



Piloting Integrated Watershed Management using Chinook as a Key Indicator Species on the South Coast of BC

The Cowichan Watershed Health and Chinook Initiative

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CWB Target

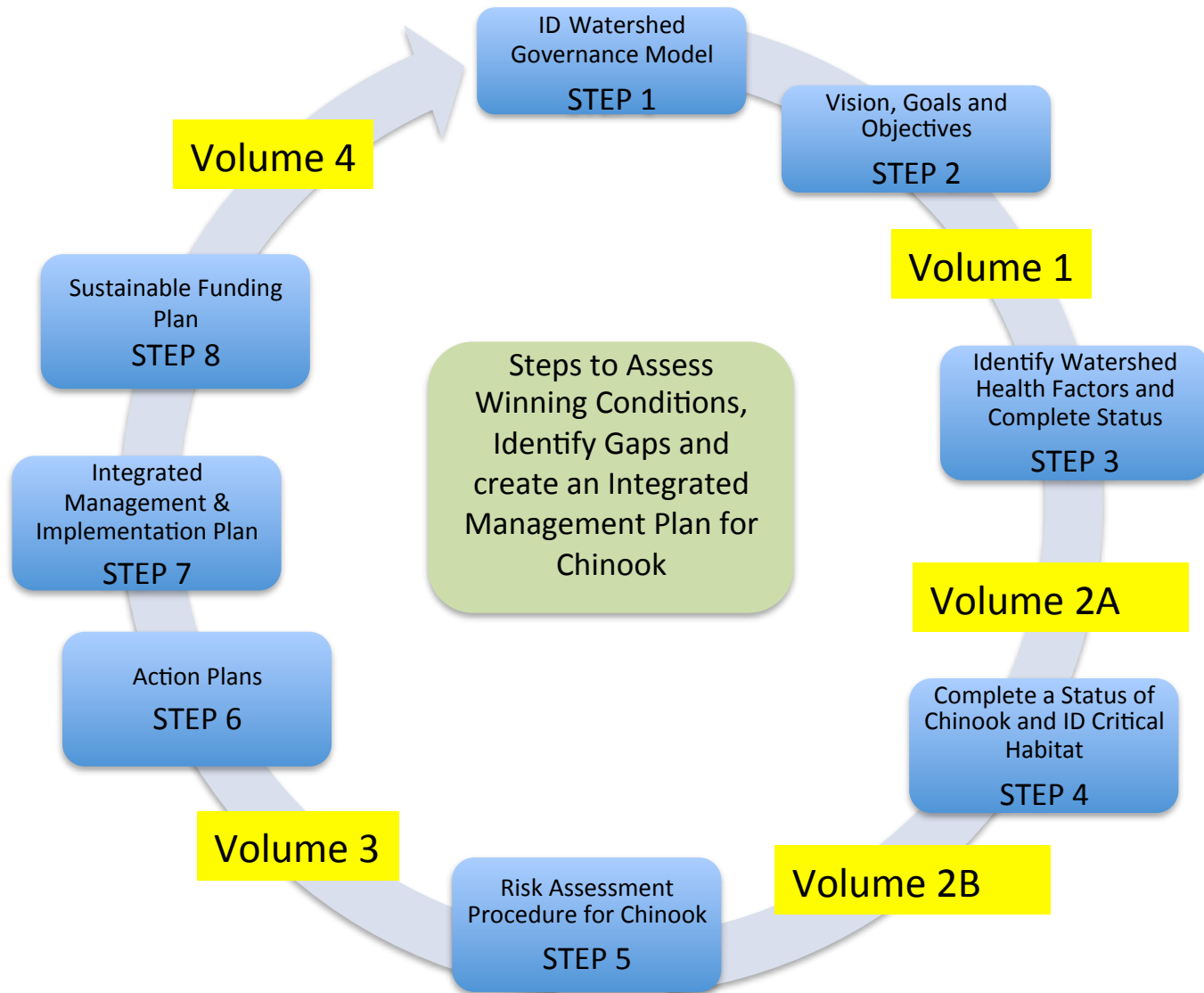
- As time and resources permit support Chinook restoration initiative and development of Chinook target utilizing the Flows and Fish Working Group as a forum.

Piloting WSP Strategy 4 - Implementation

- On the ground action to affect critical limiting factors in fresh-water is not within the immediate jurisdiction of the Federal Government, other than regulation of impacts through the Fish Protection Act and SARA.
- Can support First Nations and provincial/municipal agencies in addressing watershed health at a local level
- Limiting factors for salmonid production in fresh-water are well aligned with issues faced at a local level - salmon are a key indicator of watershed health

Cowichan Watershed Health and Chinook Initiative

- Process to date
 - 2010 – DFO promise to provide a Cowichan Chinook Re-building Plan – link to WSP
 - 2010-2013 – draft of compendium document
 - 2013 – Risk Assessment Procedure (RAP) to identify and prioritize the limiting factors for Chinook production
 - Late 2014 – funding to re-initiate process – Partnership with Cowichan Tribes
 - 2015 – revisit compendium – > 4 volumes
 - Jan 2016 – Review RAP
 - Feb 22nd – review revised RAP, identify causal mechanisms and start Action Planning



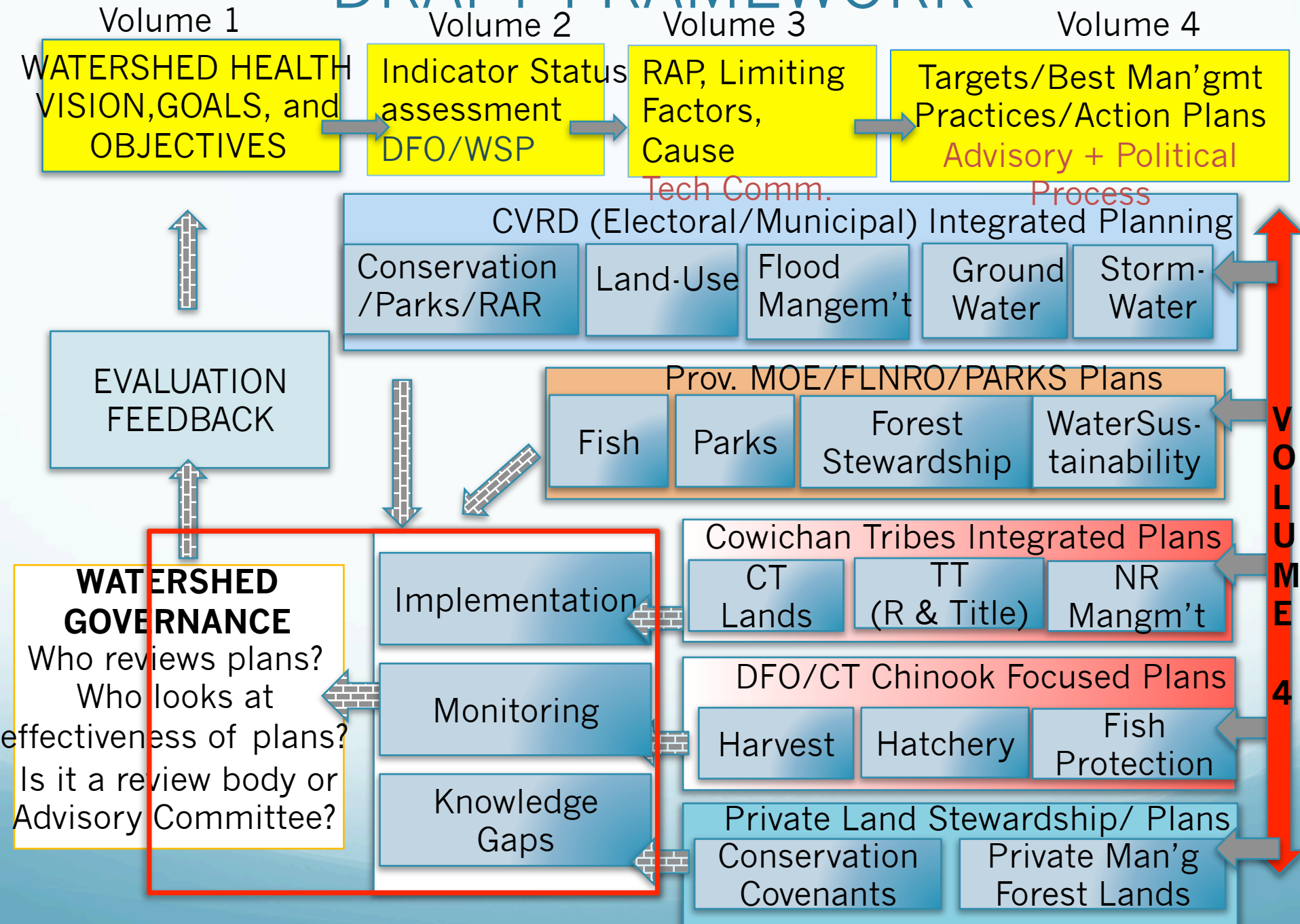
Risk Assessment - Very High Risks/Limiting Factors

- Predation of adults in the estuary and lower river by pinnipeds when flows are lower than 15cms
- Lack of high quality rearing habitat w/good in-stream complexity
- Limited or no access to historical tributary or off channel habitat
- Lack of good quality estuarine or near-shore habitat
- Predation of eggs, alevins, fry and smolts in river by mergansers, brown trout, sculpins etc.

Risk Assessment - High Risks/Limiting Factors

- Aggradation creates a migration barrier in the lower Cowichan mainstem during summer and early fall period
- Limited or delayed spawner access through lower river and Skutz Falls due to low flows
- Loss of safe migration through lower river due to channelization, loss of habitat complexity and in-stream cover features
- Lack of good quality pool refuge habitat in lower reaches

DRAFT FRAMEWORK



The Plan Forward to Completion Spring 2016

- Develop action plans for v. high and high limiting factors – Send out for feed-back
- March 18th- Meeting with practitioners/planners to identify tools and barriers
- Draft Documents out for review – late March/April – larger meeting – CSRT/CWB?
- Hatchery – Re-visit Strategic Plan – next fiscal
- Harvest – identify key areas to focus (SBC Chinook process), Harvest RT – next fiscal
- Critical Habitat Mapping – 2016-2019 if CT HSP funding approved

