

Minutes of the meeting of the Comox Valley Sewer Service (CVSS) Stage 3 Liquid Waste Management Plan (LWMP) Joint Technical and Public Advisory Committee (TACPAC) held on Tuesday, May 26, 2026, in the CVRD Civic Room at 770 Harmston Avenue, Courtenay, and via Zoom commencing at 10:02 am

**PRESENT:**

A. Habkirk, Chair and Facilitator	Facilitator
D. Monteith, Manager of Liquid Waste Planning	CVRD
M. Briggs, Branch Assistant – Engineering Services	CVRD
A. Smythe	WSP
P. Howland	Great Pacific
C. Davidson, City of Courtenay	TAC
S. Ashfield, Town of Comox	TAC
K. Daniel, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (Alternate)	TAC
T. Hamelin, Ministry of Environment and Parks (Alternate)	TAC
L. Johnson, Ministry of Health	TAC
C. McColl, K’ómoks First Nation	TAC/PAC
W. Cole-Hamilton, City of Courtenay Elected Official	PAC
M. Swift, Town of Comox Elected Official	PAC
I. Munro, Electoral Area A Alternate Director	PAC
B. Mills, Association for Denman Island Marine Stewards	PAC
N. Prins, BC Shellfish Growers Association	PAC
T. Clarke, Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce	PAC
C. Pierzchalski, Comox Valley Conservation Partnership	PAC
M. Proudfoot, Comox Valley Schools	PAC
S. Carey, City of Courtenay Resident Representative	PAC
L. Paulovich, City of Courtenay Resident Representative	PAC
J. Dacombe, City of Courtenay Resident Representative (Alternate)	PAC
K. van Velzen, Town of Comox Resident Representative	PAC
M. Crilly, Town of Comox Resident Representative	PAC
N. Prince, Area A (Craigdarroch) Resident Representative	PAC
J. Elliott, Area A (Union Bay) Resident Representative	PAC
M. Schaffer, Area B (CVWPCC) Resident Representative (Alternate)	PAC
M. Lang, Area B (Croteau Beach) Resident Representative	PAC

L. Aitken, Area B (Croteau Beach) Resident Representative PAC  
(Alternate)

Item	Description
<p><b>5.1</b> 10:02 – 10:04</p>	<p><b>Call to Order</b></p> <p>The meeting was called to order at 10:02 am.</p> <p>The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) acknowledged that the Comox Valley Sewerage Service (CVSS) is operated on the traditional unceded territory of the K'ómoks First Nation.</p>
<p><b>5.2</b> 10:04 – 10:05</p>	<p><b>February 19, 2026 Meeting Minutes</b></p> <p>MOTION: Adopt the minutes of the February 19, 2026 CVSS Stage 3 LWMP Joint TACPAC meeting. – M. Lang SECONDED: S. Carey CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY</p>
<p><b>5.3</b> 10:05 – 11:06</p>	<p><b>Overview of Environmental Impact Study (EIS)</b></p> <p>P. Howland provided an overview of the Environmental Impact Study (EIS).</p> <p>Great Pacific conducted an effluent characterization, detailing what was found in the effluent, and results were all below guidelines. Also conducted work on viruses but no guidelines present to determine what is reasonable level for receiving environment.</p> <p>Detailed characteristics of the outfall site and dilution zone, oceanographic conditions and environmental receptors, including discussion of impacts on shellfish.</p> <p>Shared results of water quality and sediment monitoring conducted for the outfall, which were all within guidelines and detection limits. Also monitored for benthic invertebrates but would require several years of monitoring to determine impact.</p> <p>L. Johnson joined the meeting at 10:23 am.</p> <p>Performed dilution modelling to determine how deep the effluent remains and how much it disperses. Effluent is predicted to stay trapped at depth and not to go below one part effluent to 114 parts water.</p>

Summarized the parameters studied in the EIS. Only microbiological indicators, ammonia and copper are of any concern, but still within regulations.

B. Mills joined the meeting at 10:33 am.

Summarized the conclusions from the study. Recommend that the effluent be disinfected and the proposed receiving environment monitoring program be implemented.

Q: Where is UV disinfection included in the LWMP? Is it in the initial phase?

A: Believe it is in initial phase of upgrades at the treatment plant but will confirm with project staff.

Q: Was there any shellfish tissue analyzed in this study?

A: No, no tissue sampled in program as we did not see impacts in the sediment. If had seen higher levels of metal in the sediment, would have investigated further.

Q: Listed copper and zinc as a potential concern and present at the baseline stations outside the discharge area. Did you find baseline different from around the effluent for those two parameters? Some risk was identified, so unclear why there would be risk if metals found in baseline?

A: Concluded that copper and zinc would exceed guidelines in effluent without any dilution or mixing. With mixing, expect those concentrations to be below guidelines. Everything in the sediment was within guidelines, so no evidence copper or zinc are accumulating in the sediment or are a result of the discharge. Don't expect any elevated concentrations as result of the discharge.

Q: Any intent to look at tissue sampling or bioaccumulation in the future? Based on the results was it decided that there wasn't an issue?

A: Could be looked at but has not been identified at the moment.

Q: What water quality guidelines were you using? How did you assess which guidelines to use? Were you using the most conservative guidelines for each parameter?

A: Primarily used marine aquatic life guidelines. Did include shellfish harvesting recreational guidelines as well.

Q: Is there the desire to include any additional parameters in the assessment, such as up-and-coming emerging contaminants like 6PPD-

Q? May want to reflect on decision to do some tissue sampling due to importance of shellfish industry and would be important for future monitoring efforts.

A: The list of parameters of potential concern was based off available marine water guidelines and did not extend to parameters that did not have guidelines.

M. Proudfoot joined the meeting at 10:42 am.

Q: Category 1 reliability was referenced earlier. What are these categories?

A: Come from *Municipal Wastewater Regulation* (MWR). Categories relate to redundancy within the system and how long a component in a treatment system could be down for repair. Category 1 is a facility of which short-term effluent degradation could cause permanent or unacceptable damage in the receiving environment, including discharges near drinking waters, shellfish waters or recreational waters.

Q: Interested in data on trapping. Had noted in presentation that plume would be trapped below the 20m depth range, but how far was this measured and how far is this predicted? Only within the 6km radius or further afield?

A: Predictions would hold for a 400m radius. Model called visual plumes and is fairly constrained model assuming infinite environment. Vertical mixing of water column within ocean is very slow and will mostly spread horizontally. Expect to stay within that range and dilute much quicker horizontally than vertically due to density profiles within the strait.

Q: So the conclusion is that we don't know where plume ends up then?

A: Have not looked at long range. Expect to meet water quality guidelines within 100m radius and within 400m zone. Should get better as the plume dilutes.

Q: Understand that we need to monitor PCB levels. Is there some plan to determine the source and a way to determine the source?

A: Will need to defer to project staff.

Q: With the tide there is a 6m variation. Estimate roughly 76,000m<sup>3</sup> maximum effluent coming out of the outfall per day. Trying to understand scale of the impact of the outfall. Does the study say

	<p>anything about the adequacy of treatment envisioned within the plan, whether it is too much or too little treatment to meet the guidelines?</p> <p>A: Understanding is that when looking at the design of a treatment plant, generally look at Total Suspended Solids, Biochemical Oxygen Demand, bacteria and ammonia when specifying level of treatment. Have not recommended additional treatment beyond minimum requirements and everything that has been measured is expected to meet water quality guidelines. If these guidelines were not being achieved, would recommend higher level of treatment. Monitoring program will determine if we continue to meet guidelines over time or if elevated treatment is required. There is no opportunity to recommend lower level of treatment, with secondary treatment required.</p> <p>Q: Shellfish is an important industry for the Comox Valley. Does the BC Shellfish Growers Association (BCSGA) do any of their own monitoring? What is the process if something is not meeting necessary standards?</p> <p>A: BCSGA partners conduct monitoring in growing region. Perform initial risk assessment and various seasonal monitoring for microbial indicators. There is biotoxin but not related to pollution outfalls. There is also limited heavy metal analysis done, with cadmium being a concern for the shellfish industry as may limit exports to Europe. Region is generally high in cadmium.</p> <p>Q: If there is less water and snowpack in the future, will the dilution be happening at the same rate as now? Does this effect production or expansion for shellfish industry?</p> <p>A: Have not explicitly looked at influence of rainfall, snowpack or climate change. Worst case situation is if effluent plume rises closer to surface and impacts geoducks at 20m. Plume expected to stay below 20m line. In the winter rivers have less runoff and a consistent water column profile that allows plume to rise closer to surface. That condition was modelled and a future reduction in fresh water would be consistent with that and more likely to see shallower plume in summer. Don't expect large variation from climate change or freshwater input.</p> <p>A: BCSGA is satisfied with water quality from microbiological perspective. More concerned about bioaccumulation of viral particles. Always recommend disinfection of effluent as it creates less concern for shellfish industry. No concern for expansion of shellfish industry.</p>
<p><b>5.4</b></p>	<p><b>Update on Sewer Extension South Project</b></p>

11:06 – 11:22	<p>D. Monteith provided a brief summary of the Sewer Extension South Project to date. Future updates to the project will need to be conducted as a future amendment to the LWMP with additional rounds of consultation. Currently assessing options for advancing the project while progressing additional engineering and archaeological due diligence. LWMP commitments include advancing planning and design for project with affordability as key criteria, continuing to seek additional grant funding and partnership contribution, and exploring development of septic maintenance bylaw for proposed service area.</p> <p>Q: If we were looking at installing the Sewer Extension South Project, is there no way of pairing that with the idea of lower or no-interest loans to the homeowners for septic maintenance or repair? If their septic systems are the primary driver, is there no way of assigning that money considered for the project to provide that as an option so we may not need sewer.</p> <p>A: Potentially that could be an option to look at. At this time staff are investigating different options for project phasing, scope, etc. to bring project within budget.</p> <p>Comment: Big concern is that the options identified are likely to shorten distance to Royston. Wonder what the possibility is of extending it beyond that as government funding seems lacking. Would be unfair to residents of Union Bay if pipe only went to Royston when funding model was for extending to Union Bay. Hope that multiple options are looked at when determining solution. May just be funding for conveyance system to Union Bay but not collection.</p> <p>Q: In terms of trying to see if the project will commence, what is the timeline on that? How long are we going to try to find funding to get the project going and when will that decision be made? Asking because if it doesn't proceed, only then we'll consider bylaws to improve septic situation.</p> <p>A: Don't have defined timeline at this point. Will keep community and TACPAC informed as options are reviewed.</p> <p>Q: Will be sending LWMP for review, which is a time-consuming process. Is it possible to amend during review or does it need to be amended after approval?</p> <p>A: Could explore options with provincial staff if timelines align.</p>
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Q: Why the need to delay a septic maintenance bylaw pending an uncertain outcome in respect to additional funding? Wouldn't it be wise to proceed with a bylaw, which would just then no longer be required should a sewer be constructed? The harm is being done and continues to be done, so there's no reason to delay a bylaw.

A: Within context of previous discussions with TACPAC, always discussed septic bylaw as alternate option so that is how it has been captured in plan.

Comment: That was the original sentiment, but these things are required. With such a high number of septic systems of unknown type, there could be a significant number of failed systems and contamination. Project still years away in terms of construction, so don't see why we wouldn't go to homeowners about septic maintenance.

Q: Is the septic bylaw included in LWMP report?

A: The exact wording focuses on the commitment to explore development of a bylaw.

Comment: 25 years ago, the impetus for extending sewer to Kye Bay was that the medical health officer issued a letter saying that all development and population growth in the vicinity of the septic systems should be frozen and the homeowners were forbidden from developing their property, including such things as putting in an extra bedroom. Residents there had a motive, but maybe the motive isn't quite there yet for the south region.

D. Monteith advised the committee that the CVRD is looking for feedback from the TACPAC on the plan, including the commitments within the plan. If there are tweaks to that wording that the committee wants to recommend, that can be put forward to the steering committee for consideration.

Q: Is there any cost benefit analysis for installing the pipe now compared to people upgrading their systems? Is there any usefulness in looking at that?

A: Did do that work through Stage 1&2 addendum process looking at costs and benefits of staying on septic versus community sewer. Did see long-term benefit to community sewer based on the scope and budget of the proposed project at that time.

	<p>Comment: The cost benefit analysis was based on a much larger population that included development, not the existing population.</p>
<p><b>5.5</b> 11:22 – 11:32</p>	<p><b>Summary of Consultation and Feedback</b></p> <p>D. Monteith provided a summary of the LWMP timeline. Provided an overview of the Stage 1&amp;2 consultation, as well as the recent Stage 3 public consultation conducted over the past year. Detailed ongoing engagement with First Nations and municipal councils. Staff recommending minor change to commitments and to re-engage if any additional changes come out of City of Courtenay council meeting. Detailed outcome of value engineering review. Provided overview of cost per connection impact for phase 4 upgrades.</p> <p>Q: With the reference to the full build out of the disinfection system, does that imply that there is a partial build-out for today's flows as opposed to future flows? A: Will need to defer to project staff to confirm.</p> <p>Q: For inflow and infiltration (I&amp;I) commitments from Courtenay and Comox, understand that value of that is massive and want to reduce flows. Do we have a sense what that will look like in terms of time and costs? A: That will be part of the process after flow monitoring is conducted and can see what is going on. Will do analysis to see how much I&amp;I is coming in, what that capital project would look like, what the costs are, etc. Data collection will be the first stage. Will know by roughly 2038 how to proceed with managing I&amp;I.</p>
<p><b>5.6</b> 11:32 – 12:16</p>	<p><b>Review of Stage 3 LWMP and Commitments</b></p> <p>A. Smythe presented on the Stage 3 LWMP and commitments, including an overview of the process so far and regulatory requirements for a LWMP.</p> <p>Summarized the Stage 3 LWMP components, including estimated costs and projected schedule. Wastewater treatment, outfall and resource recovery commitments are being done through the site master plan. Source control and I&amp;I have been reviewed by the Sewage Management Advisory Committee and Sewage Commission and require coordination with municipal partners. I&amp;I commitments are still in draft as they are being considered by the City of Courtenay, and commitment II-4 is proposed to be removed.</p> <p>Shared timeline of next 10 years for proposed LWMP commitments.</p>

Q: Goal of meeting is recommendation to Sewage Commission for adoption. Can we explain the deletion of commitment II-4?

A: Deletion came out of referral to municipal councils. Still waiting on outcome of City of Courtenay council meeting.

Comment: Would like to modify septic regulatory bylaw section of LWMP on page 45. Regarding statement of "if sewer servicing will not proceed as planned," the date of 2032 is shocking and more urgency should be placed on that. Regarding the restriction of the area to just that considered by the Sewer Extension South Project, there are septic systems everywhere and uncertain why we wouldn't say that all systems have the potential to cause problems, recognizing that property size, proximity to water, etc. are factors to consider as well. Propose that the commitment be amended along the lines of "That the CVRD commits to the development of a bylaw for septic system maintenance for all properties within the CVRD by 2027."

Response: Regarding the area for the proposed bylaw, the plan includes commitments for those areas within the plan boundary, which includes the CVSS and those proposed to be serviced in the future. Cannot propose commitments through this planning process for areas outside the plan area boundaries. Could be and has been explored through a separate process.

Q: How do we extend that commitment beyond this process? Unfair to residents of Electoral Area A that they would be subject to septic regulation while those outside the area who would have a similar impact on the environment are not. Should not just focus on Electoral Area A residents.

A: CVRD-wide bylaw has been considered by the Electoral Areas Services Committee (EASC) in the past and proceeding with septic rebate as alternate option. Could still be considered again in the future.

Comment: Considering that the commitments are restricted to the plan boundaries, propose that the septic regulation commitment be amended to remove the wording "if sewer servicing will not proceed as planned" and replace with "to be put in place by 2027."

Comment: Suggest wording of "develop and implement."

Q: Could the effectiveness of this bylaw within Electoral Area A be studied for application to other areas outside Electoral Area A? Can this type of commitment be included in the LWMP?

A: Can't make that commitment within the LWMP but can include commentary within the report.

Q: Would that be a recommendation to the Sewage Commission?

A: Could include that commentary within the proposed changes to the commitments.

That the CVRD commits to the development and implementation of a bylaw for septic system maintenance within those parts of Electoral Area A included in the plan area boundaries to be put in place no later than 2027. – I. Munro

SECONDED: L. Aitken

Comment: With development of bylaw, should look at options for rebating residents within Electoral Area A for portion of costs for septic pump outs. One per cent of the \$30M grant could cover costs of annual pump outs for existing residents. Could look to waive tipping fees or something similar for residents in those areas waiting on sewer.

Comment: Propose addition to earlier motion to include "with consideration for financial impacts to property owners." May have bylaw in place but then have plan for sewer, so could allow homeowners to delay repairs or replacement of septic systems if sewer is incoming. Want some flexibility so homeowners don't have to replace entire septic system when sewer is one year away.

Q: Is it worth including verbiage on economic impact statement? Could consider annual pump out as a stepwise procedure. Is that too detailed?

A: Have made broad recommendation and should see where this goes.

That the CVRD commits to the development and implementation of a bylaw for septic system maintenance within those parts of Electoral Area A included in the plan area boundaries to be put in place no later than 2027 with consideration for financial impacts to property owners.

– I. Munro

SECONDED: L. Aitken & N. Prince

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Comment: When this recommendation goes forward, would need second recommendation on broadening the scope of the bylaw to other areas.

Response: Would be referred to the EASC.

Q: This TACPAC reports to the Sewage Commission, correct? So it would be a recommendation to the Sewage Commission for consideration with referral to the EASC?

A: Yes.

Recommendation to the Sewage Commission with consideration by the Electoral Areas Services Committee to consider the potential of expansion of a septic maintenance bylaw to all areas of the CVRD. – I.

Munro & A. Habkirk

SECONDED: K. Van Velzen

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Alongside seeking additional grant funding and partnerships, that the CVRD explore alternate models for septage treatment or maintenance, including feasibility of financing assistance to private homeowners to upgrade systems. – M. Lang

SECONDED: J. Elliott

Q: Is that motion to be included as a commitment within the LWMP or as a separate motion?

A: To be included as a commitment. South region has been waiting for sewage system and dissuades homeowners from investing in their private systems. If financing is explored, could be an interesting method of handling the issue. The longer we leave it, the more failing septic systems there will be.

Comment: When sewer was proposed for Kye Bay, homeowners thought that they would get sewer in a set time and ended up waiting. Island Health wouldn't allow temporary repairs so had to pay more to install a sophisticated dosing system for a septic system that was about to be replaced. More than one solution. Could allow for less than current standards for septic system or holding tanks. Some form of transitional arrangements would be helpful.

Comment: May be harder to implement because septic systems are under provincial jurisdiction. Property values will go up if have updated septic systems. Imagine hard to sell down in south region right now.

Q: Have we covered that in the first motion with the statement on “consideration for financial impacts to property owners” or are we constraining the people that will write the bylaw?

A: CVRD vision has been limited to the Sewer Extension South Project. Need to open up to other models and options.

Comment: Need to look at timeline. Have been discussing sewer for south region for 25 years now. Original Comox Valley Sewer System that went in back in 1982 was a long project in development as well. Can't just wait and find out 10 years down the road that there won't be sewer. Need to do something now and broaden the possibilities.

Comment: Have been proponent of big pipe solution, but there are other solutions providing the size of the community permits it. The big pipe solution is right solution for a much larger community. Depends on if there is a desire to service that.

Comment: Also need to consider that if there is a big pipe, where the sewer stops. Need options for those areas not included in next 10+ years and should be worked out now.

Alongside seeking additional grant funding and partnerships, that the CVRD explore alternate models for septage treatment or maintenance, including feasibility of financing assistance to private homeowners to upgrade systems. – M. Lang

SECONDED: J. Elliott

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

W. Cole Hamilton advised the TACPAC of a severe sewage leak and that the entire valley has been issued a “do not flush” request. Staff will take a break at the end of the meeting to discuss.

A. Habkirk presented the draft recommendation for approval of the LWMP report by the TACPAC, with the inclusion of any recommendations put forward by the TACPAC previously.

Comment: Wanted to bring attention to events in Metro Vancouver on the north shore. 15 years ago, they were at same stage we are at, looking at sewage treatment plant upgrades, and supported \$700M to upgrade plant. Does anyone know what happened? Costs ballooned by

	<p>five times. Are there any parallels to our process? Anything to be learned from what happened in North Vancouver?                  Response: The Metro Vancouver TACPAC did a good job, but something happened after.</p> <p>That the TACPAC recommends to the Sewage Commission that the commission approve the Stage 3 LWMP report with the following changes to the report to delete commitment IL-4 and incorporate the recommendations made by the TACPAC, pending no material change required to address feedback from the City of Courtenay and/or First Nation review. – K. van Velzen                  SECONDED: M. Lang                  CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY</p>
<p><b>5.7</b>                  12:16 –                  12:27</p>	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>D. Monteith provided an overview of next steps for LWMP report including timing of submittal, review and approval.</p> <p>Q: Any way we will hear back about the recommendations to the Sewage Commission, as this in the last TACPAC meeting?                  A: Yes, we can follow up with the TACPAC on the recommendations and final approval of LWMP.</p> <p>Q: Created a commitment today, so will that update or be added to the commitments within the report?                  A: Recommendation would be to make an update to the corresponding commitments.</p> <p>D. Monteith provided an update on the sewer leak and the no flush notice. Residents are being asked to not use toilets or add water into the sewer system (laundry, bathing, dishwasher, etc.). Have little details at this time but a further update will be provided at 2:00 pm.</p> <p>W. Cole Hamilton advised that there are easily shareable don't flush notices online. The TACPAC members were asked to share the notices with friends and the community if possible. I. Munro notified the committee that ChekNews had reported on the leak as a severe emergency incident involving a wastewater leak at the Comox Pump Station and had resulted in a do not flush order. The school board reported that the temporary bypass at the Comox Pump Station broke and overflowed into the ocean. Goose Spit and the Comox Marina are impacted.</p>

	<p>A. Habkirk asked the committee for any thoughts or comments on the LWMP process. The committee thanked A. Habkirk for chairing the TACPAC meetings and guiding the process, and thanked the CVRD and consulting engineers for their work. The CVRD thanked the committee members for their participation over the years, appreciating that it is a huge time commitment and matters to the wellbeing of the community.</p>
<b>5.8</b> 12:27	<b>Adjournment and Lunch</b> The committee adjourned at 12:27 pm and broke for lunch.

**GENERAL:**

No further CVSS Stage 3 LWMP Joint TACPAC meetings are planned or scheduled at this time.

**TERMINATION:**

The meeting terminated at 12:27 pm.