



# STAFF REPORT TO COMMITTEE

**DATE OF REPORT** March 8, 2024  
**MEETING TYPE & DATE** Committee of the Whole of March 27, 2024  
**FROM:** Environmental Services Division  
Strategic 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 Program.

## **RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION**

For Information.

## **BACKGROUND**

The CVRD's Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program (DWWP) was established by referendum in 2018. Subsequently a Community and Technical Advisory Group provided input to the One Water One Region Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Strategy (the Strategy), outlining a ten-year roadmap for implementing the DWWP.

## **ANALYSIS**

The Strategy outlines a series of actions within the three key program areas (science, policy, and outreach), including the following ten actions identified as priorities for early implementation. While progress has been somewhat slower than hoped due to staffing challenges, significant progress has been made on most priority items.

Priority Action	Status
Hire Program Coordinator	Ongoing – tech position filled
Surface water quality monitoring strategy	Complete
Groundwater quality monitoring strategy	2024 priority
Hydrometric monitoring strategy	Complete
Data management strategy, data warehousing and access	Ongoing – data strategy included in hydrometric strategy, ongoing co-ordination with province
Identify gaps in the existing monitoring network and install new stations as resources permit	Ongoing as opportunities arise

Establish partnerships with stewardship groups and other partners	Ongoing – several established but potential for additional opportunities
Preliminary screening to identify high risk watersheds and aquifers; data gap analysis	Complete
Support MOCP	Ongoing as required
Establish Technical Advisory Team	2024 Priority
Xwu'qw'selu (Koksilah) Watershed Planning (XWP)	Active and Priority
Lake Cowichan Weir replacement and mid and lower river restoration	Active and Priority

As shown in the above table, most of these priority actions have been completed or are in progress. Monitoring strategies have been developed for hydrometrics and for surface water quality and formal partnerships have been established with groups including the Cowichan Watershed Board, Shawnigan Basin Society, and the Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC. Work on other priorities is ongoing, such as coordinating with the province on data management and seeking opportunities for installing new hydrometric or climatic monitoring stations. Efforts also continue to fully staff the DWWP.

In addition to work on the priority items, staff have begun to implement the actions identified in the monitoring strategies. Two rounds of water quality sampling have been completed on streams across the region, with additional stream sampling scheduled for spring, summer and fall of 2024. Opportunities for lake sampling are also being explored.

Priorities for 2024 include the development of a groundwater quality strategy (RFP targeted for release in Q1), review terms of reference for a standing Technical Advisory Team (presented to the Board in 2020), and exploration of a potential incentive / rebate program for water conservation. A final important aspect of the DWWP is continued participation in watershed planning processes in watersheds across the region including the Koksilah, Cowichan and Chemainus Rivers.

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The budget for the DWWP is established by the Board as part of the regular budget process.

### **COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS**

Updates on priority actions could be shared via the CVRD website accompanied by relevant reports or materials.

### **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*)
- ☐ Corporate Services (*Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Legislative Services*)
- ☐ Operations (*Utilities, Parks & Trails, Recycling & Waste Management*)

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- ☐ Land Use Services (*Community Planning, Strategic Initiatives, Development Services, Building Inspection & Bylaw Enforcement*)
  - ☐ Strategic Services (*Communications & Engagement, Economic Development, Emergency Management, Environmental Services*)

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Reviewed for form and content and approved for submission to the Committee:

Resolution:

☒ Corporate Officer

Financial Considerations:

☒ Chief Financial Officer