

DATE: January 20, 2021

FILE: 1700-02/2021/296

TO: Chair and Directors
Electoral Areas Services Committee

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. DYSON _____

RE: 2021 - 2025 Financial Plan – Weed Control Service – Function 296

Purpose

To provide the Electoral Areas Services Committee with the proposed 2021 - 2025 financial plan and work plan highlights for the Weed Control service, function 296.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the proposed 2021 – 2025 financial plan for the Weed Control service, function 296 be approved.

Executive Summary

- Rethink CV / COVID-19 Response for parks indicates invasive plant removal is a functional operating task that is important to maintain.
- The estimated residential tax rate for 2021 is \$0.0042 per \$1,000 of assessed value, the same as in 2020, with a requisition of \$34,500, up slightly from 2020 by \$1,926.
- Option to increase tax requisition by \$6,000 in 2021 to maintain service levels normally provided by not-for-profit organizations and add a further \$6,000 in \$2022 to moderate the service level and move away from the reliance on grant funding.
- A provincial grant, which normally provides \$12,500 in annual revenue for this service, is not anticipated to be renewed in 2021 because of COVID-19. This anticipated loss in revenue will result in reductions to service delivery operating contracts.
- Operating contracts, largely delivered by not-for-profit organizations and community resident associations, will target treatment efforts in 2021.
- Regional ‘Knot on my Property’ program is a community partnership initiative that targets the priority invasive plants knotweed and giant hogweed.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

M. Harrison

D. DeMarzo

Mark Harrison
Manager of Parks

Doug DeMarzo
General Manger of
Community Services

Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

Denman Island Residents Association	✓
Hornby Island Residents and Rate Payers Association	✓

Board Strategic Drivers

The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board has set four strategic drivers to guide service delivery. Not all services will be influenced by all drivers. Table 1 notes the degree of influence the drivers have on projects and work plans.

Table 1: Board Strategic Drivers

<p>Fiscal responsibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax requisition includes inflationary increases. Service levels reduced due to expected loss of provincial grant in 2021. • Partnerships with community associations to deliver service helps reduce cost. 	<p>Climate crisis and environmental stewardship and protection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weed control helps reduce negative environmental impacts of invasive plants.
<p>Community partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Knot on my Property’ program is a community initiative supported by the regional district and all local municipalities. • Weed control delivered largely through not-for-profit community groups and resident associations. 	<p>Indigenous relations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service includes annual partnerships and training opportunities to the K’ómoks First Nation.

Rethink Comox Valley / COVID-19 Response and Renewal

On May 12, 2020 the board adopted a COVID-19 renewal plan for the review of service levels and all necessary, critical and functional projects slated for the next five years. Recommended actions for the plan were brought forward to the relevant committees, commissions and partners for review over the summer.

The parks COVID-19 renewal plan indicates invasive plant removal as a functional operational task and that managing invasive plants and maintaining biodiversity are important to maintain.

Economic Recovery Task Force Actions

Not applicable for this service.


Financial Plan Overview

The 2021 - 2025 proposed five-year financial plan for the Weed Control service, function 296, including service establishment information, the requisition summary and the operating budget, is available within the full proposed budget binder, provided in both searchable PDF and e-reader formats, located on the CVRD financial plan web page at www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/currentbudget.

The weed control service is provided through external contracts and community partnerships.

Table 2 on the following page summarizes the 2021 proposed budget as compared to the 2020 adopted budget. Significant variances from 2020 adopted budget will be discussed in the financial plan sections that follow.

Table 2: Financial Plan Highlights

 2021 Proposed Budget		#296 Weed Control		
		Operating	2020 Budget	2021 Proposed Budget
Revenue				
Senior Government Grants		12,500	0	(12,500)
Requisition		32,574	34,500	1,926
Prior Years Surplus		2,976	3,069	93
		\$ 48,050	\$ 37,569	\$ (10,481)
Expenditures				
Operating		43,050	32,569	(10,481)
Tsfr Other Functions		5,000	5,000	-
		\$ 48,050	\$ 37,569	\$ (10,481)

Highlights of the 2021 - 2025 proposed financial plan for function 296 include:

Revenue Sources

- The primary revenue source for this service is tax requisition.
- The proposed requisition for 2021 is \$34,500, which is an increase of \$1,926 from 2020, with incremental increases to \$36,500 in 2022 to \$38,500 in 2025. The requisition could be increased in 2021 and in future years to replenish the service levels previously in place through a provincial grant.
- Normally, a provincial grant provides annual revenue of \$12,500 for an invasive species control program. The three-year term of the grant expires on March 31, 2021. Given the financial impacts due to COVID-19, this grant is not anticipated to be renewed and consequently, even though a grant application has been made to the province, this grant has been excluded as a revenue source from the 2021-2025 financial plan. The anticipated loss of the grant has impacts to service delivery and has resulted in reductions to operating contracts. Final decisions on the grant application are expected in early 2021.

Personnel

- There are no personnel costs allocated to this service. Costs for the management of the service are captured in a transfer of \$5,000 to the Baynes Sound Areas A, B and C Parks and Greenways Service function 621.

Operations

- Operating costs for 2021 are projected to be \$32,569 which is \$10,481 below the 2020 budget. These costs consist largely of operating contracts which are proposed to be \$28,200. Due to the anticipated reduction in service revenue, all operating contracts have been reduced for 2021. Operating contracts are to focus efforts on treatment in 2021. No spending is planned on advertising and outreach in 2021.

- Operating contracts include the Knot on my Property (KOMP) program, a regional weed control initiative that targets the priority invasive plants knotweed and giant hogweed. This program is a community partnership initiative involving the Village of Cumberland, the City of Courtenay, the Town of Comox and the CVRD. The 2020 program managed 145 new and retreated sites.
- Other than the KOMP program, the CVRD also works with not-for-profit organizations and community resident associations to deliver invasive plant control programs. This includes the Comox Valley Naturalists Society, Broombusters, the Denman Island Residents Association and Hornby Island Residents and Rate Payers Association.
- Targeted invasive species monitoring, inventory and treatments continue to occur at Portuguese Creek and various parks.

Capital

- There is no capital costs associated with this service that is provided by external contracts and community partnerships.

Reserves

- There are no reserves associated with this service. A future expenditure reserve could be established in future years which could provide funding to offset changes in available external funding for this program and provide consistent service levels through these changes.

Tax Impacts

Requisition impacts of the 2021 – 2025 financial plan:

- Based on the 2021 completed assessment roll, the estimated residential tax rate for this service is expected to be \$0.0042 per \$1,000 (2020 - \$0.0042) of taxable assessed value.
- Maximum levy for this service is \$0.01 per \$1,000, resulting in a maximum requisition in 2021 of \$75,149.
- For a residence with an assessed value of \$500,000, the total tax impact is estimated to be \$2.10 for this service.

Citizen/Public Relations

In an effort to reduce service operating costs for 2021, the outreach and education components of the service has been reduced. Online resources will still be available including on the CVRD website.