



Xwulqw'selu Watershed Sustainability

www.koksilahwater.ca

June 4, 2024

Re: Funding Opportunity for Phase II Koksilah Water Storage Infrastructure Feasibility Assessment

Dear CVRD Board of Directors,

I am writing to provide an update on the Cowichan Tribes and Province of B.C. Xwulqw'selu (Koksilah) Water Sustainability Planning Process, and to make a request for the CVRD's targeted support in next phases of this important initiative.

Status Update

In 2023, Cowichan Tribes and the Province of British Columbia reached historic agreement to work together to plan for the future health and sustainability of the Xwulqw'selu Watershed. The next major milestone in their government-to-government (G2G) relationship is the completion of a Water Sustainability Plan (WSP), within a whole-of-watershed framework. As you may recall, a WSP is significant because it is a provincial legal tool that offers the opportunity to address water conflicts and scarcity through changes in water and land use management regimes. This is the first WSP in the province. The scope of the Koksilah plan includes making recommendations on measures related to how water rights are managed, water storage, as well as adaptations in land use practices (agriculture, forestry, and regional development) to achieve long-term watershed sustainability.

The planning process is now well underway. In the past year, community advisory tables were struck and convened to provide input and advice to decision-makers. The CVRD has seats in this advisory capacity, with both staff and Board-level representation. The G2G decision-makers have heard invaluable perspectives on watershed goals and measures of success, as well as desired actions in the short and long-term.



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The process is now moving to technical assessments. One key question requiring further information is how water storage infrastructure can help to address water demand and increasing climate vulnerabilities. Water storage is considered a critical part of the solution for Koksilah water security, especially in the medium-term. During the WSP scoping phase in 2021, a Phase 1 water storage assessment identified approximately a dozen possibilities that could be considered in the Koksilah. These ranged from on-site options (such as dug-outs and tanks) to community-scale options (such as artificial aquifer storage, creation of dams at existing lakes or excavation pits, use of natural features, green infrastructure, etc.). A Phase 2 Koksilah storage feasibility assessment is now needed to inform planning decisions and guide next steps about which storage options to put on the implementation pathway.

Request for CVRD Support and Partnership

In mid-March, the Province of B.C. announced an additional \$80M is being committed to support investments in agricultural water infrastructure. The program will fund assessment, planning, and/or implementation of water infrastructure in watersheds where the agricultural sector is a primary water user. The funding is being administered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation. Funding applications are now being invited (beginning June 20 and closing when funds are committed).

The Ministry of Agriculture recently made the CVRD aware of the opportunity for local governments to access this funding opportunity. Local governments made successful applications to this program in 2023 (e.g., the City of Delta received \$2 million, which is helping improve the efficiency of the local irrigation system).

On behalf of the G2G planning process, I am seeking support and partnership from the CVRD to assist in conducting a Phase 2 Koksilah water storage feasibility assessment. Through initial conversations with CVRD staff, I understand that there may be a possibility of such an initiative aligning with the goals and capacity of the CVRD's Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program. The request is for the CVRD to apply for the IAF funding and, if successful, project manage. We would of course work closely together to ensure the CVRD has necessary support and oversight from the G2G partners. It is important to note that there is a fund-matching requirement for the IAF grant.



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The CVRD's expertise, capacity, and support would be a significant and greatly appreciated contribution to the G2G planning process. It will be a major influence in moving forward a key element of the water sustainability solution.

I appreciate your consideration of this request – especially acknowledging the tight time-frame created by the funding deadline!

Huy ch q'u,
Many thanks

Natasha,

Joint Executive Director,
Koksilah Water Sustainability Plan Process