



# Cowichan Watershed Board

**To:** Chief and Council, Cowichan Tribes  
Board of Directors, Cowichan Valley Regional District

**RE:** Submission of Cowichan Watershed Board's Business Plan for 2023-2025 for Input and Approval  
Submission of Cowichan Watershed Board's Annual Report for 2022 for Information  
Submission of Cowichan Watershed Board "Setting the Course" Partnership Workshop Report for Information

**Date:** March 31, 2023

Over the past 12 years, Cowichan Tribes and the CVRD have forged a unique partnership approach to a positive water future for the Quw'utsun-Xwulqw'selu / Cowichan-Koksilah watershed through the Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB). This watershed lies at the heart of the traditional and unceded territories of the Hul'q'umi'num people. The Cowichan River is designated both Nationally and Provincially as a Heritage River, and is important to the economy and quality of life for many CVRD residents. The CWB is widely recognized as a successful model for stewarding a sustained and productive relationship between a local government and a First Nation for water. In recognition of this good work, in 2018 both the CVRD and Cowichan Tribes councils committed to a new Core Principle through the adoption of the CWB Governance Manual update:

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

Another commitment from the Governance Manual was to improve the accountability of the CWB to its founding partners through annual reporting. Please find these reports enclosed, along with a report from our recent Setting the Course visioning workshop.

**Annual Report:** This provides a look back on some of your key achievements for the watershed in 2022, either in partnership with, or through the CWB. Images reflect our active collaboration with over 30 Government, business, academic and community stewardship organizations. A report of progress made against last year's Business Plan objectives is provided in Appendix D.

**Business Plan:** The enclosed 2023-2025 Business Plan outlines how we are building on the strong foundation of this relationship, providing support for "reconciliation in action" through respectful watershed partnerships, engaging indigenous and local knowledge, and providing technical support to important work across the watershed. Key areas include:

- plans to support both partners in the restoration of adequate summer water flows through the Cowichan Weir replacement project and the Xwulqw'selu/Koksilah Watershed Sustainability Plan.
- pursuing collaboration towards seven defined Targets for Watershed Health, derived from the Cowichan Basin Water Management Plan. The CWB operates under an assumption that the people

who live in the watershed and know it first-hand are the best resource we have. As such, local organizations and agencies are the foundation of the CWB's four Target Working Groups, and we are very pleased to have secured multi-year capacity to revive the Working Groups.

- supporting Cowichan Tribes in a project to explore knowledge and data sharing solutions between the partners and across our watershed community.

**Setting the Course Workshop Report:** This year, the CWB undertook a visioning exercise with you, our partners, to reaffirm the role and mandate of the Cowichan Watershed Board. The enclosed "Setting the Course" Report details the process, engagement, and recommendations from a series of interviews and an immersive workshop facilitated with our CWB members, staff and advisors, as well as senior staff and council from Cowichan Tribes and CVRD. The recommendations stemming from this initiative provide guidance to the CWB to clarify our collaborative governance model, strengthen relationships between our partners and with the community, and build our capacity and resilience to address critical challenges together.

The CWB has an enviable track record recognized by First Nations, other governments, funders, and leaders across the country as an example of advancing watershed security and sustainability through collaborative watershed governance. Through your investment in, and leadership of, the Cowichan Watershed Board, you are contributing to respectful, meaningful and impactful progress towards reconciliation. Huy tseep q'u siem.

Questions or feedback are welcome and may be directed to Jill Thompson, CWB Communications Director, at [jill@cowichanwatershedboard.ca](mailto:jill@cowichanwatershedboard.ca) or 250-709-0492.

Respectfully,



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Chief Lydia Hwitsum

Co-Chair Cowichan Watershed Board  
Chief, Cowichan Tribes



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Chair Aaron Stone

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