



Cowichan Watershed Board



Garrett Quinn, President
Rick Bryan, Representative
Vancouver Island Whitewater Paddling Society
Email: president@viwps.ca; rickbryan@shaw.ca

MAY 06 2025

RECEIVED

May 5th 2025

RE: Play wave proposal for Cowichan River

Dear Garrett, Rick, and Vancouver Island paddling community:

Thank you for the information package recently submitted to the Cowichan Watershed Board, along with this request:

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.

This information was circulated to the Watershed Board members, and discussed during the March 31, 2025 meeting. The Board always appreciates people being in deep relationship with the river, as paddlers exemplify. We again want to start by thanking you for all you do as a community to nurture a love of the river and a culture of stewardship, particularly with youth, and for your work to keep paddlers safe while doing so.

The decisions of the Board on these requests are:

i) Building the infrastructure referenced above is not within our mandate.

As our monthly meetings and Annual Reports show, at this time in the history of the Quw'utsun Sta'lo', we are greatly challenged with restoring the health and sustainability of the watershed's ecosystem, for the well-being of both human and non-human beings. Raising the weir is the most urgent project we are working on to reduce the ongoing stresses on aquatic ecosystems, and particularly fish, from lower water flows and higher summer temperatures. These stresses are compounded by pollution, habitat degradation, ocean conditions, and lower fish populations. While there are multiple benefits to maintaining healthy river and lake levels throughout the dry season, including recreation, the focus of the weir project for over 20 years has been to support fish health. As per the original request by Rick to the Board in September 2019, if the wave project could have been accomplished easily without delay to the weir replacement, nor cause harm to fish, the Board was not opposed. However, the memo from the weir engineers published on the project website since 2022 clearly explains that is not the case. (<https://cowichanlakeweir.ca/whitewater-recreation-opportunity/>) The design phase of the weir project is complete, with shoreline modeling, funding specifically tied to river resilience, and other steps well underway. If funding becomes available, a pedestrian walkway can be added to the top of the weir without any changes to the design to enhance local, accessible recreation.

ii) constructed wave features will not be supported in the Cowichan River by the CWB at this time.

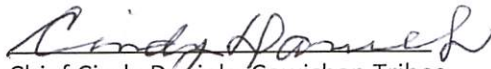
We recognize that your materials reference examples where fish and paddling features have been successfully combined. In this situation, in the Cowichan River, we feel we must rely on the best available information from fish health experts who study the fish populations here, and are actively working to restore the resiliency of fish populations in the face of climate change and other stressors. At the March meeting, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) representative to the Board spoke directly to the request for play waves in the Cowichan River. The DFO has recently reviewed the concept of play wave features in the Cowichan River and concluded the department would not support a play wave in this river as this kind of additional water disturbance and additional ongoing human activity in the river can be an additional stress on fish. Significant efforts and millions of dollars of investments are being made by all levels of Government and stewardship non-profits to protect and restore fish runs in the Quw'utsun Sta'lo' that hold significant cultural, ecological, food security, recreational, and economic value.

We would also like to clarify an error in the submitted materials:

- the [September 2019 CWB minutes](#) do not indicate that the "Board voted in favour of our proposal." The minutes reflect that the Board expressed support in principal for connecting Rick to the weir design team to consider opportunities to include play features, without impacting aquatic habitats. This connection was made, and as referenced above, the CVRD then commissioned Stantec to review the concept. The conclusion was that this type of feature could detrimentally impact the aquatic habitat.

We sincerely wish the paddling community all the best in river recreation, enjoyment, and stewardship, and hope you continue to deepen your connection with the beautiful Quw'utsun Sta'lo'. We enjoy seeing your photos, and appreciate your eyes on the river and the many other ways you find to give back.

Sincerely,



Chief Cindy Daniels, Cowichan Tribes
Cowichan Watershed Board Co-Chair



Dir. Kate Segall, Chair of CVRD
Cowichan Watershed Board Co-Chair

cc Cowichan Tribes c/o Acting CAO Yui Tromp
CVRD c/o CAO Danielle Myles Wilson
South Island Whitewater Club c/o President Harry Watson