



# Comox Valley Sewer Service Liquid Waste Management Plan

## Phase 1 Public Consultation Summary Report

November 1, 2018

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## 1.0 Executive Summary

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In June 2018, the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) launched the Comox Valley Sewer Service Liquid Waste Management Plan. The plan will identify the path forward for the service, including the approach for new/upgraded infrastructure.

Public engagement is key to the management planning process and a public consultation plan was received by the Sewage Commission in spring 2018. The first phase of the plan was implemented from June to August 2018 and focused on educating the public about the sewer system and the planning process. It collected foundational feedback about community values for sewer system planning and included the following tactics:

- *Advertising:* Promotional “Let’s Talk Poop” ads were developed and published to draw attention to the process and the online hub for updates and engagement.
- *Facilitated Sessions:* In mid-June, participants were invited to work together on an interactive activity that saw them prioritize values in sewer service decision making, as part of a two-part workshop led by professional facilitator Allison Habkirk.
- *Online Consultation:* The ConnectCVRD project page was launched with both general information and a structured survey that mimicked the exercise followed in the facilitated sessions.

Despite a challenging time of year for outreach (summer), the results of these were generally good. They included over 1,600 visits to the ConnectCVRD page, and roughly 150 active participants in the values exercise through both the online and in-person components.

Themes of feedback include the importance of the environment in decision making and a keen interest in seeing long-term plans created and followed. There is strong interest by those who have participated to remain involved through future stages of outreach.

Next steps for the project team are to hold an open house in November that will inform the public about the sewer planning process and opportunities for public consultation. It will also provide an opportunity to educate about how the sewer system operates. Following the first meetings of the Public Advisory Committee, a second set of facilitated sessions will be held to obtain the community’s feedback on goals and objectives for the sewer planning process.

## 2.0 Introduction

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### 2.1 Project Brief

In spring 2018, the Comox Valley Regional District launched a liquid waste management planning process for the Comox Valley Sewer System, which will provide a comprehensive planning opportunity that prioritizes public involvement in determining solutions. To outline how the public would be consulted in this process, a public consultation plan was drafted which offered five stages of outreach beginning in summer 2018.

## 2.2 Consultation Overview

The sewer system planning process requires active public engagement in order to determine the preferred path forward and demonstrate to the province the community's input to the overall plan. The public engagement plan developed in spring 2018 identified a suite of tools focused around facilitated sessions, open houses and the online consultation site, ConnectCVRD.

An outline of the plan is below. Phase 1 was completed this summer.



PHASE	OBJECTIVES	TOOLS
<b>PHASE 1:</b> Educate/Kick-Off (Summer 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>INFORM:</b> provide info about the sewer system and LWMP start</li> <li>• <b>INVOLVE:</b> connect with public to collect feedback on values in sewer planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Webpage: create dedicated pages on regional district &amp; ConnectCVRD websites</li> <li>• Advertisements: Print, radio &amp; online</li> <li>• Facilitated Session #1 - Values</li> <li>• Online Consultation Survey</li> </ul>
<b>PHASE 2:</b> Kick off & Goals/Objectives (Fall/Winter 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>INFORM:</b> introduce LWMP process</li> <li>• <b>COLLABORATE:</b> work with the public advisory committee</li> <li>• <b>CONSULT:</b> collect feedback on goals and objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open House #1: including promotional &amp; info materials</li> <li>• Facilitated Session #2 - Goals</li> <li>• Online Consultation Survey</li> </ul>
<b>PHASE 3:</b> Longlisted Options (Winter 2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>COLLABORATE:</b> PAC/TAC meetings, long list established</li> <li>• <b>CONSULT:</b> host a facilitated workshop for public to review and rank long list options, support with online consultation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitated Session #3 – Long List</li> <li>• Online Consultation Survey</li> </ul>
<b>PHASE 4:</b> Shortlisted Options (Spring 2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>COLLABORATE:</b> PAC/TAC meetings, short list established</li> <li>• <b>CONSULT:</b> host a facilitated workshop for public to review and rank short list options, support with online consultation</li> <li>• <b>INFORM:</b> Sewage Commission signs off on shortlist of options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitated Session #4 – Short List</li> <li>• Online Consultation Survey</li> </ul>

<p><b>PHASE 5:</b> Preferred Option (Fall 2019)</p>	<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: Present preferred solution to community and report on feedback obtained from public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open House #2 - Preferred Solution</li> <li>• Inform via news release, website and ConnectCVRD</li> </ul>
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Engaging with the public about wastewater – particularly in planning for services – can be difficult because of a lack of interest and understanding from the public. However, it’s very important as the results of these planning processes can have tangible impacts on some residents and businesses, and on all service users.

With that in mind, the following goals were identified to guide engagement:

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.

**2.3 Phase 1 Consultation: Overview**

The first phase of consultation was centered on collecting feedback that would help to establish the values of the community as they pertain to decision making in the sewer planning process. Along with promoting the new online consultation tool and advertising for Public Advisory Committee nominees, the engagement in this first phase focused on two hubs:

- *Facilitated Sessions:* Two facilitated sessions were held – June 18 & 19, 2018 – hosted by facilitator Allison Habkirk. These sessions used a group discussion method that had people discuss and rank cost, environment, neighbourhood impact and other criteria as factors in sewer service decision making. The exercise used a series of scenarios.
- *Online Consultation Survey:* A survey mimicking the exercise hosted at the two open houses was posted to the ConnectCVRD page on June 20, 2018 and ran until August 7, allowing others who did not attend the facilitated sessions to contribute their comments, for consideration by the public advisory committee.

**3.0 Consultation Results**

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The primary objective of this stage of consultation was to understand the public’s values as they relate to the decision-making process in sewage service. Also key was to establish the CVRD’s goal to actively engage with the public and introduce the online tool that will be used throughout the

process. The below overview shows a summary of these consultation results. The full reports from both the facilitated sessions and online consultations tools are attached as appendices.

### 3.1 By the Numbers

1,600	Visits to the ConnectCVRD Sewer LWMP page
104	Participants in the online consultation survey
15	Number of questions posted by participants to the online consultation tool
171	‘Engaged’ visitors who contributed actively via online consultation tool
20	Participants in two facilitated sessions
89	Percent of facilitated session participants who were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with the process
88	Percentage of scenarios over the two sessions where environment was identified as the top priority
35	Average majority percentage of participants who identified long term planning or expanding the sewer service as a priority.

### 3.2 Facilitated Sessions: Themes of Feedback

- *Concern about the environment:* Participants in the two facilitated sessions were largely focused on the importance of protecting the environment – and in almost all of the scenario exercises ranked it the highest value to consider when making sewer system decisions.
- *Interest in long-term planning:* As the most consistent response for the “other” category, participants should support and share interest in long-term infrastructure planning in coordination with community development and land use planning.

### 3.3 ConnectCVRD: Themes of Feedback

- *Interest in long-term planning:* When asked to prioritize values, the majority of participants selected ‘other’. When asked to explain ‘other’, a theme around the importance of long-term future planning emerges, along with interest in opportunities and plans for service outside of the existing areas.
- *Importance of moving forward:* A number of responses emphasize the need for the CVRD to make decisions and move forward with improvements, given the risks posed by aging/overstretched infrastructure and septic fields. Some of these comments

suggested ‘engagement’ should be reduced in order to allow progress on construction to happen sooner.

- *Concerns about the environment:* While this did not land at the top of the ranking exercise, the responses to a written question about top concerns were largely focused on the importance of protecting the environment and concerns that environment could be impacted by eagerness to reduce costs.

## 4.0 Conclusion

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Summer is a challenging time to encourage participation from the public in formal planning or engagement processes, particularly around wastewater, which often faces limited public interest. However, a push of active promotion using online and radio advertising to highlight the combined opportunities for engagement (both in-person and online) resulted in roughly 150 people providing feedback on this early stage. This is notable and sets a good foundation for engagement going forward.

The resulting comments about the importance of the environment, interest in long-term planning and eagerness to see the process move forward, will help to inform the Technical Advisory and Public Advisory Committees as they work to set the goals and objectives for the process moving forward.

### Next Steps

The public engagement was successfully launched during this period, and the CVRD has the opportunity now to move that momentum forward over the subsequent stages of the sewer service planning process. Next steps for public engagement and outreach include:

- *Open Houses:* Scheduled for November 6 and 8 at the Comox Valley Pollution Control Centre. These events will offer tours of the sewage treatment plant and provide more information about the management planning process and how to get involved in the public consultation.
- *Facilitated Sessions:* Scheduled November 27 and 28 in Courtenay and Comox. These sessions will obtain feedback from the community on the goals and objectives for the management planning process. Results will be fed back to the Technical Advisory and Public Advisory Committees and will help to inform the final recommendation to Sewage Commission.
- *Online Consultation:* Residents may submit feedback on the goals and objectives via an online survey on ConnectCVRD from November 24 to December 5, 2018.

# Appendices

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Appendix 1 – Facilitator’s Report: June 18 & 19, 2018

Appendix 2 – ConnectCVRD Analytics

Appendix 3 – Sample Advertisements