

**REPORT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 2022**

SUBJECT **Capital Regional District Climate Action – 2021 Annual Report**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To present the Capital Regional District's (CRD) 2021 Climate Action Annual Report, which identifies progress toward the CRD's Climate Action Strategy.

BACKGROUND

The CRD has a strong history of climate action and remains committed to addressing climate change within its own operations and at the regional level. The CRD signed the BC Climate Action Charter in 2007, established a target to reduce regional greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 61% by 2038, from a base year of 2007 in the Regional Growth Strategy, and declared a climate emergency in 2019.

In 2021, the Board approved a renewed CRD Climate Action Strategy and five-year action plan. The Strategy provides direction for how the CRD, under its service mandates, will show leadership on climate action, both for the CRD's corporate operations and for its community focused services. The CRD has committed to annually reporting on the progress toward achieving its climate action goals.

Found in Appendix A, the 2021 Climate Action Annual Report provides a summary of all 2021 activities and several annual indicators used to track progress of the CRD Climate Action Strategy. Multiple CRD services contributed to corporate and regional climate goals. Some of the key highlights include:

- renewed the CRD's Climate Action Strategy based on a multi-stakeholder engagement process
- developed a new Solid Waste Management Plan and advanced the Hartland Landfill renewable natural gas utilization project
- conducted research and design of a Capital Region Residential Energy Retrofit Program
- completed a regional greenhouse gas inventory for the region and its local governments
- supported climate action training in the elementary schools across the region
- work on the regional trail network continued, including the creation of 13 km of uninterrupted trail between Langford and Victoria on the E&N Rail Trail
- updated emergency response plans that address heat waves, drought and extreme weather events based on learnings from the 2021 season
- planned and hosted invasive species best practices training workshops to help build municipal staff and partner capacity
- advanced various efforts to transition the CRD's fleet to low emission vehicles, including e-bikes

The Annual Report also includes a report card that compiles self-reported progress metrics from staff responsible for advancing each of the Strategy's 127 sub-actions. These metrics were used

to produce a status measure for several informative categories, such as overall action plan progress, corporate and community-focused actions, and the six goal areas of the strategy. This systematic evaluation provides an indication of where focused efforts need to be made or increased to achieve targeted actions and outcomes within the Strategy. The overall status for the 2021 year was calculated as 'opportunity for improvement', meaning 50%-75% of the yearly target of actions were progressed as envisioned within the Strategy's five-year action plan. The Annual Report also includes a list of both corporate-focused and regional indicators that provide additional information of trends relevant to the organization, as well as broader regional climate action progress. These indicators will be updated annually and will include additional metrics related to the forthcoming regional energy retrofit and electric vehicle charging programs in the future.

IMPLICATIONS

Environmental & Climate Implications

In 2021, the CRD completed a new regional emissions inventory and report for the 2020 calendar year, building on a 2018 inventory. This followed the internationally recognized Global Protocol Community-Scale GHG Inventories BASIC+ Framework. The 2020 inventory indicated the capital region emits approximately 1.8 million tonnes of CO₂e annually. This represents a 9.8% reduction from 2007 levels and a 5.2% reduction from 2018. These reductions are largely associated with the decrease in transportation-related emissions due to the early 2020 COVID-19 pandemic response. Emissions associated with buildings increased 8.1% in 2020 relative to 2018. This increase is related to increased natural gas use and the provincial energy emissions factor being adjusted to account for imported electricity. The total per capita GHG emissions has decreased by 24%, which speaks to the efforts by the CRD and regional local governments to reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions despite significant regional growth.

In 2021, CRD operations produced 3,834 tonnes of CO₂e, with 1,301 tonnes associated with the corporate fleet and 2,533 tonnes coming from facilities and infrastructure. This represents a 19% increase from 2020 and 28% from the baseline level of emissions from 2007. An increase was expected in 2021 related to the Mcloughlin Point Wastewater Treatment Plant coming online. If excluding the increase from the treatment plant, corporate emissions in 2021 still increased by 6.6% above the previous year. This was influenced by the CRD's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 protocols increased the amount of fresh air coming into buildings, which required more energy and fossil fuels to heat. Also, the number of people per vehicle was limited, presumably increasing the number of individual vehicle trips. GHG emissions associated with Hartland Landfill and Capital Region Housing Corporation are not included in this total, as they are excluded from the provincial reporting framework.

Regardless of GHG emission reductions today, the capital region will continue to experience the impacts of climate change now and into the future. In 2021, the region experienced an unprecedented heat wave and heavy rains and flooding. The CRD and regional partners must work to reduce vulnerability in our communities and adapt to a changing climate by improving how we anticipate, respond to and recover from both extreme weather events and more gradual changes occurring over time. Climate adaptation planning and implementation will be a key aspect of future service delivery.

Intergovernmental Implications

Under Bylaw No. 3510, the CRD established a Climate Action service in 2009 with a regional collaboration mandate to directly support the organization and local governments in reaching mitigation and adaptation targets, policies and actions. The service hosts two inter-municipal networks, closely works with local government staff, senior governments, utilities and other stakeholders to identify other climate action opportunities and advance initiatives in collaboration.

To implement key initiatives within the renewed CRD Climate Action Strategy, the establishing bylaw for the maximum requisition limit for the CRD Climate Action and Adaptation service had to be raised. As such, in late 2021 and early 2022, staff embarked on a process to receive the consent of 2/3 of the participating area municipalities and electoral areas, and approval by the Inspector of Municipalities, as required by the Local Government Act. In early 2022, the CRD Board adopted Bylaw No. 4468, which amends the annual requisition of the regional climate action and adaptation service (Bylaw No. 3510).

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) includes a target to reduce GHG emissions by 61% by 2038, from a base year of 2007. The CRD climate action activities completed in 2021 align with the principles of the RGS.

Social Implications

Equity is one of the guiding principles within the Climate Action Strategy. This means that in the implementation of the Climate Action Strategy, staff will work to ensure that actions are inclusive and accessible to residents across the region, and particularly support those that are most vulnerable to the impacts to climate change.

Financial Implications

In 2021, the Climate Action service operated on an annual budget of approximately \$694,000, which included three full-time employees and one two-year, full-time term position (co-funded by BC Hydro Sustainable Communities) that was renewed in late 2021. In addition, the corporation provided an annual stipend of \$100,000 toward a fund to support key corporate-focused climate action planning activities. The program's core budget is provided through an annual requisition from all of the municipalities and electoral areas, and supplemental funding from corporate services.

The program also relies on external grants and partnerships to undertake corporate and community climate action programming. In 2021, external sources accounted for approximately \$340,000 in additional funding to support staffing and completion of key projects. Staff also submitted several grant applications for an additional \$727,000 in funds to execute several projects, starting in 2022.

Service Delivery Implications

To achieve priorities within the Climate Action Strategy, in 2021, the Board approved an increase in staff and program delivery dollars through the 2022 service planning process.

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

The CRD embedded the climate emergency declaration and leadership intentions to greatly accelerate GHG emissions reductions in the 2019-2022 CRD Board priorities. In addition to the three Board priorities related to climate change, the 2019-2022 CRD Corporate Plan includes 11 additional initiatives related to climate action.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

The climate actions completed align with the CRD's Solid Waste Management Plan, Regional Transportation Plan, Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan, and Regional Parks Strategic Plan.

CONCLUSION

The CRD's 2021 Climate Action Annual Report outlines actions the CRD has undertaken to advance its new Climate Action Strategy, Board priorities, and commitments as a signatory to the BC Climate Action Charter over the past year. Overall, in 2021, the CRD progressed on several climate action initiatives, and has identified where focused efforts need to be made or increased to achieve targeted actions and outcomes. With the recent approval of the CRD's 2022 financial plan, new efforts will focus on advancing regional programs related to residential energy retrofits and electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and corporate energy management in the coming year.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

Submitted by:	Nikki Elliott, Manager, Climate Action Programs
Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P.Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Capital Regional District 2021 Climate Action Annual Report