board as part of the regular budgetary planning.

#### **COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

Updates regarding the DWWP initiatives, monitoring strategies, TAT Terms of Reference, technical documents, etc., will be made available on the CVRD website once finalized.

#### **STRATEGIC/BUSINESS PLAN CONSIDERATIONS**

The DWWP supports the Strategic Objective related to managing water resources.

Referred to (upon completion):

- ☐ Community Services (*Cowichan Community Centre, Cowichan Lake Recreation, South Cowichan Recreation, Arts & Culture, Facilities & Transit, Emergency Management*)
- ☐ Corporate Services (*Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Legislative Services, Communications & Engagement*)
- ☐ Operations (*Utilities, Parks & Trails, Recycling & Waste Management*)
- ☐ Land Use Services (*Community Planning, Strategic Initiatives, Development Services, Building Inspection & Bylaw Enforcement, Environmental Services*)

Prepared by:

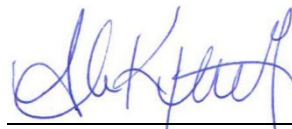


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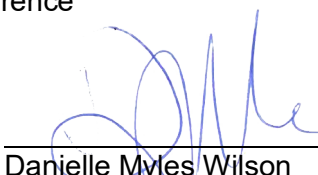
Resolution:

☒ Corporate Officer

Financial Considerations:

☒ Chief Financial Officer

Chief Administrative Officer's Comments / Concurrence



Danielle Myles Wilson  
Chief Administrative Officer