

PUBLIC CONSULTATION SUMMARY REPORT

On the

*Regional District of Nanaimo
Liquid Waste Management Plan Amendment*

*Final
January 2013
File No: 5340-20*



**LIQUID WASTE
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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Background

Laws governing wastewater management in British Columbia require a standard level of wastewater treatment that can be achieved through secondary wastewater treatment or better. Those laws also recognize that it will take time for some treatment facilities, such as the Greater Nanaimo Pollution Control Centre (GNPCC) and the Nanoose Bay Pollution Control Centre (NBPCC), to provide secondary treatment. For that reason, BC's *Environmental Management Act* allows local governments to develop a Liquid Waste Management Plan (LWMP). The LWMP lets local governments establish a reasonable timeframe to develop affordable community-driven solutions for financing and upgrading infrastructure and to meet requirements under the provincial Municipal Wastewater Regulation (MWR). It also helps to define how local governments will recover resources from waste; reduce pollution, including flow entering wastewater infrastructure; and manage stormwater.

Under the Community Charter and *Local Government Act*, a local government must seek electoral approval (i.e. hold a referendum) to borrow for capital works. However, an LWMP gives the public an opportunity to provide input with respect to the development of the LWMP and financing of the proposed projects. Therefore, the *Environmental Management Act* considers the need for electoral approval to be fulfilled if a local government can demonstrate that the public was adequately consulted. There is no mechanism to appeal an LWMP once approved by the Minister of Environment. For those reasons, adequate public participation during plan development is essential.

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) completed its original LWMP in 1997; that plan was approved by the Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks in 1999. The RDN is proposing to amend the LWMP. Meaningful public consultation is a critical component of the amendment. The following sections summarize the RDN's involvement with the community during development of the LWMP amendment. A separate report summarizes progress towards engagement with First Nations communities.

LIQUID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT

Liquid Waste Management Plan Amendment

The RDN produced the Draft LWMP Amendment for public consultation in August 2013 (updated in September 2013).

The draft was produced to generate public feedback on all ten LWMP programs with emphasis on the preferred timeline and level of taxation for secondary treatment upgrades at GNPCC and NBPCC.

The ten LWMP Programs included:

- Public Wastewater Systems Program
- Private Onsite Systems Program
- Source Control Program
- Odour Control Program
- Rainwater Management / Drinking Water & Watershed Protection Program
- Volume Reduction Program
- Inflow & Infiltration Program
- Pollution Control Centres Program
- Resource Recovery Program
- Biosolids Program

Secondary treatment timing options for GNPCC and NBPCC were included in the Pollution Control Centres Program. For GNPCC, the RDN proposed three timing options for completion of secondary treatment: 2016, 2018 and 2019. For NBPCC, the RDN also presented three timing options for completion of secondary treatment: 2020, 2025 and 2030. Technical, Social, Environmental and Economic Implications were provided for each timing option.

Public Consultation Strategy

The RDN Board approved the LWMP Public Consultation Plan in March 2008. It then approved an updated Consultation Plan in July 2013 (Appendix A). The current consultation plan was posted on the RDN website throughout the update process.

Using the updated Consultation Plan as a guide, the RDN created a comprehensive framework to provide a range of opportunities for the RDN public to be informed and participate directly in the LWMP amendment process. Pathways for information distribution and feedback included:

- Engagement through an Advisory Committee
- LWMP Website
- LWMP factsheets
- Distribution of the Draft LWMP Amendment
- Public meetings
- Survey
- Mail-out to Nanoose Bay Service Area residents
- Meetings with other levels of government
- Advertising.

The public was invited to respond in person during public meetings, via phone, and through the survey, email, and standard mail.

REGIONAL LIQUID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The LWMP was updated in consultation with the Regional Liquid Waste Advisory Committee (RLWAC), a committee that fulfills the roles of the technical, local advisory and monitoring committees as described by the Ministry of Environment (MOE) Interim Guidelines for Preparing Liquid Waste Management Plans. The RLWAC includes individuals representing:

- RDN Board of Directors
- Municipal utility managers
- RDN residents
- Local businesses
- First Nations
- environmental organizations (Georgia Strait Alliance)
- Ministry of Environment

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- Vancouver Island Health Authority
- Environment Canada.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada declined the invitation to join the committee.

The RLWAC met on 19 occasions between February 2008 and January 2014 to evaluate options and issues related to wastewater management in the RDN. The RLWAC commented on discussion papers, reports, draft LWMP amendments and other issues as they emerged through the review process. Input from the RLWAC was recorded in the minutes and helped shape the LWMP amendment. The RLWAC enhanced public consultation since the committee includes public representatives and representatives of the RDN Board, who represent their constituents. The public also may observe RLWAC meetings and review the minutes, which are posted on the RDN LMWP website. Discussion Papers and Minutes from the RLWAC are included in Appendices B and E, respectively, of the main LWMP Amendment report (separate cover, submitted concurrently). Letters from RLWAC members (Georgia Strait Alliance and MOE staff) are included in Appendix B.

WEBSITE

The website www.rdnLWMP.ca is a dedicated site to inform the public about the LWMP and amendment process. The website provided copies of the Approved LWMP, Draft Amendment and LWMP Factsheets. It also presented the schedule of public meetings, provided a link to the public survey and contained pages for frequently asked questions and RLWAC agendas, minutes and discussion papers.

FACTSHEETS

RDN staff created a wastewater glossary and LWMP Factsheets to explain the basics of wastewater treatment and to summarize key points of the LWMP Amendment in a user-friendly format. Wastewater Glossary and LWMP Factsheets are included in Appendix C. The Factsheets cover:

- Factsheet 1: Wastewater Services Overview
- Factsheet 2: LWMP Overview
- Factsheet 3: Wastewater Basics for Unsewered Areas
- Factsheet 4: Wastewater Basics for Sewered Areas
- Factsheet 5: What does the LWMP Amendment Mean for Nanaimo and Lantzville Residents with Sewer Service?

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- Factsheet 6: What does the LWMP Amendment Mean for Parksville, Qualicum Beach, French Creek and Area Residents with Sewer Service?
- Factsheet 7: What does the LWMP Amendment Mean for Nanoose Residents with Sewer Service?

Factsheet 5 and 7 outlined the three secondary upgrade timing options for Greater Nanaimo Pollution Control Centre and Nanoose Bay Pollution Control Centre, respectively. The Factsheets included a detailed analysis of the technical, environmental, social, and economic implications of each option.

DRAFT AMENDMENT DISTRIBUTION

Hard copies of the Draft LWMP Amendment were:

- Distributed to all 17 RDN Board of Directors
- Made available to RLWAC
- Available at the RDN Administration office
- Available at 7 Vancouver Island Regional Library branches
- Available at 12 LWMP Public Information Meetings
- Available at 5 SepticSmart workshops.

Additionally, an electronic copy was posted at www.rdnLWMP.ca.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public Information Meetings

Twelve public meetings were held from August to October, 2013. At least one public meeting was held in every municipality and electoral area:

- Electoral Area A, Cedar Community Hall – Monday, September 30
- Electoral Area B, Gabriola Island Agricultural Hall – Thursday, September 26
- Electoral Area C, Extension Community Hall – Monday, August 26
- Electoral Area E, Fairwinds Centre – Monday, September 16
- Electoral Area F, Bradley Centre – Thursday, September 5
- Electoral Area G, Little Qualicum Hall – Thursday, August 29
- Electoral Area G (French Creek), St. Columba Church Hall – Tuesday, October 1
- Electoral Area H, Bowser Legion Hall – Wednesday, August 28
- Nanaimo, Oliver Woods Community Centre – Monday, September 9

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- Lantzville, Lantzville Legion –Thursday, September 12
- Parksville, Parksville Community & Conference Centre – Monday, September 23
- Qualicum Beach, Qualicum Beach Civic Centre – Wednesday, September 25.

These meetings were designed specifically to consult the public on the LWMP Amendment. Meetings lasted two hours on various weeknights and were structured into a half-hour poster review/information session and a 1.5 hour focused question and answer period designed to generate feedback on each of the ten LWMP programs. At least three staff were present at each meeting to answer questions from the public. A total of 116 people attended these meetings. The outline of the question and answer session is summarized in Appendix D.

Open Houses

Annual open houses at the Greater Nanaimo Pollution Control Centre and French Creek Pollution Control Centre during the amendment period provided the public with information on the LWMP and amendment process. More than 640 people attended an Open House between 2008 and 2013.

Other Meetings

The Liquid Waste Management Plan Amendment, Factsheet Series and LWMP surveys were available at five SepticSmart workshops in October and November 2013. A total of 132 people attended the fall 2013 SepticSmart workshops.

RLWAC Meetings

As mentioned above, RLWAC meetings were open to the public and meeting minutes were available on the RDN website.

SURVEY

On August 26, 2013, the RDN launched a community feedback survey. This survey was also made available online on September 5, 2013. The survey was made open to the public until mid-December 2013. In total 122 people responded to the survey. While not statistically significant, online surveys provided a measure of public sentiment. A copy of the survey and survey results are presented in Appendix E.

NANOOSE MAIL-OUT

The Public Information Meeting in Electoral Area E (Nanoose Bay) was held at the Fairwinds Centre on September 16, 2013. Twenty members of the public attended that meeting. A recommendation from that meeting included further communication with residents in the

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Nanose Bay Service Area to relay the important issues covered in the LWMP Amendment. On November 8, 2013, the RDN sent a special mail-out to all homes in the Nanose Bay sewer service area. The mail-out included an informational letter with links to online survey and a request for input as well as Factsheet 7. A copy of the informational letter is included in Appendix F.

MEETINGS WITH OTHER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

Municipal Councils

RDN staff presented the Draft LWMP Amendment to municipal councils during the public consultation period.

Ministry of Environment

Staff met with periodically with MOE staff during the amendment period to discuss recommendations for the LWMP amendment and timeline for wastewater infrastructure upgrades. MOE staff commented on four draft amendments. Letters from MOE staff are included in Appendix B.

RDN Chair and Management Staff also met with the Assistant Deputy Minister of Environment at the Union of British Columbia (UBCM) Convention in September 2013 to discuss the LWMP amendment and timeline for wastewater infrastructure upgrades.

ADVERTISING

To ensure that every household was informed about the LMWP Amendment and Public Consultation, advertising included:

- Information flyers mailed to every household
- 14 paid ads in 8 newspapers
- 4 feature newspaper articles
- Feature article in the Electoral Area Updates
- Poster distribution
- Website presence
 - RDN Homepage and LWMP Website
 - Inclusion in the RDN Get Involved webpage
 - RDN Events Calendar
 - RDN Public Notice
 - Twitter and Facebook updates

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- Municipal websites (District of Lantzville)
- Email notification to 56 residents / business associations¹

In addition, three newspapers featured stories about the LWMP Amendment:

- Nanaimo Daily News, August 26, 2013
- Oceanside Star, September 5, 2013
- Flying Shingle, October 7, 2013.

¹ In particular, the French Creek Residents Association hand delivered 200 flyers and emailed everyone on their email contact list to alert the residents of the public meeting in French Creek on Oct. 1, 2013.

CONSULTATION REACH AND PARTICIPATION

Consultation Reach and Participation

Through the widespread advertising and information campaign, the RDN was able to reach every household within regional boundaries at least once to inform residents of the LWMP amendment.

The total number of public who participated in LWMP events include:

- Open Houses: 640
- Public Meetings: 116
- SepticSmart: 132
- Survey: 122
- Calls/emails: 26

To date, 1,036 people participated directly in LWMP events. Feedback trends and general findings are summarized in the next section.

Trends and General Findings

Feedback trends and general findings are categorized based on which LWMP program they fall under and are summarized below. A detailed summary of feedback is provided in Appendix G.

PUBLIC WASTEWATER SYSTEMS PROGRAM

Program feedback included:

- In areas without sewer, sewer is generally desired where the lots are small. Sewer is not deemed necessary or feasible on large acre properties
- Costs to connect to sewer, should it become available, should be comparable to replacing a septic system (\$20,000-\$30,000)
- The cost to connect to sewer is too expensive for some residents
- Some residents feel they should not have to connect to sewer if their septic system is working.

PRIVATE ONSITE SYSTEMS PROGRAM

Program feedback included:

- Among residents with onsite systems, there is some concern around neighbours with failing onsite systems and the effects on the environment and groundwater
- There is limited desire for the RDN to adopt a regulatory role regarding onsite systems
- There was some desire for the RDN to regulate and limit properties on pump and haul
- There is a broad perception that VIHA does not respond to complaints made regarding failing onsite systems.

SOURCE CONTROL PROGRAM

Program feedback included:

- There was a long list of recommended partners and pollution prevention targets
- Many residents are interested in receiving more education related to source control. Suggested ways to receive the information included columns in the Regional Perspectives, regular newspaper ads, financial incentives, and mailed information.
- A source control program requires bylaw enforcement to be most effective.

TRENDS AND GENERAL FINDINGS

RAINWATER MANAGEMENT / DRINKING WATER & WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM

Program feedback included:

- There was a strong interest in this topic among public meeting participants. There is particular interest in rainwater harvesting, developing building specifications, and erosion control (particularly for steep areas)
- Many residents are concerned about the effect of upstream land use and development and the potential effects on their groundwater and the quality and quantity of water in nearby watercourses.

ODOUR CONTROL PROGRAM

Program feedback included:

- Greater Nanaimo Pollution Control Centre and Duke Point Pollution Control Centre generally do not emit nuisance odours
- Odours from Nanoose Bay Pollution Control Centre are noticeable, but not a nuisance yet
- Odours from French Creek Pollution Control Centre are a significant nuisance to neighboring residents
- When asked to share ideas about tolerable levels of odours, many residents replied that no amount of odours is acceptable in residential areas. Others recognized that there is a significant cost associated with odour control and there must be a balance between investing in odour-controlling infrastructure and dealing with a moderate amount of odours.

VOLUME REDUCTION PROGRAM

Program feedback included:

- There was support for RDN workshops and educational information
- There was a strong interest in, and support for, greywater reuse as a way to conserve water.

INFLOW AND INFILTRATION PROGRAM

Program feedback included:

- Most people were unaware of what inflow and infiltration are and the problems they cause
- Most people expressed a willingness to reduce private property inflow and infiltration if they were provided enabling tools such as increased education and financial incentives.

TRENDS AND GENERAL FINDINGS

POLLUTION CONTROL CENTRES PROGRAM

Program feedback regarding the secondary treatment upgrades at Greater Nanaimo Pollution Control Centre and Nanoose Bay Pollution Control Centre varied widely. Feedback trends included:

Secondary Treatment

- Residents appreciate the value of protecting a “shared environment”
- Many residents support an earlier upgrade timeline because:
 - They felt that costs go up the longer you wait due to inflation and the rising costs of construction
 - It is better for the environment
- Many residents support a later upgrade timeline because:
 - It allows more time to secure provincial and federal grant funding
 - It represents the lowest tax increase

Regardless of the date proposed, many residents felt that the project should be completed as soon as provincial and federal grant funding were secured but that support for early upgrade was contingent upon securing grant funding.

Greater Nanaimo Pollution Control Centre

When the RDN population was asked for their preference for timing options for secondary treatment at GNPCC (based on 103 responses):

- 32% preferred Option 1: 2016
- 30% preferred Option 2: 2018
- 38% preferred Option 3: 2019.

While not statistically significant, the average sentiment among all RDN respondents supports secondary treatment at GNPCC by 2018.

Considering the response of only residents who would pay for the project (GNPCC service area) (based on 33 responses):

- 21% preferred Option 1: 2016
- 30% preferred Option 2: 2018
- 49% preferred Option 3: 2019.

The average sentiment among GNPCC service area respondents also supports secondary treatment at GNPCC by 2018.

TRENDS AND GENERAL FINDINGS

Nanoose Bay Pollution Control Centre

When the RDN population was asked for their preference for timing options for secondary treatment at NBPCC (based on 101 responses):

- 40% preferred Option 1: 2020
- 30% preferred Option 2: 2025
- 30% preferred Option 3: 2030.

While not statistically significant, the average sentiment among respondents supports secondary treatment at NBPCC by 2025.

Considering the response of only residents who would pay for the project (NBPCC service area) (based on 35 responses):

- 60% preferred Option 1: 2020
- 11% preferred Option 2: 2025
- 29% preferred Option 3: 2030.

The average sentiment among NBPCC service area respondents supports secondary treatment at NBPCC by 2023.

French Creek Pollution Control Centre

When discussing the expansion plans for French Creek Pollution Control Centre, there was a general concern from French Creek residents that expansion would increase odour problems.

RESOURCE RECOVERY PROGRAM

Program feedback included:

- Most people strongly supported economically viable resource recovery programs in the RDN
- There was support for the potential Hammond Bay Elementary district heating project and others like it.

BIOSOLIDS PROGRAM

Program feedback included:

- Biosolids reuse is a great idea, so long as storage and application areas were kept away from them due to the concern about potential effects on groundwater quality
- Residents were curious about the possibility to generate revenue from the sale of biosolids.

INCORPORATION OF PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Incorporation of Public Feedback

The Draft LWMP Amendment was updated to accommodate feedback from the public. Accommodations are listed under their corresponding program.

PUBLIC WASTEWATER SYSTEMS PROGRAM

This program was updated to improve public awareness of areas which may connect to RDN sewer systems for health and environmental reasons (failing onsite system) and create a guide which walks homeowners through the sewer connection application process.

PRIVATE ONSITE SYSTEMS PROGRAM

The program as proposed meets public expectations and was not changed.

SOURCE CONTROL PROGRAM

For this program, the RDN will continue as planned to review the Source Control Bylaw and consider mechanisms for bylaw enforcement. The RDN will also develop public education material to support initiatives under this program.

RAINWATER MANAGEMENT / DRINKING WATER & WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM

The RDN will continue to implement water education and incentive programs and programs under the Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program. The RDN will implement a new Water Conservation Plan and refine the Water Budget Study to assist in land use and development decisions.

ODOUR CONTROL PROGRAM

The program as proposed meets public expectations and was not changed. This program already considers odour controls upgrades during capital projects.

VOLUME REDUCTION PROGRAM

This program was updated to commit the RDN to working with provincial regulators to provide the RDN public with information around opportunities for greywater reuse, as supported by the BC Building code and provincial regulations.

INCORPORATION OF PUBLIC FEEDBACK

INFLOW AND INFILTRATION PROGRAM

This program was updated to develop public education material to increase awareness around inflow and infiltration. The RDN will also consider providing tools (guidebook and incentives) to enable residents to reduce private property inflow and infiltration.

POLLUTION CONTROL CENTRES PROGRAM

For this program, the proposed secondary treatment dates upgrade dates for GNPCC and NBPCC considered input from the public. As well, the Nanoose Bay service area mail-out was done in response to feedback from the public meeting.

RESOURCE RECOVERY PROGRAM

As supported by public feedback, the RDN commits to completing a Resource Recovery Opportunities Study.

BIOSOLIDS PROGRAM

Develop material to increase awareness of precautions taken to prevent impacts to groundwater from the storage and application of biosolids.

APPENDICES

Appendices

APPENDIX A: UPDATED CONSULTATION PLAN

APPENDIX B: LETTERS FROM THE LIQUID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPENDIX C: WASTEWATER GLOSSARY AND LWMP FACTSHEETS

APPENDIX D: PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION OUTLINE

APPENDIX E: PUBLIC SURVEY AND RESULTS

APPENDIX F: NANOOSE MAIL-OUT LETTER

APPENDIX G: DETAILED SUMMARY OF PUBLIC FEEDBACK