

July 4th, 2022

To: Ted Robbins, General Manager of Integrated Water Services, CRD

From: Water Advisory Council

Re: Response to the 2022 CRD Water Master Plan

The Water Advisory Committee (the Committee) recognizes the privilege to review and comment on the 2022 Water Master Plan (the Plan), recognizing the last opportunity was 28 years earlier. Looking back on the 1994 plan it is clear the role these long-term plans play in the directions taken by the utility to support the strategic goals of the region, and continued supply of safe drinking water.

Overall, the Plan is comprehensive and the data and analyses supporting the conclusions are well presented. The Committee supports the recommended approach and the Plan overall. While extremely expensive, the Plan is reasonable due diligence to increase resiliency and redundancy in our regional water supply and is supported by the committee. As the Plan outlines, we recognize that more advanced science and better modelling tools at our disposal will provide us a more mature understanding of the various implications of climate change, population growth, seismic risks, and evolving health protection regulations and guidelines over the next 30 years.

The need for filtration in the future is inevitable and tying in the additional source waters of the Leech, collecting cooler water from a North Intake, and designing balancing storage on the treated distribution to avoid fluctuations in peak flow all work together. Following through on the 1994 recommendation for an east-west connector makes sense, though the Committee believes when that time comes that a close review of population growth of Sooke and the potential changes to the Regional Growth Strategy be considered. The resiliency that comes from the upgraded and redundant transmission lines from Goldstream, raw water, and treated water systems are also supported.

Regarding climate modeling predictions, the Committee recommends utilizing an adaptive management approach to the Plan, where additional climate data is evaluated on a regular basis to re-assess if the predicted conditions, including potential impacts on water demands and quality, hold true over the years and need to be adjusted. Further, if different watersheds need to be used concurrently to meet water demands, it is recommended that monitoring and modeling for this potential use be incorporated into an adaptive management plan. The Committee also supports the recommended watershed improvement measures and management practices that will help buffer and improve water quality over time.

There are a variety of concerns the Committee has identified with the Plan. Firstly, the Committee feels population growth in the region has been underrepresented and hence some items will need to come online sooner than later. Secondly, the Plan was absent on any reference to engagement with First Nation communities and how this Plan will affect them. Thirdly, the Committee recommends differentiating between 'de-generative' water use vs. 'regenerative' water use; applying a one water approach where different departments (Integrated Water Services, Wastewater, Stormwater) develop integrated policies and programs to better reuse water. With this significant investment in our regional water supply, we should consider how we want to invest that water back into our region.

Specifically, to the water treatment component of the Plan, the Committee has concerns that process water usage in filtration is underestimated, as well, the wastewater from filtration was not addressed in the report. The Committee also recommends that agricultural water use in the Plan be highlighted given agricultural water usage occurs when water reserves are lowest and agricultural consumption may surpass population growth over time given the effects of climate change.

Lastly, regarding the public engagement piece of the Plan, the Committee feels that the in-person public engagement forums are useful and would also support additional public engagement tools such as a video presentation. The committee also thinks it would be valuable for each distribution commission to have the opportunity to provide input. For further consideration, the Committee suggests including a water literacy component into the Plan, or supporting the Plan to help inform and encourage the public and all associated stakeholders to re-evaluate local water systems and water usage.

In summary the Water Advisory Committee generally supports the 2022 Water Master Plan. After addressing the comments and concerns highlighted above, the Committee would recommend that the Regional Water Supply Commission support the plan and advise this of the CRD board.

The WAC has prepared a second response document sent alongside this initial response highlighting various comments in further detail regarding the Water Master Plan.