

**DATE:** September 16, 2021

**FILE:** 7200-01

**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Regional District Board

Supported by James Warren  
Deputy Chief Administrative  
Officer

**FROM:** James Warren  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

*J. Warren*

**RE: Community Resiliency Investment Grant Funding 2022**

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### **Purpose**

To update the Board on the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) grant program funding in 2021 and seek Board approval to apply for CRI program grant funding for 2022, in partnership with K'ómoks First Nation (KFN).

### **Recommendations from the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer:**

THAT staff be authorized to apply for the 2022 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 within the Comox Valley Regional District.

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

### **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; and
- Empower communities to participate in wildfire risk reduction and resiliency.

This report seeks authorization to submit a joint CRI grant funding application for 2022, with KFN as a partner. The 2022 application will include:

- FireSmart education and activities for the public;
- Specialized training for Local FireSmart Representatives and volunteer firefighters;
- Other items that may emerge as to be a priority for the grant funding;
- 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 is 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 recommending a service establishment and an ongoing commitment of CVRD resources.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

***J. Bast***


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 James Bast  
 Manager of Fire Services

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 Doug DeMarzo  
 General Manager of  
 Community Services
**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	✓
Union Bay Fire Rescue	✓
K'ómoks First Nation	✓

**Background/Current Situation**Update 2021 CRI Funding:

The joint CRI application for 2021 included funding for:

- FireSmart media campaign including webpages, newspaper and radios advertisements, and social media posts;
- FireSmart training and educational signage regarding wildfire prevention;
- Community meetings;
- Local FireSmart Representative training for individuals;
- Planning for a cross-jurisdictional wildfire training exercise;
- Curb-side woody debris disposal by way of chipping.

The FireSmart media campaign ran during the summer months of 2021 and provided a dedicated webpage, newspaper and radio advertisements, social media posts with tips, and training and information on how to make your residential property more resilient to wildfire.

While maintaining COVID-19 protocols and Public Health Officer (PHO) orders regarding physical distancing, staff has been able to provide a number of community meetings with FireSmart training and materials to interested residents.

Planning and coordination for a cross-jurisdictional training exercise are nearly complete and will culminate in a mock wildfire and evacuation exercise in mid-October involving four CVRD fire departments, BC Wildfire, Emergency Social Services, Salvation Army, Comox Valley Emergency Program (CVEP) and RCMP.

The curbside woody debris disposal will be held in October 2021 and will:

- Provide access to FireSmart information and education through the regional district fire departments;
- 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.

#### Application for 2022 CRI Funding

For 2022, 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 \$200,000 in funding.

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

- The promotion and distribution of FireSmart educational activities and tools;
- Education for the reduction of human-caused fires;
- FireSmart public events (PHO orders must be maintained);
- Local FireSmart Representative training (PHO orders must be maintained);
- Wildfire training for volunteer structural firefighters (PHO orders must be maintained);
- Curbside woody debris removal and disposal from within KFN lands within the regional district, 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;
  - Greater Merville fire protection service area; and
  - Union Bay fire protection service area;

#### **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.

The recommendation of this report facilitates fulfilling the recommendations of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

#### **Options**

Staff have identified options available for board consideration.

- 1) Support application for 2022 CRI grant funding for FireSmart activities; or
- 2) Not support application for 2022 CRI funding and no longer promote FireSmart beyond educational awareness.

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.

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 Service, function 271.

The 2022-2026 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 the BC Wildfire Branch in the development of the 2021 CRI application and the development of the 2022 CRI application.

**Interdepartmental Involvement**

The Community Services Branch and the CVEP collaborated to develop this report.

The Communications Branch will again be integral in the development and implementation of a successful FireSmart education program.

**Citizen/Public Relations**

With a successful 2022 CRI grant application, and in the context of maintaining PHO orders, and in partnership with KFN, staff will undertake a FireSmart public education program providing promotion and distribution of FireSmart educational activities and tools.

Also in partnership with KFN, the seven CVRD fire departments will promote and deliver the curbside woody debris removal and disposal from within their service areas to further reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire.