

Staff Report - September 2024

This is a monthly snapshot of staff's completed and current activities, and future plans as it relates to our approved [Impact Plan](#). We ask Board members to please review the table before the Board meeting. There will be time for questions to staff. Also please note decisions required (right column).

Area of Work	Activities (What?)	Comments / Analysis (So What?)	Outcome or Next Steps (Now What?)	Board Support Needed
Just Add Water (addressing low flows)	<p>Weir Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Celebrating Water Festival (CWF) - "Weir all Connected" theme. July. Event led by CLRSS; CWB served on organizing team, lead tours, etc. ● Weir update brochure mailed to 3,319 residents around Cowichan Lake and upper River and the town. Invitation to weir tour at above event. ● CWB staff providing secretariat role to Technical Working Group (BC, CT, CVRD, PE) struck to resolve outstanding issues. ● CWB also providing support to separate CT/BC bilateral conversations initiated to provide forum for G2G discussions. ● Joint meeting with Deputy Minister Lori Halls, Sept 23rd. ● Secured funding support and guidance from Cowichan Tribes' operational leadership team to move forward with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hiring a Process Manager (Kirk Stinchcombe - 	<p>CWF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 100 people toured the weir, majority had never seen it, many from around the lake. Good education and ripple effects. Live Leroy's Corner at event to see shoreline impact mapping. ● Good representation of diverse leadership spoke in favour of replacing the weir. Snippets will be loaded to CWB youtube/website. ● Zero opposition to replacing the weir encountered from event or mailout. ● Low turnout overall - summer events are hard. <p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We see momentum picking up with Kirk coming onboard to move the team (led by Cowichan Tribes) through the licencing process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff will report on the meeting with DM Halls (outcomes/next steps) ● September 26th is a joint communications workshop to create the strategic plan for the next year. 	<p>Where possible, help promote CWB events or learning opportunities within your communities to maximize the impact of our efforts.</p>

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	<p>welcome!)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communications (short/long term): CWB supporting Lockery Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Making good progress on quantifying expected costs associated with liability insurance, ongoing weir O&M and compensation (if any). ● On the other hand, due to Provincial interregnum things may slow slightly for the next couple of months. 		
	<p>Weir - concurrent/contingent Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund (DMAF) - projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordinated and onboarded consultant for the project. ● CVRD contributes BCSRIF funds to lower/mid river project selection process. ● Cowichan Tribes contributes funds to the ongoing process with DMAF. ● CWB is hiring Waters Edge Biological Consulting, on Cowichan Tribes' behalf to complete this work. 	<p>Reminder: Cowichan Tribes needs to identify all lower and mid river DMAF funding projects in order to negotiate Contribution Agreement to free up federal resources for Cowichan weir (as well as beneficial mid and lower river projects).</p>	<p>Northwest Hydraulics Consultants retained to model potential projects and provide report to CT technical selection committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CT technical selection committee recommending 3 mid river and 3 lower river projects to committee of Council ● WEB consulting to be retained to complete outstanding work required to negotiate contribution agreement. ● Contribution agreement must be negotiated with Infrastructure Canada to free up federal funding for weir and inriver projects 	

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	<p>Xwulqw’selu Watershed Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalized contract with CTs Continuing to scope a potential workstream that includes CVRD and Cowichan Tribes regarding: community planning, local jurisdiction, decision-making and bylaws around the watershed (watershed-responsible development). 	<p>Key areas we are offering support to XWP process in 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advising re: communications; technical projects; supporting financial administration of funds; Event planning/hosting; and scoping out a possible workstream for healthy community planning/responsible watershed dev’t. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Advisory Table and Cowichan Advisory Table both having meetings this fall. Open House to be held (likely January) Decision to be made on how/if a workstream for healthy community planning/responsible dev’t will be included in the WSP (CCAT, CCT, XWP G2G) 	
Achieving our Targets	<p>Fish Sustainability and Flows -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water quality monitoring has been ongoing since May and been used by the planning teams to implement responses to reduce the risk of a fish kill event in 2024 Data collection is underway to map cold water refugia for fish and identify legal tools to ensure their protection 	<p>Water quality results indicated stressful conditions for fish as soon as monitoring was started, resulting in immediate responses being enacted and partners (Cowichan Tribes, CVRD, BC Fisheries, DFO, experts, TOLC) actively working together to reduce risk of fish kill.</p> <p>No fish mortality was observed in 2024.</p> <p>Subject matter expert Dr. Ken Ashley opines that Cowichan River has likely the best real time WQ monitoring program “in the world”.</p>	<p>Fall will be busy with reporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2024 process (monitoring and response planning) Locations and proposed protections of cold water refugia 	

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	Riparian Health target - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A GIS-based pilot project situated along Kelvin Creek has been started to define metrics and methodology to assess riparian health ● Once developed the methodology will be applied overtime throughout the watershed 	This information will be used to prioritize restoration projects to support recovery of fish habitat, water quality, water flows, and other landscape-level projects	The Riparian Committee has resumed meeting and will continue until the pilot is completed and presented to the CWB	
	Water Quality target - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UVic Scholar has completed work synthesizing nearly 30 years of water quality sampling to tell the story of changing water quality of the Cowichan River 	This work will help inform the board, staff and our partners on water quality trends and help us identify and act on new projects to improve water quality	Staff are reviewing report and determining ways to share key messages	
	Water Quality Target - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The summer water quality sampling for the Cowichan River was completed in August ● Plans for fall sampling is in place 	This MOE water quality attainment program has been used to assess water quality in the Cowichan region for over 30 years.	Fall sampling will begin when the rains start, which flush stored biological, chemical, and nutrient substances into the river Data will be analyzed and reported on over the winter	
	Water Quality target - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interactive map is complete and posted on the CWB website. It illustrates who has collected what water quality information where in the Cowichan/Koksilah watershed 	An overwhelming amount of water quality data exists, some more useful than others. This tool provides a quick snapshot that leads its user to the more complete database.	The map will be part of a new link on the website that will be developed over the winter that begins to address CWB's involvement in creating a Data Hub for the community.	

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	Watershed Connections working group - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work has started to identify next steps in the Watershed Information, Knowledge and data project 	Surveys and a 1st workshop in 2023 identified an interest in the community to develop some sort of a digital platform where partners can learn who has what data, as well as how the data could be shared	To be determined	
	Water Wise Target - see supporting Koksilah Low Flow Working Group below under Partnerships.			
Building Partnerships	Held a lunch and river/weir tour for Cowichan Tribes and CVRD councils on July 29, 2024. Stop on river focussed on X'pey and salmon; Stop on weir focussed on climate impacts and capital project.	Successful opportunity to learn together and build relationships. Shared meal. Attendance 35 with good balance between the partners. Volunteer photographer captured key moments nicely.	Continue to build on the knowledge we heard from our speakers — Cheyenne Williams and Tim Kulchyski — and the connections made as we continue our learning, growth and building our relationships as a Board.	
	Supporting Koksilah Low Flow Working Group. Attempted to post roadside signs encouraging awareness of low river flows and need for conservation.	Most signs were stolen; project stalled for this year.	Gain an understanding of why the signs were stolen and create some next steps.	
	Building Collaborative monitoring solution for Cowichan River WQ.	Dr. Ken Ashley states he knows of no other collaborative WQ effort that matches the partnership approach demonstrated in Cowichan Watershed		

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	<p>Actively hosting or supporting events with partners - see below.</p> <p>Supporting Estuary Nature Centre in discussions about operational options.</p>			
Watershed Knowledge and Understanding	<p>Hosted or supported 3 major summer events:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cowichan Lake and River Stewards annual Celebrating Water Festival — Weir all Connected: July 20 2. Cowichan Watershed Board's annual River Clean Up: Aug25 3. Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable's Quw'utsun Sta'lo' Skweyul: Sept 22. Secured funding for coordination and event costs. <p>Organizing workshop RE Somenos Lake Fish Kill with Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society - October.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support partners, educate/communicate/engage on the Weir. 2. Annual CWB signature event 3. Support partners, engage with community 	<p>Outcomes: See above under Weir.</p> <p>100+ volunteers participate in partnership with Cowichan Tribes. Engage youth staff.</p>	
Administrative and Other	<p>Fundraising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Watershed Sustainability Fund has been applied for. We should find out about a decision soon. ● Successful grant received from the Bonneville Environmental Fund (BEF) for work on our targets and 		<p>Begin to action work on the Targets, as funded by BEF alongside community partners.</p>	<p>Board members please provide a bio and photo to Jill if you have not yet done so. For new website page similar to</p>

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	<p>with partners in the watershed (QCCS & CSRT).</p> <p>Communications Updating website</p>			https://cowichanwatershedboard.ca/about/staff-team/
	<p>Letters sent/signed this past month on behalf of the CWB:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society (ongoing projects) <p>Presented 2023 Annual Report and Impact Plan to CVRD Council; preparing to present to both partner councils with Governance Manual.</p>	<p>Important to present our information to both Councils (have yet to do so for Cowichan Tribes); and need our Governance Manual approved.</p>	<p>CWB ED to connect with Legislative Services at each of our partner organizations.</p>	
	<p>Extra capacity hired:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katia Bannister — River Clean Up Coordinator • Ashley van der Pouw Kraan — Communications Consultant <p>WELCOME to you both!</p>	<p>Katia's role is already complete but we hope to have her back again next year!</p> <p>Ashley is supporting on an interim basis as we confirm our local capacity and hire.</p>	<p>Prepare for 2025 Impact Plan with staffing/capacity needs filled (we are growing!).</p>	