

Fraser Salmon & Watersheds Program



Fraser Basin Council



2008 Final Report

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| FSWP File Number* | FSWP 08 PG D30 |
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Contact Information

Sponsoring Organization's Legal Name

Fraser Valley Regional Watersheds Coalition

Are you a federally registered Charity, Non-profit organization or Business (Yes /No)?

No

If yes, please indicate which.

Charity

Non-profit organization

Business

Registration number

GST number

Are you a registered Society (Yes / No)?

Yes

Society Registration number

S-50094

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Project Information

Project Title

Implementation of the Chilliwack River Watershed Strategy: Awareness and Engagement of Decision-Making Institutions that Affect Watershed Conditions within the Chilliwack Valley

Project Location

Chilliwack River Watershed, FVRD Electoral Area "E"

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| Amount Requested | \$22,100 | Total Project Value | \$59,800 | Non-FSWP funds | \$37,700 |
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Project Summary

Please provide a single paragraph describing how your project has satisfied at least one of the FSWP priority activities. As this summary will be used in program communications, clearly state the issue addressed and avoid overly technical descriptions. Do not use more than 300 words.

The need for watershed planning in the Chilliwack River Watershed came about due to the recognized desire by key individuals and agencies for improved information and collaboration in the watershed, a goal conveniently shared with the integrated planning and governance program of the Fraser Salmon and Watershed Program. Through the ongoing collaborative efforts that have gone into the development of CRWS, information has been shared and relationships between key decision-making stakeholders have been forged, resulting in (hopefully) improved communications and better informed landuse management in the future.

What we hoped to accomplish with this specific phase of the project was to further engage watershed managers about the Strategy and the watershed and to identify opportunities to help implement Strategy outcomes. Obtaining commitments and follow-through is a very common weakness of any type of non-legislated volunteer planning process, where recommendations are made by a collective but a lack of adequate buy-in at a policy-making level hinders adoption and further progress. Although agencies were represented on CRWS at a staff level, this does not necessarily translate to changes at an institutional level. Through our attempts at meeting with agencies who manage the watershed, we have been able to identify a number of specific commitments agencies are willing to implement.

OPTIONAL If your project lends itself to sparking interest through a compelling sound byte (for potential use in FSWP media communications), please tell us what that sound byte would be.

Nestled within the spectacular Cascade Mountains and draining into the mighty Fraser River, the Chilliwack River watershed represents more than fish and wildlife, more than a recreation destination, more than a source of important resources and revenue, and more than a place people have called home for thousands of years – it represents a unique opportunity to still have the chance to find a balance between all of these values before one or more of them disappear. This is the motivating goal of the Chilliwack River Watershed Strategy (CRWS).

Species and life stage(s) the project targets: please list

The Chilliwack Valley supports all life stages of all five species of Pacific salmon, as well as numerous other salmonids and non-salmonid fish species, which collectively contributes to the very high environmental value of the watershed and the strong recreational and cultural values supported by healthy fisheries.

Watershed(s) the project targets: please list

Chilliwack River Watershed

Project Deliverables and Results

- Paste in the deliverables outlined in your Detailed Proposal (question #3 under project 'relevance and significance' heading) into the table below. Then, please list the results associated with each deliverable.
- Please include copies of any relevant communications products resulting from this project.

| Deliverable | Result |
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| Presentations of the Strategy to target groups | <p>Presentations were made to a total of 12 people (many at the management or senior staff level) from 7 key agencies (see contact database, Golder Associates). These presentations allowed us to demonstrate the areas of overlap between the Strategy and their agency's mandates or initiatives and to propose suggestions for specific policies or recommendations they can implement.</p> <p>In addition, a presentation of CRWS has been prepared to present to local First Nations, local governments, and the local community at an upcoming Community-to-Community forum held within the watershed. Further discussions with First Nations and other stakeholders will be conducted as follow-up.</p> <p>An open house to fully celebrate the completion of the Strategy is tentatively scheduled for late April.</p> |
| Summaries of discussions with target groups following presentation and consultation | Full summaries of discussions are provided in the attached report provided by Golder Associates. |
| Letters of recognition or implementation commitments from target groups and stakeholders | As a result of the consultation with responsible agencies, a number of commitments have been identified (see accompanying Golder report). While it is too soon to evaluate the results of the project in terms of letters returned, initial feedback about the Strategy has been very positive and encouraging. |
| Database of agencies contacted, commitments, and feedback. | A database of agencies contacted, potential commitments, and feedback is provided in the attached report provided by Golder Associates. |
| Outline of significant amendments made to the Strategy as a result of the feedback. | While no significant amendments were made to the Strategy as a result of the feedback (we decided to 'launch' a final version of the report rather than a draft version which was originally planned), useful feedback was obtained from this phase of the project. This feedback was identified in the Golder report, and will be updated as needed and posted to the CRWS website. |

Project Effectiveness

Please evaluate the effectiveness of the project, using the objective standards, quantifiable criteria and/or quality control measures identified in your Detailed Proposal (under question #1 in the 'performance expectations' heading).

Three performance indicators were identified in the Detailed Proposal for this project. The results of each are evaluated below:

- 1) Number of stakeholders consulted and engaged about the Chilliwack River Watershed Strategy and the health and sustainability of the Chilliwack Valley
 - Presentations/discussions took place with 12 senior staff and managers representing 7 different key provincial or federal agencies.
 - CRWS will be presented to approximately 200 participants at an upcoming Community-to-Community forum held in the watershed for First Nations, local governments, and local stakeholders. Following this presentation, follow-up with key First Nations and other stakeholders will be conducted to discuss further.
- 2) Number of decision-making authorities who officially recognize CRWS or agree to help implement or adopt relevant recommendations
 - Common ground and opportunities for working together or for recommendation implementation was identified amongst all 7 of the key agencies consulted through this project. Letters of commitment have not yet been returned to us, but we are very encouraged by initial conversations and interest expressed.
- 3) Number of CRWS recommendations supported or initiated by consulted agencies.
 - From the initial discussions with agencies, approximately 30 different CRWS recommendations were

supported by responsible agencies. It is too early to evaluate how many of these actions are actually implemented, or the on-the-ground benefits caused by these actions, but the project certainly has resulted in a step in the right direction.

What are the top three lessons learned from this project that would be important to communicate to others doing similar work throughout the Basin?

1) The need for addressing governance issues:

Implementation of watershed plans, even those created through a collaborative process involving key decision-making authorities, remains a challenge when there are no legislated or mandated requirements to follow-through. The regional staff that attends these meetings often do not make policies and more often than not do not have the ability to significantly affect change based on provincial or federal directions and legislation. In an ideal world, participation equals buy-in, and buy-in translates to change in decision-making. The reality is that those who can affect change do not have the time or ability to participate in local planning processes. Unless true governance models emerge that actually empower local watershed groups, processes such as CRWS will continue to be challenged with the realities of implementation.

2) Value of process, not simply the final outcome:

One of the key values of undertaking such a process is in going through the process – not just in reaching the endpoint. CRWS took over four years – four years of regular stakeholder meetings, tours, and reports. Many friendships were born out of the process, both personal and professional, an outcome that will continue to bear fruit for years to come. Spin-off initiatives have already been created for (e.g., Cultus Lake Aquatic Stewardship Strategy) based on these relationships. The value of the process cannot be emphasized enough in any watershed planning exercise.

3) Finding areas of common ground:

Despite different mandates or jurisdictions, all agencies and regulatory authorities are interested in maintaining a healthy watershed. They may have varying definitions of what this means or how it should be done, but no public agency has a mandate involving unilateral watershed destruction. This area of overlap can be exploited and highlighted as a means of finding common ground. This is what we tried to achieve with this project – approaching each agency, identifying their policies, initiatives, or mandates involving watershed sustainability, and establishing specific courses of action they can follow regarding the Chilliwack River Watershed. Time will tell if we are ultimately successful or not, but it is still a useful lesson for others looking at achieving buy-in or implementation commitments for a watershed plan or strategy.

Project Effectiveness

Please describe how your project has addressed each Priority Activity identified in your Detailed Proposal.

| Priority Activity ¹ | How the Priority Activity has been Addressed |
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| letters of recognition from key agencies and organizations towards CRWS and CRWS products | Through the consultative process utilized during this phase of the project, each of the key decision-making agencies were presented with ideas and opportunities for how they may use or help implement the watershed strategy. Each was sent a draft letter outlining the results of these discussions and their verbal commitments, but none have had a chance to be returned yet to us. Additional follow-up will occur. |
| multiple CRWS recommendations or actions implemented or accepted by decision-making agencies | During discussions, approximately 30 different recommendations or actions were identified by agencies as items they were willing to commit to or to consider. |
| longevity – CRWS remains active and relevant in the near future (3 or 5 years) | While it is obviously too soon to evaluate the relevancy and effectiveness of CRWS in 3-5 years time, we are certain that the results of this project, including the commitments and the relationships established, will have long-term benefits for the watershed and for watershed-management. |
| lessons learned from the CRWS process and implementation will benefit future | We are already approaching efforts at generating a plan for Cultus Lake with a different approach than what we did with Chilliwack, in part |

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| watershed planning initiatives within region | based on lessons learned through CRWS. The Cultus Lake Aquatic Stewardship Strategy is very bottom-up, driven by local stewards and residents. Agencies are involved as well, but it is not nearly as agency represented as was CRWS. Time will tell what strategy is ultimately more effective. |
| Various monitoring programs are initiated to help track improvements or declines in the watershed health of the Chilliwack River. | This priority area has not yet been initiated. We are hoping to produce a regular State of the Watershed report on the status of the watershed in order to document progress and new concerns, as well as to keep CRWS participants engaged and to make sure the website remains relevant. UFV researchers have expressed preliminary interest in assisting with this environmental monitoring. |

¹Please paste each priority activity identified in your Detailed Proposal in the space provided.

Further Comments (optional)

Please provide any further comments including recommendations for future conservation efforts and suggestions for helping partners to meet the goals of the Fraser Salmon and Watersheds Program. If relevant, we encourage you to attach a narrative report or additional project products (e.g. maps, photos) as an appendix.

As a pilot process for the Watershed-based Fish Sustainability Program, the Chilliwack River Watershed Strategy evolved into quite a different entity from other WFSPs. Most WFSPs are relatively fish-focussed and action-oriented around improving fish stocks, but CRWS took a more watershed-scale approach and decided to become more of a higher level 'strategy' or guiding document and less of a 'plan'. Early on, it was agreed that the role of CRWS is to be advisory (e.g. facilitate discussion & understanding), NOT advocacy.

Unlike other plans that have identified priority actions, schedules, and champions which can be tracked over time, CRWS produced broader recommendations and issue analysis intended as only a first step in enhancing the watershed and in bettering our understanding of the issues and each other. Although we felt that this 'strategic' direction would be best for this specific watershed and for the particular stakeholders involved, it does lead to a number of challenges regarding implementation and evaluation. Many agencies do not have the funding or staffing available to them to allow full engagement in a multi-year planning process in one watershed of their region. Further, our broad watershed-level scope of issues meant that often we were discussing issues outside the jurisdiction of particular participants, making it a challenge for them to justify a full level of commitment to our process. As a result of this design, our process was unable to attach responsibility to each action or recommendation proposed when those agencies were not at the table. This phase of the project is hoped to address some of these challenges, by engaging those agencies that were unable to become fully engaged in the process and to identify opportunities for their agencies to help implement specific recommendations. The long-term results of this tact cannot yet be determined, but initial feedback and response has been very encouraging and positive.