

## Staff Report - January 2025

This is a monthly snapshot of staff’s completed and current activities, and future plans as it relates to our approved [Impact Plan](#) (updated Plan to come to the Board in February). 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
<p>Just Add Water (addressing low flows)</p>	<p><b>COWICHAN WEIR</b></p> <p><b>Licensing and Ownership</b></p> <p>-2 Planning tables continue to meet regularly to move licensing/ownership process forward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● G2G table - bi-monthly</li> <li>● TWG Table - bi-weekly</li> </ul> <p><u>Recent Progress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stantec retained to develop operations and maintenance schedule for new weir including costing (due end of Jan.)</li> <li>● Work to rework construction budget in 2026 dollars complete</li> <li>● Liability insurance estimate for ongoing operations in place</li> <li>● Confirming ability of First Nation to hold both ownership and conservation license under BC WSA</li> <li>● License application completion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CWB asked to serve in secretariat role for the weir G2G table, which continues to move forward on important conversations on Rights and Title, licensing, compensation and operations and maintenance.</li> <li>● Partners fully engaged in necessary “detail work” to prepare license application for submission Spring 2025</li> <li>● Construction budget in 2026 \$ indicates funding gap. Partners currently engaged in procuring additional funding</li> </ul>	<p>Anticipated Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Submission of license application spring 2025</li> <li>● Completion of Infrastructure Canada Contribution agreement for DMAF funding spring 2025</li> <li>● Ongoing dialogue with WLRS DM regarding funding gap</li> </ul>	<p>Where possible, help promote knowledge and understanding of the Cowichan Weir project within your communities and support your staff’s work on this important initiative.</p> <p><a href="https://cowichanlakeweir.ca/">https://cowichanlakeweir.ca/</a></p>

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	<p>target for project is spring, 2025</p> <p><b>_Resourcing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cowichan Tribes moving forward with process to hire full time <u>internal Project Manager</u> to oversee project to completion.</li> <li>● WLRS DM Halls remains committed to project and waiting for final funding gap analysis before approaching Treasury Board</li> </ul> <p><b>_Permitting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Permitting workshop with all regulatory agencies completed Jan. 9. Gaps identified &amp; plan created</li> </ul> <p><b>Comms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Comms team assembled, with additional guidance from CT Comms during transition to potential ownership.</li> <li>● Comms plan implementation strategy created.</li> <li>● Key messages, project title, hul'q'umi'num teaching confirmed; website updated, list of lake residents being compiled for 1:1</li> </ul>			

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	<p>outreach with CLRSS, first presentation to Youbou Community Association, update to CLRSS News (Dec).</p>			
	<p>Xwulqw’selu Watershed Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CWB staff team meeting with process ED to explore expanded CWB role in supporting specific workstreams, Eg.: Ecological flows, Land use, Community Engagement</li> <li>● CWB staff continue to participate in and support process Planning Team and G2G table, including budget administration for the process on behalf of Cowichan Tribes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CWB will start to expand its support within areas already identified (i.e. events)</li> <li>● Also exploring leading/supporting different specific areas of work (i.e. different workstreams).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue to firm up the details of CWB staff increased involvement in this process.</li> <li>● CWB will support the planning of an Open House (est. Spring 2025)</li> </ul>	<p>Decision: Approval for CWB staff to be supporting in the areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Flow Targets</li> <li>● Land Use and Restoration</li> </ul>
<p>Achieving our Targets</p>	<p>Draft Target Strategy Review presented (Nov CWB meeting) and draft Target Strategy Discussion Paper written.</p>	<p>Staff considering best ways to keep pursuing our Targets in the next decade, acknowledging that much change and growth in project activity means that TAC and Working Groups are no longer meeting.</p>	<p>TBD - will be looking for discussion / guidance soon.</p>	
	<p>Fish Sustainability and Flows - [See above - Weir and XWP are both major strategies for this target.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CWB Hosted a December workshop on Lessons learned from our 2024 monitoring and fish kill response</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Work underway is to document the valuable lessons learned in 2024 that are transferable to future years and other communities/watersheds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Final report to funder (PSF)</li> <li>● Planning for further cold water refugia work</li> <li>● CWB to host March meeting of monitoring partners to initiate 2025 program</li> </ul>	

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	<p>initiative and to solidify plans for 2025. Good participation and support from all partners. Next year's plan and resourcing in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report writing on 2024 strategies is underway.</li> <li>• CWB staff hosted a Somenos Lake fish kill workshop resulting in clear understanding of event and components of a monitoring/management plan moving forward.</li> <li>• Data collection and reporting is completed to map cold water refugia for fish in Cowichan River.</li> <li>• CWB staff invited to present on Fish mortality response at Indigenous WQ monitoring workshop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust plans and partnerships in place to improve program next season</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to report out/network at provincially scoped workshop</li> </ul>	
	<p>Riparian Health target -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A GIS-based pilot project to assess riparian health along Kelvin Creek is underway. A GIS technician has been secured and will begin late January/ early February.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once questions are answered about what defines 'successfully restored', 'riparian area' and 'protected' and the modeling process is defined, results can be modeled over the Koksilah watershed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Team will reconvene once preliminary results are available</li> </ul>	
	<p>Water Quality target -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive water quality monitoring program completed this summer/fall for the Cowichan River</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations on the 2024 program indicate that the continuous monitoring data is higher value than the grab</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CWB to host March meeting of monitoring partners to initiate 2025 program</li> </ul>	

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	<p>in partnership with BC MOE, BCCF and CVRD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MOE is preparing report on their results</li> </ul>	<p>sample data for identifying responses to avoid fish mortality</p>		
	<p>Watershed Connections working group -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resumed Speaker Series in partnership with VIU-Cowichan.</li> <li>Examining ways to support local ENGOs who do education / immersion programming.</li> <li>Visited Francis Kelsey Grade 12 Environmental Studies Class to share about CWB's work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No specific WG meeting planned. Attending CSRT regularly and working with partners on events, Speaker Night, and calendar. Potential for shared grant being explored.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with partners on reviving Nature Cowichan's online calendar for events and volunteering. <a href="https://www.naturecowichan.net/wp/event-calendar/">https://www.naturecowichan.net/wp/event-calendar/</a></li> </ul>	<p>Board members encouraged to attend Speaker Nights if you wish. Watch for details <a href="#">here</a> and we will send calendar invitations as requested.</p>
	<p>Water Wise Target - see supporting Koksilah Low Flow Working Group below under Partnerships.</p>			
Building Partnerships	<p>Watershed Board to host First Nations Fisheries Council Water Table at January meeting.</p>	<p>Opportunity to network and build relationships with important water stewardship organization with provincial scope and authority</p>		
	<p>Staff continue to attend Koksilah Low Flow Working Group; Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable; Xwulqw'selu Connections; Cowichan Lake and River Stewards, and other watershed-based meetings on behalf of the Board.</p>	<p>Important to know what else is happening within the watershed (concerns, projects, plans) to support collaborations, and share CWB news.</p>	<p>Continue to attend and report back as needed.</p>	

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Watershed Knowledge and Understanding	Organized workshop RE Somenos Lake Fish Kill with Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society - November 27th.	Somenos Marsh is an important part of the Cowichan Watershed so stepping in/up to support our partners (SMWS).		
	Watershed data (WIKD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah Jackman has been hired and is gathering and summarizing Cowichan-based research to be used to develop maps and a bibliography highlighting local work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This information will be hosted on the CWB website connecting people with information in a user-friendly format.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will seek input from our partners to inform content and format of information.</li> </ul>	
Administrative and Other	Write 3 year Impact Plan Write 2024 Annual Report Presentation to CVRD Board and Cowichan Tribes' Council to be made after these reports are passed by the CWB. Planning a 15 year Celebration!	To agree on our shared direction and vision and the activities needed to get there. Review our last year and evaluate success. Share information out and get feedback from key partners. Celebrate our work, together!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Impact Plan will be presented at the February 2025 Board Meeting</li> <li>• Draft Annual Report will be presented at the March 2025 meeting.</li> <li>• Presentations to be booked for May/June.</li> <li>• Begin to plan a celebration, if receive that guidance from the Board.</li> </ul>	Decision: Do we want to host a 15 year celebration? If so, what should that look like?