



# Cowichan Watershed Board

November 20, 2017

The Honorable George Heyman  
Minister of the Environment  
PO Box 9360 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9M2

The Honorable Doug Donaldson  
Minister of Forests, Lands and  
Natural Resource Operations, and  
Rural Development  
PO Box 9428 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9V1

The Honourable Scott Fraser  
Minister of Indigenous Relations  
and Reconciliation  
PO Box 9051 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

RE: **Cowichan Watershed Board Co-Governance Partnership**

Dear Honourable Ministers Heyman, Donaldson and Fraser,

The Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB) was formed in 2010 with a mandate to provide leadership in sustainable water and watershed management for the Cowichan and Koksilah Rivers. It represents a unique local governance model that is co-chaired by the Chief of Cowichan Tribes, the largest First Nation in British Columbia, and the Chair of the Cowichan Valley Regional District. Our vision is for a healthy watershed supporting a healthy community and we operate following the principles of Representation, Transparency, Partnerships and "Whole of Watershed" thinking. The Cowichan is a Canadian and British Columbia Heritage River and supports an ecosystem that has provided wealth and sustenance to the Cowichan community since time immemorial.

In November 2016, the CWB submitted a proposal to the British Columbia Ministers of Environment and Forests, Lands and Natural Resource for a pilot co-governance partnership between all 4 levels of government (First Nations, Federal, Provincial, Local) as well as community and local stakeholders. The partnership would develop and test new tools as defined under the *Water Sustainability Act (WSA)*. We were convinced, and still are, that such a partnership would result in real benefits not only to the citizens of the Cowichan Valley but all British Columbians.

In February, we had the opportunity to sit down with Ministers Polak and Thomson to discuss the proposal. While the Province was not ready to support the proposal at that time there was mutual interest in working together towards the development of specific tools as described in the Act.

Since then, CWB has secured resources from the BC Freshwater Legacy Initiative to engage in a 1.5 year facilitated watershed governance development process to increase our collective readiness to engage in co-governance of the Cowichan watershed. We recently completed the first of six workshops towards that end.

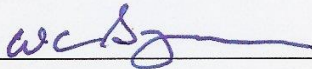
Accordingly, we request an opportunity to meet with all three relevant Ministries to review the 2016 proposal, share our progress with you, and hear your ideas about collaborative watershed management.

Our staff will contact your offices in the next week to seek meeting arrangements. Alternatively you may reach the CWB Executive Director Tom Rutherford at 250-815-5930 or [tom@cowichanwatershedboard.ca](mailto:tom@cowichanwatershedboard.ca).

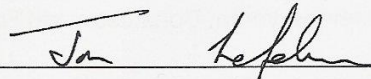
The CWB has an established track record of using a partnership model to demonstrate success in local watershed initiatives. British Columbians are facing unprecedented challenges in terms of managing increased demand for scarce water resources in the face of climate change. We believe that we can assist the Province of British Columbia to demonstrate what BC's *Living Water Smart Policy* looks like in the real world and how communities can use WSA tools to protect and conserve our precious water resource.

We look forward to working closely with the Province of British Columbia to explore new governance models and tools that will pave the way for a new era of progressive water and watershed management in British Columbia.

Sincerely,



Chief William Seymour  
Co-Chair Cowichan Watershed Board  
Chief, Cowichan Tribes



Chair Jon Lefebure  
Co-Chair Cowichan Watershed Board  
Chair, Cowichan Valley Regional District

cc. Deputy Minister Tim Sheldon, FLNRORD  
Deputy Minister Mark Zacharias, MOE  
Lynn Kriwoken - Director Water Protection and Sustainability, MOE  
Sharon Hadway – Regional Director, West Coast Operations, FLNRORD  
Larry Barr – Director, Resource Management, West Coast Region, FLNRORD