Making a difference...together

REPORT TO REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY COMMISSION
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JULY 16, 2025

SUBJECT **2026 Service Delivery – Staffing Requirements**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To report back on the five-year staffing requirements for meeting the commitments outlined in the 2025 Strategic Plan and advise on the implications of a 2026 staffing freeze on service delivery and project timelines.

BACKGROUND

At the March 12, 2025, Capital Regional District (CRD) Board meeting, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) informed the Board that staff had been directed to pause all new staffing requests for 2026, unless directed otherwise by the CRD Board or a sub-regional or local Commission. This decision was in response to challenging economic conditions and in recognition of the significant number of staffing requests approved for 2025. This pause will allow the organization to focus on filling current vacancies and hiring the 61.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) regular and Term positions already approved for 2025, before reassessing staffing capacity in the future.

On April 16, 2025, the Regional Water Supply Commission (Commission) passed the following notice of motion: "*That staff be directed to report back on the 5-year staffing requirements for meeting the commitments outlined in the 2025 Strategic Plan and advise the implications of a 2026 staffing freeze on service delivery and project timelines*".

At the July 17, 2024, Commission meeting, staff presented the draft 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan). The Strategic Plan outlines 11 priorities and proposes short-, medium- and long-term actions to be implemented in the next five to eight years to advance the commitments identified. The actions span all aspects of service delivery including operations and capital delivery, demand management, asset management, public engagement, First Nations engagement and watershed protection. Though many of these identified actions will be supported by existing resources, the full extent of the effort goes beyond existing capacity in certain areas. An excerpt from the Staff Establishment Chart (SEC) is provided in Appendix A. Table 1 outlines the proposed five-year staffing needs to meet the commitments outlined in the Regional Water Supply Strategic plan, while Table 2 highlights projected staffing needs, however there is insufficient information at this time to define the scope of the roles. The staffing forecast will need to be reviewed each year as the scope of the actions are refined and demands of the service evolve.

As part of the annual service planning process, each proposed initiative is documented in an Initiative Business Case (IBC) and summaries of these initiatives are presented to the CRD Board in the fall for approval. The summaries for the Regional Water Supply-funded IBCs, which include new proposed positions (FTEs) aligned with the Strategic Plan objectives, are included in Appendix B.

Initiatives Planned for 2026

The following provides further details on the key programs that have staffing implications in 2026.

The impact of deferring the staffing plans associated with these programs in 2026 is highlighted in the Service Delivery Implications section, further down in this report.

2a-2.3 Master Plan Program: The Master Plan Program outlines the need for additional staff to advance the planning and implementation of 21 major projects recommended by the 2022 Regional Water Supply Master Plan (Master Plan). These projects are critical to improving the resiliency of the Regional Water Supply system and providing sufficient drinking water to support the growing region and climate change adaptation. The proposed phased staffing plan includes:

2026 (4 FTEs)	***Senior Project Manager*** *(Infrastructure Planning and Engineering)* – Required to undertake the planning for the Master Plan projects – i.e. Filtration Siting study, Environment Assessment, Archaeological Assessment, First Nations engagement.
	Operations Supervisor**:** *(Water Operations)* – Supports Master Plan and capital projects by providing operational input through planning, design, and construction. Ensures integration, operability, and coordination with engineering teams.
	First Nations Liaison *(First Nations Relations, Corporate Services)* – Supports the upcoming Master Plan projects and the required engagement with local First Nations. This role will also support various actions identified in the Strategic Plan related to the management and access to the watershed. These initiatives were identified during the Strategic Plan First Nations consultation as being of particular interest to various First Nations with Traditional Territory in the Watershed.
	Paralegal *(Legal Services & Risk Management, Corporate Services)* – Assist with development and review of contract terms and contract template updates to respond to shifting market and project needs for the Master Plan projects.
2027 (1 FTEs)	***Project Engineer*** *(Infrastructure Planning and Engineering)* – Required to support the planning required for the Master Plan projects – i.e. Filtration Siting study, Environment Assessment, Archaeological Assessment, First Nations engagement.
2028 (1 FTEs)	***Senior Project Manager*** *(Infrastructure Planning and Engineering)* – Required to lead growing program of projects related to the Master Plan.

2b-2.6 Operations Coordinator (RWS/JDF): The Strategic Plan outlines IWS' commitment to providing reliable high-quality drinking water through efficient and effective operations. The ongoing operation and maintenance of our system is foundational to meeting those commitments. In the last five to 10 years, Operational Supervisors and Team Leads responsible for the Regional Water Supply and Juan de Fuca Water Distribution systems have been increasingly spending more time on regulatory and administrative responsibilities. These tasks include preparing safety documentation, acting as contractor coordinators, managing permitting processing, and tracking budgets.

To improve efficiency, increase the effectiveness of operations, and allow the Supervisor and Team Lead positions to spend more time in the field supporting and developing their teams, a new Operations Coordinator position has been proposed. This position would also provide additional capacity to liaise with engineering specialists on planning and capital project implementation, which will improve the likelihood of success on capital works.

2026 (0.5 FTEs)	Operations Coordinator: *(Water Operations)* Required to reduce regulatory and operational risk by managing administrative aspects of key operational compliance components such as contractor oversight, permitting, and safety documentation. This role will support Supervisors and Team Leads by handling budget tracking, permit processes, and contract administration. This position will be shared with the Juan de Fuca Water Distribution Service, if implemented each service would fund 50% of the position.

2b-1.1 Dam Safety Program: The Dam Safety Program aims to create a dedicated Dam Safety section within the Infrastructure Planning and Engineering division to manage dam safety risks proactively. The program will address the challenges of maintaining 23 water supply dams, ensuring compliance with the Dam Safety Regulation, and improving the resiliency of these critical assets. This initiative began in 2024 with the addition of the role listed below, which were approved in previous planning cycles and have been filled:

2024 (2 FTEs)	***Manager, Dam Safety*** *(Infrastructure Planning and Engineering)*
	Team Lead *(Water Infrastructure Operations)*
2025 (3 FTEs)	***Project Engineer – Dam Safety Regulatory Compliance*** *(Infrastructure Planning and Engineering)*
	Project Engineer - Dam Surveillance and Hydrology *(Infrastructure Planning and Engineering)*
	Dam Operator (*Water Infrastructure Operations)*

To ensure regulatory compliance, address the growing list of dam-related deficiencies and undertake the ongoing operational activities, the CRD needs to continue to build the necessary in-house expertise and capacity. This capacity development is being proposed through additional staffing in 2026 and 2027.

2026 (2 FTEs)	***Project Engineer*** *(Corporate Capital Delivery Services)*
	Project Engineer *(Infrastructure Planning and Engineering)*
2027 (1 FTE)	***Technologist*** *(Infrastructure Planning and Engineering)*

Ongoing management of our dams is critical to meeting the commitments outlined in the Strategic Plan, particularly the actions outlined in commitment 3 “to provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure”.

The Infrastructure and Water Services (IWS) department is proposing to add two new Project Engineers in 2026 to increase capacity to deliver the following Dam Safety Program projects and initiatives:

1. Improving dam operations, maintenance, and surveillance and adapting to climate change – supporting the needed improvements to the operation, maintenance, and surveillance of the IWS dams in order to adapt to climate change;

2. Completing required engineering analysis and design work for seismic and flood resiliency, and instrumentation improvements – resolving dam safety issues through capital studies focussed on engineering analysis, action plans, and multi-phase design projects to build seismic and flood resiliency, and automate instrumentation systems;

3. Supporting construction of dam safety rehabilitation projects – providing dam safety expertise during tendering, construction, and commissioning of complex dam safety rehabilitation projects;

4. Managing an increasing volume of data – as IWS is working towards automating collection of dam performance data, and increase warning time of any dam safety incident, there is a growing need to manage and analyze larger datasets;

5. Adapting to increasing regulatory oversight in B.C. – increasing capacity to adapt to changing regulatory oversight of dams in B.C. In 2025, the B.C. Dam Safety Office released new guidance and requirements needed to conduct dam safety improvements;

6. Building capacity to engage with First Nations – Dams and reservoirs often have significant cultural and historical significance for First Nations communities. Newly released legislation, such as the *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* includes new requirements for consultation and cooperation with First Nations governing bodies in order to gain acceptance of dam emergency plans;

7. Building public awareness of the Dam Safety Program - the CRD has recently added a public Dam Safety Program webpage to start building public awareness about the program. The CRD is considering a targeted communication plan for all property owners within each dam inundation zone; and

8. Building staff expertise through dam emergency training and exercising – Increasing the training and exercising around emergency preparedness and response is considered by experts as an essential part of an effective Dam Safety Management System.

2b-2.9 Reliability Engineers/Performance Optimization: The Reliability Engineers/ Performance Optimization initiative is dedicated to enhancing asset performance and system reliability within the Corporate Asset & Maintenance Management Division. The initiative supports key actions in the Corporate Asset Management Strategy, including condition and criticality assessments and structured data capture programs. The initiative directly supports actions in the Strategic Plan under Commitment 3 and Priority 1 “to make evidence-based and community-responsive infrastructure decisions to ensure reliable system performance and sustainability”. The proposed staffing plan includes:

2026 (1 FTE)	***Reliability Engineer*** *(Corporate Asset and Maintenance Management)* – Required to establish a dedicated reliability function to optimize asset performance and mitigate asset risks, ensuring dependable service delivery and strategic maintenance and capital replacement planning. This function collaborates with operations and engineering teams to integrate reliability insights into decision-making for capital projects.

This role is foundational to establishing a reliability function that uses data to drive maintenance and capital decisions, leading to efficiency and optimization within the service. The role will work to decrease reactive maintenance demands and a shift to more proactive maintenance and sustainable budgets.

Initiatives Planned for Future Years (2027-2029)

In addition to the initiatives listed above that have staffing implications in 2026, the following six initiatives have staffing implications in 2027 or beyond:

2027 (2 FTE)	2a-5.2 Equipment/Watershed Operator (1 FTE, Watershed Protection)
	2a-5.3 Seasonal Watershed Protection (0.75 FTE, Watershed Protection)
	2b-2.7 Contract Support Service (0.25, FTE shared with other services)
2028 (2.75 FTE)	2a-5.3 Seasonal Watershed Protection (0.75 FTE, Watershed Protection)
	2a-5.4 Forest Management Plan Implementation (1 FTE, Watershed Protection)
	2b-2.5 Utility Operator (1 FTE, Water Operations)
2029 (1.6 FTE)	2a-5.3 Seasonal Watershed Protection (0.6 FTE, Watershed Protection)
	2a-5.5 Forest Hydrology Technician (1 FTE, Watershed Protection)

Descriptions for these initiatives have been included in Appendix B.

Projected Future Initiatives

This report summarizes the staffing requirements to achieve the commitments of the Strategic Plan based on the information currently available. Within the Strategic Plan, there are longer-term initiatives that have not yet been fully scoped, and additional information will be required to determine if existing resources can be optimized to undertake these initiatives or if additional skills or resources will be required. In order to fulfill the Commission's request and present our best projection of the staff required to meet commitments of the Strategic Plan, possible future initiatives have been identified in Appendix A, Table 2. However, there is insufficient information available at this time to confirm the need or scope these roles.

NEXT STEPS

The 2026 Service Planning process began in March 2025. To align with the staffing pause, several initiatives originally planned for or deferred to 2026 were postponed. Following the Regional Water Supply Commission's motion of April 16, 2025, staff evaluated initiatives with staffing implications and reviewed potential downstream service implications. These initiatives were phased over a four-year period (2026-2029) and costed, in alignment with the Commission's interest in understanding the implementation path for the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan and Master Plan. The proposed initiatives were subsequently reviewed by both the IWS leadership and the ELT. If the Commission wishes to proceed with any initiatives requiring staffing in 2026, a motion should be recommended for consideration by the CRD Board. The provisional budget will be presented to the Committee of the Whole in October 2025.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

The proposed staffing additions in support of the Strategic Plan reflect an estimated incremental cost increase of $1,202,400 in 2026, based on approved IBCs. These costs represent only new FTEs planned for hire in 2026 and are apportioned between operating and capital budgets.
A high-level estimate of projected salaries and associated costs for 2026 is summarized in Table

1. These figures include both ongoing and one-time costs, covering FTEs hired directly within IWS as well as FTEs hired in other services areas in support of the strategic plan whose costs will be recovered through internal allocation to the Regional Water Supply service.

Table 1:

Cost Distribution by IBC	2026
2024 IBC: 2b-1.1 Dam Safety Program (2 FTE)	310,900
2026 IBC: 2a-2.3 Master Plan Program (4 FTE)	689,000
2026 IBC: 2b-2.6 Operations Coordinator (0.5 FTE)	80,000
2026 IBC: 2b-2.9 Reliability Engineers (1 FTE)	122,500
Total Cost Increase	**$ 1,202,400**

These costs will be integrated into both capital and operating budgets. The operating portion represents a 3.8% increase in total ongoing operating expenditure compared to 2025. The capital portion amounts to approximately 0.4% of the 2025 capital budget. Funding will be sourced through a combination of water sales revenue and MFA debt financing, with the intent to support rate stability and long-term financial sustainability.

A breakdown of projected funding sources is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2:

Funding Breakdown	2026
Operating Budget (Water sales revenue)	742,700
Capital Budget (Water sales revenue & debt)	459,700
Total Funding	**$ 1,202,400**

Environmental & Climate Action

Advancing the actions identified in the Strategic Plan, which include moving forward with the implementation of the Master Plan, directly supports the CRD's Climate Action Strategy by embedding climate resilience and environmental stewardship into the long-term planning and operation of the region's water system. The Strategic Plan emphasizes the need to protect and adapt the watershed and critical water infrastructure in response to increasing climate variability, including more extreme weather events, prolonged droughts, and wildfire risks. By prioritizing risk-based infrastructure investment, these plans align with and operationalize the CRD's broader climate mitigation and adaptation goals.

Key projects such as the addition of water filtration and a second deep intake in the Sooke Lake Reservoir are proactive climate adaptation measures. Filtration will strengthen the system's ability to maintain water quality in the face of increased turbidity events tied to severe storms, wildfire runoff, and ecological shifts—events that are projected to become more frequent and severe with climate change. Similarly, a second deep intake improves system redundancy and operational flexibility, enabling a more stable supply under changing seasonal patterns and potential water quality disruptions. Together, these investments are not just technical upgrades—they are foundational climate adaptation tools that reinforce the CRD's commitment to delivering safe, reliable drinking water in an increasingly uncertain environmental future.

First Nations Reconciliation

The Strategic Plan directly supports the CRD Board's 2023–2026 Priority of "strong relationships with First Nations based on trust and mutual respect, partnerships, and working together on

shared goals" by advancing tangible, ongoing actions that build stronger relationships with First Nations and reflect the region's commitment to shared stewardship. The Plan recognizes that the lands and waters within the Regional Water Supply Area lie within the traditional territories of numerous First Nations, and commits to working collaboratively with them to protect, manage, and access these critical areas. This approach is in alignment with the Board's objective to "foster strong relationships with First Nations" and to "invite, respect and incorporate Indigenous leadership and traditional knowledge to enhance initiatives and strategies".

The proposed addition of a First Nations Liaison position in 2026 supports the delivery of the Strategic Plan and the Board's commitments. This role will directly support the implementation of key projects identified in the Master Plan, many of which require thoughtful and ongoing engagement with Nations whose territories intersect the watershed. Beyond project-level engagement, the First Nations Liaison will help advance several actions in the Strategic Plan related to land access, cultural use, and Indigenous-led monitoring and stewardship—areas highlighted as priorities during the Plan's First Nations consultation process. This dedicated position ensures that the CRD has the internal capacity to support respectful, responsive, and relationship-based engagement, helping to embed reconciliation into both policy and day-to-day practice.

Service Delivery Implications

The service delivery implications of deferring the implementation of the 2026 initiatives are outlined below.

2a-2.3 Master Plan Program: The infrastructure investments outlined in the 2022 Master Plan ensure IWS continues to meet the commitments made in the Strategic Plan while adapting to the needs of the growing population, climate adaptation and improved seismic resiliency. If these positions are deferred to a future year, this will ultimately impact the planning efforts required to move forward with the implementation of the Master Plan and will delay realizing the goal of improving the overall resiliency of the Regional Water Supply system.

Details of some of the specific planning project that would be impacted by a deferral are listed below:

1. Filtration Plant Planning and Preliminary Design – includes initial studies such as:
    - Project definition study outlining the project's purpose, scope, and objectives including integration with other system components and review of current and future technologies.
    - Filtration Plant Siting Study confirming the proposed location of the filtration plant
    - Filtration Plant Pilot Study to confirm proposed treatment efficiency.
    - Other preliminary engineering studies such as Geotechnical, Environmental and Archaeological assessment.
    - Public and First Nations Engagement Strategies

2. Deep Northern Intake and Sooke Lake Pump Station Planning and Conceptual Design – includes initial studies such as:
    - Project definition study outlining the project's purpose, scope, and objectives including integration with other system components and review of current and future technologies (including floating intake versus fixed, tunneled versus overland etc.).
    - Deep Northern Intake Siting Study confirming the proposed location of the Intake based on reservoir circulation and water quality.
    - Other preliminary engineering studies such as Geotechnical, Environmental, and

archaeological assessments; and,
- Public and First Nations Engagement Strategies.

3. Preliminary Planning for a Transmission Main from Sooke Lake Pump Station to Head Tank – Undertake the Preliminary planning and route analysis of a second intake and raw water transmission main pumped to the Head Tank to add redundancy to the existing single southern intake, allow access to deeper, high-quality water and allow for further drawdown of the Sooke Lake Reservoir to increase supply.

4. Preliminary Planning for a Gravity Main from Sooke Lake to Head Tank – Undertake the Preliminary planning and route analysis of a third raw water main extending between the Sooke Lake Dam and the Head Tank to increase capacity, improve redundancy and ensure service continuation in the event of a natural disaster or failure.

5. Preliminary Planning for the Goldstream Reservoir Connector Transmission Main – Undertake the Preliminary planning and route analysis of a piped connection between Goldstream Lake Reservoir and the proposed Filtration Plant to protect the water quality of the secondary water supply for use during emergencies, Kapoor Tunnel shut down, and eventually allow Kapoor Tunnel redundancy and increased raw water transmission capacity.

2b-2.6 Operations Coordinator (RWS/JDF): Operational input and oversight is required to ensure that the capital investments meet operational needs and are practical, maintainable and cost-effective systems in the long term. Currently this is supported by existing operational staff but results in deferral of operational tasks when demand exceeds existing capacity. By dedicating an Operations Supervisor to this role, they can provide a needed link between design and operations, without impacting the day-to-day operational demands. In addition to supporting the projects above this position will also support several large in-stream projects, such as the Mount Tolmie Tank Improvement, the replacement of high-risk Concrete Cylinder Pipe transmission mains, and the high pressuring of Main No.1 that require additional engineering support.

Deferring the Operations Coordinator position will further strain the capacity of the Supervisors and Team Leads, increasing the risk of delays in permit processing and regulatory submissions related to required operational and maintenance activities, ultimately impacting project timelines and operational productivity. In addition, it will limit supervisors' field oversight and increase risk of safety incidents or operational non-compliance.

2b-1.1 Dam Safety Program: Continuing to review and add to the internal resources of the Dam Safety team in a phased approach is essential to maintaining regulatory compliance, resolving the many safety issues, and continually improving the program over time. If there is delay with adding the two FTEs in 2026, progress will be slowed in implementing the projects and initiatives described in the Background, which will increase dam safety and regulatory risks. Specifically, current resources will continue to be prioritized to rehabilitating the "Extreme" consequence Sooke Lake Dam, but IWS will not be able to complete the required engineering analysis, design, and construction related to seismic and instrumentation improvements at multiple "Very High" and "High" consequence dams, as currently planned. Additionally, there will be less capability to support construction of planned dam safety rehabilitation projects, such as rehabilitating concrete outlet structures at the "High" consequence Goldstream Dam and Butchart Dam No.1, currently needing repairs.

2b-2.9 Reliability Engineers/Performance Optimization: Delaying the implementation of the Reliability Engineer role will postpone the establishment of a dedicated reliability function for the

Regional Water Supply service. As a result, operational decision-making will continue to rely on existing staff, potentially affecting efficiency and long-term system optimization.

CONCLUSION

This report outlines the five-year staffing requirements needed to support the implementation of the 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan and provides information on the potential implications of a new staffing request pause in 2026. The proposed positions address anticipated gaps in capacity related to project planning and delivery, dam safety, operations support, asset reliability, and engagement with First Nations.

Delaying the addition of these positions may impact timelines for initiating major capital projects identified in the Master Plan, reduce capacity for operational oversight, and limit the ability to meet evolving regulatory and engagement requirements. These implications have been identified based on current service needs, resourcing levels, and the projected scope of work.

This phased staffing plan is intended to align with strategic priorities and provide the internal capacity needed to support ongoing service delivery, infrastructure planning, and regulatory compliance over the next five years.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Submitted by:	Alicia Fraser, P. Eng., General Manager, Infrastructure and Water Services
Concurrence:	Varinia Somosan, CPA, CGA, Acting Chief Financial Officer
Concurrence:	Ted Robbins, B. Sc., C. Tech., Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

Appendix A: 2025 Staff Establishment Chart Excerpt
Appendix B: Summary of Initiative Business Cases for FTEs in 2026