

DATE: March 28, 2024

FILE: 5330-20/SESP

TO: Chair and Members
Sewage Commission
(Comox Valley Sewerage Service
LWMP Steering Committee)

Supported by James Warren
Chief Administrative Officer

J. Warren

FROM: James Warren
Chief Administrative Officer

RE: Sewer Extension South – Final Draft LWMP Addendum

Purpose

To present the final draft Stage 1/2 Liquid Waste Management Plan (LWMP) Addendum report for the Sewer Extension South Project.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the Sewer Extension South LWMP Addendum report, as referenced in Appendix B of the staff report dated March 28, 2024, be approved and submitted for provincial review;

AND FURTHER THAT discussion of potential impacts to groundwater and local stream baseflows resulting from the diversion of water from Electoral Area A septic fields to the regional sewer service be completed and submitted to the Province during the review process for inclusion in the Addendum report.

Executive Summary

A regional approach to wastewater management and environmental protection will benefit the entire Comox Valley and is in alignment with the board's strategic drivers. The Sewer Extension South Project is being developed in cooperation with K'ómoks First Nation (K'ómoks) as a key partner, supports environmental protection of Baynes Sound and sustainable development in Baynes Sound - Denman/Hornby Islands (Electoral Area A), and provides the most cost-effective solution for providing sewer service to the communities of Royston and Union Bay.

Subsequent to the June 2022 Electoral Areas Services Committee and Sewage Commission support for developing the Sewer Extension South Project through an Addendum to the Comox Valley Sewerage Service (CVSS) LWMP, significant progress has been made:

- Sewer Extension South LWMP Addendum Public and Technical Advisory Committees (PACTAC) have been formed.
- A value engineering workshop for the project has been completed, identifying potential options to improve the overall value of the project.
- Six combined PACTAC meetings have been held, covering a considerable quantity of background and technical material, including project cost estimates and financial impacts to homeowners.
- In May 2023, the Sewer Extension South LWMP Addendum Steering Committee endorsed recommendations put forward by the PACTAC, and supported moving forward with next steps in public engagement.
- In June 2023, public engagement activities including a webinar, public open house and Engage Comox Valley project page were implemented.
- Engineering for the project components has been advanced to a preliminary design level with associated Class C cost estimates.
- The draft LWMP Addendum report has been prepared, incorporating feedback from committees and public engagement, and including summaries of project design and cost estimates.
- In December 2023, the draft LWMP Addendum was presented to the Sewer Extension South LWMP and Comox Valley Sewer Service LWMP steering committees, both of which supported moving forward with next steps in public engagement.
- In January 2024, additional public engagement activities, including a webinar and two public open houses, took place.
- The final Environmental Impact Study was completed, including consideration of Phase 1B of the project.
- The final draft LWMP Addendum report was completed, including revisions to reflect the final Environmental Impact Study.
- The final LWMP Addendum PACTAC meeting was held on March 14, 2024, where committee members supported advancing the Addendum report to the CVSS LWMP Steering Committee for approval, but have requested consideration of the hydrological impacts of diversion of water from local septic fields be included in the report prior to it being finalized.

Subject to approval by the SES LWMP Addendum Steering Committee (Electoral Areas Services Committee plus Sewage Commission chair), CVSS LWMP Steering Committee (Sewage Commission plus Electoral Area A director) and Board, the Addendum report will be submitted for provincial review, currently anticipated for May 2024. Staff recommend that the additional discussion of hydrological impacts of diversion of septic water be completed and submitted to the Province during the review process for inclusion in the report.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

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Government and Community Interests Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

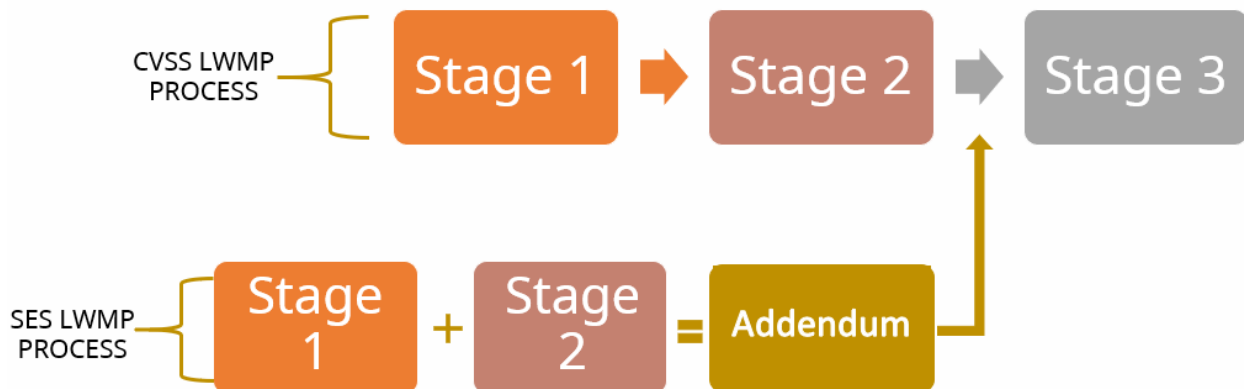
K’ómoks First Nation	✓
Sewer Extension South LWMP Addendum Joint Public and Technical Advisory Committee	✓

Background/Current Situation

Longstanding concern regarding septic systems in the Royston and Union Bay area is a key driver supporting efforts to bring sewer servicing to these communities. The extension of sewer services south is understood to be the most reliable, sustainable and long-term means of wastewater management for this area.

The extension of the CVSS service area boundary to include the south region, the consideration of south wastewater flows in the CVSS Stage 1/2 LWMP process, and historic LWMP efforts in the south all support development of the Sewer Extension South Project through an addendum to the CVSS LWMP. Figure 1 below illustrates how the Sewer Extension South LWMP Addendum fits into the overall CVSS LWMP.

Figure 1: Sewer Extension South Project Concept



The Sewer Extension South Project is envisioned to unfold over several stages, with initial priority for servicing being given to areas with higher dwelling density and higher environmental risk. The initial phase, termed Phase 1A, will provide servicing in the historic core areas of Union Bay and Royston, and establish the

critical collection and conveyance infrastructure to support future expansion to additional portions of the Royston area as well as the Kilmarnock neighborhood, in Phase 1B. The system will also serve Union Bay Estates and K'ómoks First Nation Treaty Settlement Lands, for which development and economic growth will be an important part of reconciliation. The conveyance infrastructure constructed for Phases 1A and 1B will provide initial capacity to support proposed development in the area. Future phases will add additional collection and conveyance capacity as development and population growth unfolds.

Draft LWMP Addendum

Development of the Addendum includes the involvement of public and technical advisory committees, and public and First Nations engagement in accordance with provincial LWMP guidelines. There have been six combined PACTAC meetings, two LWMP Addendum Steering Committee meetings, one CVSS LWMP Steering Committee meeting, a multi-stage public engagement process and ongoing engagement with First Nations.

The input received from the public and technical advisory committees, guidance provided by the steering committee and further input received through public and First Nations engagement has informed the development of the final draft Addendum report, a summary of which is attached as Appendix A, and a link to which is provided in Appendix B. The Addendum report provides background on the future serviced area including population and flow projections, project phasing from the initial phases up to the ultimate full build-out of the system, and details on the forcemain, pump stations and collection systems envisioned to be constructed in Phases 1A and 1B of the project. Changes to the final draft addendum since the first draft addendum was presented last December generally relate to updates made to the Environmental Impact Study to consider both Phases 1A and 1B of the project; the prior draft EIS only included Phase 1A.

The final draft Addendum report was presented for consideration at the March 14 meeting of the LWMP Addendum PACTAC. Committee members supported advancing the Addendum report to the LWMP Addendum and CVSS LWMP steering committees for consideration, and requested additional discussion be included prior to the report being finalized to consider the impacts on groundwater and terrestrial and aquatic habitat resulting from the diversion of water from local septic fields to a sewer system.

Upon approval by the steering committees and Board, the Addendum report will be submitted for provincial review, currently anticipated for May 2024. Staff recommend that the additional discussion on the hydrological impacts of diversion

of septic water be completed and submitted to the Province during the review process to ensure there is no delay to the LWMP schedule.

Submission of the LWMP Addendum report to the province will represent the conclusion of the south region addendum process. In accordance with the terms of reference for the LWMP Addendum Public and Technical Advisory Committees, these committees will be dissolved and combined with the CVSS LWMP advisory committees for Stage 3 of the LWMP process. Electoral Area A resident representatives for the CVSS LWMP PAC were nominated at the final LWMP Addendum PACTAC meeting on March 14, with three primary and three alternate members selected. These new members, alongside representatives from a few additional agencies and stakeholder groups, will join the CVSS LWMP PACTAC at its first Stage 3 meeting in fall 2024.

Options

The following options are available for consideration:

1. Approve the Sewer Extension South LWMP Addendum report for submittal to the Province for review, with additional discussion on potential hydrological impacts resulting from diversion of water from Electoral Area A septic fields, to be completed and submitted to the Province during the review process.
2. Not approve the Sewer Extension South LWMP Addendum report.

Due to the support shown for the Sewer Extension South Project through the extensive consultation process to date, and the request from the PACTAC for the inclusion of additional information relating to hydrological impacts of diversion of water from septic fields to a new sewer system, Option 1 is recommended.

Financial Factors

The Addendum is being funded via the Liquid Waste Management Planning service, function 340, and the Electoral Area A Baynes Sound feasibility studies service, function 151.

External funding for the Sewer Extension South Project will include project partner contributions, the \$30 million Critical Community Infrastructure grant received from the Province of BC in April 2023, approximately \$1.2 million in Community Works Funds, and \$808,500 in Growing Communities Funds allocated to the project. The remainder of project costs will be funded through long-term borrowing, to be recovered via parcel tax from the approximately 460 Royston and Union Bay properties in Phase 1A.

The final draft LWMP Addendum report includes cost estimates for the main project components, reflecting design work completed on the conveyance and collection systems and consideration of value planning recommendations. Internal analysis and review of these estimates, including considerations for additional project risk contingencies, construction cost escalation, internal costs, grant funding and anticipated project partner contributions has resulted in per-connection cost estimate of \$1,200 to \$1,500.

Strategic Considerations - Strategic Drivers								
Fiscal Responsibility	✓	Climate Crisis and Environmental Stewardship and Protection	✓	Community Partnerships	✓	Indigenous Relations	✓	Accessibility, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

A regional approach to wastewater management and environmental protection will benefit the entire Comox Valley and is in alignment with the board’s strategic drivers. The Sewer Extension South Project is being developed in cooperation with K’ómoks as a key partner, supports environmental protection of Baynes Sound and sustainable development in Electoral Area A and provides the most cost-effective solution for providing sewer service to the communities of Royston and Union Bay. Considering this project within the CVSS LWMP process is in alignment with four of the strategic drivers.

Strategic Considerations - Regional Growth Strategy Goals							
Housing	✓	Ecosystems, Natural Areas and Parks	✓	Local economic development	✓	Transportation	✓
Infrastructure	✓	Food Systems	✓	Public Health and Safety	✓	Climate Change	✓

Union Bay is one of the three settlement nodes identified by the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) to accommodate compact forms of development. MG Policy 1B-1 of the RGS states that growth in settlement nodes shall be accommodated through improvements to public infrastructure, including the provision of appropriate sewer services.

The three settlement nodes, settlement expansion areas (including Royston), and a portion of K’ómoks lands are considered in the RGS as Core Settlement Areas. Infrastructure Policy 5D-4 of the RGS states that the majority of growth should be focused in Core Settlement Areas where appropriate sewer servicing exists. Directing growth to these areas alleviates sprawl pressure within the surrounding

rural settlement areas, and ensures that servicing costs will be spread over more users. Growth needs to be planned in accordance with the availability of public servicing and public servicing can be made financially viable by growth when it is directed to the core settlement areas. With or without growth in the settlement expansion areas (i.e. future municipal lands) and settlement nodes, sewage servicing has to be addressed to resolve existing public and environmental health impacts from septic systems.

Intergovernmental Factors

K'ómoks First Nation continues to be a strong project partner with significant current and future land holdings in the area. Regular dialogue continues to occur between the partners in regards to this initiative.

The Sewer Extension South LWMP Addendum Technical Advisory Committee includes representation from the federal and provincial governments, as well as the City of Courtenay and the Town of Comox.

Citizen/Public Relations

Public engagement is a key component of the Sewer Extension South Project. Engagement to date has been guided by a public engagement strategy developed to keep the community informed of project progress and gather feedback on key topics such as service costs and boundaries, service delivery details and the approval process. Consultation activities have included a range of online and in-person opportunities for discussion with the community.

Feedback has also been provided by the Sewer Extension South LWMP Addendum Public Advisory Committee, which includes representation from local residents, as well as several community groups.

Attachments: Appendix A – Final Draft Sewer Extension South LWMP Addendum summary
Appendix B – Final Draft Addendum Report. Please find a link to the PDF below:

<https://ln5.sync.com/dl/bb1881bb0/9fdwjp3d-4kh62qfx-6hey9fmu-58snkq9c>