



Comox Valley Sewerage System Liquid Waste Management Plan

Public Consultation Plan

June 2018

Updated November 2018

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Consultation Area and Target Audience	2
1.3	Regional Interests	2
1.4	Study Process.....	3
2.0	Public Consultation Framework	3
2.1	Principles	3
2.2	Objectives	4
2.3	Team Roles.....	4
2.4	Consultation Milestones and Estimated Timeline	5
3.0	Consultation Methods and Tools	7
3.1	Ongoing	7
3.1.1	Project Website	7
3.1.2	Online Consultation/Discussion Forum.....	7
3.1.3	Social media	7
3.1.4	Public Advisory Committee (PAC)	8
3.1.5	Phone/Email Logs and Comment Sheets	8
3.1.6	Traditional media	8
3.2	Milestone-specific	8
3.2.1	Open Houses and Public Events	8
3.2.2	Promotional Materials	9
3.2.3	Informational Materials	9
3.2.4	Newsletters.....	9
4.0	Outcomes and Products	9
	Public Consultation Report.....	9
	Comment Log / Input Received	9

1.0 Introduction

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

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 the Ministry of Environment, will allow for the selection and implementation of the best long-term solutions for the System. The process will generate community and stakeholder confidence, while also providing the appropriate regulatory and borrowing authorizations.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Wastewater from the City of Courtenay and Town of Comox is transported to the Treatment Plant 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 plant. 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 Comox Valley Regional District (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 more 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 (Sewage Commission) directed staff to review alternative options to the

Comox No. 2 Pump Station project to identify the lowest risk and most cost-effective conveyance solution, one that inspires confidence and buy-in from stakeholders.

The CVRD is committed to ensuring that long term planning for the service considers the best approach for the full System, 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.

1.2 CONSULTATION AREA AND TARGET AUDIENCE

The LWMP will be developed for the System, inclusive of the conveyance system and the Treatment Plant. As the scope will address the current system only, which serves the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, CFB Comox, and K'ómoks First Nation, and much of the equipment is located in Electoral Area B, the consultation area will include those municipalities and the portions of Area B located near System infrastructure.

Target audiences for LWMP public consultation activities include:

- K'ómoks First Nation
- Property and business owners in the Comox Valley Sewerage System service area, Lazo, and portions of Area B nearby System infrastructure
- Department of National Defence/CFB Comox
- Environmental stewardship organizations
- Industry associations

1.3 REGIONAL INTERESTS

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

- The long-term viability of the System, and the importance of reliable infrastructure to continued growth in the area.
- Protecting the marine environment by preventing spills and ensuring compliance with environmental standards.

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. The environmental issue in the area continues to persist and has led to interest in delivering wastewater from Area A to the Treatment Plant.

At their May 2018 meeting the Sewage Commission agreed to support in principle the concept of receiving Area A wastewater subject to assessing concerns relating to governance, cost implications and regulations. At the same meeting, the Commission directed staff to assess the impact of accepting Area A wastewater through the Comox Valley Sewerage System LWMP process.

Staff do not expect the potential inclusion of Area A service to make any significant difference to the selection of conveyance alternatives to the Comox No2 Pump Station.

1.4 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. It is traditionally a three-stage process, consisting of the following steps:

- 1) “Identify” - Set the goals, determine the baseline conditions, develop a long list of options, and pare down to a short list
- 2) “Evaluate” - Identify any required environmental or technical studies, feasibility study of the short listed options, and select the preferred option
- 3) “Adopt” - Detailed study of the selected option, develop the financing and implementation plans, approval of the completed plan.

The LWMP process allows combining of two stages into one, where appropriate and advantageous. Given the amount of engineering work already done, staff recommend combining stages one and two in order to advance the process efficiently.

While much engineering 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, setting of “outcomes goals”, 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

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

2.1 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.
- Offer options for community involvement– By using a range of tools, the public will be able to engage in a method that suits them.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

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

2.3 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 with the support of consulting engineers and an independent facilitator to assist with moderating meetings.

2.4 CONSULTATION MILESTONES AND ESTIMATED TIMELINE

DATES	PROJECT MILESTONES
May-Aug 2018	1. Educate the public about wastewater in the CVRD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INFORM – provide information via advertising and website • 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.
Nov 2018	2. Kick-off LWMP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INFORM – public open house to introduce the LWMP process and public consultation options • COLLABORATE – introduce public and technical advisory committee (PAC/TAC).
Nov-Dec 2018	3. Establish LWMP Goals and Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COLLABORATE – PAC/TAC meetings, goals and objectives established • CONSULT – host a facilitated workshop for public to review goals and objectives, support with online consultation.
Jan-Mar 2019	4. Develop Long List of Options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COLLABORATE – PAC/TAC meetings, long list established, reviewed and evaluated to select short list. • CONSULT – host a facilitated workshop for public to review and rank long list options, support with online consultation.
Mar-June 2019	5. Study Short List of Options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COLLABORATE - PAC/TAC meetings for feasibility study of short list options, additional technical studies as required. • COLLABORATE – PAC/TAC review, evaluate and rank options • CONSULT – host a facilitated workshop for public to review and rank short list, support with online consultation.
Fall 2019	6. Present Preferred Solution* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sewage Commission signs off on preferred solution • INFORM – host public open house to present preferred solution to community. Report on feedback obtained from public consultation process, supported by online discussion forum.

**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.*

Fall 2019/ Winter 2020	7. Completing Stage 1&2 - Working Towards Final Draft Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COLLABORATE – PAC/TAC meetings to refine draft • COLLABORATE - submit LWMP stages 1 and 2 final report and Environmental Impact Studies to Ministry of Environment for review.
Winter 2020	8. Develop Draft Stage 3 Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INVOLVE – PAC/TAC meetings, review Ministry feedback, develop implementation and financing plans • CONSULT – facilitated session for community input on implementation and financing, supported with online consultation • COLLABORATE – PAC/TAC considers community input and refines draft to develop final report and all supporting documents.
Spring 2020	9. LWMP Completion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sewage Commission approves Stage 3 Final Report • COLLABORATE – submit Stage 3 final report to Ministry of Environment • INFORM – provide final report to the community, report back to participants/ community on public consultation value, results and affect.

3.0 Consultation Methods and Tools

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
- Calendar of public events, PAC/TAC meetings
- Resource materials (eg Glossary, FAQs, staff reports, studies)

3.1.2 ONLINE CONSULTATION/DISCUSSION FORUM

The CVRD's online consultation/engagement platform, Connect CVRD, offers the public the opportunity to engage when it is convenient for them, broadening the consultation reach through ease of access. The platform 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. Connect CVRD also measures participant engagement, distinguishing between aware, informed and engaged users.

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

- Issuing a news release about the Connect CVRD platform launch
- Targeted advertising and social media push to support launch and get residents registered on the site
- Radio advertisements with a call to action for residents to join the conversation.

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 information 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, environmental and business organizations to the project. They will be tasked with gathering and relaying public feedback. Information gathered via the public consultation process will support the PAC in its work.

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 interested and affected parties, 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 the Comox Valley Conservation Partnership.

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 and 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 PUBLIC EVENTS

Facilitated sessions and public open houses will be held during the LWMP process. These will mark important milestones in the development of the plan, including preliminary education, launch, long list of options, shortlisting proposed options, presentation of preferred solutions, and presentation of financing requirements and implementation schedule.

One example of such an event is a public tour of the Treatment Plant at Brent Road, and possibly the pump stations – these events encourage public involvement and increase knowledge of wastewater matters in general.

These events are effective for consultation purposes or sharing large amounts of information and offering the opportunity for the public to meet with members of the project team to have their questions answered or seek specific information.

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 interested and affected parties 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 online consultation/discussion forum.

4.0 Outcomes and Products

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, interested and affected parties 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.