

Cowichan Watershed Board

Communications Plan

April 2010

Communications Plan Objectives

1. To take a strategic approach to communications and raise the profile of water-related issues within the valley;
2. To ensure residents understand issues affecting the watershed as well as the importance of the watershed;
3. To ensure residents are aware of the work of the CWB and provide input into the Board's activities;
4. To support proactive communications as opposed to issues management;
5. To facilitate partnerships, collaboration and coordination across jurisdictions and among agencies and interest groups.

Key Audiences

- Residents
- Local interest groups
- First Nations, local, provincial and federal governments
- Funding agencies and potential collaborators e.g., educational institutions
- Businesses and companies whose operations affect or are affected by the watershed
- Provincial, national and international conservation/stewardship organizations

Key Messages - External

- ***The CWB*** - volunteers committed to the well-being of the watershed; no legislative or regulatory power; dependant on the goodwill of government decision makers and the community.
- ***Whole of the Watershed Thinking*** – elements of the watershed are interconnected, therefore land use and water management needs to consider the whole system.
- ***Collaboration*** – strive for representation of basin-wide interests, ongoing dialogue among stakeholders, and trust and a sense of ownership among all.

Key Messages - External

- ***Cowichan Basin Water Management Plan.*** – CWB influences and guides Plan implementation to improve decisions and outcomes and keeps the plan alive and up to date.
- ***Collective Responsibility*** –we share a collective responsibility to ensure that land use practices and personal choices/behaviours support water conservation and the health of the ecosystems.
- ***Our Responsibility Extends beyond the Region*** - activities in the watershed also affect provincial, national and international interests.
- ***First Nations*** – we must respect special cultural, spiritual ceremonial interests, rights and title in the watershed.

Key Messages - External

- ***Floods and Drought*** –the challenges posed by the area’s wet winters and dry summers must be considered in land use and water management activities.
- ***Climate Change*** - will exacerbate flooding and droughts and we must take proactive and adaptive approaches.
- ***Funding*** - CWB does not have an ongoing funding source. If it is successful it may seek increased responsibilities and stable funding source(s).
- ***Public Education*** – People will be better able to contribute to the health and well being of the watershed if they have information about the nature of the watershed, its importance and the roles that they can play.

Key Messages - Internal

- ***Valuing One Another*** - we value our commitment, objectivity, knowledge, problem solving abilities and communications skills.
- ***Core Business Areas*** – key elements of our business include policy, planning, advocacy, public education and accountability.
- ***Addressing Key Issues*** - to overcome diverse and diffuse watershed-related responsibilities we advocate for ‘whole of the watershed’ thinking, collaborative priority setting and clear responsibilities and accountabilities.
- ***Use of Best Science*** - our work is informed by the best science available and we advocate to fill knowledge gaps.
- ***Communications Roles*** – Board members serve as ambassadors for the watershed and the co-chairs and coordinator are lead spokespeople.

Communications Initiatives

- **Communications Committee**
 - 2 Board members and Coordinator overseeing:
 - annual communication plan,
 - tracking the plan's implementation, and
 - reporting on its progress to the Board.
- **Board Members as Ambassadors/Advocates (Stakeholder Relationship Strategy)**
 - Building connections with key stakeholders

Communications Initiatives

- **Consistent Look and Feel (Brand/Branding)**
 - recognition
- **Web Presence**
 - Easy access to information **REQUIRES DECISION**
- **Communications Calendar**
 - Strategic and disciplined communications
- **Annual Plan/Report and other Reporting**
 - accountability

Communications Initiatives

- **Regular Communications**
 - Board and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings (open to the public)
 - Annual Plan/Report and other Reporting
 - Special Initiatives to Tell the Story of the Watershed e.g., watershed tours, earned media, special celebrations, news articles etc.

Example Communication Calendar

May/10	Responsibility
<p>May Board meeting if necessary (May 6/10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Minutes approved and posted on web; •Final review and approval of demand, supply portions of plan •Ted van der Gulik presentation –agriculture and water) (either videoed or presentation summarized for posting); •Approve draft 2010 plan for habitat, flood and governance portions of plan; •Prepare and distribute press release re meeting and van der Gulik appointment as special advisor. •Discussion re Board finances 	<p>Board/Coordinator Board</p> <p>Coordinator/van der Gulik Board</p> <p>Coordinator Coordinator/Advisors</p>
<p>Reconfirm Oliver Bransen's participation June, 3, 2010.</p>	<p>Coordinator</p>
<p>Confirm attendance by Celebration Guests.</p>	<p>Coordinator</p>
<p>Communications Committee (Track/monitor plan implementation) develop strategy for Brand/Branding</p>	<p>CC/Coordinator</p>