



**GRANT APPLICATION TO UNION OF BC MUNICIPALITIES ASSET MANAGEMENT
PLANNING PROGRAM - ECOLOGICAL ACCOUNTING PROCESS PARTNERSHIP**

RECOMMENDATION

That the Regional District of Nanaimo Board endorse the Drinking Water and Watershed Protection program's application to the 2022 Union of BC Municipalities Asset Management Planning Program for funds to support Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute in embedding the Ecological Accounting Process Program into Vancouver Island University.

BACKGROUND

The Ecological Accounting Process (EAP) is a methodology and set of metrics that can help local governments operationalize maintenance and management of natural assets such as stream corridors and corresponds to the BC Framework for Asset Management and Sustainability Service Delivery (2014). Stream systems are considered a natural commons asset in that they provide a range of uses or ecological services to the community at-large. The EAP informs communities about the condition of their natural commons, the investment that has been made, and the value of the land underlying these spaces. This analysis posits that landowners adjacent to the stream corridor and setback zone (30 metres on both sides of the stream) and the community share responsibility for the condition of the stream as well as the financial value of the land it occupies. From an asset management point of view, the stream has value as a land use. Depending on its functioning condition, it may enhance or degrade the social and financial values of land uses along its course.

The EAP has been developed by the Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia (PWSBC) and has been piloted through nine trials with municipal partners. The process has demonstrated to be an effective and efficient measure for monetizing commitments to supporting riparian areas for ongoing maintenance and management. The Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI), a Vancouver Island University (VIU) entity, has supported the last six pilot studies that the PWSBC has undertaken, including the Millstone River EAP (2021) that was funded in part by the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) and the City of Nanaimo.

Beginning in 2023, the RDN, through the Drinking Water and Watershed Protection (DWWP) Program, is one of three local governments collaborating with PWSBC, MABRRI, and VIU to embed the EAP principles and core knowledge into MABRRI (and VIU). This partnership will ensure knowledge of EAP is maintained and passed on to the next generations of planners and municipal staff and provides an opportunity for local and regional governments to leverage the process to operationalize natural asset management. The local government partners are the RDN, the City of Nanaimo, and the Municipality of North Cowichan. This project is a three-year commitment and will see the DWWP program providing support through funding from its core budget as well as staff time to prioritize and determine individual EAP study sites, co-develop EAP research questions, and support

data generation. As part of the commitment and partnership, MABRRI will complete one EAP study each year with each of the local government partners.

With the endorsement of the RDN Board, the DWWP program will apply for matching support funds from the 2022 Union of BC Municipalities Asset Management Planning Program for this project. If successful, the matching funds will reduce the amount of funds required from the DWWP program's core budget. Similar grant applications are being made concurrently by the City of Nanaimo and the Municipality of North Cowichan, all with specific encouragement from the decision makers within the UBCM grant program.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The RDN's Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program will support the funding request for this three-year commitment with VIU, at \$30,000 per year, out of the DWWP Operating Budget, with a maximum total commitment of \$90,000 over three years. If the grant application through UBCM is successful, DWWP will contribute \$15,000 per year, with the grant matching funds for project commitments.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

The Ecological Accounting Process Partnership Program aligns with the following RDN Strategic priorities:

Environmental Stewardship - Protect and enhance the natural environment, including land, water, and air quality for future generations.

Growth Management - Provide effective regional land use planning and responsible asset management for both physical infrastructure and natural assets.

REVIEWED BY:

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ATTACHMENT

Information Package for the RDN about the "3-Year Transition Strategy" for EAP