



October 27, 2022

File No.: 0360-20

Via email: FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests
Room 248, Parliament Buildings
VICTORIA BC V8V 1X4

Dear Honourable Minister,

As the leaders of our organizations and co-chairs of the Cowichan Watershed Board, following the advice of Minister Osborne, we are writing to request a meeting, at your earliest convenience. We wish to share our community's work to realize a vision of water sustainability for future generations, and solicit your Ministry's support and participation as a key partner.

For over 20 years our community has been working hard to construct a new, higher weir at the outlet of Cowichan Lake to store additional water to mitigate climate change impacts. As you know, our designated heritage river, and the salmon populations it supports, have provided physical, cultural and spiritual sustenance to the Quw'utsun people for millennia—and it continues to do so today. Constructing this weir is essential for long term water supply, climate resilience, salmon viability, community safety and well-being, and Cowichan Tribes members' constitutionally protected right to harvest salmon from our river. The devastating flood and drought events of 2021 illustrated the urgency for completing this infrastructure.

The new weir has been fully designed and is shovel ready, and all upstream impacts have been clearly quantified. This is thanks in large part to funding from the joint Federal/Provincial BC *Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund*, and is also a testament to the positive, productive collaboration to date between Cowichan Tribes, CVRD, Paper Excellence, the Province of BC and the Cowichan Watershed Board. There is broad community support for this project, demonstrated by the consensus achieved in a 2018 Water Use Planning process that resulted in the recommendation to raise the weir by 70 cm.

Cowichan Tribes, CVRD, and Paper Excellence are working together as partners to put forward a conservation water license application for the weir this fall to your Ministry. To date provincial water authorizations have provided excellent support to this process; however, we anticipate that the process ahead will be resource intensive and there will be key roles for the Province in the ultimate license and ownership arrangement. Additionally, we have a funding shortfall. Infrastructure *Canada Disaster, Mitigation, and Adaptation fund* has committed \$24.2 million that includes the weir and in-river flood mitigation works. However, this is only a portion of the necessary funding to ensure the weir and flood works can be implemented. As we discussed with Minister Osborne, the partners are counting on provincial support from a range of ministries.

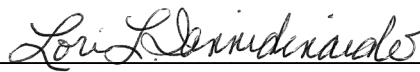
This historic effort will provide BC with an opportunity to meaningfully recognize Indigenous rights and title in the spirit of the *Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and support foundational on the ground collaboration by multiple levels of government. Together we can demonstrate to all British Columbian what a collaborative approach to water sustainability looks like.

We appreciate the commitment your government has expressed to-date towards attaining our common watershed goals, including the innovative work on the province's first Water Sustainability Plan in the Koksilah watershed. We look forward to an ongoing collaborative relationship in the spirit of one of our CWB principles: *Nutsamat kws yaay'us tth qa'* – *We come together as a whole to work together to be stronger as partners for the watershed.*

Respectfully,



Chief Lydia Hwitsum
Co-Chair Cowichan Watershed Board
Chief, Cowichan Tribes



Chair Lori Iannidinardo
Co-Chair Cowichan Watershed Board
Chair, Cowichan Valley Regional District

Copied via email:

The Honourable Josie Osborne, Minister of Land, Water, Resource Stewardship and Minister Responsible for Fisheries
The Honourable Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
The Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Adaptation
The Honourable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General
The Honourable Selina Robinson, Minister of Finance
The Honourable Bowinn Ma, Minister of State for Infrastructure
The Honourable Fin Donnelly, Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Aquaculture
MLA Sonia Furstenau, Cowichan Valley
MLA Doug Routley, Nanaimo-North Cowichan
MP Alistair MacGregor, Cowichan-Malahat-Langford
James Mack, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship
David Muter, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship
Matt LeRoy, Executive Director, Strategic Land Use, Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship
Sharon Hadway, Regional Executive Director, West Coast Operations, Ministry of Forests
Arlette Malcolm, Director, Resource Stewardship Operations, West Region, MLWRS
Cindy Daniels, Chief Administrative Officer, Cowichan Tribes
Larry George, Director, Lands and Self Governance, Cowichan Tribes
Danielle Myles-Wilson, Chief Administrative Officer, Cowichan Tribes
Kate Miller, Manager, Environmental Services, CVRD
Jill Thompson, Program Manager, Cowichan Watershed Board
Lisa Fox, Business Manager, Cowichan Watershed Board
Tom Rutherford, Cowichan Watershed Board