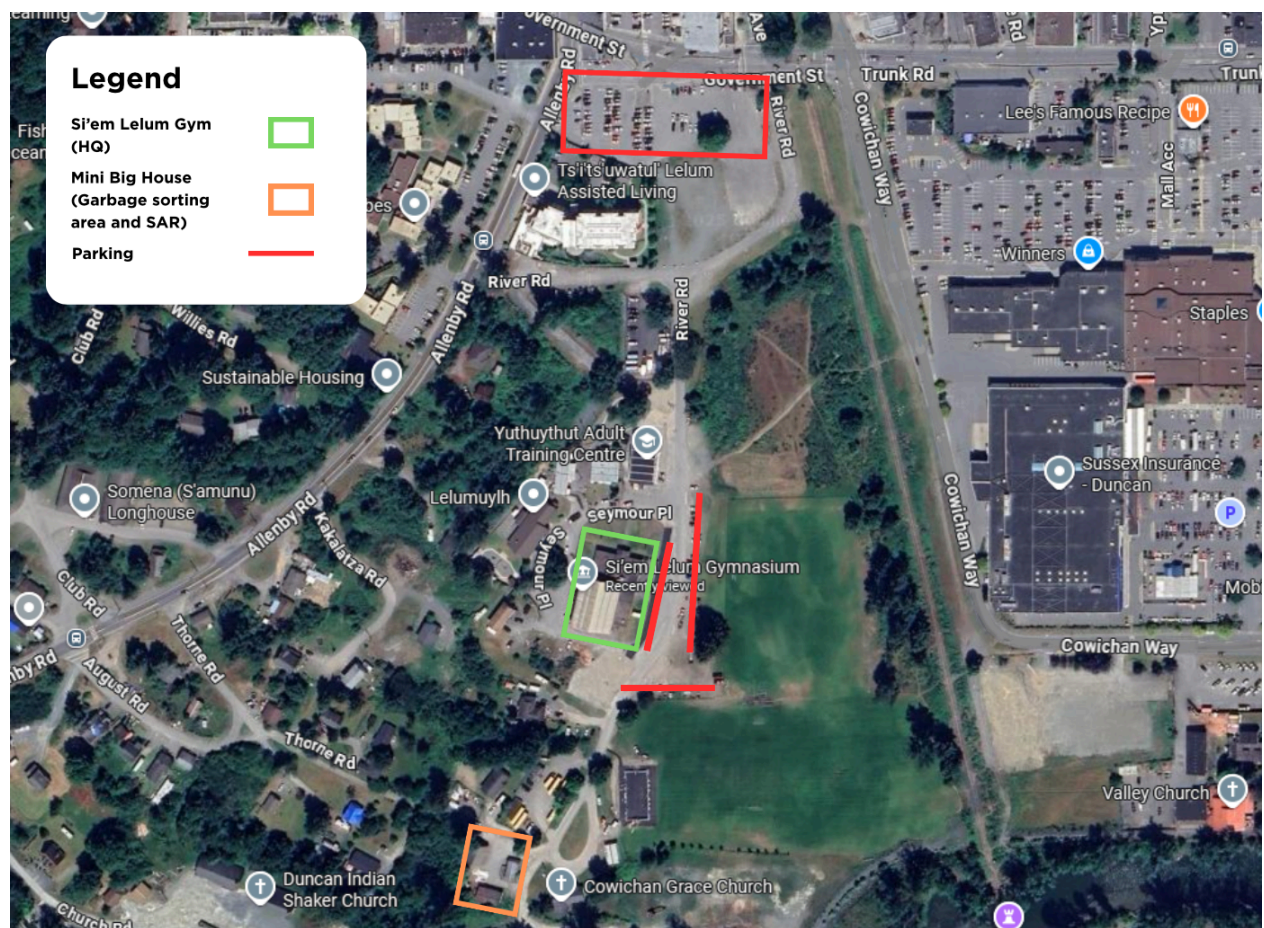


## Lower Cowichan River Cleanup 2025 Accessibility Statement

The Cowichan Watershed Board is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible event environment for all attendees of the annual Lower Cowichan River (Quw'utsun Sta'lo') Cleanup. It is our hope to engage as many community members as possible in the important work of caring for and cleaning up our beloved river. Supporting the participation of all members of the community who wish to take part in this work is deeply important to this goal and our organization as a whole.

Included below are details about the accessibility features and accommodations available at the River Cleanup event:



### Venue accessibility:

**Bathrooms:** During the event, bathrooms, including a wheelchair accessible stall, will be available inside Si'em Lelum Gymnasium.

**Sensory Reduced Areas:** At the Clean Up Headquarters (HQ), the Dining Hall will be a quiet space between 11-12pm with most event participants being out on cleanup routes. As the

Dining Hall is a single room, we are unable to offer an indoor sensory reduced area at HQ, but volunteers are encouraged to find other sensory reduced spaces that support their needs, such as quiet corners outdoors (which the event organizers are able to move seating to upon request) or in their personal vehicles as needed.

**Accessible seating:** Accessible seating will be available inside Si'em Lelum. These chairs will be in-place all day long and will be arranged to be easily accessible to people who use mobility aids. There will also be a row of chairs set-up at the front of the venue when we gather to do our welcome and opening at 10AM.

**Accessible parking:** At HQ, accessible parking will be available directly in front of the entrance to the Dining Hall on both sides of the road.

### **Accessibility accommodations:**

**Online pre-registration:** Optional online pre-registration allows volunteers to view and select their Clean Up route before the day of the event based on wheel-accessibility, get-wet requirements, walking requirements, length, etc, and communication other important info ahead of time to limit the sign-in required on the day of the event.

- **Personal info:** In the online pre-registration form, we will request your name and any relevant health or medical info, and there will be an option to share your pronouns.
- **Accessible route selection:** Clean Up routes will be cataloged and displayed based on their length, physical demands, and other features of accessibility for you to make an informed decision about if there is a route that best fits your wants and needs.
- **Family registration:** Parents and guardians are easily able to pre-register their children with them as well.
- **Dietary accommodations:** Gluten free, dairy-free, nut-free, vegetarian, and vegan food options will all be available at the event, including at the community BBQ that takes place after the Clean Up. However, the Cowichan Watershed Board cannot guarantee that unpackaged food will be risk-free for people with anaphylactic allergies or celiac disease. We are additionally unable to guarantee that vegan or vegetarian food options will be able to be prepared in meat-free areas.

**Shortened route options:** Routes at the event range in length from approximately one (1) hour to three (3) hours. In addition, with another participant at the Cleanup or with support from a CWB volunteer, Clean Up attendees are able to return early to HQ from designated routes if they would like to participate for a shorter period of time. If you wish to return early from your route, you must let your Route Leader know and either have someone who can accompany you back to HQ, or wait for your Route Leader to contact HQ and get a volunteer to accompany you back to the site.

**Available Cleanup equipment:** Garbage pickers will be available to all event volunteers, which can allow volunteers to pick up garbage without having to bend over, kneel, or crouch. For

volunteers who will be in the river to pick-up garbage, CWB will also be able to provide a limited number of inner tubes equipped with net bags for garbage.

**Signage:** Clear signage with white backgrounds and large black lettering will be present on-site to direct attendees to bathrooms, parking, the registration table and other important locations. Site maps will be available for anyone who would like one at the registration table and a few will also be posted around the venue.

If you require support and/or accommodations that are currently unable to be offered by the CWB, but you are able to bring needed supports with you (including a person to assist you, equipment you would like to use, etc) the Cowichan Watershed Board heavily encourages you to do so, acknowledging that this option may not be possible for everyone.

### **Accessible routes:**

Please note: most of the routes at the Cleanup require sustained walking and/or wading. Due to the time of year during which this event is held and the way that the sta'lo' and the surrounding terrain have formed, most of the routes at the River Cleanup require walking on slopes, wading onto of slippery cobbles, on uneven surfaces, navigation around fallen trees, etc., with little opportunity for swimming in deep water or walking on paved or smooth gravel surfaces. The following are the most accessible route options are able to offer at the Cleanup at this time:

**Route #6: White Bridge (Allenby Road) to Black Bridge (E&N Rail Bridge)** - This route covers a wide, braided section of the sta'lo' right beside Cleanup HQ. On this route, volunteers will be spread over a larger area than on some other routes. Some parts of this route are very flat and it is possible to purposely stay in these areas, rather than venture to other parts of the route that will require walking on slopes. However, this route will require at least some walking on cobbles and up to 1.5 kilometres of walking overall. Please ask the Route Leaders for this route for further details on the day of the event or reach out to [rivercleanup@cowichanwatershedboard.ca](mailto:rivercleanup@cowichanwatershedboard.ca) for any questions you would like answered in advance.

**Route #7: Black Bridge (E&N Rail Bridge) to Silver Bridge (Hwy Bridge)** - For volunteers who are looking for a Cleanup route that does not require them to walk long distances and are comfortable swimming, Route #7 features a calm and deeper pool that volunteers can dive for sunken garbage in, or swim around looking for garbage on the banks. There is parking available right near this location, so it is only a couple hundred metres away from the pool. If you would like to sign-up for this route and spend your time at this location, you must be accompanied by another volunteer as it is not safe for volunteers to be alone near the water during the Cleanup. You will also need to let the Route Leader, Peter Williams, know that you would like to access this option so he can give you directions for the parking location (as the rest of the group on this route will not stay in a single location).

**Route #8: Level Berm Highway 1 to Rail Bridge** - This route follows the Level Berm between Highway 1 at the Silver Bridge to the Black Bridge (which is located just across the fields at HQ). This route is accessible to participants that use mobility aids (including those with wheels), as well as strollers. The route itself is about 500m in length. Participants may either drive themselves closer to the starting point and park at the Village Green Mall, or travel around 1km to the start from HQ without a vehicle.

### **Other opportunities to support and engage at the Cleanup**

The Cowichan Watershed Board acknowledges that even with our commitment to ensuring that as many community members as possible are able to attend and participate fully in this special event, there are accessibility barriers that we are unable to fully address. For anyone who does not feel like any of the routes fit their wants and needs, there will still be activities at the Clean Up Headquarters happening throughout the day including:

- A variety of materials to browse detailing some of the Cowichan Watershed Board's past and current work, information and interesting resources from the Lulumexun Department of Cowichan Tribes, and activities and educational resources about watersheds and water conservation from the CVRD.
- All ages crafts and art activities led by the Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society between 11am and 2pm.
- Opportunities to sort incoming garbage to help the CWB collect important data about the kinds of garbage we are removing from the river, which can help to inform the work we do in our community. This activity can be done from a seated position with provided tables and chairs.

The Cowichan Watershed Board is very open to feedback on how we can improve accessibility at the annual Lower Quw'utsun Sta'lo' (Cowichan River) Clean Up. If you have any thoughts, questions, or concerns, please email our Special Events Coordinator, Katia Bannister (she/her) at [rivercleanup@cowichanwatershedboard.ca](mailto:rivercleanup@cowichanwatershedboard.ca) for more information.