

## Community Conversation Summary

May 13, 2025, Sahltam Firehall

### Welcome and Territorial Acknowledgement

#### Introductions

- Roundtable introductions -23 participants including:
  - Susan Kaufmann co-chair Area E Advisory Planning Commission (APC provides advice to the Board on land use applications and policy for Area E);
  - Mike Lees, Laurel Circle and Bernice Timmer, Area E Parks Advisory Commission members (the Parks Commission provides advice to Board on community parks budget and any land use related parks matters); and
  - Kristi Koons, Alternate Director for Area E.

#### Topics Discussed:

- **Agriculture** – how is CVRD updating its policies and regulations to better support Agriculture?
  - ALR land is primarily governed by the Agriculture Land Commission however local governments may make additional regulations related to the use of land, buildings and other structures
  - Modernized Official Community Plan for the Electoral Areas is nearing completion. The MOCP lays out the land use policies and there is a specific chapter on Agriculture. You can find the draft MOCP at <https://www.planyourcowichan.ca/the-modernized-official-community-plan-mocp> Mark your calendars for a **Public Information Meeting May 27, Cowichan Community Centre Heritage Hall** in preparation for a Public Hearing on the MOCP Bylaw 4373 in the fall.
  - Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw is an initiative to update the zoning regulations based on the MOCP. That work is underway and the agriculture community was engaged last fall to provide input. There will be two rounds of APC meetings:
    - June/July 2025 for Agricultural, Forest, Parks, Institutional and Water zones.
    - January/February 2026 for Residential, commercial and Industrial zones.and 4 main public engagement events will occur in January/February (Q1) 2026. There will be surveys and website updates to engage the public at that time.
- **Trails for Connectivity** – how can we ensure old rail beds are converted to trails for the community?

- CVRD Regional Parks and Trails looks after the Cowichan Valley Trail and the Regional Parks and Trails Master Plan is under review; expect additional public consultation in the fall.
  - Area E Parks and Trails Master Plan also prioritizes trails. Unfortunately the haul road rail bed that runs from the estuary to Glenora has been privatized or returned to First Nations so that opportunity has already been lost; the Sunrise to Barnjum trail is in the 2025 budget.
  - Island Corridor rail bed is currently under discussion with First Nations who have a significant interest in the future of that corridor.
- **3-stream Waste Collection**
    - Strong opposition to mandatory organic collection was voiced by a number of attendees.
    - Rationale for 3-stream is to reduce the amount and therefore cost of garbage that we ship to the US as we do not have landfill capacity available to us on the island. For the program to work efficiently and effectively it must be mandatory for all residences in electoral areas.
- **Cell Tower Planned for Tipperary Road** - Telus reports that the tower will be operational by the end of 2025 or early 2026.
- **Government Waste/Taxes**
    - CVRD delivers about 180 services ranging from user specific fire, water and sewer systems to EA area specific street lighting and community parks to electoral area wide waste collection, regional parks and trails and recreation facilities as examples. Each service exists based on the approval of the electorate and the cost to deliver each service is budgeted separately.
    - What you pay depends on where you live and the list of services you receive.
    - That list of services combined with your property assessment determines how much you pay.
    - The Board works hard to minimize costs for each service during budgeting. There has historically been inadequate funding set aside for asset maintenance and many of our facilities and other infrastructure are aging and need maintenance or replacement. The only real way to reduce taxes is to stop delivering one or more services.
- **Emergency Management Cowichan** – check out the website <https://emcowichan.ca/> for lots of information and support including FireSmart assessments and grant funding.

- **Private Managed Forest Land on Barnjum and Riverbottom Rds.** (Note: we discussed this topic briefly at the meeting and to respond to the interest shown by attendees, below is information in addition to what was covered at the meeting).
  - PID 009-850-660 is a 45 ha parcel across from Wake Lake and adjacent to the Sahltam Greenway, originally logged and replanted in about 2012, and sold a few years ago by Island Timberlands to the current owner.
  - The land is zoned as forest resource and classified as Private Managed Forest Land whereby the owner commits to managing for long term timber production in exchange for reduced taxes.
  - The Private Managed Forest Land (PMFL) Act is overseen by the Managed Forest Council. The Council consists of 2 members appointed by the provincial government, 2 members elected by private managed forest landowners and one chair who is jointly appointed by the other four council members.
  - The current owner cleared existing regeneration, has moved/imported/exported soil and fill, recontoured the site, dug large ponds and in the process has had a major impact on wetlands and streams, winter habitat for the Western Toad etc.
  - The Managed Forest Council has reported that the activities are considered compliant with the PMFL Act; the site must be restocked by 2028. Forest management activities are identified in Schedule A of this regulation: [https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/371\\_2004](https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/371_2004).
  - The forestry professionals who make such assessments are governed by a code of ethics which includes that they "uphold forest stewardship and practise the responsible use of forest resources based on the application of an ecological understanding at the stand, forest, and landscape levels, which maintains and protects ecosystem function, integrity, and resilience" <https://www.fpbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2023-06-05-FPBC-Code-of-Conduct-final.pdf>
  - In 2019, the Province paused a review of the PMFL program – if you link to the submissions they received you will see that there were significant concerns raised by the public about the way private forest lands are managed. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/forestry/forest-tenures/private-managed-forest-land/program-review/public-engagement>
  - In particular, the PMFL Act is extremely weak in regards to the protection of wildlife habitat and water.
  - If you think the activities are damaging to the environment and not in the best interests of the watershed and community then you may want to consider writing to:
    1. The Honourable Ravi Parmar, Minister of Forests [For.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:For.Minister@gov.bc.ca) and the Honourable Randene Neill, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship [WLRS.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:WLRS.Minister@gov.bc.ca) to raise your concerns about this site and to request completion of the PMFL Program review, stronger legislation to protect

water and wildlife habitat and improved governance and oversight of the legislation.

2. The Ombudsman <https://bcombudsperson.ca/complaints/how-to-make-a-complaint/> to request a review of the Managed Forest Council's interpretation of the legislation and handling of their review.
3. The Forest Professionals Association <https://www.fpbc.ca/complaints-and-decisions/submit-complaint/> to request a review of the professional conduct of its members who are reporting to the Managed Forest Council on this site.

- **Regional Growth Strategy (RGS)**

- Province considers CVRD a high growth area provincially
- A RGS is a high level master land use plan for the whole region
- If adopted it has legislative teeth
- Most Regional Districts in the Province have a RGS
- Goal of a RGS is compact, complete, connected communities that protect green space/nature and avoid hazards.
- A RGS identifies:
  1. Where businesses and residences should grow
  2. How to protect important natural areas,
  3. How to sustain water and food systems
  4. How to manage roads, waste
  5. How to reduce pollution and prepare for climate change
- Area E is centrally located with growth pressures on all sides – what are the pros and cons of RGS and for Area E of participating in a RGS process?
- Pros
  1. Protect region from overdevelopment
  2. Growth rationalized on best available information about water availability and where servicing can be sustained into the future
  3. Gives us a say in how neighbours grow
  4. More potential for coordinating and sharing services
  5. Balance growth – keep Area E rural
  6. Provides rationale for future jurisdictional boundary adjustments which otherwise could occur arbitrarily if a municipality wants to take some of the area and the Province agrees
  7. Starts a process to collect better data about the environment/water on which to make decisions.
- What can go wrong?
  1. Requires teamwork and ability to balance different views
  2. Area E is one voice of 16 at table
  3. Comprehensive data about water sustainability, i.e., health of aquifers, is not available