

Sewage Treatment Plant Upgrades

Newsletter #1
June 2019

There's a lot happening at the Comox Valley Water Pollution Control Centre (sewage treatment plant) with upgrades completed in 2018 and more to come this summer. We know that people living in the neighbourhood have more questions than anyone. To keep the community informed about this critical facility, and the work to manage, maintain and improve it, the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) is launching this newsletter. It will be produced as needed to keep you informed about both capital work and ongoing operations.

Equalization Basin Work Set to Get Underway

Of the roughly 8,760 hours in every year, there are around 50 that pose a real threat to the successful operations of the Comox Valley's sewage treatment plant. Those are the hours – in the rainiest, stormiest days and nights of the winter – when inflows due to stormwater are so high that the treatment plant can hardly keep up. It's less than one per cent of the facility's annual operating time, but the negative effects of an overflow would be significant.

To mitigate this risk, the CVRD is proceeding with the construction of an equalization basin – an open basin on the southeast corner of the property. The basin will allow for the storage of primary effluent during those high inflow hours until the facility can properly process and treat the wastewater and safely discharge to the ocean.

Construction will be underway in mid-late July this year and should be completed in early fall. To prepare for this work, trees were removed from the property in the spring, before bird nesting season.

Here's some information about concerns we've heard from the neighbourhood:

- **Protecting Groundwater:** The basin will be lined and will include a monitoring system. Regular maintenance of vegetation around the basin will prevent trees and harmful debris from falling into it.
- **View Corridor + Berm Landscaping:** The trees removed from the property have opened up a view line from Curtis Road, however a landscaping plan is being developed to revegetate the area. (See sidebar).
- **Odour:** While there will be odour associated with the basin's operations, the time of year and very limited time it will be used (winter, wet periods, when outdoor activity is limited) will mean any increased odour impacts would be minimal. The new berm is intended to minimize impact by blocking an odour corridor identified by neighbours.

Watch for updates at comoxvalleyrd.ca/upgrades on the progress of this construction work.



Landscape plans drafted for new EQ Basin

Share Your Input

In order to both stabilize the berm and revegetate the area where trees were removed, a landscape plan has been developed. We want to hear from you about this plan and invite you to come by the plant on **July 17 between 3:30-5:00 PM** to talk with the landscape architect and project team. This will be the first in a series of mobile office hours, when neighbours are invited to stop in and talk with facility managers about any concerns or questions.



Listening and Addressing Our Neighbours' Concerns

Over the past few months, the CVRD has heard from the Curtis Road Residents' Association (CRRRA) through both formal presentations to the Comox Valley Sewage Commission and meetings with staff and elected representatives. On behalf of neighbours, the CRRRA raises ongoing concerns about the facility, which we are responding to and addressing where possible. Below is a summary of top issues addressed in a recent staff report to the Sewage Commission. To read the full report, visit: comoxvalleyrd.ca/upgrades

- Odour:** We know that residents on Curtis Road have long raised concerns about odours from the treatment plant. In 2016, the CVRD agreed to move forward with a series of improvements estimated to reduce odour by 80 per cent, including the installation of a new carbon air scrubber and covering of the primary clarifiers. While this has reduced odour generally, concerns remain. This summer, the CVRD will undertake an odour assessment to understand the effectiveness of upgrades to date, as well as update cost estimates to cover the facility's bioreactors (a key concern flagged by the CRRRA). More information will be shared on this in the coming months. Staff will also assess odour standards in other provinces as BC currently does not have a standard in place.
- Electoral Area B Representation on Sewage Commission:** At the June 11 Sewage Commission meeting, a motion to allow Electoral Area B representation on the commission was not successful. The issue will be considered further as part of an ongoing governance study currently underway by the CVRD.
- Equalization Basin:** Concerns about location, increased odour and perceived risk to groundwater have been raised. See story on page 1 for more info.
- Improved Odour Complaints Reporting + Communications:** An odour reporting form is available at comoxvalleyrd.ca/odourcomplaints. The CVRD is committed to improving communications with the neighbourhood and continues to work with the CRRRA on a communications protocol that sets clear standards about when and how residents will be informed of operational and capital news. See sidebar for a first step in this effort.

Questions/Concerns?

Contact Us:

Phone: Business hours/non urgent: **250-334-6056**, after hours/emergency: **1-888-777-5985**

Email: engineering@comoxvalleyrd.ca

Online: comoxvalleyrd.ca/upgrades

Sign Up for Phone or Text Notifications

The CVRD has added a sewage treatment plant notification option through the regional district's text and/or voicemail notification system (ConnectRocket). Residents can sign up to receive urgent or short notice updates. The facility team will send out a notice if there is planned maintenance that may result in noise or odour impacts, or if an unplanned operational issue causes increased impact that will be prolonged (more than 1 day).

To sign up, visit:

comoxvalleyrd.ca/notifications



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