STAFF REPORT TO THE BOARD

DATE OF REPORT	April 17, 2024
MEETING TYPE & DATE	Regular Session Board May 8, 2024
FROM:	Emergency Management Cowichan
SUBJECT:	CVRD 2023/24 FireSmart Program
FILE:	7185-10 Program Planning

PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the FireSmart program and activities for 2023 and 2024.

RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION

For information.

BACKGROUND

The impact of climate change to the Coiwchan area, as well as urban encroachment, water supply challenges and limited resources has increased the wildfire threat on the Island. Under the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) fund, Emergency Management Cowichan (EMC) is continuing to implement and deliver a 2023/2024 FireSmart Program for the electoral areas to increase wildfire resiliency. The current program aims to reduce the risk and impact of wildfire to communities in the Cowichan specifically in the electoral areas with $600,000 in funding for FireSmart preparedness, planning and mitigation activities. This includes some larger FireSmart projects, as well continuing the momentum and sustainablity of the program from previous years.

ANALYSIS

The current 2023/4 CVRD program includes:

- Home ignition assessments and neighborhood wildfire hazard assessments in all electoral areas. Eligible residents may also apply for a rebate on approved mitigation work.
- FireSmart critical infrastructure mitigation projects to reduce risk at key sites – Honeymoon Bay water infrastructure, Bings Creek, Shawnigan Lake reservoir, Cowichan Bay Fire Hall and Bald Mountain Water Treatment infrastructure.
- Structural Protection equipment to stage in the south of the region (existing SPU is staged centrally)
- Coordination of the Cowichan Regional Wildfire Resiliency Committee
- Implementation of a FireSmart plant program
- Implementation of a FireSmart education and literacy program through Vancouver Island Library

The electoral area program will soon require renewed funding, to be put forward in a future committee report. Meanwhile an application for additional grant funding for EMC to deliver Ladysmith and Duncan's Firesmart program is pending with UBCM.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

FireSmart activities are not fiscally possible without leveraging grant funding annually. The FireSmart Community Funding and Supports Program can contribute a maximum of 100% of the cost of eligible activities. At this time, the CVRD program has eligible activities for approximately $600,000. A small portion of FN 205 requisition supports the program for ineligible activities annually ($15,000).

COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS

It is critical to communicate to residents on an ongoing basis about the importance of FireSmart in reducing the impact of wildfires. The program leverages events, word of mouth, social media, and the EMC website (www.emcowichan.ca) to keep residents informed.

STRATEGIC/BUSINESS PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

Continued progress on the FireSmart program is critical to the future regional emergency management approach.

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

Prepared by: Reviewed by:

Trevor Reid   _____

Trevor Reid   April Diver, PMP MACT CBCA
FireSmart Coordinator   Manager, Operations and Planning

                                                                          _____

                                                                          Clayton Postings
                                                                          General Manager, Strategic Services

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

Resolution: Financial Considerations:

☒ Corporate Officer   ☒ Chief Financial Officer

ATTACHMENTS:
Attachment A – FireSmart 2024 Program Update to Committee of the Whole (PowerPoint)