

**COWICHAN-KOKSILAH WATERSHED TECHNICAL ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE**

**Terms of Reference**

**March 2017**

**1. Introduction**

The Cowichan Basin Water Management Plan (the Plan) ([http://www.cvrld.bc.ca/water\\_cowichan/index.htm](http://www.cvrld.bc.ca/water_cowichan/index.htm)) was completed in 2007 to provide a framework for:

- learning more about the basin system and water issues;
- protecting the ecological function of the system;
- balancing water supply and use; and
- building broad public understanding and support for the Plan.

The Plan was commissioned by the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), Cowichan Tribes, Ministry of Environment, Fisheries and Ocean Canada, Catalyst Paper, and the Pacific Salmon Commission who recognized that a more formal and proactive approach to water management was needed in the Basin in the face of continued population growth, climate change and the cumulative impacts of uncoordinated decision-making on the watershed in the past.

Establishing a Cowichan Basin Water Advisory Council was a key recommendation of the Plan. That recommendation was fulfilled in January 2010 with the establishment of the Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB) by Cowichan Tribes and the CVRD with the support of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Ministry of Environment, Catalyst Paper and the Living Rivers Trust. The CWB's purpose is to serve as a formal entity to guide the implementation of the Plan and improve the quality of water management decisions and the outcomes arising from those decisions within the Cowichan watershed.

The Cowichan - Koksilah Watershed Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) exists to support the work of the Board. The TAC is also a key component of the Cowichan Valley Stewardship Community as outlined in Section 3. The following are the terms of reference for the TAC.

**2. Mission**

The Committee's mission is to be a trusted source of expertise and knowledge for sustainable water management in the Cowichan Watershed. It provides balanced and considered technical advice to the Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB) and through it to elements of the community at large. The Committee will draw upon its members' diverse range of knowledge and technical expertise to develop options and recommendations for consideration by the CWB and, as appropriate, implement the actions needed to achieve the goals of the Cowichan Water Basin Management Plan.

**3. Mandate**

The Committee is established as a technical advisory body with links to water stakeholder communities throughout the watershed. The Committee provides independent, objective advice supporting sustainable water

management using its collective expertise to identify watershed issues and to develop workable solutions that reflect the best available science, innovative policy and consensus approaches within its means. The Committee recommends only those actions that can be undertaken within the bounds of the CWB's mandate. In addition to its role as an advisory body, the Committee may develop programs and initiatives that contribute to the local knowledge base and provide stewardship tools for the watershed community. The TAC is a key component of the Cowichan stewardship community and works in conjunction with Cowichan Tribes, local government, the Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable and individual stewardship groups to support collaborative water and environmental stewardship efforts in the Cowichan Valley.

The Committee also advises the Board on technical matters pertaining to watershed management and supports the work of the CWB Target Working Groups (see appendix 1) by providing a forum for information exchange; input to Working Group workplans and priorities; technical critique and feedback; and support and coordination for overarching projects or processes such as strategic review of CWB Targets or State of the Watershed reporting. The TAC, in collaboration with the technical working groups, will also track and report out regularly on progress being made towards achieving the targets.

The CWB technical advisory committee will also provide technical advice to the CWB or any subset thereof that engages with the province of British Columbia to create and/or pilot tools under the *Water Sustainability Act*

Tools and mechanisms employed by the CWB TAC to achieve these ends are outlined in Appendix 2.

#### **4. Funding and Resources**

In the short term the partners will contribute funding for a part time CWB Coordinator to work with the Committee as well as the Board. As appropriate they will also provide additional funding in support of agreed to initiatives and in-kind administrative support like meeting rooms, communications, and secretarial services. Working Group meeting costs are born by the CWB with meeting space being donated by one of the founding partners. Working Group members as well as TAC members are provided by in-kind support or are volunteers.

Other funding will be pursued opportunistically and as required.

For the long term sustainability of the CWB, options will be explored with the partners for acquiring a stable revenue stream or streams to support Board and Committee activities.

#### **5. Membership and Co-chairs**

- a) Members shall be drawn from the Target Working Groups as outlined in Appendix 1. Each working group may contribute up to 3 members to the TAC.
- b) In addition, there will be a chair at the TAC table for a representative from Cowichan Tribes in addition to any Cowichan Tribes members that may be appointed by individual working groups.
- c) Additional individuals representing other organizations/interests may also become members of the committee at the recommendation of the Board.

- d) Committee membership shall be voluntary. If a member has to discontinue his/her participation the Co-chairs will invite the Target Working Group to designate a replacement appointee to complete their term.
- e) Committee members may designate alternates.
- f) Subject to there being adequate funding to support a part time Coordinator, the Coordinator will serve as a Co-chair. The other Co-chair will be elected by a simple majority of a quorum of Committee members.
- g) In the event that there are inadequate resources to support a Coordinator, elections will be held for both positions.

## **6. Operating Procedures**

- a) 50% + 1 of current members or alternates constitute a quorum.
- b) The Committee will operate on a consensus basis. The Committee is a group with common values respecting the watershed and will act in the best interests of the watershed and its residents.
- c) The Co-chairs will ensure that proposals being considered are well understood by everyone; that all objections or reservations have been heard before affirming that agreement has been reached.
- d) Co-chairs will ensure that agendas and minutes are prepared and distributed, advocate for funding to pursue required research and studies, and act as liaisons between the Committee and the Board.
- e) Committee members can request items to be included on the agenda.
- f) The Committee may invite resource people to serve as advisors and other members of the public to make presentations at meetings.
- g) The Committee may form sub-committees or task groups to assess and report on specific issues as identified by the Committee.
- h) Committee meetings will be held quarterly on the first Thursday of the month in March, June, Sept. and December. Additional meetings may be scheduled as required at the call of the Co-chairs.
- i) Minutes of Committee meetings will be prepared by the coordinator, reviewed and approved by the Committee at subsequent meetings.

## **4. Communications Protocols**

- a) On an annual basis, as feasible and in conjunction with the Board's planning cycle, the Committee will analyze and provide background information and recommendations to the Board to support the preparation of the annual watershed report and updated management plan.
- b) The Board may request the Committee to provide science-based information and recommendations as feasible, on particular water stewardship concerns/issues.
- c) Target Working Groups will report out directly to the CWB as needed or directed and provide annual updates to the TAC
- d) The Committee may submit position papers, written letters or recommendations, or written or verbal briefings to the Board for consideration during regular Board meetings.
- e) The Board may then take the information under advisement or pursue further action as deemed necessary under the Board mandate.
- f) If an issue requires timely action the Committee may submit written materials to the Board via the CWB Co-chairs.
- g) The Committee will communicate with the public in the following way:
- i) The Committee will provide recommendations directly to the Board. These recommendations then become public documents unless they

involve personnel, land, legal or other matters deemed to be of a confidential nature;

j) Committee members must clarify that they are not speaking for the Committee or CWB when they speak for themselves or their organization on a CWB-related issue;

k) Committee members representing a specific group are responsible for keeping that group abreast of Committee initiatives.

h) Technical and outreach materials produced by the Committee must be approved in advance by the Co-chairs.

## **5. Conflict of Interest**

The CWB does not wish to discourage Committee members from bringing forward worthy project proposals for funding consideration by the Committee and Board. However, as an advisory body, Committee members must take a precautionary approach to ensure that issues of potential or perceived conflict of interest are clearly identified as part of the proposal

## Appendix 1

### Cowichan Watershed Board Targets and Working Groups

In 2012, the Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB) tasked the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) with the development of broadly scoped accessible “Targets” that would facilitate the implementation of the detailed actions in the Cowichan Basin Water Management Plan (CBWMP). 8 targets were developed and endorsed by the CWB as follows:

#### Water Quality

*We want clean water in our watershed*

TARGET: TSS levels (turbidity) in the Cowichan Watershed should meet accepted water quality guidelines

#### Water Supply

*Summer water flows are critical and have been declining*

TARGET: Cowichan River summer flows need to be 7CMS or higher

#### Water Conservation

*We need to use our water wisely*

TARGET 20% reduction in water use

#### Outreach & Education

*You Can't fully value what you don't understand*

Target: Grade 4/5's know their watershed

Target: Residents increasingly know and value their watershed

#### Public Health

*We want to be able to swim safely in Cowichan Lake, Cowichan river, and Cowichan Bay...*

Target: E. Coli levels should be below guidelines for swimming and recreation

#### Estuarine Health

*We want to be able to eat shellfish from Cowichan Bay*

TARGET- Shellfish from designated areas of Cowichan Bay will be harvested for human consumption by 2020

#### Fish Health

*We want healthy fish populations in the Watershed*

TARGET- Steelhead pre-smolt abundance in the Cowichan should meet or exceed target densities

### Riparian Health

*We want to protect and enjoy Stream, River and Lake front habitats*

Target – 50% of “intact” riparian habitats protected by 2021

Target – 10% of impacted riparian habitats restored by 2021

*Target Working groups* have been established to implement the targets. These working groups include technical experts in fields relevant to the targets as well as at least one member of the CWB. Their workplans are vetted through the CWB and the target working groups provide regular updates to the Board. Most working groups meet quarterly.

There are 5 Target Working Groups to support the 8 targets:

- Water Quality, Estuarine and Public Health working group
- Fish and Flows Working Group
- Water Conservation working group
- Outreach and Education
- Riparian Health

Progress towards achieving the targets will be monitored by the working groups and, with the support of the TAC, reviewed regularly. Subject to the approval of the Board, the targets will be reviewed and revised by the CWB Technical Advisory Committee and relevant working groups as needed.

## APPENDIX 2

### **Functions, tools and mechanisms employed by the CWB TAC to fulfill its Mandate to the CWB, Target Working Groups and Cowichan Stewardship community:**

- a) Provision of advice to the Board on watershed issues that require timely action to address current needs or ensure future sustainability.
- b) Consolidating information and expertise for strategic watershed scale management planning including:
  - Identifying critical information gaps and approaches to fill them;
  - Advising on existing or proposed water-related legislation and policies;
  - Advising on priorities for watershed projects/programs;
  - Advising on stewardship practices to protect water quality, quantity and other interests including seasonal flow issues;
  - Addressing the needs of fisheries, wildlife and other environmental resources;
  - Advising on integrating water, land use and recreation planning;
  - Advising on the costs and benefits and timetables for water management projects;
  - Identifying, tracking and increasing coordination among all water-related projects in the Cowichan watershed.
- c) Working with Partners to integrate research to support watershed management recommendations including:
  - Assessments relating to groundwater, supply and demand, flooding etc. for the watershed and adjacent areas;
  - Emerging research on climate change impacts;
  - New technologies and approaches.
- d) Submitting position papers, briefing notes or verbal presentations on water-related topics to the Board as required and feasible.
- e) Increasing public communication and awareness about water resource issues by:
  - assisting in the development of the CWB's annual report;
  - reviewing and providing recommendations to the CWB on public information and engagement of stewardship groups.
- f) As appropriate, developing programs and other implementation tools that conserve or enhance water quality and supply.
- g) Building and strengthening partnerships in the Cowichan Valley