



October 27, 2022

File No.: 0360-20

Via Email: [LWRS.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:LWRS.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

The Honourable Josie Osborne, Minister of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship  
PO Box 9012 Stn. Prov. Govt.  
VICTORIA BC V8M 9L6

Dear Honourable Minister,

We would like to express our thanks for the opportunity to meet with you and your staff on October 14, 2022, to discuss the next steps towards water sustainability in the Cowichan/Koksilah watershed. We appreciate your understanding of the full impacts of current and projected river conditions on the Cowichan people, and our region – and your commitment to work with the Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB), Cowichan Tribes, the Cowichan Valley Regional District and Paper Excellence towards implementing meaningful positive change.

We would like to acknowledge the collaborative support offered by the Province of BC to date through the *BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund*, the *Conservation Economic Stimulus Initiative* and the *Healthy Watersheds Initiative*. The resources provided through these programs have been instrumental in allowing the Cowichan Partners to move forward with the critical and important work necessary to ensure both watershed and community resilience for current and future generations.

We appreciated the frank, open and positive dialogue on October 14, 2022, and the commitments made with respect each of our requests:

**We discussed the need for \$14M in partnership funding to leverage the \$24M federal money currently on the table to implement the weir/flood control works.** We appreciate the understanding you expressed for the urgent need to close the funding gap, and that you see a role for your Ministry in helping. We understand that, although not an infrastructure Ministry, Land, Water and Resource Stewardship (LWARS), is a convener and networker and that you can help in that way. We thank you for your commitment to providing support to this process, and your willingness to talk to Minister Heyman and other Ministers who could assist us.

**In the discussion of our need for an efficient, effective and well-resourced licensing process,** you advised us to reach out to Minister Conroy and her senior staff directly. We appreciate your advice on this as well as the commitment that you or your designate will also reach out to the Minister on this issue.

**We discussed the commitment needed for the Government of BC to negotiate a fair division of responsibilities associated with a new Cowichan weir, with the province stepping up to address liability and compensation issues;**

We recognize this is a complex issue, and we very much appreciated your commitment to assist with this process, recognizing it is key to being able to move forward with a water sustainability solution for our watershed that will reflect alignment with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and reconciliation, a progressive and innovative climate adaptation strategy, healthy salmon for the future and a robust economy supporting a thriving community.

**Finally, thank you for referencing a key contact person in your Ministry that we can work with to resolve these issues.** We very much look forward to working with Matt LeRoy, Executive Director, LWARS Strategic Land Use, on this file.

Working together in the spirit of reconciliation to pursue innovative solutions to the challenges associated with salmon sustainability and climate change is a priority for all of us. We appreciate the strong support you expressed in that regard, as well as the acknowledgement of the urgency associated with these issues and your willingness and commitment to work with us in a creative way to attain our common goals.

We look forward to an ongoing collaborative relationship, and to achieving tangible success together for our community, for our ecosystems, for First Nations culture, and for the future of British Columbia.

Finally, we would like to invite you and members of your team to visit our watershed at your earliest convenience to follow up on our conversation of October 14, 2022, celebrate our successes to date, and address our remaining challenges together. Depending on the time available, we would be happy to arrange for a drift boat float (water levels permitting), or a vehicle tour. Spending a few hours on the Cowichan would provide a whole new perspective on the importance of ensuring a positive future for our heritage river and the communities it supports!

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 Katrine Conroy, Ministry of Forests

The Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Adaptation

The Honourable Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation

The Honourable Bowinn Ma, Minister of State for Infrastructure

The Honourable Fin Donnelly, Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Aquaculture

MLA Sonia Furstenu, Cowichan Valley

MLA Doug Routley, Nanaimo-North Cowichan

MP Alistair MacGregor, Cowichan-Malahat-Langford

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James Mack, Assistant Deputy Minister, 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 Valley Regional District

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Tom Rutherford, Cowichan Watershed Board

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