

DATE: May 17, 2021

FILE: 5280-02

TO: Chair and Directors
Regional District Board

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. Dyson

RE: Regional Airshed Roundtable Update (Year One)

Purpose

To provide the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board with an update and summary of the first year of the Airshed Roundtable (Roundtable) including the draft vision and goals developed for the Regional Airshed Protection Strategy (Strategy).

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the Regional Airshed Roundtable Update staff report dated May 17, 2021 be received for information.

Executive Summary

- The Regional Airshed Roundtable, was established following direction from the board on September 17, 2019 to create a collaborative framework for improving air quality in the Comox Valley as described in *A Regional Approach to Improve Air Quality and Health in the Comox Valley: Our Proposal* dated August 2019. Ensuing the recommendations for this framework, Pinna Sustainability was retained as the Air Quality Coordinator to work with the Steering Committee and the Roundtable. The first year (May 2020 – April 2021) of the Regional Airshed Roundtable has successfully established the foundation and built capacity for a collaborative approach in the development of a Regional Airshed Protection Strategy.
- Year One principal activities accomplished include:
 - Retaining an Air Quality Coordinator.
 - Establishment and engagement of the Steering Committee which is represented by government agencies, academics, and health authorities involved in managing air quality.
 - Establishment and engagement of the Roundtable which is represented by non-profit groups, private industry, advocacy groups and members of the public. The Steering Committee also participates in the Roundtable.
 - Initiation of the strategy development process through the creation of the draft vision and goals.
- The five Steering Committee meetings and three Roundtable meetings were well-attended and informed the creation of the draft vision and goals for the Strategy.
- The second year (May 2021 – April 2022) of the project will see a broader engagement approach, supported by additional funding financed through the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) Community Wellness Grant.
- The Regional Airshed Roundtable Year One report by the Air Quality Coordinator is attached as Appendix A.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

D. Mazarura

A. Mullaly

Daphne Mazarura, BURPI, MEL
 Planning and Policy Analyst

Alana Mullaly, RPP, MCIP
 General Manager of Planning and
 Development Services

Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

City of Courtenay	✓
Town of Comox	✓
Village of Cumberland	✓
K’ómoks First Nation	✓
Air Quality Coordinator - Pinna Sustainability	✓

Background/Current Situation

Improving air quality is a strategic priority that was identified by the board in January 2019, and is also a key initiative under the Regional Growth Strategy Service. The Comox Valley struggles with poor air quality emanating from high levels of fine particulate matter that is further exacerbated in the winter months. The concentration of air pollutants in specific areas such as valleys can cause serious impacts on human health. Improving air quality in the region is complex due to personal choices, socioeconomic inequities, different levels of government regulation and cultural values. The Regional Airshed Roundtable was developed as a regional framework in 2020 to address air quality in the Comox Valley. The three year timeline was selected to provide a sustainable and effective engagement approach in the development of a Regional Airshed Protection Strategy.

The Regional Airshed Roundtable Structure and Year One Achievements

Figure 1: Objectives and Process for the Regional Airshed Roundtable

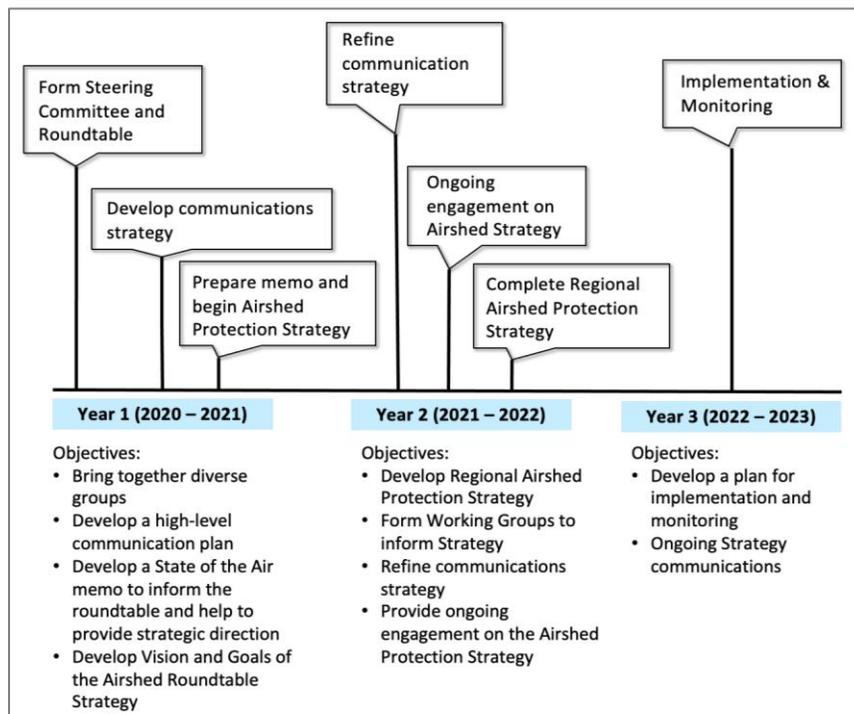


Figure 1 above provides an overview of the objectives and process for the three year project timeline. The first year of this initiative resulted in the establishment and collaborative engagement of the Steering Committee, the Roundtable, and development of the draft vision and goals for the Strategy. A detailed account of the Roundtable’s first year is available in the Airshed Roundtable Year One report (Appendix A). The established Regional Airshed Roundtable Structure and Year one engagement are summarized as follows:

CVRD staff convenes the processes of the Roundtable, obtains and allocates resources and liaises directly with the Coordinator.

The Air Quality Coordinator facilitates the Roundtable process, coordinates the Roundtable activities and leads in the development of the Strategy.

The Steering Committee provides technical expertise, champions and supports development of the Strategy. The Steering Committee is comprised of staff from the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Vancouver Island Health Authority, Vancouver Island University and local government representatives from the City of Courtenay and the CVRD.

The Steering Committee met five times in the first year of the project to:

- Prepare a Terms of Reference and set of Guiding Principles for the Steering Committee and the Roundtable;
- Develop a State of the Air Memo;
- Develop a communications plan and media approach;
- Develop, in consultation with the Roundtable, a draft vision and set of goals for the Strategy; and;
- Provide feedback on key decision points to the Air Quality Coordinator and CVRD staff.

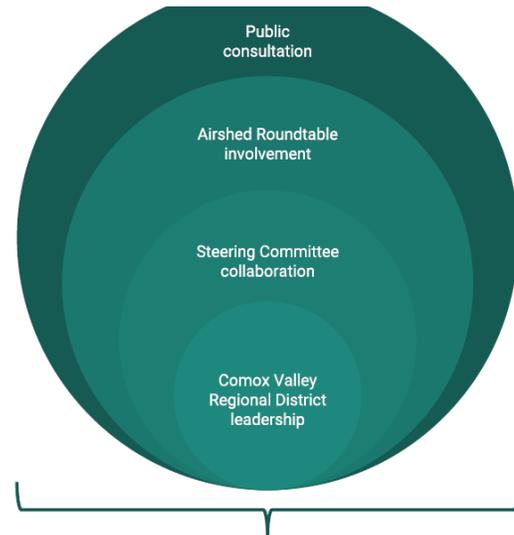
The Roundtable is a collaborative group of representatives from the private industry, regional fire services, the Chamber of Commerce, advocacy groups, non-profit groups and members of the public (including municipal and electoral area representatives). The Steering Committee is also part of the Roundtable. The Roundtable identifies issues and helps generate solution ideas. The Roundtable operates under a terms of reference which includes the following objectives:

- To help identify issues and establish shared priorities.
- To offer potential solutions as identified.
- To help inform public policy on clean air in the region.
- To share information with the organizations/ groups that they represent.

The Roundtable met three times in the first year to:

- Provide input on the Terms of Reference;
- Draft the vision and goals;
- Discuss the complexity of air quality and help identify issues and establish shared priorities. The Roundtable also plays a role in reporting out the work of the Roundtable to their organizations.

Airshed Protection Strategy Group Structure



Coordinator facilitation and process support
(Pinna Sustainability)

CVRD staff convenes the processes of the Roundtable, obtains and allocates resources and liaises directly with the Coordinator.

Engagement Approach and Key Deliverables:

Thorough engagement and understanding of the Roundtable is required because of the diverse representation, knowledge and understanding of the members. In addition to the meetings of the Steering Committee and the Roundtable, it was necessary to create and share resources and materials for a supportive process which included the Terms of Reference and Guiding Principles. An information repository was created to address timing constraints, improve efficiency and accessibility to more detailed information on topics identified by the Roundtable. Additional engagement activities included presentations on various topics and initiatives delivered by Steering Committee representatives and CVRD staff. Also, surveys and dialogue helped build the capacity of the Roundtable and elicit themes for strategy development and working group topics.

The broader public can keep informed of activities through the Airshed Roundtable Project page on [Airshed Roundtable Project | Comox Valley Regional District \(comoxvalleyrd.ca\)](http://Airshed Roundtable Project | Comox Valley Regional District (comoxvalleyrd.ca)). The Roundtable meeting materials such as the State of the Air Memo, meeting slides and presentations are available on the project page.

Airshed Protection Strategy Draft Vision and Goals:

The vision and goals were developed in alignment to the purpose statement created by the working group that preceded the creation of the Airshed Roundtable stating: “Working together to achieve the best air possible for a healthy Comox Valley.” The process also entailed the brainstorming, discussions, surveys and the review of related materials. The condensed version of the draft vision for the Strategy is:

“The Comox Valley has clean air supporting the health of all residents.”

Goal 1: Achieve measurable reductions in fine particulate matter levels

Goal 2: Effective coordination of our efforts

Goal 3: Educate and involve the community in understanding and reducing the impacts of air pollution

The draft vision, goals and principles of the Strategy will guide subsequent activities of the Roundtable. The detailed draft vision and goals are included in Appendix D of the Year End Report (Appendix A). The process for the vision and goals creation included Roundtable meetings, surveys, reviewing other BC plans and input from the Steering Committee.

Next Steps

The key milestone for the second year is the development of a Regional Airshed Protection Strategy. The Steering Committee, Coordinator and Airshed Roundtable will work towards this development through working groups and broader engagement. The task schedule for year two is available in Figure 4 of Appendix A.

Broader Engagement

Additional funding was secured to enhance engagement and collaboration in the Airshed Roundtable process for year two. The year two engagement strategy will enable broader education, input and collaboration in the strategy development process. This will include further online engagement using the Connect CVRD web site, a public online event, additional collaborative initiatives and support for Working Groups.

Policy Analysis

Part 13 of the *Local Government Act* (RSBC, 2015, c. 1) outlines the purpose of a Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). The RGS is a regional vision that commits regional districts and municipalities to a course of action to meet social, environmental and economic objectives. The legislation is broad enough to address regional matters including air quality. In 2019 the board included air quality as a key project under the RGS Service.

Air Quality has also been identified by the board as a strategic priority, therefore the resources to support the Regional Airshed Roundtable are considered alongside the delivery of other core services.

Options

This report is provided for information.

Financial Factors

This project is housed under the RGS service in which the electoral areas and municipalities participate. The project is supported by an annual amount of \$ 30,000 from the RGS service budget. The second year (May 2021 – April 2022) will be supported by an additional \$ 20,000 funded by the VIHA Community Wellness Grant which will contribute to broader engagement.

Legal Factors

There are no legal factors related to this report.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

Clean air is fundamental to human life and healthy ecosystems. The RGS vision statement is impossible to achieve without clean air:

“...As stewards of the environment, local governments, the K’ómoks First Nation, public agencies, residents, businesses and community and non-governmental organizations will work collaboratively to conserve and enhance land, water and energy resources and ensure a vibrant local economy and productive working landscape’s.”

Clean air also supports a high quality of life through the protection and enhancement of community health, safety and well-being (Goal 7: Public Health and Safety) and protecting, stewarding and enhancing the natural environment and ecological connection and systems (Goal 2: Ecosystems, Natural Areas, and Parks).

The Regional Airshed Roundtable will assist in achieving the overall objectives of the RGS through a collaborative effort to identify and implement actionable steps or advocacy work to improve air quality.

Intergovernmental Factors

Members of the Steering Committee and the Airshed Roundtable include local government staff and representatives from provincial agencies such as VIHA, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.

Interdepartmental Involvement

The Planning and Development Services Branch is the project lead with support from Pinna Sustainability and in collaboration with the members of the Steering Committee and the Airshed Roundtable.

Citizen/Public Relations

The Roundtable is represented by non-profits and six members of the general public. The activities of the Airshed Roundtable are shared with the public through the project page. In addition, broader public engagement and materials will be conducted on the Connect CVRD page. A detailed engagement plan will be prepared for year two.

Attachments: Appendix A - Airshed Roundtable Year One Report by Pinna Sustainability