

Cowichan Basin Water Management Plan



Showcasing Innovation in the Cowichan Basin

'Partnerships and Collaboration -
Moving from Concept to Reality'

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The Cowichan Basin

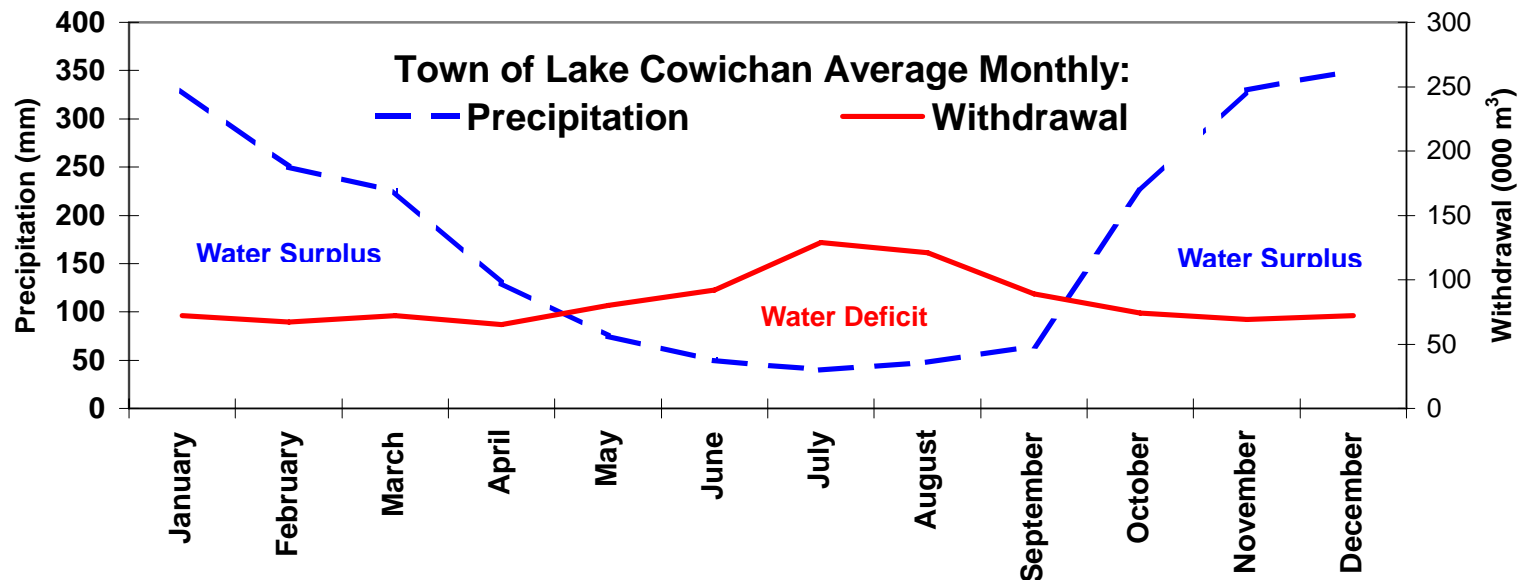


Total Area = 930 km²

Cowichan Lake area = 63 km²

Water Supply and Demand

- Even in average years, water is in limited supply during summer when demand is at its peak



- Large number and variety of water systems
- Few water users quantify annual consumption
- Future demand growth and climate change will increase summer stress on the system

What the supply problem looks like...

Skutz Falls, 2006



Fall



Summer

Impacts of seasonal water shortages

- Health of the Cowichan River is threatened
 - » Loss of 40% of summer habitat (low flows and higher water temperatures)
 - » Reduced water quality (including decreased dilution of treated sewage effluent)
- Operation of Catalyst's Crofton mill is jeopardized
 - » 1,000 jobs = \$117M annual wages, local taxes
- Fish survival and fishery is threatened
 - » Commercial, sport, First Nations ~ \$6-10M/year

Impacts of water shortages (cont.)

- Municipal water supply for Duncan, North Cowichan, and Crofton is affected
- Recharge of aquifers is reduced – long term consequences to agriculture and wells
- Boaters, swimmers, fishermen affected by low river levels
- Residential, commercial growth requires more water and generates more sewage

Is there a water “crisis”?

- In 2003, lake storage was within 5 days of being totally exhausted and mill shutdown
- Without drastic early action to reduce river flows, 2006 could have been ‘the shutdown year’
- In October 2006, spawning Chinook had to be moved by truck due to inadequate river flow
 - » The Chinook escapement was the lowest on record
- Lack of supply will have serious economic, effluent dilution, and ecological consequences

Other water issues identified

- Lack of public voice in water management
- Confusion about hydrology
- Flooding (lake, river, sub-basins)
- Gravel deposition
- Forestry impacts
- Lingering mistrust of water managers
- Lack of “basin thinking”

Why did Partners authorize the Water Management Plan?



- Problems are getting worse
- Recognized need to engage broad interests in water
- Residents want action to protect water
- Move beyond “crisis decision-making”
- Partners agreed that “the time is right”

Purpose of the Water Management Plan

- Develop a plan for water and its use in the Cowichan Basin that:
 - » Has broad public support
 - » Protects the ecological function of the system
 - » Balances water supply and use
 - Today and in the future
 - » Increases the understanding of the Cowichan Basin system and its water issues



Who is involved?



- Partners
 - » CVRD, Cowichan Tribes, DFO, MoE, Catalyst Paper Corporation, Pacific Salmon Commission
- Water Management Forum
 - » 26 people -- varied interests and geographic locations in the Basin
- Consulting team
 - » Led by Westland Resource Group
- The Public
 - » Inform plan content and support implementation

Water Management Forum

- Responsibilities
 - » Represent range of interests
 - » Become deeply involved in project
 - » Information in, information out
 - » Review documents, advise on process
- Members
 - » Local and senior governments, First Nations
 - » Basin residents
 - » Interests
 - Resource interests (fishing, tourism, agriculture)
 - Other interests (community, environment, business)

Public involvement elements

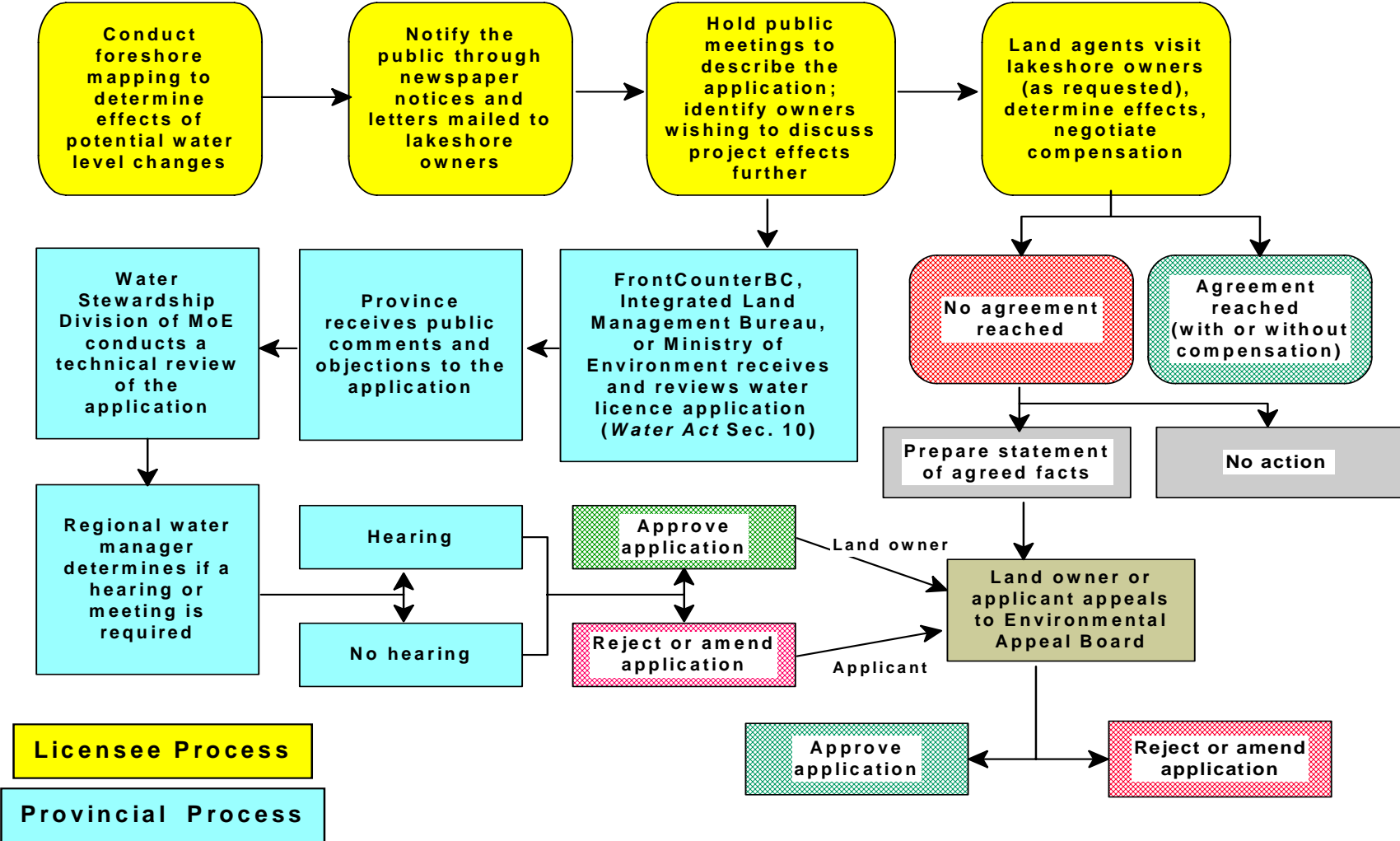
- Contact list of groups and individuals
- Forum meetings and input
- Website (cvrd.bc.ca)
- Media (print, radio, TV, animation)
- Newsletters and response forms
- Mailouts to lakeshore residents
- Open houses, public meetings (June 2005 and January 2007)



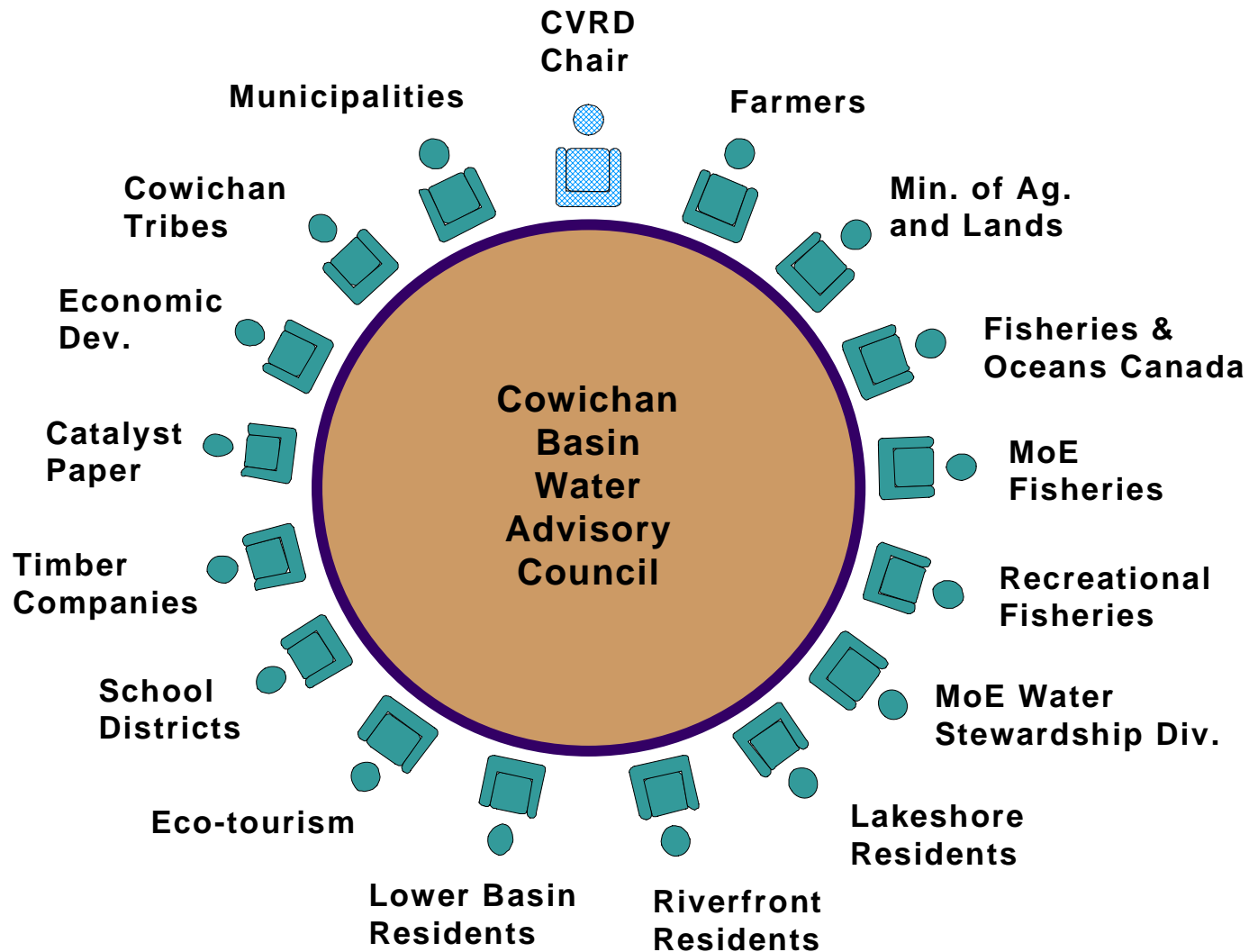
Content of the Plan

- 1 Vision, 6 Goals, 23 Objectives, 89 Actions
- The Six Goals:
 1. Demand management
 2. Increase supply
 3. Protect aquatic ecosystems
 4. Reduce flooding impacts
 5. Research, education, public outreach
 6. Improved water governance

Lakeshore consultation process



CBWAC Membership



Basin-wide benefits of water management

- Responds to public concerns about water
- Increased public voice in water management
- Assured year-round water supply
- Reduced risk to economy and ecosystems
- Protect surface and ground water quality
- Protect recreational potential
- Improved knowledge of water and its use
- Reduced waste, more equitable pricing



If the Plan is NOT implemented...

- More frequent “crisis” decision making
- No change to present “gaps and overlaps”
- Limited role for public and CVRD in water decisions
 - » No local forum to deal with water issues
- No climate change response
- Potential loss of Cowichan fish stocks



More risks of not having a plan

- Continued uneven water management
 - » Pricing, metering, conservation
- Risks to economic activity
- Worsening effluent dilution in dry seasons
- No coordinated flood management
- Disappoint the majority who support the Plan



How will the Plan be implemented?

- Partners adopt the Plan
- Create CBWAC
 - » Determine mandate and operating rules
 - » Secure funding
- Identify licence applicants
- Initiate licence application process
- Begin implementing other WMP elements
- Public needs to support Plan implementation and advocate Basin Thinking



Advancing the Plan

Until the plan is adopted and implemented, there will be no benefits of coordinated, comprehensive water management in the Cowichan Basin

Update!

Regional Board Decision (September 12, 2007)

Endorse the Plan, but...

- No to raising the Weir
- No to revision of the Rule Band
- No to structure of Advisory Council

Thank You!