

## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **CVRD Reviewing Water Supply Options for the Cowichan River**

**March 4, 2015 – Duncan, BC:**

The CVRD is currently reviewing opportunities to maintain adequate water flows on the Cowichan River in response to an increasing frequency of drought conditions in summer and fall months. The impacts of increasingly low summer water levels on Cowichan Lake and the corresponding low flows on the Cowichan River are significant and will result in risks to the environment, the economy and human uses of the river and the lake.

The review is intended to analyze the various options for maintaining adequate water flows in the Cowichan River and to identify the most practical and effective solutions. Options that have been identified in previous studies and technical reports include raising the weir at Cowichan Lake, dredging the upper river, installing pumps or a combination of these measures. The CVRD has until April 15<sup>th</sup> to submit an application to secure federal gas tax funds to undertake any necessary works. In advance of submitting a grant application, the CVRD has been meeting with local stakeholder groups to review the technical aspects of the various water supply options.

"We're looking for a practical, cost effective solution to ensure adequate river flows to the end of the dry season," said CVRD Chair Jon Lefebure. "We're fortunate that the Cowichan River watershed receives an abundant supply of water annually. Our challenge is to maintain that supply during the increasingly dry summer months." The preferred option will form the basis of an application to the Gas Tax Strategic Priorities Fund. With some potential solutions carrying a price tag in the range of \$10M, obtaining funding support from senior levels of government is critical. "This is a chance to significantly reduce the potential tax burden on local residents while ensuring sufficient funds for a high quality, lasting solution" Chair Lefebure states.

Approval of grant funding for this project will allow for detailed design and engineering to be undertaken. Additionally, any increased water storage on Lake Cowichan will require an application to the Province for a water storage license which will involve consultation with stakeholders, the community and affected property owners. Lefebure expressed his desire to engage the community on this process noting, "I understand there are lakefront owners who are understandably concerned about how this might affect their property." Should grant funding be awarded for the project, the CVRD will be meeting with local residents and other stakeholders to listen to concerns, share information and answer questions. "There are some good options available," Lefebure explains, "we just need to make a decision on moving ahead, and do the best we can to protect the long term health of the river."

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