
TO: Committee of the Whole **MEETING:** February 12, 2019

FROM: Julie Pisani **FILE:** 5600-07
Drinking Water and Watershed
Protection Program Coordinator

SUBJECT: RDN Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Action Plan Update Project

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board nominate three (3) Directors to a temporary Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Action Plan Update Board Steering Committee for the 2019 project.

SUMMARY

The Regional District of Nanaimo's (RDN) Drinking Water and Watershed Protection (DWWP) Action Plan will be updated in 2019 to refresh the program mandate and outline program priorities and activities for the next decade and beyond. Board participation in this planning initiative from the start is desirable for success.

The DWWP Action Plan Update represents an opportunity to build on the successes of the first ten years of the program, and re-energize the program with updated priorities, shared objectives and emerging areas of focus. A steering committee composed of three members of the Board for the duration of 2019 will contribute to the project as the liaisons of the Board, and provide input and guidance during the year-long process. The intended outcome of this project is a comprehensive Action Plan document, developed through a collaborative process, to guide the DWWP program moving forward.

This report describes the high-level project strategy for the DWWP Action Plan update process. A future Board report will present a project charter, which is envisioned to be collaboratively developed over the coming weeks.

BACKGROUND

Since the early 2000s, the RDN Board has identified protection of our water resources as a key strategic priority supporting the long term resilience and prosperity of the region. A changing climate, a growing population, continued development and the cross-jurisdictional nature of water issues were drivers that prompted a concerted regional effort in planning for drinking water and watershed protection. The current RDN DWWP Action Plan was adopted by the RDN Board in 2008, and first implemented in 2009 with a 10-year scope. By 2012, the program was fully regional, serving the four member municipalities of Nanaimo, Lantzville, Parksville and Qualicum Beach, as well as the seven RDN Electoral Areas. The DWWP program is the first of

its kind in the province and has positioned the RDN as a leader in regional water initiatives within BC.

The existing Action Plan has three main program categories: 1) Education and Public Awareness, 2) Data Collection and Monitoring and 3) Planning Support. Over the first ten years, the focus has advanced from an initial emphasis on education and outreach, proceeding to expanded effort in water science and data collection. More recently, as the program has evolved, policy and planning and refining science and data management have been given more attention.

In 2018, a third-party review of the DWWP program implementation examined the achievements of DWWP against the actions outlined in the Plan and evaluated program effectiveness in the first decade. The review of the first ten years of the program offered observations that will assist with the Plan update, and revealed opportunities to improve the DWWP program in the next decade and beyond. A key recommendation from the review is to prioritize engagement with First Nations to identify how they would like to participate in and benefit from the DWWP Action Plan. Another key overall recommendation is to recognize and incorporate key integrations with other RDN plans, programs and departments in the DWWP Action Plan moving forward.

The program currently delivers a range of regional water initiatives including: groundwater monitoring; rebate programs for water efficiency; school education; community-based surface water sampling; policy advocacy with the Province; water budget analysis; region-wide outreach programming, and much more (see the September 2017 Board report *Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program – Board Update 2017* and the November 2018 Board report *Final Report – 10 Year Action Plan Review for Drinking Water and Watershed Protection* and the www.dwwp.ca website for more details). A [technical advisory committee](#) (TAC) guides the program implementation, with representatives from provincial ministries, the community at-large, municipal water departments, the academic community, forestry industry and more. The TAC reports to the Committee of the Whole, to keep the RDN Board apprised of DWWP activities.

In 2019, the RDN's DWWP Action Plan requires a comprehensive update to outline objectives, activities and priorities for the next ten years plus. We will work with key partners as participants in the update process to help develop the Plan, utilizing the significant basis of knowledge established from the program implementation over the past several years. Through insights gained in practice and confirmed in the 2018 program review, the following are understood to be the most important new elements that an updated Plan will need to reflect:

- Recognition of importance of First Nations engagement in water initiatives and active mutually-beneficial partnership with established protocols.
A letter was sent by the Chair on behalf of the RDN Board to First Nations (Snuneymuxw, Snaw-naw-as and Qualicum) Chiefs and Councils in January 2019 to introduce the project and invite their engagement.
- Focus on “operationalizing data” – i.e. developing mechanisms for data to inform decision-making and planning.
- Further integration and harmonization with other RDN plans, programs and departments and municipal plans, programs and departments.
- Consideration of regulatory implications of the new BC Water Sustainability Act.
- Development of indicators for success and mechanisms for feedback and adaptive program management.

- Emphasis on the WHY in public communications about water protection and water conservation.

A project charter will be developed as part of the early engagement with First Nations, the Board Steering Committee, internal departments and the DWWP Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and presented at a subsequent Board meeting. The project charter is envisioned to capture the guiding principles and terms of engagement for the DWWP Action Plan Update and to outline the parameters of the cooperative effort towards the planning a multi-year program for drinking water and watershed protection in the region.

To guide this effort from a Board level, the establishment of a Board Steering Committee is recommended, with three directors nominated to participate on the Committee for the duration of 2019. The DWWP Action Plan Update Board Steering Committee's role will be to regularly contribute to the project as active liaisons of the Board, and provide input and guidance during the process. The intended outcome of this project is a comprehensive Action Plan document, developed through the collaborative process described above, to guide the DWWP program for the next decade and beyond.

The key stages and timeline for this project are outlined in the table below. Note that this is preliminary and subject to further discussion with First Nations, the Board Steering Committee and others, and will be confirmed in a subsequent report to the Board on the project charter. The driver for the timeline is the RDN budget cycle which requires preliminary budgets and financial plans for 2020 to be entered in September of 2019. Developing the contents of the updated DWWP Action Plan is a necessary prerequisite to designing an appropriate budget to adequately resource the mandate and delivery of the DWWP service in 2020 forward.

Project Stage	Timeline (2019)	Focus
Start Up	Jan – Mar	Develop project charter; engage key partners; summarize and communicate current understanding, linkages and status.
Visioning and Idea Generation	Mar – May	Facilitate sessions with Board members, First Nations, TAC, inter-departmental group and administer public engagement platform to gather input.
Compilation		Compile ideas from idea generation stage into menu for possible inclusion in Action Plan.
Decision-making	May – Jun	Facilitate processes to select and prioritize actions, develop indicators for success, feedback mechanisms for inclusion in the Plan.
Drafting Plan	Jun - Oct	Write draft Action Plan based on outcomes of internal and external input.
Finalization of Plan	Nov - Dec	Final Action Plan to CoW in November for adoption in December.
Implementation	2020- 2030 +	Put the plan into action with the needed resources, staff and partnerships.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the Board nominate three (3) Directors to a temporary Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Action Plan Update Board Steering Committee for the 2019 project.
2. That the Board provide alternate direction to staff.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is an operational budget of \$60,000 to support the DWWP Action Plan Update in 2019. This amount is available to fund external professional fees for discrete components, to be determined in the forthcoming project charter.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Focus On Relationships- We Value Our First Nations Relationships And Will Integrate Their Input In Future Planning And Service Delivery

Focus On Relationships- We Will Focus On Improved Two-Way Communication Within The Regional District And With Our Communities

Focus On Economic Health- We Recognize The Importance Of Water In Supporting Our Economic And Environmental Health

Focus On The Environment- We Will Have A Strong Focus On Protecting And Enhancing Our Environment In All Decisions

As we move towards updating and renewing the mandate of the regional Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Action Plan, strategic priorities on relationships, economic health and the environment are front and centre. A collaborative process and an engaged Board are crucial to the project's success and the ongoing success of drinking water and watershed protection initiatives in the region.



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January 17, 2019

Reviewed by:

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