

## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



April 22, 2020

### Work begins on Cowichan Lake weir design

**DUNCAN, BC** – The design and engineering of a new weir to control water flows in the Cowichan River is now underway.

A contract has been awarded to Stantec Engineering Services to develop the necessary designs, engineering and associated studies that will be required to construct a new weir at Cowichan Lake. The existing weir structure, constructed in the 1950s, is no longer capable of storing enough water to maintain flows in the Cowichan River during increasingly dryer summer and fall months. The project follows many years of study, and will support future grant applications for the necessary funding to construct a new weir.

“On behalf of the project partners, we are all very relieved to see this project come to fruition and reiterate our thanks to our senior governments for their funding support,” said Aaron Stone, Chair of the Cowichan Valley Regional District and Co-Chair of the Cowichan Watershed Board. “As our Cowichan climate becomes increasingly warmer and drier, maintaining adequate river flows in our key watersheds will be critical to the health of our region going forward.”

The project is made possible by a joint provincial/federal grant from the British Columbia Salmon Recovery Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) announced in 2019. The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) is managing the project on behalf of partners Cowichan Tribes, Paper Excellence and the Cowichan Watershed Board. Local resident Leroy Van Wieren has been hired by the CVRD as the project manager. Mr. Van Wieren has extensive experience managing large and complex projects and will be charged with the oversight of the project.

This work is in response to recommendations of the Cowichan Watershed Management Plan (2009) and the Cowichan Water Use Plan (2018) which were developed through collaborative, multi-stakeholder processes. Together these plans address the issues facing the long term health of the Cowichan River system and provide direction on how much water should be stored in Cowichan Lake to maintain appropriate flows in the Cowichan River during increasingly dry conditions.

Design and engineering of a new weir, and removal strategies for the existing structure, are expected to take up to two years with several opportunities for public input. The second phase of the project, to assess any potential impacts of a new weir on the foreshore and properties adjacent to Cowichan Lake, is scheduled to begin in May 2020. These two projects will provide an understanding of the costs and impacts of a new weir and will inform the process for issuing a new water license.

The current COVID-19 pandemic should have little to no impact to the proposed project schedule, as the majority of this work can be coordinated remotely through integrated IT systems. Opportunities for the public to provide input remotely is currently being considered and designed.

To learn more about CVRD Cowichan Lake water supply projects, please visit [www.cvrld.bc.ca/2318/Cowichan-Basin](http://www.cvrld.bc.ca/2318/Cowichan-Basin) or <https://cowichanwup.ca>

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