

# 2022-2024 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE

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## About this Plan:

This annually updated plan is provided as direction and guidance to the Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB)'s members and staff, and to inform our partners. It identifies why we exist, the key areas of focus for the upcoming year, our broader goals and milestones for the next three years, and the financial plan to achieve these improvements for the health of the watershed and its residents.

More information, including 2-page summaries of current Project Plans, are available at the Cowichan Watershed Board website here. [cowichanwatershedboard.ca/about/](http://cowichanwatershedboard.ca/about/)

Feedback is always welcome. Please write to [info@cowichanwatershedboard.ca](mailto:info@cowichanwatershedboard.ca).

Huy tseep q'u for your interest in collaborative local leadership for watershed health.

### Recognition of Cowichan Tribes' Statement on Inherent Rights

Quw'utsun mustmuhw, ni' 'o' ni' tthusht'esulhkws 'itst 'u tun'atumuhw, 'i 'o' hwunst'e. Nilh 'o' thu-'it syuw'entst, tun ni' 'u kwthuhwun'amustimuhw 'iwutl'uts' 'i 'u tun'atumuhwtst. Ni' yuxtse'tumtthu Quw'utsun 'u tthu-itumuhw, qa', kw'atl'kwatthuni' spupin' 'u tthutumuhw, ttho' mukw' stem ni' hakwni' 'u tthustl'ulnuptst. Kwuthushtun-ni' 'iwststni' yuxtse'tum 'u ttho' mukw' stem ni' ha'kwkwsstthuthi'skwshuli-s. O' nilhtthu Quw'utsun mustumuhw, nilemuxutunstum 'u tthuni' snuwuntewut 'u tthushtunaalhtun, tst. Uwutumtem-us 'i' ni' tstsmem't 'aanlhkwskwun-etewut, hwayumtun'as'aalhtl'ulnup. Quw'utsun Mustimuhw, ha'kwushtst kw' stutul'na'mutxetsul's kw' shtuhimstthustl'ulnuptst. Mukw' stem 'o' slhilukw'tul 'i' nilhni' shkw'akw'umstthusulsuli'tst.

Cowichan Peoples have existing inherent rights. Cowichan as the original Peoples of this territory within which the Cowichan Watershed is included continue the right and responsibility to make informed decisions to manage and organize based on our history and continued connections. As told through time by our ancestors; the lands, waters, seas, minerals, air and all elements interconnected within the territories provided for and can provide a good sustainable life for Cowichan Peoples. Cowichan has never given away this right and continues to govern and make decisions to support the well-being and sustainability of our Peoples and territories.

*Source: Cowichan Watershed Board Governance Manual, 2018*

[photo credits and captions will be added later]

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## Executive Summary

After over 10 years of local effort and increasing levels of partnership and support from the provincial and federal governments and independent funders, the Cowichan watershed has arrived at a tipping point. The indigenous co-governance model we have successfully developed over our first decade is on the cusp of graduating into formal decision-making responsibilities for Cowichan Tribes, restoring indigenous authority over water in their territories, and creating a new way to govern water in BC.

In both the Cowichan and Koksilah watersheds, Cowichan Tribes First Nation is now chairing or co-chairing processes that could result in co-lead solutions to protect salmon, local economies, and culture from serious climate change threats to freshwater ecosystems within their territory within the next few years. Cowichan Valley Regional District is leading on the engineering and design of the new weir for Lake Cowichan. It is also only the second regional district in BC to adopt a Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Service, passed by public referendum, enabling it to take a leadership role in water and water partnerships like the CWB.

**Then why is the CWB needed?** CWB is acknowledged as having been pivotal to the successful establishment of trusted co-governance relationships and progress to date. We create safe spaces for candid discussions about difficult realities. The transition from 150 years of settler governance over common resources (like water and fish) back to indigenous stewardship of the lands, waters, and living things in Quw'utsun territory, is a hopeful and just direction. The CWB's role is to build trust, confidence, understanding and community engagement in this precedent-setting new way of caring for and sustaining shared resources.

At the heart of our watershed challenges are salmon, and 'salmon-people'. Five species of salmon live here, and the CVRD is home to over 80,000 humans, including 5,000 indigenous people. The Quw'utsun people have lived in an interconnected way with salmon ecosystems since time immemorial but in fact the well-being of all residents of the Cowichan-Koksilah watershed are directly connected to the health of our salmon. We are all salmon people.

Land use practices and other influences have eroded salmon populations for decades. Salmon survival is now being further challenged in both the Cowichan River (a Canadian Heritage River) and the Koksilah sub-basin by critically low water flows that impact fish habitats from Spring to Fall. Climate change predictions are that this problem will worsen in the coming decades, with longer drier summers. Electric pumps have already been required to maintain minimal flows in the Cowichan River, and in the Koksilah watershed, legal Fish Protection Order measures to protect fish are causing real hardship for agricultural producers and others. Salmon and salmon-people are under dire threat.

In both watersheds, processes led by the people who live here are underway to re-shape our shared futures. These are big changes, and a fragile situation, but the status quo isn't a viable choice anymore, and so...

“Nutsamat kws yaay'us tth qa': We come together as a whole to work together to be stronger as partners for the watershed.”



## About the Watershed Board

The Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB) is a local governance entity created in 2010 to promote water and watershed sustainability in the Cowichan/Koksilah watersheds, ancestral home of the Quw'utsun First Nation.

Co-chaired by Cowichan Tribes and the Cowichan Valley Regional District, the CWB represents a unique partnership between First Nations and local government. Through this model, Cowichan Tribes and the CVRD work together to advance whole-of-watershed health, demonstrating a commitment to moving down the path of reconciliation. [See our Governance structure here](#) (link)

Since its inception, the CWB has played a critical and collaborative leadership role in watershed sustainability in the region. In today's context—with increasingly urgent water challenges at hand, and a growing recognition of the role of Indigenous authority and stewardship in sustainable watershed governance, the CWB's leadership is more important than ever.

Fiscal and administrative support for the Board is provided by the Cowichan Watershed Society, a registered BC non-profit society (#S0061620). The Society is comprised of a sub-set of the sitting Cowichan Watershed Board members.

For more information about the Board and its members, visit [cowichanwatershedboard.ca/board-members](https://cowichanwatershedboard.ca/board-members) (update with bios of new Board members)



## Current Focus

The CWB is focused on shifting to a better way to govern water that respects indigenous authority alongside local governments, and engages local knowledge and expertise in the pursuit of a healthy and sustainable future for watersheds.

The CWB works with Indigenous and non-Indigenous water leaders, communities, and governments to develop and implement new tools and approaches for watershed governance, decision making, management, and legal and regulatory reforms in the Cowichan-Koksilah watershed.



Figure 1: 2021-2025 Priorities

## Key Areas of Impact 2022

- Mitigating the impacts of climate change and land use practices on freshwater and estuarine ecosystems of the Cowichan-Koksilah watershed.
- Restoring the strength of indigenous governance in the unceded territories of Cowichan Tribes.
- Fostering community understanding, engagement, and support for shifting the ways we govern water for today’s situations.
- Moving towards equal access to the best available data and knowledge held between decision-making organizations; data management and sharing plans. [ If information is power then co-governance requires better information sharing (however tedious!)]
- Seek to fill knowledge gaps using sound science, including indigenous ways of knowing.

## ***Overview of Planned Activities:***

**1) At the Tables:** We contribute co-governance experience, community networking support, and whole of watershed scientific expertise to:

- a) Koksilah Water Sustainability Plan - this is the first ever WSP under the BC Water Sustainability Act, establishing a model for WSA implementation that uses a whole-of-watershed, indigenous co-governance framework.
- b) Cowichan weir governance. Replacing the Cowichan weir is necessary to protect salmon viability for the long term in a Canadian Heritage River. Cowichan Tribes is leading a process to explore a collaborative management approach to managing this critical water flow infrastructure in the future.
- c) Cowichan Watershed Board. The Cowichan Watershed Board itself is recognized by water policy leaders and BC Government Ministers as a successful model for local watershed governance that incorporates indigenous co-leadership and authority over water. Work is needed to keep this relationship strong, and support communications between all involved.

**2) On the ground:** The CWB believes that the people who live in the watershed, and know it first hand, are the best resource we have. Local people are the foundation of the CWB's successes.

- a) Target Working Groups - CoVid19 has challenged the ability of the Target working Groups to meet face to face, and that needs to change. Keeping our grassroots stewardship network apprised and engaged in the shift to watershed-wide indigenous co-governance is critical to the success of proposed solutions. Over the next 2 years this includes supporting a Cowichan Tribes community member to step into the co-chair role for each of the 5 Working Groups.
- b) Events and Listening Tents - hosting a variety of face-to-face community engagement activities to encourage open dialogue; ensuring that local knowledge and concerns are received, respected, and replied to in a safe space. The CWB has a unique role to play as a trusted 'third-party' entity, with a history of respecting community expertise and commitment in watershed solutions.

**3) In the Cloud:** CWB has some catching up to do here. The world is increasingly connecting and learning "online" and it has been identified that we need to link gumboots with gigabytes to improve efficiencies and transparency, and to make good information available to guide good decision-making.

- a) Data: Data sharing is an important part of empowering this new way to do governance. The CWB co-Chair model is about having equal decision-making power and data-sharing is about equal access to the information needed to make those decisions. CWB will facilitate discussions with First Nations, other governments, and stewardship entities to seek consensus on data sharing plans that allows for the greatest possible transparency of information resources to support better decision making and watershed knowledge.
- b) Online educating: social media has become a more important tool than ever during the CoVid19 pandemic. CWB will use its website, YouTube channel, and social media audiences to build understanding of the need for change, and confidence in the proposed solutions.



## Financial Plan

Fundraising and financial administration for the Board is provided by the Cowichan Watershed Society, a registered BC non-profit society (#S0061620). The Society manages two budgets:

- An annual (core) budget to maintain ongoing Cowichan Watershed Board functions, including regular monthly meetings to discuss concerns, learn from subject experts, advocate for the health of the watershed, and support the technical Working Groups.
- A projects budget which changes annually to reflect priorities at that time and as additional funding resources (grants or contracts) allow.

### a) Annual Budget

The annual budget of \$70,000/year is provided by the CWB's founding partnership:

- Cowichan Tribes does not have a tax base to draw on but the First Nation has contributed \$20,000 annually since 2011 drawing on various sources.
- Cowichan Valley Regional District has contributed \$50,000 annually since 2011 drawing on regional taxes. In 2018 a Drinking Water and Watershed Protection service was supported by a public referendum, allowing the CVRD to support "strategic partnerships" like the Cowichan Tribes partnership through the CWB. In 2021, the CVRD Directors voted to continue allocating \$50,000/year to the CWB for three years.
- Both partners also provide in-kind support through the appointments of elected officials to the Board and Society, and the free use of meeting spaces.
- The province is planning to implement a Watershed Security Fund by 2023 which we hope will bolster the Core budget to meet rising costs.

<b>Core Staffing Expenses</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	
Executive Director	30,000	40,000	40,000	
Project Coordination, Communications	15,000	20,000	20,000	
Fundraising, Financial Mgmt	12,000	12,000	12,000	
Bookkeeping	3,000	4,000	4,000	
Other staffing	2,000	3,000	3,000	Adhoc support
<b>Core Administrative Expenses</b>				
General - Fees, Banking, Insurance	2,500	3,500	3,500	WorkSafe, Insurance, banking
Meeting Expenses	2,500	3,500	3,500	Venues, refreshments, copies, travel
Communications, websites, email	4,000	5,000	5,000	Webmaster, Zoom
<b>Core Program Expenses</b>				
River Cleanup	2,000	2,000	2,000	
Speaker Series	0	0	0	
Volunteer Appreciation	150	150	150	
<b>Total Core Expenses</b>	<b>\$73,150</b>	<b>\$93,150</b>	<b>\$93,150</b>	



## b) Projects Budget

The Cowichan Watershed Society also seeks grants and contracts to advance specific objectives that align with the Board's priorities, as outlined in the annual Business Plan. Grants to date have ranged from \$1500 to \$500,000, and from short term tasks, like the development of a collaborative communications framework, to multi-year work like the Cowichan Co-Governance Conversations advancing the Board's recognition of indigenous authority within its governance model, to robust field science contributions like the 2021 Twinned Watersheds project.

**SORRY - have not figured out how to share this in a readable format. Will share as spreadsheet.**

### 2022-2024 Project Budget Forecast with Potential Funding Sources (green = confirmed; pink=pending)

2022-24 Grant Projections		Green=confirmed; Orange=pending; Blue=unfunded					Y1 (\$1000s)				Y2 (\$1000s)				Y3 (\$1000s)				Total
FUNDER	Cowichan water	Kokuliah WSP	Targets / Fieldwork	Org Health / Local leadership	Community Engagement	Other	Labour	Other	Admin	Total	Labour	Other	Admin	Total	Labour	Other	Admin	Total	Total
Cowichan Tribes - Healthy Watersheds Initiative (and other grants)		Support Cowichan Tribes and Province to establish watersheds-wide WSP					30			30				30				30	\$ 90,000
Cowichan Tribes - BC SRF			Support Fish Health Target in Kokuliah Watershed	Build and support partnership between Cowichan Nations, CWS and local stewardship initiatives			5			5				5				5	\$ 10,000
Habitat Conservation Trust Fund - (CS)		Complete Twinned Watershed report.		Peer review and presentations of TW findings.	Develop videos, website, communications RE Twinned Watersheds project.		27	29	3	59				0				0	\$ 59,000
REFBC		Support Cowichan Tribes and partners to expand indigenous co-governance model to support successful long-term watershed solutions.		Create safe spaces for difficult discussions. Respectfully answer questions and concerns. Embrace local knowledge. Find innovative ways to reach target audiences with key information.	Oversee contract to develop data sharing plans - (biomonitoring, experienced, local data expert)		44	10	6	60	44	10	6	60	44	10	6	60	\$ 180,000
Cowichan Tribes - BCC Tech for Nature			Coordinate 3 <sup>rd</sup> attainment sampling round with WQ working group.	Oversee contract to develop data sharing agreement between core partners.	Community engagement, website, BigDance offish		16			16				0				0	\$ 16,000
Heritage Canada or BC Parks				Overlook on Site to Skwayul				2	4	6				0				0	\$ 6,000
Pacific Salmon Foundation				Educational video series			0.5	2	0	2.5	0.5	2	0	2.5	0.5	2	0	2.5	\$ 7,500
?			Define strategic WG plans and projects to achieve targets.	Expand indigenous co-chair model to all Target working groups.	Review Working Groups to support knowledge sharing and collaboration between stewardship organizations.		36	8	6	50	27	17	6	50	18	26	6	50	\$ 150,000
?		Drought Mgmt Group								0				0				0	\$ -
?		Support Kokuliah Connections								0				0				0	\$ -
Freshwater Legacy Foundation				Setting the Course Review			2000	10000	3000	13000				0				0	\$ 13,000
Core Funding - Partnership between CWRD and Cowichan Tribes	Participate in Frog Team to establish water governance agreement.		Leverage collaborative work between organizations to achieve Targets.	Coordinate monthly CWS meetings; senior government relations. Foster collaboration and stewardship.	Maintain CWS communications, website, social media														
	Review and update Targets every 5 years.		Support good communication between partners and with CWS.	Community engagement programs and activities.			42	10	20	72	42	10	20	72	42	10	20	72	\$ 216,000
	Align with CBWMP, Cowichan WUP, Kokuliah WSP, and other core planning documents.		Maintain CWS non-profit society, and all administration. Human resources management.																
TOTAL							\$ 2,201	\$10,061	\$1,039	\$13,301	\$ 149	\$ 39	\$ 32	\$ 220	\$ 135	\$ 48	\$ 32	\$ 215	\$ 747,500

# CWB Governance – How we work

## PRINCIPLES AND GOVERNANCE MANUAL

A [Governance Manual](#) guides the work of the Board, including these five Principles (Governance Manual, Section 2.3)

- Partnership
- Representation
- Watershed Emphasis
- Transparency
- Nutsamat kws yaay'us tth qa': We come together as a whole to work together to be stronger as partners for the watershed.

## BOARD MEMBERSHIP AND CO-CHAIRS

The Board is co-chaired by the elected Chief of Cowichan Tribes and the Chair of Cowichan Valley Regional District. Two additional elected leaders are appointed from each council by the respective co-Chairs, and four additional members are jointly appointed by both. Two seats each are also reserved for nominees of the Provincial and Federal Governments. Appointments are renewed as needed and following elections of Cowichan Tribes and CVRD Councils. [Click here for more.](#)

## MONTHLY MEETINGS OF THE BOARD

Meetings of the entire Board take place on the last Monday of every month. They are open to the public and routinely attended by members of CWB Working Groups, representatives of partner organizations, and political leaders. Standing agenda items include an update from the Executive Director, Public Comment, and Correspondence and Announcements, followed by presentations related to the priorities of the CWB and/or its Targets for Watershed Health (Appendix C). Decisions are made by Consensus. Board meeting materials and presentation files are posted online [here](#).

## WORKING GROUPS AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Each of these targets is being pursued by collaborative Working Groups, which are co-chaired by CWB with partner organizations focused on that area, and comprised of representatives of stewardship organizations and governments. Two members of each Working Group are appointed to the Technical Advisory Committee. The groups have been inactive in 2021-22 but we hope to resume meeting in [2022](#). We are [also](#) working towards establishing a web portal for each Working Group to share their resources online. More information is [here](#).

## COMMUNICATIONS

An important role of the Board is to build public understanding of, and connection with, the watershed, as well as fostering links and partnerships between the many organizations actively working to restore its health and resilience. This is done through Board meetings and the working groups, an e-newsletter, websites and social media, articles in the local newspaper, public education projects like the Speakers Series, public outreach and engagement projects such as the "Water Woman" superheroes series and Stth'aqwi' our Chinook salmon mascot. See the [website](#) or [Facebook page](#).

## Personnel

The Board is supported by several contract staff provided through the Cowichan Watershed Society as needed. The core personnel team is as follows:



**Tom Rutherford, Executive Director, Lead for Salmon, Science and Partnership Projects:** Tom worked with Fisheries and Oceans Canada for 35 years. He brings a strong technical background in salmon habitat inventory and restoration, stock assessment, stock enhancement and public outreach/citizen science. Tom has experience planning and implementing technical processes and partnerships with First Nations, providing scientific direction and guidance for program delivery activities, supervision of staff, and successful development of strategies to meet Sr. Government resource management objectives.

**Jill Thompson, Project Coordinator and Administrative Assistant, Lead for Communications and Engagement Projects:** Jill holds a Bachelors of Environmental Studies and has more than 25 years' experience in environmental education and non-profit program leadership and fundraising. Jill is an experienced community builder who seeks out people who feel intrigued, motivated, and nourished by working together for a bright future, while having a bit of fun. She found the Watershed Board teeming with them!

**Heather Pritchard, Forest Ecologist, Lead for Targets Review:** Heather is a Registered Professional Forester with 30 years' experience in natural resource management. She brings expertise in applying ecosystem-based management principles in forest and land management with focus on protecting community and domestic water sources and fish habitat.



**Ruby Walmsley, Book-keeper and Financial Systems Support:** Ruby has 35 years of accounting experience. She has a Financial Management Certificate obtained through studies with both the Certified Management Accounting Program (CMA) and the Certified General Accountancy Program (CGA). Ruby has worked for both profit and not-for-profit organizations as a financial bookkeeper and later as a management consultant and accounting manager.



## APPENDIX A: PROJECT OUTLINES

***A1 - Cowichan River Water Supply and Watershed Resiliency***

***A2 - Koksilah Watershed Sustainability Plan (WSP)***

***A3 Community Engagement and Collaborative Watershed Governance***

***A4 Field Studies (Gumboots)***

***a) Twinned Watersheds Project: Koksilah & Chemainus Rivers***

***b) Water Quality Testing***

***c) Koksilah Connections***





## ***A1 - Cowichan River Water Supply and Watershed Resiliency***

### **Including Raising the Weir!**

#### **GOAL**

- Protect and restore E-Flows and fish populations in the Cowichan River
- Establish an indigenous partnership model for a new conservation water license on the river.
- Build resilience to climate change throughout the watershed using both built and natural infrastructures.

#### **CWB ROLE**

- Participating in facilitated processes to identify a conservation license holder.
- Clarifying range of possible roles for CWB in new weir governance system.
- Organizing government meetings and opportunities to help secure the remainder of capital funding.
- Supporting ongoing weir replacement processes with technical expertise and indigenous co-governance experience.
- Creating and implementing effective and engaging communications tools.
- Providing informed feedback to community concerns and questions.



The Cowichan River needed electric pumps to keep water flowing for three weeks in 2019. Photo by Barry Hetschko.

#### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1) CVRD and its partners are working together on this important foundational work to bring the Cowichan Weir Project to a “shovel ready” state. The weir design has been completed and the shoreline assessment work will be finished spring of 2022. The design includes all construction grade drawings and detailed budget estimates, as well as innovative fish way designs that will ensure both upstream and downstream passage of all salmonid life history stages throughout the year. [More info.](#)

2) Cowichan Tribes and its partners have secured significant funding for long-term solutions to ensure water resources are sustainable and available to meet the region’s future water use needs, and the Cowichan River’s continued fisheries values in the face of flooding and drought. This project will embrace a holistic approach to immediately mitigate the current effects of climate change as well as rebuilding long term adaptive capacity within the Cowichan watershed. The project includes i) major in river works along the whole river system, including grey and green infrastructure, sediment, and riparian management and ii) increasing water storage capacity - construction of the new weir - including establishing weir governance (ownership, water conservation license).

#### **3-YEAR OBJECTIVES**

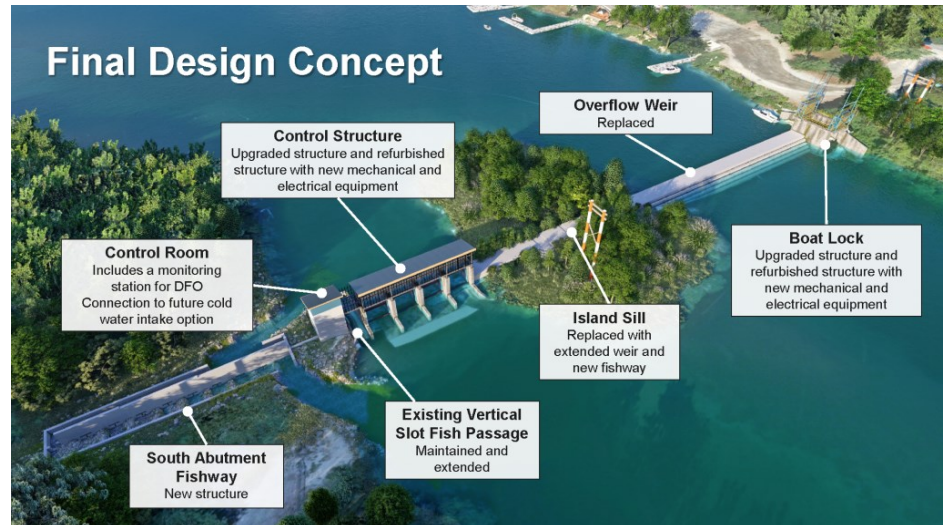
- Weir license is awarded to an entity supported by consensus of Cowichan Tribes, CVRD, Catalyst, and CWB.

- The project is shovel ready and capital funds are in place to replace the weir, reflecting CVRD's Water Use Planning recommendations and design.

- There is wild community enthusiasm for replacing the weir as a pathway to sustaining salmon, culture, economic benefits, and recreation in the Cowichan River in the face of climate change.

- Water flows in Cowichan River are maintained at recommended environmental flow levels throughout the dry season at least 80% of the time for the next 50 years. (?Tom check)

- All native fish species remain viable in the Cowichan River for the next 50 years.



#### RELEVANT CWB TARGETS:

- We want to ensure that Cowichan River summer flows are at levels that support the needs of people and fish.
- We want healthy fish populations in the watershed.
- We want to be able to eat shellfish from Cowichan Bay.
- We want to protect and enjoy the benefits of healthy stream, lakefront, and estuary habitats.

#### FINANCIAL PLAN

Cowichan Watershed Society is seeking 3-year funding from the Real Estate Foundation of BC to maintain CWB support to the partners in these final steps to construction as outlined above. Currently, the CWB role is limited to the first three bullets.

Replacing the weir is a significant capital project. Approximately 2/3 of the capital funding is in place, with additional funding for flood protection and rebuilding the river's natural resilience to climate change.

- CVRD received ~\$3.8M in a BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund partnership (CVRD, Cowichan Tribes, Catalyst Paper and the CWB) to complete engineering and shoreline assessment work for the new weir.
- Cowichan Tribes received a commitment in 2021 for \$24M through the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund, towards a total estimated program cost of \$38M over seven years including the weir, and other watershed resiliency work. This funding is pending an application for a water conservation license and securement of required partnership funding.

## A2 - Koksilah Watershed Sustainability Plan (WSP)

### GOAL

- Protect and restore E-Flows and fish populations in the Koksilah River (Cowichan Watershed).
- Create a model for implementing tools under the *BC WSA* that recognizes equal authorities and distinct legal traditions and responsibilities of First Nations and the Province.
- Water Sustainability Plan based on ecological sustainability and “whole of watershed” thinking.
- Engaged communities for successful outcomes.



### CWB ROLE:

- Interim Secretariat and advisor to the planning process until March 2022.
- Hire and supervise process facilitator (March 2022)
- Provide experience and support to build consensus around solutions.
- Provide community liaison support to the Steering Committee through difficult processes to protect environmental flows, in both the short and long-term.
- Provide technical support, including:
  - Twinned Watersheds Project field research and reports
  - Koksilah Connections groundwater research,
- Collaborative in-season drought management committee
- Liaise with local knowledge holders, and support community dialogue, education, and relationship building to promote healthy community involvement in WSP processes.
- Participate in short term drought management working group.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This is a major project co-lead by Cowichan Tribes and the BC Government to find long term solutions for Koksilah watershed’s low water flows. See the website here. [www.koksilahwater.ca](http://www.koksilahwater.ca)

### 3 YEAR OBJECTIVES

These objectives are informed by the consensus recommendations of WSP Scoping committee.

- Interim interventions are in practice to reduce low flow impacts on fish populations, including:
  - “closing the source” to restrict new water licenses
  - implementing irrigation schedules when needed
  - other water conservation and land use practices adaptations.
- WSP is based on more knowledge regarding fish, ecosystems and environmental flows than currently exists.
- Cowichan Tribes and Province of BC successfully develop a consensus based WSP for the Koksilah watershed, including:
  - Confirming WSP Terms of Reference.



- Designating the entity (Responsible Person) responsible for preparing the proposed plan.
- Koksilah WSP is in place by 2024
- Provincial policy advisors are integrated to support their ability to support other watershed sustainability planning processes with similar goals.
- WSP is based on attention to linkages between land use and watershed health throughout the watershed.
- WSP is based on pooling collective knowledge, science, and understanding of the Xwulqw'selu - Koksilah watershed and ecosystem health.
- Includes development of guidance (with incentives) for more sustainable land use practices.
- Koksilah Connections project engages local people in watershed science and builds understanding of the connections between groundwater and the river/tributaries.
- Majority of both indigenous and non-indigenous community members embrace and support the WSP approach: Ist' hwialasmut tu Xwulqw'selu Stol'lo - We are taking care of the Koksilah River.
- All existing species of fish remain viable in the Koksilah River for the next 50 years.

#### RELEVANT CWB TARGETS:

- We want to ensure that [Koksilah] River summer flows are at levels that support the needs of people and fish.
- We want to protect and enjoy the benefits of healthy stream, lakefront, and estuary habitats.
- We want Cowichan watershed residents to use water wisely.
- We want healthy fish populations in the watershed.

#### FINANCIAL PLAN

A \$500,000 Healthy Watersheds Initiative grant to Cowichan Tribes is currently in place for 2022. Cowichan Tribes has sub-contracted the CWS for secretariat and advisory support as needed.

CWS has applied to the Real Estate Foundation of BC for multi-year funding to enhance the CWB's ability to support the local communities for a successful shift to new ways of governing water in BC.





## A3 Community Engagement and Collaborative Watershed Governance

### (a.k.a. “Not Enough Fish” Dating Service)

#### GOAL

- Nutsamat kws yaay’us tth qa’: We come together as a whole to work together to be stronger as partners for the watershed.
- Engage and bridge the interests of governments, regulatory agencies, local water stakeholders and citizens.
- Facilitate knowledge sharing: Respect and integrate local knowledge in all projects. Improve access to watershed data and information by organizations working in the Cowichan-Koksilah watershed.

#### CWB ROLE:

- Facilitating, initiating, supporting.

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This element of our work is mostly about ‘how’ we approach all our work, but we also need to plan time to give partnerships the time and attention they need to be successful.

**Governance:** CWB staff and Board members actively work to foster a new way of governing that recognizes indigenous authority and local knowledge, while facilitating whole of watershed thinking that pushes past jurisdictional silos. We do this through regular monthly meetings of the CWB members, by facilitating inter-governmental partnerships and communications, and by connecting organizations and people that share similar watershed interests and goals (e.g. Target Working Groups).

**Engagement:** Involving and educating community members is embedded in all projects both as a path to transparency but also because of the belief that if the people who live in a watershed are more involved in decision-making, better outcomes will be achieved. Engagement activities include:

- Producing educational tools e.g. “Why Fish Need Water” video.
- Stth’aqwi’ the salmon mascot builds culture of optimism and belonging as “salmon people.”
- Roving River Reporters interview watershed stewards and share videos on social media.
- Hosting Speakers Series, Listening Tents, and other community dialogue opportunities for residents to learn, ask questions, and contribute their knowledge and ideas.
- 100+ people participate in annual Lower River Cleanup
- Supporting the Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable and Cowichan Tribes’ Bi-annual Quw’utsun Sta’l’o Skweyul

#### 3-YEAR OBJECTIVES

- Public understanding about watershed problems, and trust in proposed solutions, is strong through the difficult transition



period ahead. CWB maintains trusted relationships with knowledge-holders, opinion leaders, and the people most affected by decisions.

- A vision for CWB's second decade: Undertake workshops about "Setting the Course for 2030".
- Improved governance systems between CVRD and CWB address communication gaps
- Ten-year review and update of CWB's 7 Targets for Watershed Health is complete and new targets are adopted.
- Four Target Working Groups (WGs) are making collaborative progress on the targets by:
  - Seeking an indigenous co-chair for each WG to facilitate indigenous co-governance throughout CWB areas of influence, and to coordinate knowledge and resource-sharing between First Nation and settler communities.
  - Developing 3-5-year action plans for each WG and seeking funding for those plans.
  - Developing WG website pages that are user-controlled to improve access to information and planning capacity.
- Coordinate interesting and engaging monthly meetings of the CWB members to discuss, learn and develop trusting relationships. (10 meetings / year)
- Keep CWB website updated with resources and news about Cowichan-Koksilah watershed, as well as CWB meeting minutes and watershed research, maps, and data.
- Initiate a data sharing and management planning process for Cowichan, starting with CWB and its project partners. Expand scope of facilitation to all Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable member organizations as time permits.



#### **RELEVANT CWB TARGET:**

- We want Cowichan watershed residents to increasingly know and value their watershed. We can't fully value what we don't understand.

#### **FINANCIAL PLAN**

CWS has applied to the Real Estate Foundation of BC for multi-year funding to enhance the CWB's ability to support the local communities for a successful shift to new ways of governing water in BC.

Cowichan Tribes has applied to RBC Tech for Nature grant to support developing local data management and sharing plans.

CWS will apply for a Pacific Salmon Foundation grant of \$2500 to support the creation of educational tools.

## **A4 Field Studies (Gumboots)**

### **a) Twinned Watersheds Project: Koksilah & Chemainus Rivers**

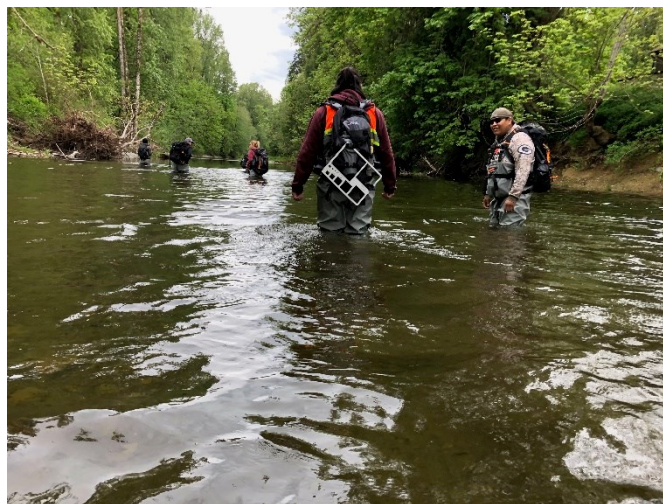
#### **GOAL**

- Protect and restore E-Flows and fish populations in the Koksilah River (Cowichan Watershed).
- Partner with Halalt First Nation leadership to support the same for the Chemainus River (beyond CWB mandate)

#### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Two First Nations in two nearby and similar watersheds - Koksilah (Cowichan Tribes) and Chemainus (Halalt FN) are working in partnership to maximize efficiencies in this field study. The Nations have supported the

Cowichan Watershed Board's leadership on the E-flows, meso-habitat inventory and communications components of this project and provide guidance through a Steering Committee, with a Technical Advisory Committee to support implementation. The provincial government compared the two rivers in recent hydrological studies on the impacts of a Section 88 Fish Protection Order in the Koksilah River because of the similarities in low water flows and fish impacts.



#### **i) 2021-22: Habitat Mapping, E-Flow Regime, Riparian Restoration, and Community Engagement.**

(CESI grant) The 2021 “Twinned Watershed” field study project mapped fish habitats, including riparian (terrestrial) plant ecosystems. Two reports were completed and presented in early 2022 to inform recommendations for Environmental and Indigenous Flows (EFlows) and fill information gaps for the Koksilah Watershed Sustainability Planning process. A “Roving River Reporter” team shared knowledge and images from the field studies and other conservation projects using videography and social media.

#### **CWB ROLE:**

- Leading, Project Management, Administration and Reporting

**ii) Salmon Stock Assessment and Aquatic Restoration Plan** (BCSRIF grant) This is a three-year project that will generate population abundance rates for all salmon species in the Koksilah and Chemainus rivers (stock assessment). This will address a data gap in these rivers with no data from this century. The project will also include the development of aquatic restoration prescriptions and some implementation. It will support the Koksilah Watershed Sustainability Planning process by identifying the fish stocks and associated Environmental Flows that require protection.

#### **CWB ROLE:**

- Supporting, Member of project Steering and Technical Committees.



### RELEVANT CWB TARGETS:

- We want to ensure that Cowichan River summer flows are at levels that support the needs of people and fish.
- We want healthy fish populations in the watershed.
- We want to protect and enjoy the benefits of healthy stream, lakefront, and estuary habitats.
- We want Cowichan watershed residents to increasingly know and value their watershed. We can't fully value what we don't understand.

### FINANCIAL PLAN

Part i) was fully funded by a \$500,000 grant from the BC Conservation Economic Stimulus Initiative to the Cowichan Watershed Society.

Part ii) was funded by a ~\$1.3M grant from the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund administered by Cowichan Tribes. Cowichan Tribes is sub-contracting Cowichan Watershed Society for support as needed.

## *b) Water Quality Testing*

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Conduct 2 sets (summer low flows, first flush fall event) of 5 in 10 sampling in partnership with Cowichan Tribes and stewardship orgs, and guided by the Ministry of Environment. This work will continue 2 previous (2012, 2017) rounds of testing using consistent methodology, at 5-year increments. There will be ~60 marine and freshwater sites tested.

### CWB ROLE:

- Leading, in partnership with Cowichan Tribes and stewardship organizations.

### RELEVANT CWB TARGETS:

- Water Quality Target: We want clean water in our watershed.
- Estuarine Health Target: We want to be able to eat shellfish from Cowichan Bay.

### FINANCIAL PLAN

Cowichan Tribes has applied to RBC Tech for Nature grant to support WQ testing and developing local data management and sharing plans, including water quality data.



## *c) Koksilah Connections*

This is a 5 year UVic project to study groundwater. See <https://koksilahconnections.weebly.com/>

### CWB ROLE:

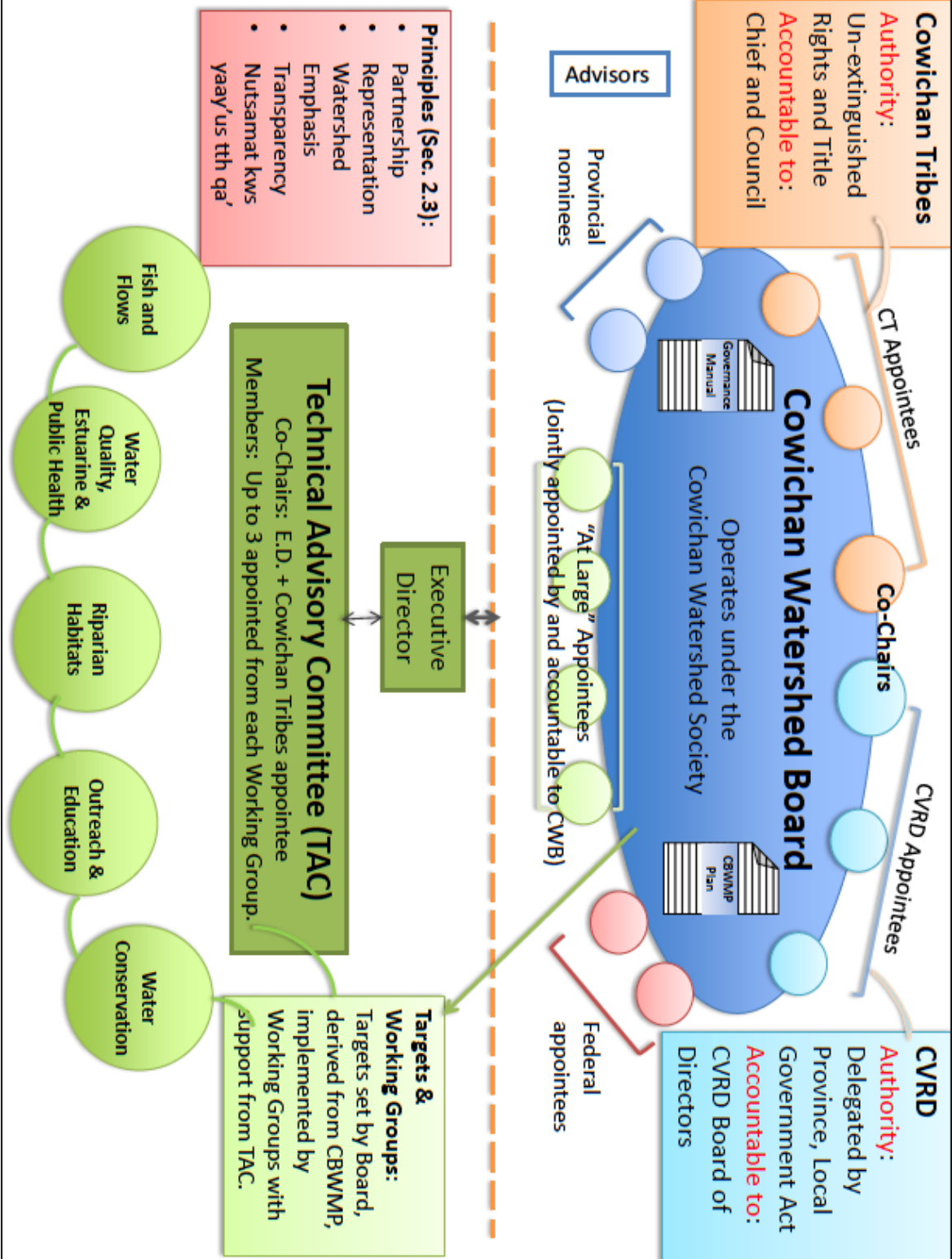
- Participant, supporting



## APPENDIX B: Targets for Watershed Health

Targets	1-3-Year Objectives	Funding Source(s)
<p>Water Quality Target: We want clean water in our watershed.</p> <p>Estuarine Health Target: We want to be able to eat shellfish from Cowichan Bay.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct 1 round of 5 in 10 sampling in partnership with Cowichan Tribes and stewardship orgs ~60 marine and freshwater sites.</li> </ul>	CT - RBC Tech for Nature (pending)
Flows Target: We want to ensure that Cowichan River summer flows are at levels that support the needs of people and fish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cowichan Weir License is secured.</li> <li>Koksilah WSP is complete.</li> </ul>	REFBC 2022-2024 (pending)
Fish Target: We want healthy fish populations in the watershed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cowichan Weir License is secured.</li> <li>Koksilah WSP is complete.</li> <li>Twinned Watershed E-flows, meso habitat and riparian habitat studies complete. Koksilah/Chemainus (2021-2022)</li> <li>Twinned Watershed fish population study complete. Koksilah/Chemainus (2022-2024)</li> </ul>	CESI – 2021-2022
Riparian Health Target: We want to protect and enjoy the benefits of healthy stream, lakefront, and estuary habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Riparian ecosystem analysis of Lower Koksilah and Chemainus Rivers.</li> </ul>	CESI – 2021-2022
Watershed Connections Target: We want Cowichan watershed residents to increasingly know and value their watershed. We can't fully value what we don't understand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce educational video series "Why Fish Need..."</li> <li>Stth'aqwi' the salmon mascot builds culture of optimism and belonging as "salmon people."</li> <li>Roving River Reporters interview watershed stewards</li> </ul>	<p>CESI 2022</p> <p>REFBC 2022-2024 (pending)</p> <p>Pacific Salmon Foundation</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage 100 residents / year in Annual Lower River Cleanup</li> </ul>	Sponsors (pending)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support Stewardship Roundtable and Cowichan Tribes' Bi-annual Quw'utsun Sta'l'o Skweyul</li> </ul>	Heritage Canada, BC Parks, Sponsors
Wise Water Use Target: We want Cowichan watershed residents to use water wisely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support partners to reduce Koksilah water use in dry periods.</li> </ul>	(pending)

APPENDIX C: CWB Organizational Structure







**Contact us!**

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