

**REPORT TO REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY COMMISSION
MEETING OF JULY 15, 2026**

SUBJECT **Environmental Monitoring Access Agreement – W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council Society**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To seek approval of an agreement that provides access to the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council Society (W̱LC) Nations for environmental monitoring in the Goldstream watershed of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area (GVWSA).

BACKGROUND

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board, through its Board Priorities, provides direction to build strong relationships with First Nations based on trust and mutual respect, partnerships and working together on shared goals. The CRD Corporate Plan calls on the CRD to seek out and invite opportunities for Indigenous leadership and knowledge to inform and transform approaches to taking care of land and water across CRD service delivery areas.

The GVWSA is located within the traditional territories of several First Nations, including the W̱LC Nations, currently W̱JOLELP (Tsartlip First Nation) and W̱SIKEM (Tseycum First Nation).

The W̱LC operates a Local Government Program that is mandated to promote respect for W̱SÁNEĆ culture, traditional practices and language through collaboration with local governments that operate in W̱SÁNEĆ territory. Part of promoting respect for W̱SÁNEĆ culture and traditional practices includes supporting opportunities for W̱SÁNEĆ people to reconnect with the land within W̱SÁNEĆ territory.

The W̱LC has requested access to the Goldstream watershed for their Local Government Program members, employees and volunteers to conduct environmental monitoring within W̱LC territory.

CRD staff drafted, and the W̱LC has reviewed, the Environmental Monitoring Access Agreement (Agreement), attached as Appendix A. The W̱LC Board is also considering the agreement for approval at their meeting July 15, 2026.

Key points of the Agreement include the following:

- Environmental monitoring is defined as observing, measuring, recording, sampling but not otherwise consuming, removing, disturbing or harming organic or inorganic natural resources (Sections E and 3).
- CRD will provide access (keys to gates) for W̱LC Local Government Program members and employees for access during daylight hours (Section 2 and Schedule A); volunteers may accompany oriented members and employees (Schedule A).
- The Agreement is initially for three years (Section 8).
- W̱LC and CRD would like to share environmental information and will sign separate data access agreements (Section 10).

- WLC must maintain insurance to protect themselves and CRD for their Local Government Program to operate in the GVWSA (Section 17 and Schedule B).
- If access is found to cause damage, impact water quality or operations, the access activity must stop and terms to review and remedy or terminate the agreement are included (Section 18).

For transparency, a letter has been sent to all other First Nations with territory in the Goldstream watershed informing them that we are negotiating this access agreement and providing assurance that this agreement does not preclude any other Nation from entering into similar or other agreements with the CRD.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

1. That access to the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area for the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council Society be approved; and
2. That the General Manager Infrastructure & Water Services be authorized to finalize, and the Regional Water Supply Commission Chair be authorized to execute, the Environmental Monitoring Access Agreement with the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council Society, attached as Appendix A.

Alternative 2

That staff report back to the Commission with additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

The proposed Agreement aligns with the:

- Board Priority to build strong relationships with First Nations based on trust and mutual respect, partnerships and working together on shared goals.
- Board Priority to hear from First Nations how they would like the CRD to approach reconciliation.
- CRD Corporate Plan to seek out and invite opportunities for Indigenous leadership and knowledge to inform and transform approaches to taking care of land and water across CRD service delivery areas.
- Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan to explore opportunities for First Nation guardian programs to conduct environmental monitoring in their territories.

Environment & Climate Action

The data gained through WLC monitoring program will contribute to broader GVWSA environmental stewardship. In addition, the relationship with WLC over time will likely contribute toward knowledge sharing opportunities, which will help CRD to manage the GVWSA lands in a way that is informed by Indigenous traditional knowledge.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

A presence of the WLC Local Government Program employees and members in the GVWSA

provides an important visible element of inclusion of First Nations on the GVWSA lands both for the Nations and the CRD workforce.

Financial Implications / Service Delivery Implications

The Agreement may require the CRD to provide access and basic worker safety checks during business hours which can be incorporated into current watershed operations without additional cost or impact on service delivery.

First Nations / Intergovernmental Implications

The proposed Agreement facilitates relationship-building and sharing of GVWSA environmental knowledge and data with W̱LC. W̱LC has not had a presence on the GVWSA lands in recent years and this Agreement offers an opportunity to begin a relationship that could incrementally lead to greater involvement in management of the GVWSA lands.

The CRD has one other environmental monitoring access agreement for the GVWSA with MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat Nation) signed in 2024. This Agreement contains very similar terms and conditions.

CONCLUSION

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board provides direction to build strong relationships with First Nations based on trust and mutual respect, partnerships and working together on shared goals. The proposed Environmental Monitoring Access Agreement facilitates W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council Society (W̱LC) presence and monitoring in their territory, provides opportunity for the CRD to learn from the W̱LC Local Government Program employees and members to enhance management of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area, and represents an opportunity to build relationships that may have lasting positive impact.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That access to the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area for the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council Society be approved; and
2. That the General Manager Infrastructure & Water Services be authorized to finalize, and the Regional Water Supply Commission Chair be authorized to execute, the Environmental Monitoring Access Agreement with the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council Society, attached as Appendix A.

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ATTACHMENT(S)

Appendix A: Environmental Monitoring Access Agreement