

**DATE:** September 30, 2020**FILE:** 7200-01**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Regional District Board**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer*R. Dyson***RE: Community Resiliency Investment Grant Funding 2021**

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**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to:

- Update the Board on the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) program grant funding in 2020;
- Seek Board approval to apply for CRI program grant funding for 2021, in partnership with K'ómoks First Nation (KFN).

**Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

THAT staff be authorized to apply for the 2021 Community Resiliency Investment grant funding in partnership with the K'ómoks First Nation to undertake FireSmart activities in the electoral areas and on K'ómoks First Nation lands;

AND FURTHER THAT the Comox Valley Regional District commit to overall grant management if the application is successful through Comox Valley Emergency Program- Electoral Areas function 271.

AND FINALLY THAT this report be forwarded to the Comox Valley Airshed Roundtable council for information.

**Executive Summary**

The goal of the CRI grant funding program is to fund activities that:

- Reduce the risk of wildfire,
- Improve a community's resiliency to the effects of wildfire,
- Empower communities to participate in wildfire risk reduction and resiliency.

In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 CRI application was amended to best meet these objectives while still maintaining the Public Health orders regarding physical distancing.

This report seeks authorization to submit a joint CRI grant funding application for 2021, with KFN as a partner. The 2021 application will include:

- FireSmart education and activities for the public,
- Specialized training for Local FireSmart Representatives and volunteer firefighters,
- Curbside woody debris removal and disposal from within KFN lands as well as from within Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) fire department service areas to remove wildfire fuel load,
- For clarity the chipper program is only envisioned to be offered as a pilot and subject to grant funding.

CVRD, KFN and the regional district fire departments are maximizing the available grant funds to further these objectives but unless directed otherwise are not contemplating service establishment and an ongoing commitment of CVRD resources.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

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**Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)**

Denman Island Fire Rescue	✓
Hornby Island Fire Rescue	✓
Fanny Bay Volunteer Fire Department	✓
Oyster River Fire Rescue	✓
Comox valley Emergency Program	✓
K’ómoks First Nation	✓

**Background/Current Situation**

Update 2020 CRI Amended Funding

The joint CRI application for activities in 2020 included funding for:

- Community FireSmart workshops,
- Community meetings,
- Local FireSmart Representative training for individuals,
- Educational signage regarding wildfire prevention,
- Distribution of educational materials including brochures and video links.

In the context of COVID 19 and the Public Health orders regarding physical distancing, staff was unable to arrange workshops, meetings and training sessions. However, staff has since received approval from the grant administrator, UBCM, to amend the 2020 CRI application to pivot the program to more fully utilize the funds available.

Through discussions with KFN staff and the CVRD fire departments, the 2020 CRI funding will be used to provide a Curb-Side Wood Debris Pickup program that facilitates the removal of woody debris fuel from the priority zones of residential properties protected by CVRD fire departments and on KFN lands within the Comox Valley. This program will be delivered through each of the CVRD fire departments to their respective service areas and through KFN staff for their lands and residential properties.

Once implemented, this revised 2020 program will:

- Provide access to FireSmart information and education through electronic means,
- Encourage residents to FireSmart their property with the removal of fuel debris,
- Reduce the risk and the need to burn woody debris on the residential property. This may also have the added benefit of improved air quality.

Note: the curbside woody debris removal aspect of the program will focus on the higher density neighbourhoods where a wildfire has a greater risk of catastrophic loss of structures.

This amended 2020 program is only considered a pivot to more fully utilize approved grant funding, and is not meant to be a new and distinct service provided by the CVRD.

Once the 2020 pivot is completed, staff will report out on the effectiveness of the amended program with data collected regarding:

- Volume of woody debris diverted from backyard burning,
- Effectiveness of diminishing wildfire risk, and
- Effect on Burn Permit applications within the participating fire service areas.

The results will be shared with the Airshed Advisory Committee given the shared objectives.

#### Application for 2021 CRI Funding

For 2021, the CRI program provides up to \$50,000 available to each eligible applicant for eligible projects. With board support, staff will again submit a regional application with KFN as a partner. In partnering with KFN, the regional application can be up to \$100,000 in funding.

In the context of COVID 19 staff has developed a grant funding application that maintains the Public Health orders regarding physical distancing, while still meeting the objectives of the CRI program.

Through discussions with KFN staff, CVRD staff has developed a CRI application package that includes the following FireSmart activities:

- The promotion and distribution of FireSmart educational activities and tools through electronic means.
- Education for the reduction of human caused fires by way of signage.
- FireSmart public events (Public Health Orders must be maintained.)
- Local FireSmart Representative training. (Public Health Orders must be maintained.)
- Wildfire training for volunteer structural firefighters. (Public Health Orders must be maintained.)
- Wildfire training exercise. (Public Health Orders must be maintained.)
- Curbside woody debris removal and disposal from within KFN lands as well as from within CVRD fire department service areas including:
  - Hornby Island fire protection service area
  - Denman Island fire protection service area
  - Fanny Bay fire protection service area
  - Black Creek-Oyster Bay (CVRD portion, with SRD portion provided by SRD staff)
  - Mount Washington fire protection service area

Note: the curbside woody debris removal aspect of the program will focus on the higher density neighbourhoods where a wildfire has a greater risk of catastrophic loss of structures. Additionally in some service areas it may be possible to offer it to the entire service area.

The deadline for 2021 CRI application submission is October 9, 2020, with resolutions from CVRD Board and KFN Chief and Council able to follow.

As with the 2020 amended program, the 2021 CRI application and program is only considered a utilization of available grant funds and is not meant to be a new and distinct service provided by the CVRD. That is, the program is directly connected to the availability of grant funding.

**Policy Analysis**

At its regular meeting of April 2017, the Board approved a joint application with the KFN for grant funding to complete a Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

At its regular meeting of January 2020, the Board approved a joint application with KFN to the Community Resiliency Investment to undertake FireSmart activities in 2020.

The recommendation of this report is consistent with these Board policies.

**Options**

Staff have identified options available for Board consideration.

- 1) Support application for 2021 CRI grant funding for FireSmart activities, or
- 2) Not support application for 2021 CRI funding and no longer promote FireSmart beyond educational awareness developed to date.

This report provides information in support of option 1.

**Financial Factors**

The CRI program is 100 per cent funded with no financial contributions required by the CVRD but program delivery depending on support at the fire chief and manager of fire services.

As the delivery of the FireSmart education and the Curbside Woody Debris pickup program will be delivered over five separate fire protection service areas and KFN lands, the CRI grant funding will be administered through the Comox Valley Emergency Program- Electoral Areas function 271.

The 2021-2025 financial plan for function 271 will include the approved grant funding revenue and corresponding expenditures.

**Legal Factors**

Not relevant.

**Regional Growth Strategy Implications**

Not relevant

**Intergovernmental Factors**

CVRD staff collaborated with KFN staff and BC Wildfire Branch in the development of the amended 2020 CRI application and the development of the 2021 CRI application.

**Interdepartmental Involvement**

The Community Services Branch and the Comox Valley Emergency Program collaborated to develop this report.

**Citizen/Public Relations**

With a successful 2021 CRI grant application, and in the context of maintaining Public Health Orders, staff will undertake a FireSmart public education program providing promotion and distribution of FireSmart educational activities and tools through electronic means.

Further, the five CVRD fire departments will promote and deliver the curbside woody debris removal and disposal from within their service areas.