

2023 RDN Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program Accomplishments

Detailed Highlights by Theme



Water Awareness and Stewardship (WAS)

- ✓ Supported **five community-led watercourse restoration and monitoring** projects via stewardship seedfunding: Little Qualicum Estuary, Gabriola Creeks, Shelly Creek, Tire Wear Toxin Monitoring (multiple sites), and Community-based Flow Monitoring (multiple sites). *(Progress Indicator WAS-2)*
- ✓ Co-initiated a **Youth Ambassadors program** with a focus on water and climate action, with high school students / eco-clubs, in partnership with RDN Energy and Sustainability Dept.
- ✓ Offered **Residential Irrigation Check-ups** to high water users across the region, providing 14 in-person visits and distributing education material to additional residents who observed high water use on their properties *(Progress Indicator WAS-1)*
- ✓ Offered **workshops and activities** to engage the community in water stewardship education:
 - 6 workshops on topics including rainwater harvesting, stream stewardship and wellSMART for well owners;
 - 12 School Watershed Field trips in partnership with City of Nanaimo, City of Parksville and Mosaic Forest Management;
 - Brought the Team WaterSmart booth and education materials to 17 community events across the region.
- ✓ Provided **over 190 rebates** to residents including rainwater harvesting, wellhead upgrades, well water testing, irrigation and soil improvements.
- ✓ Continued to host the **Stewardship Network Get Involved Page** and the second annual **Water Stewardship Recognition Event** to facilitate networking among water stewardship organizations to build capacity and promote better coordination of watershed protection activities. *(Progress Indicator WIS-3)*
- ✓ Supported the delivery of over 120 curriculum-connected **School Freshwater Stewardship lessons** to schools in SD68 & SD69 in partnership with Nanaimo Area Land Trust, for over 40 classrooms across the region. This included 12 capstone stewardship projects.



Water Information and Science (WIS)

- ✓ Finalized the **French Creek Water Region - Phase 3 Water Budget Model (including updated aquifer mapping)** to assess aquifer stress and predict groundwater level change given climate, water demand and land use change scenarios. *(Progress Indicator WIS-2)*
- ✓ Completed the 13th year of **surface water quality sampling with the RDN Community Watershed Monitoring Network (CWMN)**; this includes 14 trained stewardship groups in over 27 watersheds. *(Progress Indicator WIS-1 & WIS-3)*

- ✓ Completed the 10th year of **groundwater monitoring** via the RDN Volunteer Observation Well Network; added one new site in an RDN Community Park for a total of 32 sites in 14 aquifers. *(Progress Indicator WIS-1 & WIS-3)*
- ✓ Reported on **Regional Groundwater Level Trends Pre-Summer 2023** and shared the analysis with the Board and Water Purveyors. *(Progress Indicator WIS-4)*
- ✓ Supported the **Regional Downscaled Climate Projections project delivered by PCIC** in partnership with Long Range Planning.
- ✓ Supported Vancouver Island University (VIU) / Mt. Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute to continue the multi-year **wetland monitoring** citizen science research project *(Progress Indicator WIS-3)*
- ✓ Completed a **lake monitoring equipment upgrade** for Holden and Quennell Lakes to support data collection and future water budget studies in the Cedar-Yellowpoint region.
- ✓ Funded Year 5 of a **snowpack mapping and modelling research project** for Mt. Arrowsmith / Upper Englishman Watershed led by the Coastal Hydrology Research Lab at VIU.
- ✓ Partnered with the BC Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy to sample and analyze benthic invertebrates at four priority sites as a part of the **Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network (CABIN)**



Water-centric Planning and Policy Support (WPS)

- ✓ Completed phase 2 of developing **Watershed Performance Targets for Rainwater Management** in French Creek Water Region which outlines implementation, monitoring and adaptive management approaches for targets intended to replicate the natural water balance and control flood peaks *(Progress Indicator WPS-2)*
- ✓ Drafted **rainwater management plan checklist** for potential inclusion with draft Development Permit Area guidelines and coordinated first round of Qualified Professional review.
- ✓ Supported Long Range Planning in summarizing **Climate-informed Water Supply Planning: Best Practices and Current Practices** within the region.
- ✓ Supported Long Range Planning in the review / update of the **Area F OCP** from a water-centric lens, including of draft DPAs for Aquifer Protection and Freshwater and Fish Habitat.
- ✓ Supported **review of 10+ development referrals for Planning** with water related information. *(Progress Indicator WPS -1)*
- ✓ Completed year one of the **Ecological Accounting Process Partnership** with Vancouver Island University and Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI), advancing work on valuing natural commons.
- ✓ Resolution on **Regional Water Supply Strategies** was endorsed at AVICC and UBCM.



Water Collaboration

- ✓ Convened the multi-stakeholder **DWWP Technical Advisory Committee quarterly**, with meeting minutes reported to the Board.
- ✓ Convened monthly check-in meetings with **regional water purveyors** between April – October to communicate about watering restrictions etc.
- ✓ Initiated a **review of the regional watering restrictions** in collaboration with water purveyors from across the region, to be finalized in first quarter 2024.
- ✓ Convened an annual meeting of the regional **Rainwater Working Group**, to discuss implementation progress of the Regional Strategy for Rainwater Management.
- ✓ Participated on the **Nanaimo River Watershed Roundtable** bi-monthly meetings with multiple stakeholders.
- ✓ Participated on **Mid Island Stewardship Caucus** monthly meetings in collaboration with multiple environmental stewardship groups within the RDN.