Area G OCP Implementation

The Regional District is consulting with residents in a renewed effort to support sustainable development goals for Area G. All residents are invited to comment on four new proposed zoning bylaws aimed at supporting the 2008 Area G Official Community Plan for development and land-use in Dashwood, French Creek, and San Pareil. In September the RDN Board approved first and second reading of the bylaws and directed staff to initiate public consultations.

Since 2008 the RDN has been working to introduce zoning consistent with the OCP, while addressing public concerns. Following strong opposition from residents in 2008 the RDN abandoned an earlier OCP implementation effort, Bylaw 500.346, and is now proposing four new bylaws instead. The revised legislation takes into account residents’ concerns over a variety of issues. In particular, the RDN is no longer proposing to increase minimum parcel sizes, and has amended the proposed bylaws to ensure that new minimum site area requirements only apply to new lots.

By revising the previous bylaw and separating it into four new bylaws, it’s hoped that residents will have an opportunity to better respond to specific concerns, while allowing other less contentious issues to proceed in a more efficient manner.

In October the RDN mailed a newsletter to Area G residents to provide an update on the new proposed bylaws, and earlier this month the RDN held a series of public open houses to facilitate discussions. Residents who would like to comment further on the proposed changes are invited to contact staff at the phone numbers below. Written submissions can also be made anytime to gkeller@rdn.bc.ca.

Following first and second reading the four new bylaws were referred to other agencies for comment. Prior to adoption they must be presented to residents at a public hearing and read a third time by the Board. The bylaws must also be forwarded to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure for approval.

More information on the proposed bylaws and the Area G implementation process is available at www.rdn.bc.ca, or by calling 250-954-3798, 250-390-6510, or toll free 1-877-607-4111.

C.W. Young Side Channel

A salmon rearing channel situated largely within Englishman River Regional Park and Conservation Area (ERRPCA) is making a strong contribution to the local fishery. Recently released data collected in 2009 by Fisheries and Oceans Canada credits the 4.1 kilometre park side channel for 42 per cent of the 85,467 coho that left the Englishman last year.

In spring 2009 researchers captured and marked juvenile coho in the C.W Young side channel, then caught a large sample of coho in the lower river for comparison. The resulting 42 per cent marked fish is the largest percentage ever credited to a constructed side channel habitat in the Englishman River.

The C.W. Young side channel in ERRPCA was originally constructed in 1992 and tripled in size in 2007. The side channel now covers 8.3 hectares on the northwest side of the river. Pre-expansion studies conducted from 1998 – 2005 showed the channel contributed between 7.7 and 22 per cent of coho entering the ocean.

As a flow-controlled man-made stream that diverges and later reconnects with the river approximately 5 kilometres from the estuary, the C.W. Young Channel provides juvenile salmon with year-round rearing habitat, as well as refuge during winter floods and summer low flow periods. Unlike other salmon, coho require one year in fresh water before they migrate out to sea.

This flyer is intended for residents in RDN Electoral Area G. Overlapping postal routes could result in some municipal and adjacent electoral area residents receiving this newsletter. We hope you find the content of interest.
Fisheries and Oceans is currently analyzing data from the 2010 coho count carried out in the C.W. Young Side Channel.

The Green Bin Program
Local households are starting to send less waste to the landfill with the region-wide Green Bin Program now underway. The Regional District thanks all residents for making the transition to the new program, and your patience as new green bins, collection schedules, and Curbside Collection Guides have been delivered to more than 32,000 single family homes in all seven Electoral Areas, Qualicum Beach, Parksville, Lantzville, and Nanaimo. If your home now has a green bin and weekly food waste collection you may have seen that it can help reduce garbage disposal by about half.

All single family homes in Electoral Areas starting the Green Bin Program have new 15 month curbside collection schedules for food waste collection, garbage, and recycling. Comprehensive information on the Green Bin Program, such as acceptable materials for disposal, and tips for green bin storage, is included in your Curbside Collection Guide. You can also find the latest information on RDN garbage and recycling in the Guide.

Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Our Communities
The need to address climate change is now officially recognized in the Electoral Area G Official Community Plan. In May the Regional District fulfilled one of its pledges as a signatory of the 2007 Climate Action Charter by adding targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to the Area G OCP and five other OCPs for rural areas throughout the region. Area G is now committed to a 33 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2007 levels by 2020, and an 80 per cent reduction from 2007 levels by 2050. The RDN is one of 177 local governments throughout BC that have signed the Climate Action Charter, pledging also to achieve carbon neutral operations by 2012.

So how can local governments use community planning to help reverse climate change? The first step is to identify the main causes of climate change in our communities – the broad information we have tells us that carbon emissions from road transportation account for 60 per cent of local greenhouse gas emissions in the region, while building energy consumption is the second highest contributor. Our new OCP policies encourage more efficient local transport and building construction, compact communities, urban containment, the protection of forest land, and local food production.

The next priority for the RDN is to gather specific data on greenhouse gas emissions in each electoral area, and develop a Community Energy and Emissions Plan. Following the completion of the CEEP rural residents throughout the region will be invited to provide input on more detailed planning policies aimed at reducing the effects of climate change.

Toilet Rebate Program
The Regional District’s Toilet Replacement Rebate Program was very successful this year. The program ended in late August after all 2010 funding was allocated due to high demand. Rebates provided this year for 500 low-flow toilets will reduce water consumption by approximately 12 million litres annually in RDN Electoral Areas.

If you live in an RDN Electoral Area, and are thinking of replacing your toilet with a new water-efficient model, remember to check back next year for more incentive opportunities. Applications for toilet rebates received after August 25, 2010 will be held on a first-come first-serve basis for processing in 2011, pending approval of a new program by the RDN Board. Staff will provide an update on a variety of drinking water protection initiatives related to the Toilet Rebate Program at the Friends of French Creek Conservation Society Annual General Meeting, Wednesday, November 24, 7pm, at St. Columba Church Hall, 921 Wembley Road. All residents are welcome to attend.