

**REPORT TO PARKS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26, 2019**

SUBJECT Invasive Species Service

ISSUE

To seek direction for the ongoing support for the invasive species program for the purpose of coordinating invasive species management and education in the Capital Region.

BACKGROUND

In October 2017, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board supported the regional coordination of invasive species management (education, outreach and coordination) through the Climate Action Service. The Board approved a part-time (0.5 FTE) coordinator funded through existing Regional Parks, Environmental Protection and Integrated Water Services budgets for 2018 and 2019. This program originated at the request of an informal inter-municipal partnership (Capital Region Invasive Species Partnership [CRISP]) that had been working together on the management of high priority invasive plants species since 2010. The CRD Board directed staff to review and propose service level change post 2019 for consideration in the 2020-2023 service plans.

The current regional invasive species program focuses on the education, outreach and coordination of management efforts for high priority invasive plants. Through 2018, the CRD hired a coordinator, established and branded the regional program, chaired and coordinated the intergovernmental working group, developed educational material and obtained program funding from the Province. Staff provided a summary of 2018 program accomplishments and 2019 highlights for the CRD Invasive Species Program at the March 27, 2019 Parks & Environment Committee meeting.

ALTERNATIVES

That the Parks & Environment Committee recommend to the CRD Board:

Alternative 1

That the current administration and scope of the service for the purposes of coordinating invasive species management and education in the region be confirmed as part of the 2020 service planning process.

Alternative 2

That the CRD Board direct staff to explore the feasibility of including goose management into an expanded regional invasive species service that would be funded by requisition.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Services with large land holds (e.g., Regional Parks, drinking watershed lands), and all other landowners in the region and province, are responsible for invasive species (plants) management on their respective properties. The management of these species requires a coordinated effort. For several years, local governments, the CRD and other major landowners have met through the Capital Region Invasive Species Partnership to share information, coordinate efforts and align with research and initiatives developed by senior levels of government.

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

High priority invasive plants species (e.g., Knotweed, Hogweed, Shiny geranium, etc.) currently present significant social, environmental and economic stressors. They have the potential to overwhelm ecosystems, pose human health risks, and damage public, institutional and private property and infrastructure. Climate change will likely accelerate these risks over the coming decades through accelerated landscape changes. The program is focused only on plants and does not include invasive animal species or hyper-abundant regional species such as Canada geese.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There is an advisory group to the service that has representation from all local governments, as well as some First Nations and key regional stakeholders. This process facilitates communication and coordination across the region. The CRD also coordinates a shared invasive species treatment and removal contractor service for high priority invasive species to interested CRD departments and local governments on a fee-for-service basis. Some larger municipalities have trained staff and do their own work but still share data and tracking through the regional service and the inter-municipal working group. This has been a very successful approach and saves staff at all levels time and effort and ensures a consistent approach to treatment and follow-up monitoring across the region.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Board approved the support for a part-time (0.5 FTE) invasive species coordinator for 2018-2019. The operating budget was provisionally funded through a shared funding model that uses existing budgets – Regional Parks, Environmental Protection and Integrated Water Services – for a total of \$95,000 (approximately \$75,000 labour and \$20,000 program budget). In addition, the CRD was the successful recipient of a provincial grant of \$32,000 to support educational and outreach efforts for 2019-2021.

Confirmation of ongoing service levels to support service plans will be brought forward as part of the service plan process, as the current commitment was to 2019.

CONCLUSION

The CRD established a provisional regional service for invasive species that focusses on high priority invasive plants that aligns with the environmental protection, sustainable agriculture,

harbours and watershed protection, climate change and biodiversity priorities of the region. The current service is focused on plant species and is authorized through the Climate Action service. Climate change will likely accelerate the concerns associated with these invasive species, including associated increased environmental, social and economic costs. Continuation of the service will ensure regional coordination of education, coordination, and actions for this significant issue.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Parks & Environment Committee recommend to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the current administration and scope of the service for the purposes of coordinating invasive species management and education in the region be confirmed as part of the 2020 service planning process.

Submitted by:	Glenn Harris, Ph.D., R.P.Bio., Senior Manager, Environmental Protection
Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P.Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

GH:ss