

COWICHAN WATERSHED TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

March 2010

1. Introduction

The Cowichan Basin Water Management Plan (the Plan) (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 Watershed Technical Advisory Committee exists to support the work of the Board. The following are the terms of reference for that Committee.

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 and communication link with 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 Committee advises the Board on technical matters pertaining to watershed management and supports the implementation of priority projects and programs by:

- a) Advising 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 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;
 - Providing standards for demand-side management;
 - 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) Integrating 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 among water stakeholders in the Cowichan Valley.

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.

Other funding will be pursued opportunistically and as required.

It is anticipated that much of the work cited in Section 3 above will be accomplished by contractors.

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) The Committee's initial mandate ends on December 31, 2011. The term may be extended based on the ongoing mandate of the CWB.
- b) The CWB will direct the Coordinator to invite selected organizations to designate an appropriate technical representative to the Committee.
- c) Initially, members will be representatives of the organizations/interests identified in Attachment 1.
- d) Additional individuals representing other organizations/interests may also become members of the committee at the recommendation of the Board.
- e) Committee membership shall be voluntary. If a member has to discontinue his/her participation the Co-chairs will invite the organization to designate a replacement appointee to complete their term.
- f) Committee members may designate alternates.
- g) 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.
- h) In the event that there are inadequate resources to support a Coordinator, elections will be held for both positions.

6. Operating Procedures

- a) Two-thirds 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 on set meeting dates and 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.

7. 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) The Committee may submit position papers, written letters or recommendations, or written or verbal briefings to the Board for consideration during regular Board meetings.
- d) The Board may then take the information under advisement or pursue further action as deemed necessary under the Board mandate.
- e) If an issue requires timely action the Committee may submit written materials to the Board via the CWB Co-chairs.
- f) 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;
 - ii. 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;
 - iii. Committee members representing a specific group are responsible for keeping that group abreast of Committee initiatives.
- g) Technical and outreach materials produced by the Committee must be approved in advance by the Co-chairs.

8. 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 proposals.

Attachment 1

Preliminary List of Technical Advisory Committee Member Organizations

Catalyst Paper
Cowichan Economic Development Commission –Tourism Cowichan
Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Committee
Cowichan Tribes
Cowichan Valley Naturalists' Society
Cowichan Valley Regional District
Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Living Rivers Trust
Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
Ministry of Environment
Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport
Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
Private Forest Landowners Association
Quamichan Lake Stewardship Committee
Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society
Vancouver Island Health Authority