

COMOX VALLEY SEWER SERVICE LIQUID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Report Back to Community – Summary Report

APRIL 2022



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Executive Summary

As a final phase to the Comox Valley Sewer Service's Liquid Waste Management Plan (LWMP) multi-stage public consultation process, the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) provided a report back to the community in the spring of 2022.

This report-back provided details to the public about the Stage 2 Draft Plan, as well as insight into how community input was considered hand-in-hand with technical evaluations to inform decisions and next steps and ultimately helped determine outcomes and decisions for moving forward.

The CVRD also used the opportunity to inform residents about the next steps for the Sewer Conveyance Project, which is derived from the LWMP planning process. Community updates took place during the month of April, with the following key outreach tools:

- **Information session:** A public open-house event in compliance with COVID-19 protocols was held at the Comox Rec Centre.
- **Online webinar:** For those not comfortable attending an in-person event, and to offer a guided-learning format, an online webinar was also held via ZOOM.
- **Website updates:** Event information (before and after) was posted to the dedicated project web page where background resources are available, along with FAQs, timelines, route maps, etc.

The participation results of this phase were the result of extensive outreach using a variety of methods including a press release, social media, print and radio ads. Roughly 40 participants were in attendance at the in-person open house, with 25 participants attending the online webinar.

In general, the CVRD heard support for the final plan, with interest in next steps for construction planning on the Sewer Conveyance Project, and questions about specific impacts of that work.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

The Comox Valley Sewer Service treats raw sewage (wastewater) from homes and businesses in Courtenay, Comox and K'ómoks First Nation. More than 14,000 cubic metres of wastewater from these communities flows daily through a pipe located along the Willemar Bluffs which poses a significant environmental risk.

In order to address this risk, and create a long-term plan for the service, the CVRD launched a Liquid Waste Management plan (LWMP) in 2018. Along with extensive studies, assessments and financial and implementation planning, the LWMP delivered a multi-stage public consultation process throughout the stages of plan development

Stages 1-4 of this consultation has been summarized in other reports, providing guidance to staff and directors for decisions made within in the LWMP. As a final stage in that consultation, the Comox Valley Regional District completed a final round of public outreach in spring 2022, reporting back about the completed LWMP process, the decisions that have been made, and how feedback influenced these outcomes.

1.2 LWMP Consultation Overview

The development of a long-term wastewater management planning tool began in 2018 and included multiple stages of assessment, analysis and public engagement.

This LWMP work has determined long-term plans for pipes, pump stations and the treatment plant that currently manages sewage from Courtenay, Comox and K'ómoks First Nation, while prioritizing the most urgent concern around an aging forcemain that runs along Balmoral Beach (Willemar Bluffs) and lies at risk of damage from waves, rocks and logs.

To fully understand the potential impacts of these plans on the local community, continuous and dedicated engagement is required, and the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of public participation has been used to define engagement goals for this project as a whole.

The outreach completed in April 2022, as a wrap up to the LWMP process, fell on the INFORM level of the spectrum.

Increasing level of public involvement in decision-making				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Provide balanced and objective information to residents.	Obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions from residents	Work directly with residents to address concerns	Partner with residents to develop a preferred solution	Place final decision making in the hands of residents

Engagement for the LWMP is now complete, achieving the below stated objectives:

1. Provide information about the LWMP process.
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.

2.0 LWMP Consultation Wrap-Up Overview

2.1 Approach

The current report back to the community kicked off in early April 2022. This included the following methods of approach:

Open House

This event took place on April 4, 2022 from 4-6 pm at the Comox Recreation Centre. Vaccine passports were required and checked as per Public Health Office COVID-19 protocols. Masks

were optional. Information boards featuring details of final LWMP were on display, with members of the project team on hand to answer questions. Comment forms were also available for participants to submit to the team.

Webinar

An online webinar was hosted by the project team on April 13, 2022 from 12-1 pm via ZOOM. The first half of the hour ran through the details presented at the open house, and was followed by a Q&A period for participants to pose questions to the project team.

Website Updates

Event information from display boards at the open house, as well as the recording of the webinar, was posted on the [project web page](#) for those who were unable to attend but wished to move through the information at their own pace.

Promotional/Awareness Tools

- **Press release:** Event details and project background information was distributed on the CVRD website, and to Comox Valley media outlets.
- **Social media:** Posts promoting the events were published to the CVRD Twitter and Facebook pages, and shared by Area Directors, councillors, partnering municipalities and interested residents.
- **Print ads:** A half- page advertisement was published in the local newspaper to further promote events.
- **Radio ads:** 42 radio advertisements ran on two local stations leading up the events (6x a day for one week).

2.2 Engagement Tools

The overall success of the final phase of engagement was the result of a blend of tools used to promote, inform and encourage participation.



COVID-19 protocols were reduced at this time, though vaccine passports were still in place during the open house event, and were checked as per PHO guidelines. Masks were optional. The project team also offered an online update via Zoom for those who preferred a virtual environment.

Both the in-person and online events were intended to provide details on the final LWMP including the resulting decisions for wastewater treatment, integrated resource recovery and conveyance, as well as a summary of the process to date, and next steps forward.

2.3 By the Numbers

The numbers below highlight key data collected at the end of the consultation.



2.4 Themes of Comments

Along with the questions posed by participants during the online webinar's Q&A, there were feedback boards at the in-person open house, as well as comment forms.

The following themes from residents emerged to complement the existing themes presented in previous consultation reports:



Impacts of construction: Respondents outlined infrastructure and environmental concerns around the proposed construction phase including protection of marsh areas, bird nests and other natural elements.



Additional upgrades: Requests to consider partnership opportunities with the Town on Comox during construction came up, such as the addition of traffic calming measures on Balmoral Road, and opportunities for new active transportation paths.



Area-specific concerns and issues: Residents provided both personal and specific feedback to their circumstances, including proximity to well water and the protection of important trees.

3.0 Conclusion

Developing a final, long-term plan for wastewater within the CVRD has required both critical technical evaluation as well as considered public input. The engagement plan has been a powerful tool to successfully draw out key impacts and advantages from a community perspective.

Environmental concerns, which emerged as a top priority in prior phases, remains a key potential impact for residents. Concerns also continue to highlight how work will impact their specific areas in regards to the water, trees, traffic, etc. nearby.

Feedback also included impact concerns during the proposed construction phase. These varied and thoughtful comments will provide valuable insight for the project team to consider during the proposed construction phase.

Participation in the final stage of engagement remained high despite COVID-19 protocols, which continued to inform the decisions around the tools and methods used to keep the community informed.

4.0 Next Steps

A commitment was made by the CVRD to follow up with the outcome of the public consultation process, and the following steps will be taken:

- **Closing the loop:** A wrap-up outlining the completion of the consultation process will be made available on the project web page.
- **Sharing new updates when applicable:** The project team will continue to provide updates on the LWMP as needed, including approval options.
- **Continuing with established communications:** Relevant information in subsequent related projects, such as the [Comox Valley Sewer Conveyance Project](#), will be ongoing.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Event Display Boards

Appendix 2 – Webinar Presentation

Appendix 3 – Print & Radio Advertisement Samples