

DATE: June 8, 2021**FILE:** 5600-20/AGRI**TO:** Chair and Directors
Electoral Areas Services Committee**FROM:** Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer*R. Dyson***RE: Tsolum River Agricultural Watershed Plan Phase Two - Process and Next Steps****Purpose**

This report outlines the proposed process for presenting results of the Phase Two Tsolum River Agricultural Watershed Plan.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

This report is for information only.

Executive Summary

The Tsolum River watershed lies in the unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation (KFN) and flows through the administrative boundaries of Puntledge-Black Creek (Electoral Area C), Lazo North (Electoral Area B), IR#2 Puntledge and the City of Courtenay. Land use within the lower reaches of the watershed is primarily agricultural with approximately 72 square kilometres of Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) within the watershed.

In 2017, the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) secured grant funding from the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia (IAFBC) for the purposes of completing Phase One of an agricultural watershed planning study for the Tsolum River watershed. The Phase One report was completed in early 2019, and presented to the EASC at its March 11, 2019 meeting ([link](#)).

In spring 2019, the CVRD applied to IAFBC for further funding to continue with recommended Phase Two activities; funding was awarded to the CVRD in July 2019. The CVRD hired a team led by Elucidate Consulting to complete Phase Two, and work was initiated with a technical team kickoff meeting in January 2020, followed by an Agricultural Watershed Planning Advisory Committee (AWPAC) meeting in March 2020.

Following these initial meetings, Phase Two engagement activities had to be adapted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As work progressed throughout 2020 and early 2021, a variety of approaches were used to engage with watershed stakeholders and other levels of government to better understand watershed issues and develop solutions. This included online AWPAC meetings and direct engagement with KFN, farmer's institutes and the stewardship community via email, phone calls, and online meetings. Feedback from this engagement was critical in developing the recommendations in the report.

A timeline of Phase Two engagement activities is shown in Appendix A. A more detailed description of engagement activities form part of the final Phase Two report.

Engagement with KFN played an integral role in development of the report and allowed opportunity to better understand their perspective and gain input so the project does not infringe on

the exercise of Aboriginal rights. The project opened a dialogue between KFN and the CVRD regarding watershed stewardship in the Tsolum River watershed and allowed for discussion of a shared vision for continued collaboration in water management. This vision involves collaboration in water governance, co-management, and co-development of policy to protect groundwater and surface water health.

KFN espouses four pillars: authority, jurisdiction, governance and management over natural resources within the territory. Collaboration in water management respects the Indigenous worldview; aligns with the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act; and draws on each organization's respective legal traditions, governance systems and perspectives for a more effective and robust approach to watershed stewardship.

Collaboration with KFN on this project has also informed a more comprehensive process for presenting results of the Phase Two study. This includes presentation and discussion of the Phase Two study at the following meetings:

- May 10th – Present report to Chief and Council
- May 20th – Present report at final AWPAC meeting
- May 31st – Submit final report to IAFBC
- June 14th – Presentation to EASC, process/next steps
- June 29th – Joint CVRD/KFN presentation to CVRD Board
- July 12th – Present report to EASC for decision on proposed recommendations

As outlined above, a presentation of the results of the Phase Two study and recommendations for next steps will be brought forward to this committee at its July 12 meeting.

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Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

K'ómoks First Nation	✓
Agricultural Watershed Planning Advisory Committee	✓

Attachments: Appendix A – Timeline of Phase Two engagement activities

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