

Regional District of Nanaimo Approved for Six Figure Wildfire Resiliency Grant

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) has been approved for a grant of \$384,960 for Electoral Area Community Wildfire Resiliency Planning. The Community Resiliency Investment FireSmart™ grant, which is funded by the Government of British Columbia and administered by the Union of BC Municipalities, will enable the RDN to develop new Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans (CWRPs) for each of the seven Electoral Areas within the RDN to reduce the risk and impact of wildfires. Development of Fuel Management Prescriptions for the 707 Community Park on Gabriola Island and the RDN Arboretum property (formerly the H.R. MacMillan Grant Ainscough Arboretum) will also be covered by the grant.

“In consideration of the wildfires we have had in the region in recent years, the update to the RDN’s Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) is timely,” said Chair Tyler Brown. “This substantial grant will enable the RDN to replace its CWPPs with sustainable and adaptable CWRPs that ensure effective fire mitigation and response in our region over the long term.”

Developed between 2004 and 2009, updates to the RDN’s CWPPs were identified as a priority in past Operational Plans. With confirmation of the grant, the RDN can now proceed with developing the new CWRPs. A temporary CWRP Coordinator will be hired using a portion of the grant funds to provide the technical expertise, capacity and project management needed. Efficiencies will be achieved by developing the Electoral Area CWRPs under one regional project, thereby avoiding duplication of efforts, and completing the Fuel Management Prescriptions in the same funding stream.

Multiple community stakeholder groups will be engaged including First Nation communities, Municipal partners, Electoral Area fire departments, BC Wildfire, Mosaic Forest Management, Islands Trust and others. Collaboration with key representatives will ensure that the plan reflects local knowledge and expertise and includes achievable actions that can be implemented under a common vision to reduce the intensity and impacts of wildfires and increase community resiliency.

Once complete, the Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans will help shape community plans, promote bylaws, identify high priority areas, and facilitate discussions and cooperation among stakeholders to improve community safety and reduce the risk of property damage.

Based on learnings from previous wildfire seasons in British Columbia and Alberta, the Province of BC developed a new Community Wildfire Resiliency Planning template to replace the Community Wildfire Protection Plans. The new template focuses on the seven FireSmart™ disciplines which proactively identify risks and provide comprehensive actions to mitigate or manage the risks.

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