

Briefing: Wave Feature Request

For: Cowichan Watershed Board

Purpose: To respond to the Vancouver Island Whitewater Paddling Society (VIWPS) request to the Board:

We request that the CWB collaborate with Vancouver Island Whitewater Paddling Society to reinstate our project (integrating one single playwave, to be located in the outflow channel of the new weir) into the weir design OR, if that option is not feasible, we request that the CWB collaborate with us to seek and develop an alternative site on the Quw'utsun.

Background

Materials:

- Presentation to CWB by Rick Bryan about the paddling and recreation communities, and benefits of potential recreation amenities that could be included in the new weir. (2019) https://cowichanwatershedboard.ca/document/cwb-board-30-sept-2019-1247-2-2-2-3-2/attachment/weir-recreation-presentation_rickbryan/
- 2022 Response Letter to the VIWPS request from the Cowichan Watershed Board CoChairs-attached
- Stantec's November 2021 memo to the CVRD, detailing the consideration paid to this request and rationale for concluding it was not feasible. "*Cowichan Lake Weir – Whitewater Recreation Opportunities and Related Hydrotechnical Information Transmittal*". This memo informed the Cowichan Watershed Board's decision and is publicly available here: <https://cowichanlakeweir.ca/whitewater-recreation-opportunity>

History:

- [2017-2018 - Water Use Plan](#) concluded the weir should be replaced.
 - Sept 2019 Rick Bryan, representing VIWPS, presented a well-received slideshow at a CWB meeting to introduce paddling as a path for connection, stewardship, and mental well-being. The presentation included a proposal to tweak the design of the weir and river bed to improve recreational value, and extend the season. CWB decision was: Ian Morrison (former co-chair, CVRD) will follow up with Rick to connect him to the weir design team for consideration of whether paddling features could be incorporated.
 - CVRD secured Stantec to develop a new weir design to meet the recommendations of the [Water Use Plan](#). This was funded by the [BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund](#), a grant that was awarded by Fisheries and Oceans Canada.
 - Stantec hosted an online survey as part of the weir design. There was a high level of support for the idea of a wave feature, as well as other recreation / tourism opportunities, to connect the weir to the community and trail systems. Stantec states that it considered ways to include survey results, including the wave feature, to the extent possible within the confines of the funding, which was for salmon habitat.
 - VIWPS secured additional funding, through CVRD Area Directors and independent fundraising, for specialized consultants, SG1 Water Consulting and Recreation Engineering & Planning, to provide design recommendations for the wave feature. This was submitted to the CVRD project manager and Stantec at a meeting in August 2021.

- In Nov 2021, Stantec provided its analysis and conclusion, including an opinion that:
 - “White water features are not conducive to fish passage for all life stages of fish because by their very nature they serve to speed-up the water and create hydraulic differentials; both of which challenge passage, particularly for small and juvenile fish. While we understand that there are cases where fish passage has been successfully incorporated into white water features, it is more often that fish passage measures are added as a mitigation to the risk to passage that these structures pose. There is also a high potential recreational activity in a dual-purpose channel to affect the behavior of fish that are navigating the channel. A dual-purpose fish passage and whitewater channel would introduce a risk to the fish passage objectives of the project.”
 - “...it is Stantec’s opinion that adding a whitewater facility or features to the Cowichan Lake Weir is not feasible due to hydraulic, geometric and operational limitations of the site.”
- In May 2022 the CWB CoChairs provided a written response to VIWPS that expressed appreciation for their work, and states why the Board cannot support a play feature at the weir based on Stantec’s recommendations. The Board committed E.D. Tom Rutherford to discuss other options with Rick Bryan. A follow up meeting occurred but no actions resulted.
- The new weir design does include an optional pedestrian walkway, which would connect the north and south sides of the lake. This addition would enhance recreation amenities for residents and visitors, and be more broadly accessible. The walkway is not currently funded but can be added later.



Cowichan Watershed Board

To: Edmond Duggan & Rick Bryan, Vancouver Island Whitewater Paddling Society

May 16, 2022

Dear Edmond and Rick,

Thank you for the detailed correspondence package regarding the incorporation of recreation values in the design of the new Cowichan Weir forwarded to Cowichan Watershed Board Members this past March, and our apologies for the delay in responding.

We acknowledge, and sincerely appreciate the contributions that the paddling community make to the stewardship of the river and to introducing so many people to the “river experience” on both the Cowichan and Koksilah rivers. Your participation and support of numerous river and watershed focused community events adds an important dimension and perspective in terms of profiling the many ways the river supports our physical and mental wellbeing here in the Cowichan Valley.

As you mention in your letter, CWB members heard and supported the idea of incorporating a paddling feature in the weir design as presented in 2019, with the caveat that it would be feasible without slowing down the design process being led by Stantec under contract to the CVRD. It is our understanding that the option was sincerely considered by the Stantec team and a decision made that it would not be feasible within the scope of the current project. The weir design work was completed in Dec. 2021 and it has been made clear to us that, at this point, there would be significant cost and scheduling impacts associated with considering any changes. We understand and appreciate your disappointment but are not in a position to question the opinion of the technical experts retained to design the weir.

CWB members are still supportive of encouraging and enhancing paddling opportunities on the Cowichan River and we have asked our Executive Director, Tom Rutherford, to reach out and engage in discussions around the possibility of identifying other locations and options for realizing this visionary idea.

Again, we appreciate the contribution you and your organization make to our “river community” and acknowledge the importance of the connection to the river forged by paddlers, hikers, swimmers, naturalists, educators and many others.

Huy tseep q’u siem – Thank you with respect,

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

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