

To: CAO for the Electoral Area Services Committee

Date: 2019-11-14

From: Tareq Islam, Director of Engineering & Community Services

File No: 2320-35

Subject: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between FVRD and BC Parks on Cultus Lake North and South Sewer Systems

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board authorize its signatories to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between FVRD and BC Parks with respect to the Cultus Lake North and South Sewer Systems.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Support Environmental Stewardship
Support Healthy & Sustainable Community
Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services

PRIORITIES

Priority #1 Waste Management
Priority #2 Air & Water Quality

BACKGROUND

The Cultus Lake area in Electoral Area 'H' of the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) offers significant cultural, recreational, economic, and ecological services. It is established on traditional territory of Aboriginal peoples; it provides many recreational opportunities to both year-round residents and high numbers of seasonal visitors; and the fertile soils in the area support significant agricultural activities. Cultus Lake itself is a highly valued ecological resource, and provides habitat for fisheries and other aquatic wildlife, including two species at risk. Because of these many valuable attributes, Cultus Lake has experienced increasing development over the years and the population in the area is projected to increase significantly.

Scientific studies spanning the last 80 years demonstrate the effects that anthropogenic and climate factors are having on water quality and nitrification of the lake. Sewage treatment to septic systems are not appropriate given the cumulative effects that all treatment systems, both private and public, are having on lake health. Conditions in the Cultus watershed warrant upgraded treatment standards to reduce loading and contamination from sewage effluent as one critical form of lake protection. The trend for lake health is very concerning and recent studies from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans signal the need for immediate actions and partnership-type investments to restore ecological values.

The testing we have completed along with the continued sampling that the FVRD is conducting demonstrates elevated water quality concerns. Septic sewer systems around the Lake including all provincial sewer systems in the campgrounds may prove inadequate to accommodate the seasonal spikes in population and sewage loading during the summer: local residents demand higher quality treatment and are willing to partner with the FVRD and BC Parks to meet Class A+ effluent (+ refers to additional removal of phosphorus).

The FVRD has a Liquid Waste Management Plan (LWMP) approved by the Minister of Environment in 2018 for the communities surrounding Cultus Lake. This LWMP identify two Class A+ sewer systems to be developed. One for the northside of the lake (Sunnyside Camp ground, Cultus Lake Park Board, Rachel Place, Soowahlie lands, and BC Parks Entrance Bay and Clear Creek) and one for the southside (Lindell Beach, Aquadel, Happy Trails, and BC Parks Parks Maple Bay). The communities affected in the North Side system have come together and are working collectively to partner in a Class A+ system. The system will be built to accommodate BC Parks.

There is a new Waste Water Treatment Plant slated to be completed at the south side of the Lake which would serve the new Aquadel subdivision. However, the plant does not have capacity to accommodate Lindell Beach, Happy Trails, and BC Parks in the future. Additional field will be required to dispose treated effluent and based on a feasibility study that was completed by FVRD indicates that an active partnership of BC Parks for disposal fields would be beneficial for all parties. Without the active partnership of BC Parks this process remains stalled and opportunities to share resources reduce costs and improve lake health are being jeopardized by the lack of working collectively.

DISCUSSION

A partnership between FVRD and BC Parks will reduce public health risks for lake water quality and will restore ecological values by implementing an expanded service area, and to commit (as a partnership) to provide a fair share of the cost, including monies, land or similar contributions, to facilitate and fund the implementation of a community service operated by the FVRD.

COST

No cost to FVRD

COMMENTS BY:

Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services

Reviewed and supported. Any future service area expansion to include BC Parks will allow for a greater connection base for which costs can be spread over.

Jennifer Kinneman, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Reviewed and supported. This MOU establishes a formal written commitment from the Province to support Cultus Lake health and future contributions toward public infrastructure.