



# Comox Valley Sewerage System Liquid Waste Management Plan

## Public Consultation Plan

FINAL: May 22, 2018



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# 1.0 Introduction

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This document outlines the approach and tactics for public consultation during the development of a liquid waste management plan (LWMP) for all Comox Valley Sewerage System (CVSS) works, including conveyance system components and upgrades to the Comox Valley Water Pollution Control Centre (CVWPCC).

The two primary objectives for a LWMP are:

- 1) to protect public health and the environment, and
- 2) to properly consult the public.

The strength and rigor of the required public and stakeholder consultation, along with final approval of the plan by independent provincial review, will allow for the selection and implementation of the best long-term solutions for the CVSS, using a process that generates community and stakeholder confidence.

## BACKGROUND

Wastewater from the City of Courtenay and Town of Comox is transported to the CVWPCC through a large diameter forcemain that follows the shoreline from the Courtenay River estuary to Goose Spit, along Willemar Bluff and then on to the CVWPCC. The section along Willemar Bluff has deteriorated and poses significant environmental and operational risks.

Studies to address those risks led to the development of the Comox No. 2 Pump Station project – a planned re-routing of the at-risk pipe away from the beach which was further supported during the sewer master planning process.

In 2017, the CVRD carried out an indicative design process for delivery of the Comox No. 2 Pump Station project, finding that:

- Capital and lifecycle costs associated with the project would be significantly higher than previously understood.
- Addition of an inline booster style pump station would increase the risk of overflow at the Courtenay and Jane Place pump stations.
- Given the revised cost estimates, there may be a cost-effective solution to rerouting this portion of pipe.
- The condition of the foreshore forcemain, including the Willemar Bluff section, is better than expected, offering additional time to ensure the region implements the optimum solution.

In October 2017, after reviewing the above findings, the Comox Valley Sewage Commission directed staff to review alternative options to the Comox No. 2 project to identify a lower risk and more cost-effective solution to the issue of conveyance, one that inspires confidence and buy-in from stakeholders.

The CVRD is committed to ensuring that the plan moving forward considers the best approach for the full CVSS, not solely the high-priority Willemar Bluff (Balmoral Beach) portion of pipe.

As a result, an LWMP has been selected as the best planning tool moving forward – offering both a comprehensive planning opportunity as well as one that prioritizes public involvement in determining solutions.

## CONSULTATION AREA AND TARGET AUDIENCE

The LWMP will be developed for the Comox Valley Sewerage System (CVSS), inclusive of the conveyance system and CVWPCC. As the scope will address the current system only, which primarily serves City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, CFB Comox, and K’ómoks First Nation, the consultation area will include those municipalities/regions.

Target audiences for LWMP public consultation activities include:

- K’ómoks First Nation
- Property and business owners in City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Lazo, and other areas served by the CVSS
- Department of National Defence/CFB Comox
- Environmental stewardship organizations
- Industry associations

## LOCAL INTERESTS

The LWMP includes a broad region. Residents throughout the area will consider this a topic of local interest because it is a service they participate in and rely on. In addition to the service area, residents in the CVRD’s electoral area “B” will also be included in the consultation process as the CVWPCC is located in that area, as is much of the conveyance system infrastructure.

## REGIONAL INTERESTS

Regionally, interest in the LWMP process will be centered on protecting both:

- The long-term viability of the CVSS, and the importance of reliable infrastructure to continued growth in the area.
- The health of Baynes Sound, which is critically important to the Comox Valley, and which could be put at risk by over-capacity or aging/failing infrastructure.

Also, between 2014 and 2016, the first two phases of an LWMP were developed for the CVRD’s electoral area “A” (excluding Denman and Hornby Islands). The proposal to proceed with the implementation of a South Region wastewater system was defeated in a referendum in 2016. However, growth in the south region (currently not serviced by CVSS) has led to interest in delivering wastewater from Area A to the Comox Valley Pollution Control Centre.

## STUDY PROCESS

The LWMP process is a prescribed approach used by many local governments in BC to develop a wastewater management strategy for their communities. Traditionally a three-stage process, the CVRD has chosen to combine stages one and two of the LWMP in order to make use of relevant prior investigations and advance the LWMP process efficiently.

While much work has already been completed, the LWMP involves key steps that create critical opportunity for public engagement. These include the creation of public and technical advisory committees, review of existing information, development of service options, identification of a preferred option, completion of environmental condition and risk studies, and assessment of financial and implementation plans.

## 2.0 Public Consultation Framework

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A successful LWMP requires extensive public consultation. This framework outlines proposed engagement for the process.

### PRINCIPLES

The following principles will guide public consultation throughout the LWMP process:

- Follow IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation – This acknowledged best practice of public engagement (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower) will guide consultation.
- Meet provincial LWMP Requirements– The specific requirements of the LWMP process ensure meaningful input is sought from the public – these will guide consultation plans.
- Support the Work of the LWMP Technical Consultant/Engineer - Public consultation will support and align with the efforts of the technical consultant.
- Demonstrate transparency and competency in planning – By openly sharing information and working through planning and decision-making processes with interested and affected parties (IAPs).
- Offer options for community involvement– By using a range of tools, the public will be able to engage in a method that suits them.

### OBJECTIVES

1. Provide information about the process of engagement and tools to be used.
2. Offer opportunities for active public involvement.
3. Clearly explain how feedback will be received and considered.
4. Create a record of engagement at the end of the process
5. Demonstrate how engagement was considered and how input influenced final decisions.

### TEAM ROLES

The development of the technical portion of the LWMP will be managed by the CVRD's Engineering Department with the support of consulting engineers and an independent facilitator to assist with moderating meetings.

The CVRD's Operational Communications, with support of communications consultants and a public engagement facilitator will plan, deliver and manage the public engagement and community outreach portion of the LWMP development work.

Management of the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) will primarily be led by the engineering department.

## CONSULTATION MILESTONES AND ESTIMATED TIMELINE

DATES	PROJECT MILESTONES
	Educate the Public about wastewater in the CVRD
May-Aug 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• INFORM – provide information via advertising and website</li> <li>• INVOLVE – host a facilitated workshop for public to start discussion with public about the sewage system and value decisions around planning, support with online consultation.</li> </ul>
	Kick-off LWMP
May-Sept 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• INFORM – public open house to introduce the LWMP process and public consultation options</li> <li>• COLLABORATE – introduce public and technical advisory committee (PAC/TAC).</li> </ul>
	Establish LWMP Goals and Objectives
Oct – Dec 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COLLABORATE – PAC/TAC meetings, goals and objectives established</li> <li>• CONSULT – host a facilitated workshop for public to review goals and objectives, support with online consultation.</li> </ul>
	Present Long List of Options
Jan-Feb 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COLLABORATE – PAC/TAC meetings, long list established</li> <li>• CONSULT – host a facilitated workshop for public to review and rank long list options, support with online consultation.</li> </ul>
	Present Short List of Options
Feb-Mar 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COLLABORATE PAC/TAC meetings, short list established</li> <li>• CONSULT – host a facilitated workshop for public to review and rank short list, support with online consultation</li> <li>• INFORM – Sewage Commission signs off on shortlist of options.</li> </ul>
	Present Preferred Solution*
Apr -Jul 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COLLABORATE – PAC/TAC meetings, consensus on preferred solution</li> <li>• INFORM – Sewage Commission signs off on preferred solution</li> <li>• INFORM – host public open house to present preferred solution to community and report on feedback obtained from public</li> </ul>

*\*Conveyance components may be split from remaining LWMP processes once preferred conveyance solution is selected. Communications support for a separate assent process will be coordinated as details are confirmed.*

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Working Towards Final Draft Report	
Aug-Dec 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COLLABORATE – PAC/TAC meetings to refine draft</li> <li>• COLLABORATE - submit LWMP stages 1 and 2 final report and Environmental Impact Studies to Ministry of Environment (MOE) for review</li> <li>• INVOLVE – PAC/TAC meetings, working towards final draft report.</li> </ul>
Jan - Mar 2020	Present LWMP Final Draft Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CONSULT – facilitated session to present final draft report to community for input, supported with online consultation</li> <li>• COLLABORATE – PAC/TAC considers community input and refines draft.</li> </ul>
Spring 2020	Present and Submit Final Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COLLABORATE – submit Stage 3 final report to Ministry of Environment</li> <li>• INFORM – provide final report to the community, host public open house</li> <li>• INFORM – report back to public consultation participants/community on consultation value, results and affect.</li> </ul>

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## 3.0 Consultation Methods and Tools

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Multiple complementary consultation approaches will be used to ensure the public has many opportunities to be informed and engage/provide input in a meaningful way in a format that is convenient for them.

### 3.1 ONGOING

#### 3.1.1 PROJECT WEBSITE

The project website will be the central location for project information and details of how the public can engage with the LWMP process. It will be the hub for accurate, timely information about the process and the link to the online consultation/discussion tool and will include:

- Up-to-date project information
- Link to online consultation/discussion forum (Bang the Table)
- Calendar of public events, PAC/TAC meetings
- Resource materials (e.g. Glossary, FAQs, staff reports, studies)

#### 3.1.2 ONLINE CONSULTATION/DISCUSSION FORUM

An online consultation/engagement tool such as *Bang the Table* offers the public the opportunity to engage when it is convenient for them, broadening the consultation reach through ease of access. *Bang the Table* is very intuitive, easy to use, allows for public debate, discussion and comment and is moderated 24/7 ensuring questions are answered promptly and discussions are managed in a constructive and respectful tone. *Bang the Table* also measures participant engagement, distinguishing between aware, informed and engaged users.

To encourage public participation via *Bang the Table*, an engagement strategy will be executed, inclusive of the following actions:

- Sending targeted invitations to interested constituents
- Issuing a news release about the *Bang the Table* launch
- Targeted advertising and social media push to support launch and consultation re: project milestones

#### 3.1.3 SOCIAL MEDIA

Using the CVRD's Facebook and Twitter accounts, brief, shareable updates will be regularly provided. Any social media updates will link to the online consultation/discussion forum, where commentary and questions will be monitored. The goal will be to provide as new information is available and project milestones are achieved.



#### 3.1.4 PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)

As part of the LWMP process, a PAC will be established that connects interested and affected parties (IAPs), environmental and business organizations to the project. They will be tasked with gathering and relaying public feedback, as well as reviewing information and providing comment directly to the project team.

To encourage participation via the PAC and ensure the right people are at the table, active recruitment will be undertaken from:

- General public, with the goal of fair representation from IAPs, across geographic areas, and from those with relevant experience
- Business organizations, such as Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) and the Chamber of Commerce
- Environmental organizations, such as Comox Valley Land Trust, Comox Valley Conservation Partnership, Project Watershed

#### 3.1.5 PHONE/EMAIL LOGS AND COMMENT SHEETS

Project team members will be provided with phone/email logs, where they will record comments or questions received from members of the public. Comment sheets will also be made available at all open houses/public events/presentations, to encourage ease of feedback from event participants.

#### 3.1.6 TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Traditional media channels (radio, print, television) will be used as appropriate to keep the public informed as project milestones are achieved. The focus of any advertisements, news releases, and media outreach will be to direct the public to opportunities (open houses/public events and Bang the Table) where they can learn more about the LWMP process and provide comment/input.

### 3.2 MILESTONE-SPECIFIC

#### 3.2.1 OPEN HOUSES AND FACILITATED SESSIONS

Both facilitated sessions to collect targeted feedback and more open/general public open houses with a drop-in style will be held during the LWMP process. These will mark important milestones in the development of the plan, including preliminary education, launch, shortlisting proposed options, presentation of preferred solutions, and presentation of financing requirements and implementation schedule. Events may also be held if other opportunities arise.

These events are effective for sharing large amounts of information, collect input and offer the opportunity for the public to meet with the project team to have their questions answered or seek specific information. In organizing each event, the following will be considered:

- Up-to-date and new information and presence of project experts
- Opportunities to collect input and feedback
- Convenient hours and location
- Easy to understand informational material

### 3.2.2 PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Using tools like advertising or handouts, promotional materials will be used specifically as the LWMP process is launched, in order to draw attention to the opportunity for involvement and explain the process which will roll out as the planning begins.

### 3.2.3 INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

Easy to read materials will be provided both in hard copy and online to assist in explaining the background and ongoing work related to the LWMP. This information will be designed for ease of reading and written with the general public as the target audience. Examples include project display boards, FAQs, project backgrounders/pamphlets, glossary.

### 3.2.4 NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters will be produced to update residents when project milestones are achieved. These newsletters will be distributed via post or email to IAPs and stakeholders and will also be made available online and at the public open houses. The newsletters will include project contact information should recipients have questions and directions on how to participate in the Bang the Table online consultation/discussion forum.

## 4.0 Outcomes and Products

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### PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPORT

The proceedings of consultation activities will be documented and available to regulators and members of the public at the conclusion of the LWMP process. It will include:

- Overview of consultation activities
- Listing and samples of informational materials created and provided to the public, IAPs and stakeholders
- Record of consultation reach and participation
- Synopsis of feedback themes, trends and findings
- Summary of incorporation of public feedback in the final plan

### COMMENT LOG/INPUT RECEIVED

All input/comments received, including comment logs, will be provided to the CVRD in their raw form at project end, to form part of the official record of the public consultation process.