



**REPORT TO REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY COMMISSION
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JULY 20, 2022**

SUBJECT **Summary of Feedback - 2022 Regional Water Supply Master Plan**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To present a summary of the public and stakeholder engagement activities conducted to gather feedback on the 2022 Regional Water Supply Master Plan for the Regional Water Supply Commission's consideration in endorsing the Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Regional Water Supply Commission (Commission) received the 2022 Regional Water Supply Master Plan (Master Plan) at its May 18, 2022 meeting and directed staff to seek public feedback on the Master Plan through the Capital Regional District (CRD) website public engagement portal and report back to the Commission. The CRD Board received the Master Plan at its June 8, 2022 meeting.

Public Engagement Summary

The CRD's digital engagement site (GetInvolved.crd.bc.ca) was used to share details of the Master Plan and invite feedback between June 9 and July 6, 2022. Comments were collected using an online form and through the water@crd.bc.ca email.

During the feedback period, the site was visited 753 times resulting in three levels of participation:

1. Aware: 383 participants visited at least one page
2. Informed: 157 participants downloaded documents such as the Master Plan executive summary, and visited multiple pages
3. Engaged: 22 participants shared comments or asked questions

The feedback is provided verbatim in the attached Public Engagement Report (Appendix A).

There were some general themes that emerged from the feedback:

1. There is general support for the Master Plan including adding filtration to the water treatment process.
2. There is a need to consider future water demand necessary to support agriculture and local food security.
3. There are some concerns about the financial implications of the Master Plan and water rate structures.
4. There are some local interests and concerns:
 - a. environmental and social benefits of Smith Hill Reservoir
 - b. construction related environmental and social impacts
 - c. need to consider extending water service area/infrastructure to areas that are currently not serviced as ground water sources become less reliable
5. There is a need to consider how the Master Plan impacts First Nations and their water supply needs.

Social media was also used to raise awareness of the Master Plan, promote the engagement site, and invite the public to provide their feedback. In total, Facebook posts reached 12,352 users with 328 engagement site link clicks and Twitter posts resulted in 837 impressions, with 32 engagement site link clicks.

First Nations Engagement

The CRD Board has stated its commitment to engage First Nations communities respectfully and appropriately in regional plans, strategies, decision making and shared interests. Staff engaged directly with First Nations, by sending individual letters to 16 Nations across southern Vancouver Island, whose traditional territories overlap the CRD (sample letter included as Appendix B).

Nations were invited to advise the CRD of their interests in relation to the Master Plan. CRD staff also provided an on-line overview and information session on the Master Plan for First Nations in June. Although the CRD has not received written responses from First Nations to date, given the timeframe for engagement and acknowledging the other engagement and referral demands on First Nations communities, the CRD does not consider the response reflective of the interests and concerns of the Nations. The CRD will be conducting more and specific engagement with First Nations on a project-by-project basis as each project proceeds through further study and design phases.

Water Advisory Committee Feedback

The Master Plan was presented to the Water Advisory Committee (Committee) on May 13, 2022, and staff responded to initial questions and comments regarding the Plan. The Committee then met without staff in June to discuss the Master Plan. The Committee provided a written submission (Appendix C) summarizing its comments and concerns. From the submission, the Committee states, *“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.”*

The Committee did identify some concerns as follows:

Population growth projections – *“The Committee feels population growth in the region has been underrepresented and hence some items will need to come online sooner than later.”* For the Master Plan planning horizon, a 1.25% annual population growth rate was used, resulting in a projected population in the service area of 569,000 by 2050. This population projection is in alignment with the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) population projections. Although, the planning horizon for the RGS is 2038, at which time the population for the Region is estimated to be 478,500. Staff will continue to review actual population and future population growth rates every five years moving forward. If the population and water demand estimates vary from the Master Plan estimates, staff will re-evaluate the timing of projects required to meet the service area water demand and make recommendations to the Commission to adjust the capital plan accordingly.

First Nations engagement – *“The Plan was absent on any reference to engagement with First Nation communities and how this Plan will affect them.”* This is addressed above. As the Commission is aware, a new approach to First Nations water servicing is in the early stages of implementation.

Degenerative water use vs. regenerative water use – *“The Committee recommends differentiating between ‘degenerative water use vs. ‘regenerative’ water use; applying a one water approach where different departments (water, wastewater, stormwater) develop integrated policies and programs to better reuse water.”* The primary purpose of the Master Plan was to determine the potable water supply needs for the Greater Victoria area to 2050. When there is more interest in using recycled water for non-potable purposes, (such as agriculture, and irrigation for landscape, parks and golf courses, or larger scale grey water re-use in the residential and commercial sectors), and there is a willingness to invest in the construction of non-potable water treatment, storage and distribution infrastructure, then staff can evaluate the potential reduction in ‘potable’ water demand for these types of uses. CRD staff continue to monitor guidelines and criteria for the beneficial use of recycled water established in other parts of North America and potential policy implications for the Region.

Filtration plant process water usage and treatment of process water – *“The Committee has concerns that process water usage in filtration is underestimated, as well, the wastewater from filtration was not addressed in the report.”* This concern, along with other technical concerns form the majority of the comments are outlined in the Committee’s detailed submission (Appendix D). Given the nature of the document, the Master Plan did not consider this level of design detail, which will result from further detailed study and design for each of the projects.

Agricultural water use – *“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.”* As noted in the Master Plan, agricultural water demand currently accounts for approximately 3% of the total annual water demand for the service. This has remained fairly constant for many years. Staff will continue to monitor actual and projected agricultural water demand and adjust the total annual water demand to reflect any demand shifts. The Agricultural Water Rate Study is currently underway, and depending on the outcomes of this study, agricultural water demand may change in the future due to rates and rate applicability.

Public engagement – *“The Committee feels that the in-person public engagement forums are useful and would also support additional public engagement tools such as video presentation.”* As noted in the May staff report, the CRD is now using the CRD website’s digital public engagement site as the primary engagement tool to share engagement materials and receive feedback on key initiatives. As noted above, the Master Plan engagement site received 753 visits. For comparison, when staff conducted the five in-person public open houses as part of the public engagement plan for the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan in 2017, there were 45 attendees in total.

The Committee closed their submission by noting, *“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.”*

Media

A media release highlighting the Master Plan purpose, timelines, planned projects and costs, and opportunity for public input, was issued on June 9, 2022. The Master Plan received local television, radio and print media coverage through the month of June. In most cases, the coverage included a reference to the public engagement site and opportunity for public input.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That the Regional Water Supply Commission:

1. Approve the Regional Water Supply 2022 Master Plan; and,
2. Recommend that the Capital Regional District Board approve the Regional Water Supply 2022 Master Plan.

Alternative 2

That the 2022 Master Plan be referred back to staff for more information.

IMPLICATIONS

Intergovernmental Implications

The proposed projects in the 2022 Master Plan are located in traditional territories of local First Nations and some projects are likely located in areas of cultural significance to Nations. The CRD is committed to engaging with First Nations on the projects in the early phases of project development on a project-by-project basis.

The Regional Water Supply Service provides drinking water service to 13 municipalities and one Electoral Area across Greater Victoria, via the water distribution systems operated by the municipal and sub-regional service providers, who in turn provide drinking water to eight First Nations. All local and First Nations governments will be engaged as the plan is implemented over time. The plan will inform how municipal and sub-regional service providers plan for the future needs of their water distribution systems, particularly with respect to system capacity, infrastructure improvements and financial sustainability.

Financial Implications

The financial implications of implementing the Master Plan over the next 30 years were detailed in the May staff report to the Commission. Specific financial implications will be assessed by the Commission and CRD Board through the annual and five-year service planning and budget processes moving forward.

Future Plan Updates

As noted in the May report, the 2022 Master Plan recommendations and proposed infrastructure will continue to be reassessed, on a five-to-10-year cycle, to consider new information and latest trends in population growth and water demand, and evaluate risks to the service, including climate change and water quality. Current technology and construction costs will also be evaluated. As a result of this continuous and adaptive process, the 2022 Master Plan implementation will be adjusted moving forward, to reflect any changes in assumptions or conditions.

CONCLUSION

The Regional Water Supply Commission received the Regional Water Supply 2022 Master Plan in May and directed staff to seek public feedback on the Plan through the CRD website public engagement portal and report back to the Commission. The CRD Board received the Master Plan at its June meeting. The engagement period has now closed, and the public feedback has been provided for the Commission's consideration. The CRD provided information about the Master Plan to 16 First Nations and will be conducting more and specific engagement with First Nations

on a project-by-project basis as each project proceeds through further study and design phases. The Water Advisory Committee reviewed the Master Plan and has provided written feedback and indicated support for the recommended approach and Master Plan overall. Staff are now seeking the Commission’s endorsement of the Master Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Regional Water Supply Commission:

1. Approve the Regional Water Supply 2022 Master Plan; and,
2. Recommend that the Capital Regional District Board approve the Regional Water Supply 2022 Master Plan.

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Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: 2022 Master Plan Public Engagement Report
- Appendix B: Sample letter to First Nations Chief and Council
- Appendix C: Water Advisory Committee: Response to the 2022 Water Master Plan
- Appendix D: Water Advisory Committee: Additional Detailed Comments on the 2022 Water Master Plan