

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Shoreline assessment underway to determine impact of new weir water levels in Cowichan Lake

DUNCAN, BC – With the completion of a new weir design for Cowichan Lake, a shoreline assessment project is now underway to understand how a raised weir could impact the shoreline of the lake.

The new weir has been designed to be 70cm higher than the existing weir, as per the recommendations of the 2018 Water Use Plan developed in partnership by the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), Cowichan Tribes, the Cowichan Watershed Board and Catalyst Paper. With increased storage capacity, more water can be captured in early spring and released throughout the dry summer and fall months, improving the health of aquatic habitat for fish and vegetation. It is also hoped that storing more water will result in fewer extreme low water events and the reduced need to pump water out of the lake to support base flows of the Cowichan River.

“Our data collection to date is helping us understand the current status of the lakeshore and what types of impacts might happen with increased water storage. and we will be sharing the current mapping information with the public in a virtual presentation this month,” said Leroy Van Wieren, Project Manager for the Weir and Shoreline Assessment project. “The scope of this part of the project is primarily meant to understand potential impacts at the property level, and we hope property owners and anyone else interested in this work will tune in to learn more.”

The [Shoreline Assessment project update presentation](#) will take place on Wednesday, November 17 at 7 p.m. in a virtual format. Anyone interested in attending can visit www.cowichanlakeweir.ca for login and call-in details, or to learn more about this phase of the weir project.

As part of the presentation, the project team will be previewing a ‘Property View Tool’ which will enable property owners to see a map of their property and how different lake levels may affect their property. These levels will include the low-water mark, property title boundaries, existing weir elevation, new weir elevation, average high-water mark, a 1-in-200 year flood line, the present natural boundary. A modelled future natural boundary based on both additional water storage in the spring and summer as well as impacts from climate change is expected to be complete by February 2022.

“This project is a key step in our continuing effort to achieve climate resiliency for the Cowichan watershed,” said Kate Miller, Manager of Environment Services with the Cowichan Valley Regional District. “The low water scenarios we’re experiencing have seen riparian vegetation drying up, reduced fish habitat, and tributaries sitting relatively higher and impacting aquatic access. This project is critical to ensure we are able to meet the community, environmental and economic needs of the future.”

The shoreline assessment is expected to be complete in February 2022, with a final public update to follow. The new weir design and shoreline assessment project is the next step

towards construction of a new weir, which will also require agreement on a water license holder a formal application and approval processes for the new water license holder. If approved, construction funding would be finalized and contracts would be awarded, all of which will take a several years to complete.

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