



Notice of Meeting and Meeting Agenda
Regional Water Supply Commission

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

1:30 PM

6th Floor Boardroom
625 Fisgard St.
Victoria, BC V8W 1R7

Special Meeting

G. Baird (Chair), K. Harper (Vice Chair), J. Caradonna, N. Chambers, C. Coleman, Z. de Vries, S. Duncan, C. Graham, S. Gray, C. Green, K. Guiry, S. Hammond, K. Jordison, S. Kim, T. Morrison, K. Pearson, T. Phelps Bondaroff, J. Rogers, C. Stock, M. Wagner, M. Westhaver, A. Wickheim

The Capital Regional District strives to be a place where inclusion is paramount and all people are treated with dignity. We pledge to make our meetings a place where all feel welcome and respected.

1. TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

3. PRESENTATIONS/DELEGATIONS

3.1. [26-0008](#) Delegation - Mehdi Najari; Resident: Re: Agenda Item 5.1. 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan - Final

4. MOTION TO CLOSE THE MEETING

4.1. [25-1345](#) Motion to Close the Meeting

Recommendation: That the meeting be closed for intergovernmental negotiations in accordance with Section 90(2)(b) of the Community Charter. [1 item]

5. SPECIAL MEETING MATTERS

5.1. [25-1340](#) 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan - Final

Recommendation: That the Regional Water Supply Commission:
1. Approve the 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan as presented and direct staff to move forward with the actions identified; and
2. Direct staff to forward the 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan to the Capital Regional District Board for information and make the Plan available for public distribution.

Attachments: [Staff Report: 2025 RWS Strategic Plan - Final](#)
[Appendix A: 2025 Strategic Plan - December 2025](#)
[Appendix B: Draft 2025 Strategic Plan - February 2025](#)
[Appendix C: What We Heard Report - Community Input \(Phase 1\)](#)
[Appendix D: What We Heard Report - Community Input \(Phase 2\)](#)
[Appendix E: What We Heard Report - First Nations Engagement](#)

6. ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting is January 21, 2026.

To ensure quorum, please advise Megan MacDonald (mmmacdonald@crd.bc.ca) if you or your alternate cannot attend.

Voting Key:

NWA - Non-weighted vote of all Directors

NWP - Non-weighted vote of participants (as listed)

WA - Weighted vote of all Directors

WP - Weighted vote of participants (as listed)



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REPORT TO REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY COMMISSION MEETING OF DECEMBER 17, 2025

SUBJECT **2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan – Final**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To present a summary of the First Nations consultation and feedback on the draft 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan and the updated 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan (Appendix A) for approval.

BACKGROUND

At its February 21, 2024 meeting, the Regional Water Supply Commission (Commission) closed out the 2017 Strategic Plan and directed staff to update the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan), with the further direction to return an updated draft to the Commission prior to initiating public, First Nations, and interest holder engagement.

Based on the February 21, 2024 direction from the Commission, staff developed a draft of the 2025 Strategic Plan. The draft built on the foundational commitments defined in the 2017 Strategic Plan and considered current operational context and external pressures and priorities anticipated in the next five-to-ten-year planning horizon. Staff incorporated best practices in water management and consulted with municipal partners to ensure the draft addressed both operational requirements and long-term strategic goals.

On July 17, 2024, staff presented the draft Strategic Plan and the proposed engagement plan to the Commission. The Commission provided feedback, which was incorporated into a revised draft. At the September 25, 2024 meeting, the Commission endorsed the revised draft Strategic Plan and directed staff to proceed with a two-phased engagement plan.

Public Engagement

Phase 1 of engagement focused on informing the public about the three commitments that form the foundation of the Strategic plan and gathered initial input on how the public would like to be engaged in the subsequent phase. The feedback from this engagement was presented to the Commission on November 20, 2024 and was summarised in *Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Input (Phase 1) – What We Heard Report* (Appendix C).

Following this, Phase 2 was conducted from February to March 2025, during which substantive feedback was collected from the community. At the May 21, 2025 Commission meeting, staff presented the *Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Input (Phase 2) – What We Heard Report* (Appendix D), providing a comprehensive summary of public feedback received during the engagement period. The Commission reviewed this report and the engagement outcomes.

First Nations Engagement

In parallel with public engagement, staff-initiated engagement with First Nations. On March 4, 2025, the Capital Regional District (CRD) sent letters of engagement to the following First Nations with traditional territories within the regional water supply area: BOKÉCEN (Pauquachin), Cowichan Tribes, Halalt, Lyackson, MÁLEXEL (Malahat), paaʔčiidʔatx (Pacheedaht), SʔÁUTW (Tsawout), Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), Spune'luxutth (Penelakut), Stz'uminus, T'Sou-ke, Ts'uubaa-asatx, WJOLÉLP (Tsartlip), WSIKEM (Tseycum) and x^wsepsum (Kosapsum).

Each letter invited feedback on the draft 2025 Strategic Plan, specifically asking whether the proposed actions reflected the priorities of each Nation. The CRD expressed a strong interest in collaborating with each Nation on water supply management. While the draft Plan presented several potential actions, recipients were asked to consider how these actions aligned with their priorities and to suggest any additional initiatives for inclusion. Furthermore, CRD staff offered to meet individually with each First Nation to discuss the draft Strategic Plan in greater detail and to collect direct feedback.

To ensure a comprehensive and accurate summary of First Nations engagement, staff engaged Jemma Scoble & Associates Consulting Inc. (JSCO). JSCO was provided all formal and informal written feedback, as well as meeting summaries from First Nations that did not provide feedback in writing. JSCO was tasked with reviewing this material and preparing an independent summary of key themes and perspectives, which is reflected in the *CRD Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan: First Nations Engagement – What We Heard Report* (Appendix E). The following themes were present in most of the discussions with First Nations and in written feedback received during the engagement period:

- Reconciliation as a Guiding Principle
- Governance and Representation
- Watershed Access
- Desire for Greater Collaboration on Watershed Stewardship and Protection
- Cultural and Spiritual Connection to Water
- Cumulative Impacts on Water Resources

Updates to the Draft Strategic Plan

Public feedback from both phases of engagement, along with input from First Nation consultation, has been considered and changes based on that feedback have been incorporated in the final the 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan (Appendix A). The following summarizes the more significant changes that have been made to the draft 2025 Strategic Plan that was released with the Phase 2 – Public Engagement and First Nations consultation (Appendix B).

Based on feedback from the public, there is an opportunity to provide more insight into the municipal water bills and clarify confusion and ambiguity. As the CRD does not bill residents directly for Regional Water Supply, staff will need to coordinate with each of the water suppliers. Given this feedback, staff have added the following action:

Commitment 2, Priority 2:

Long Term Action: Work with Municipal partners to provide added clarity on water bills.

Based on the feedback from the First Nations consultation, staff have updated the Guiding Principles to add a principle titled “Advancing Reconciliation Through Shared Water Stewardship.” The Land Acknowledgment was also updated based on feedback from the First Nations. Several actions were also revised or added in response to feedback from the First Nations, including:

Commitment 1, Priority 1:

Near Term Action: Expand opportunities for First Nations to access the watershed lands for cultural and ceremonial use, for purposes such as food and medicine harvesting.

Near Term Action: Explore additional opportunities for First Nation Guardian programs to conduct environmental monitoring in their territories.

Medium Term Action: Expand opportunities for First Nations involvement in stewardship of watershed lands.

Medium Term Action: Collaborate with First Nations on implementation and mitigation strategies for works that impact the watershed lands, waters and wildlife.

Commitment 1, Priority 2

Near Term Action: Refine the schedule and develop a delivery implementation strategy for infrastructure improvements identified in the 2022 Master Plan.

- a. Undertake early engagement with First Nations and consultation as required*

Commitment 1, Priority 3

Near Term Action: Explore options for enhanced First Nations participation in decision making within Regional Water Supply Service.

Commitment 3, Action 2

Cultivate strategic partnerships with skilled contractors and consultants, including First Nations, ensuring access to expertise and resources to meet operational and capital needs.

Commitment 3, Action 3

Foster partnerships with municipalities and First Nations to develop a robust integrated drinking water plan for emergency response and natural disasters in alignment with the evolving requirements of the Emergency and Disaster Mitigation Act.

The addition of the actions listed above responds to the priorities raised by the First Nations that are within the scope and control of the service.

Finally, messages introducing the Strategic Plan from the Chair and the General Manager were also added.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That the Regional Water Supply Commission:

1. Approve the 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan as presented and direct staff to move forward with the actions identified; and
2. Direct staff to forward the 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan to the Capital Regional District Board for information and make the Plan available for public distribution.

Alternative 2

That this report be referred back to staff for additional information or consultation.

CONCLUSION

At its February 21, 2024 meeting, the Regional Water Supply Commission directed staff to update the Strategic Plan. Staff developed a draft, conducted two phases of public engagement (Phase 1 in late 2024 and Phase 2 in early 2025), and held parallel First Nations engagement. Updates based on this feedback were incorporated into the final 2025 Strategic Plan. This report recommends approving the plan and directing staff to proceed with identified actions and forward the plan to the Capital Regional District Board for information and public distribution.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Regional Water Supply Commission:

1. Approve the 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan as presented and direct staff to move forward with the actions identified; and
2. Direct staff to forward the 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan to the Capital Regional District Board for information and make the Plan available for public distribution.

Submitted by:	Alicia Fraser, P. Eng., General Manager, Infrastructure and Water Services
Concurrence:	Ted Robbins, B. Sc., C. Tech., Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: 2025 Strategic Plan - December 2025
- Appendix B: Draft 2025 Strategic Plan - February 2025
- Appendix C: What We Heard Report - Community Input (Phase 1)
- Appendix D: What We Heard Report - Community Input (Phase 2)
- Appendix E: What We Heard Report - First Nations Engagement



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Regional Water Supply

STRATEGIC PLAN

DECEMBER 2025

Territorial Acknowledgment

The CRD respectfully acknowledges that many First Nations have long-standing relationships with the lands and waters in the Regional Water Supply Area since time immemorial that continue to this day. The Water Supply Area encompasses a geographical area of 20,643 hectares on the territories of the T'Sou-ke Nation, Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay) First Nation, MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat) Nation, P'a:chi:da?ahť (Pacheedaht) First Nation, STÁUTW (Tsawout) First Nation, WSIKEM (Tseycum) First Nation, BOKÉĆEN (Pauquachin) First Nation, WJOLEŁP (Tsartlip) First Nation, Cowichan Tribes, Tsu'uubaa'asatx First Nation, Penelakut Tribe, Halalt First Nation, Lyackson First Nation, Stz'uminus First Nation, and x^wsepsəm (Kosapsum) Nation.

The CRD recognizes that each First Nation has a unique relationship to the Water Supply Area, and a responsibility to care for and steward the lands within their territory. The watershed has been and continues to be an important place for harvesting, cultural practices, and other uses. The CRD recognizes the critical importance of the lands making up the Regional Drinking Water Supply Area to First Nations and respects the ongoing responsibility of First Nations to care for these lands through their own governance and laws.

In this spirit, we commit to working collaborating with First Nations to increase our understanding of and apply learnings from Indigenous knowledge and environmental management practices, to cultivate partnership opportunities with First Nations, and to provide space within the Regional Drinking Water Supply Area for cultural and ceremonial use, food, medicine harvesting, environmental monitoring, and other priorities of the Nations as they emerge.

The CRD supplies drinking water to several First Nations throughout the region, and is committed to respectful collaboration and service delivery on a government-to-government basis with these Nations.



Cover photo: Sooke Watershed, North Basin

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Introduction

The Capital Regional District (CRD) supplies drinkable water to more than 430,000 people, supporting residential, commercial, institutional, light industrial, agricultural and public safety uses across the Greater Victoria area on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. Greater Victoria is growing and factors affecting water supply continue to change, however, a safe and adequate supply of drinking water is critical to the livability and sustainability of the Region. Recognizing this, the CRD makes three commitments (the “commitments”) to ensure a safe and healthy water supply:



Provide high quality, safe drinkable water



Provide an adequate, reliable, long-term supply of drinkable water



Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure

The Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan (the “Strategic Plan”) sets commitments and identifies Strategic Priorities, with a planning horizon to the year 2055, that will guide the future direction for the Regional Water Supply Service (the “Service”). The Strategic Plan will also support CRD Board priorities, provide context for water servicing policy, and align with other CRD strategies and plans.

Message from the Commission Chair



As Chair of the Regional Water Supply Commission, I'm proud to present our finalized Strategic Plan, our commitment to long-term, visionary planning. This plan ensures our regional water supply continues to meet the evolving needs of residents and businesses.

Our vision is grounded in sustainable planning, anticipating future challenges to deliver reliable, high-quality water services that support regional growth and community vitality. Since 1915, the Sooke Lake Watershed has exemplified the success of combining vision with long-term planning, consistently providing exceptional service and water quality.

Today's challenges such as climate change, cybersecurity, emerging contaminants, advancing technologies, and evolving regulations differ from those of the past, but our commitment remains unchanged. This plan outlines the goals and strategies that will guide us in enhancing service and quality of life.

We believe this plan will serve as a clear roadmap for policymakers, staff, consultants, and regulators, ensuring public confidence in our system and in those delivering water to your taps.

Gord Baird (he/him)

Councillor – District of Highlands

Chair – CRD Regional Water Supply Commission

Chair – JDF Water Distribution Commission

Message from the General Manager



My career in municipal water began over 20 years ago, motivated by the chance to protect public health, support strong communities, and work at the intersection of engineering and the natural environment. That same perspective shapes how I approach this Strategic Plan, grounded in practical, long-term planning, strong teams, and solutions that balance today's needs with our responsibilities to future generations.

The 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan outlines how we will manage risk, renew systems, strengthen climate resilience, and maintain the reliability expected by the 430,000 people who depend on this service. It provides staff with a framework for aligning daily decisions with long-term priorities.

I acknowledge the CRD staff who contributed to the development of this plan, especially the Regional Water Supply teams whose technical insight and operational experience shaped its direction and whose day-to-day work keeps the system safe and responsive. I also extend my thanks to the public, First Nations, municipal partners, and the Water Advisory Committee for feedback that ensured the plan reflects regional needs.

As we move into implementation, success will depend on strong partnerships, clear communication, and steady follow-through. Staff are committed to carrying out the actions identified and supporting the priorities set by the Commission. This Strategic Plan sets the path for decades ahead, and staff will implement it with professionalism, integrity, and a clear focus on public confidence and value.

Alicia Fraser (she/her)

General Manager, Infrastructure & Water Services
Capital Regional District

Context for the Strategic Plan

In 1997, the Province transferred the Greater Victoria Water District to the CRD as part of a provincial direction aimed at creating a new system for water delivery in the region with the goal of fostering high-quality water provision, encourage conservation and ensure stewardship over the water supply catchment area.

The Regulation required the CRD to establish a strategic plan for managing the CRD's water supply. The CRD completed the first Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan in 1999 and reviewed and updated it in 2004, 2012, and 2017. The CRD is reviewing and updating the 2017 Strategic Plan in 2025. The previous plans resulted in the development and implementation of several initiatives in the areas of water conservation, management of watershed lands, investment in treatment and transmission infrastructure, adapting to climate change, and addressing changing water use trends.

The 2017 Strategic Plan had a significant focus on improving the overall resiliency of the system through risk mitigation and long-term planning. One of the key outputs from the 2017 Strategic Plan was the preparation of the 30-year Regional Water Supply Master Plan which identifies infrastructure needs to meet our growth and resiliency objectives. As we move into the 2025 Strategic Plan there will be a larger focus on the implementation of those longer-term planning efforts.

The CRD will use the 2025 Strategic Plan to guide the CRD's commitments to the Regional Water Supply Service's customers, and to inform the day-to-day activities and decision making associated with the Service. This will ensure the safe, reliable, and efficient delivery of water supply for current and future customers in Greater Victoria. The actions outlined in the Strategic Plan will direct the initiatives, projects and studies that will form the annual and five-year work programs, with progress reported to the Water Advisory Committee and Regional Water Supply Commission.

A PEOPLE POWERED PLAN

The Infrastructure & Water Services department is dedicated to ensuring the Regional Water Supply Service operates reliably and efficiently. Our team of experts in water operations maintenance, engineering, watershed protection, water quality, demand management, and capital project delivery work tirelessly to serve our communities.

Every team member contributes to ensuring that water flows from the taps, impacting the lives of everyone in our service areas. Our staff's professionalism and commitment to excellence are the backbone of our success.

Staff have played a crucial role in developing and advancing strategic plans, including this one. Their insights and efforts will be essential in implementing the plan's actions and meeting our longer-term commitments. Staff will continue to identify and recommend the most sustainable and affordable ways to achieve our goals. Continued investment in our people remains the most important factor in ensuring the success of this plan.



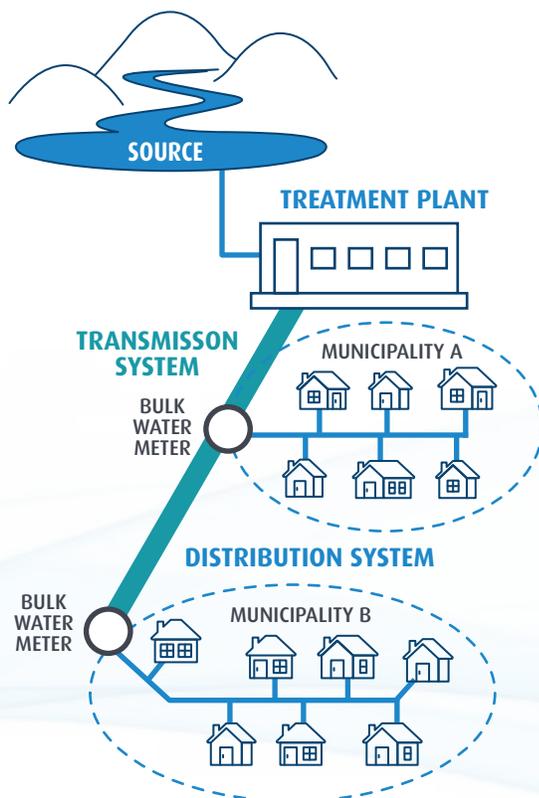
Watermain maintenance

Service Governance & Interest Holders

The water supply system operates under a CRD regional service, known as the Regional Water Supply Service, which is administered by the Regional Water Supply Commission, a Commission of the CRD Board.

The Regional Water Supply Commission (the “Commission”) is a body of 22 elected officials who represent and provide political leadership and decision making on behalf of the local authorities that receive water supply service. The Water Advisory Committee is the public advisory committee that provides advice to the Commission on matters related to the service including water supply, water quality, water conservation and stewardship of the Regional Water Supply Area (the watershed). There are many interest holders involved in the supply and delivery of safe drinking water, each with specific roles and responsibilities.

WATER SYSTEM



The Regional Water Supply Service is responsible for the treatment and transport of drinkable water through the transmission system. Water suppliers are responsible for the delivery of water through the distribution system to end users, being homes and businesses.

The Regional Water Supply Service provides drinking water to the communities listed below:

- ◆ District of Central Saanich
- ◆ City of Colwood
- ◆ Township of Esquimalt
- ◆ District of Highlands
- ◆ City of Langford
- ◆ District of Metchosin
- ◆ District of North Saanich
- ◆ District of Oak Bay
- ◆ District of Saanich
- ◆ Town of Sidney
- ◆ District of Sooke
- ◆ City of Victoria
- ◆ Town of View Royal
- ◆ Portions of East Sooke in the Juan de Fuca EA
- ◆ BOKÉĆEN (Pauquachin) First Nation
- ◆ Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay) First Nation
- ◆ xʷsəpsəm (Kosapsum) Nation
- ◆ Songhees First Nation
- ◆ WJOLĒLP (Tsartlip) First Nation
- ◆ SƧÁUTƧ (Tsawout) First Nation
- ◆ WSIKEM (Tseycum) First Nation
- ◆ T'Souke First Nation



Some of the key interest holders are:

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality, published by Health Canada, set out health and aesthetic limits for microbiological, chemical and radiological parameters and physical characteristics, such as taste and odour. Water utilities, such as the Regional Water Supply System, strive to achieve these guidelines in order to ensure clean and safe drinking water is provided to the community they serve.

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

The provincial *Public Health Act* and Regulation sets out the role and powers of health officials and the requirements for planning, reporting and regulation of activities that may affect public health, including the provision of drinking water. The *Public Health Act* works in concert with the *Drinking Water Protection Act* and Regulation which pertains specifically to drinking water supply and protection requirements.

The CRD also meets the requirements of the *Water Sustainability Act* which sets out requirements to ensure a sustainable supply of fresh, clean water that meets the needs of BC residents and maintains critical flows to support fish and wildlife into the future.

ISLAND HEALTH AUTHORITY

Island Health is the Vancouver Island Health Authority that administers and enforces the applicable provincial legislation through water system operating permits. The CRD holds operating permits with Island Health for

the Regional Water Supply System and regularly reports drinking water quality information to Island Health.

WATER SUPPLIERS

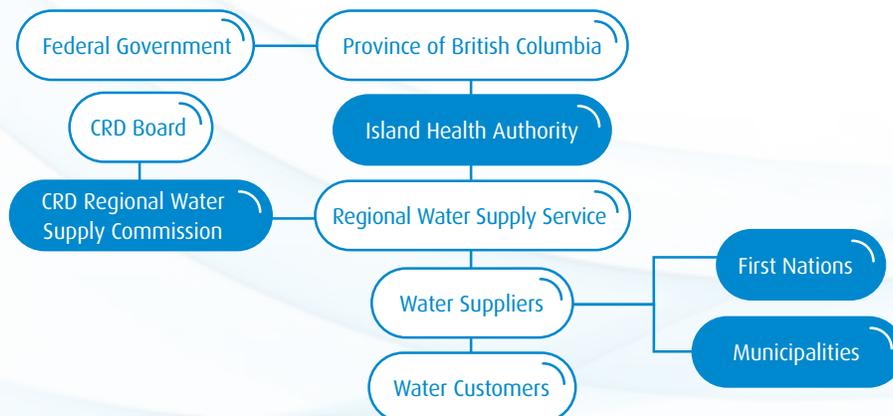
The CRD and municipalities in the region own and operate water systems that receive water from the Regional Water Supply Service, then distribute water directly to water customers. Water suppliers are responsible for the supply of safe drinking water as well as managing all other aspects of the distribution system.

FIRST NATIONS

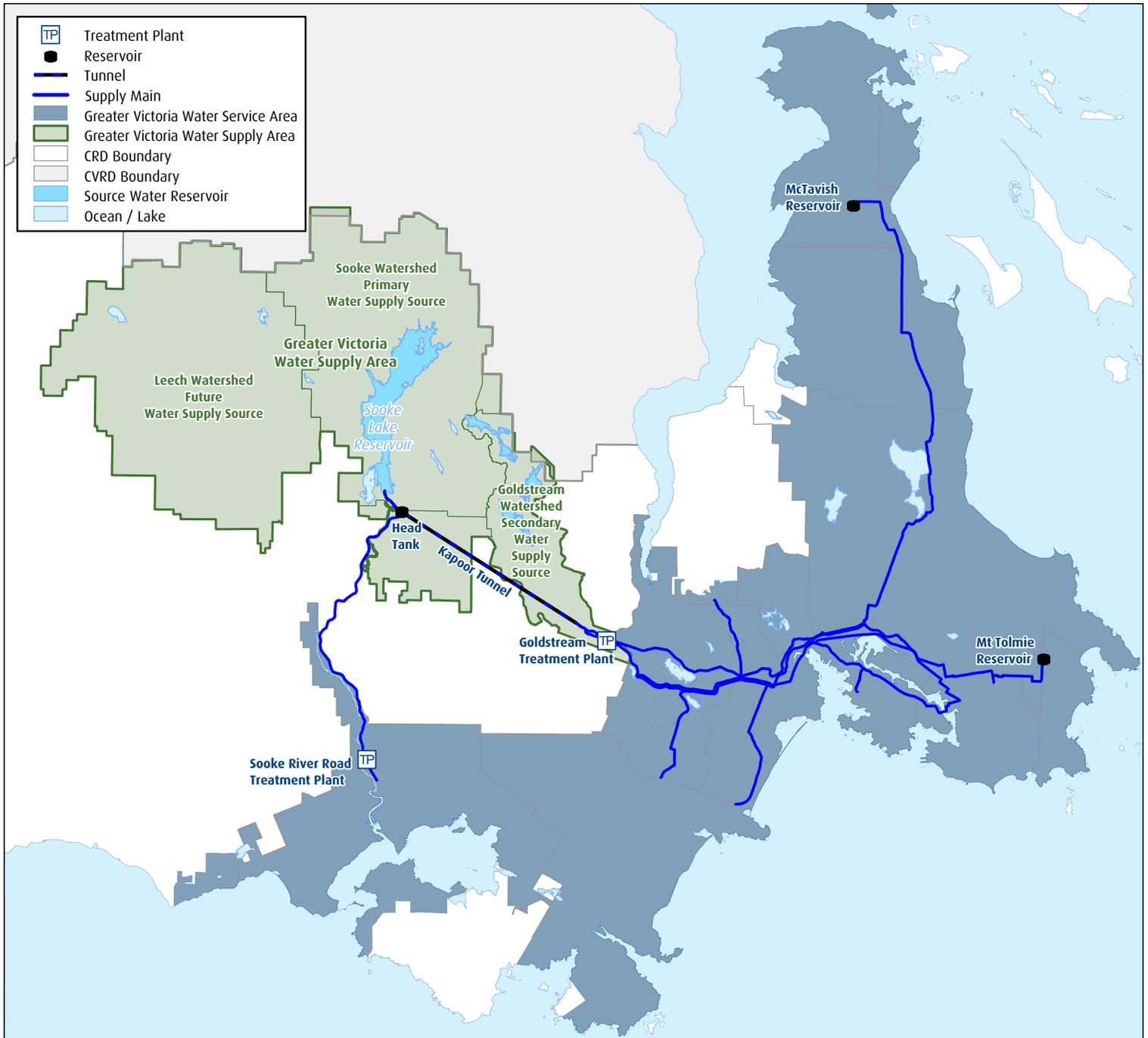
The Regional Water Supply Service source water is provided by the Sooke and Goldstream watersheds and in the future, the Leech watershed. These watersheds are in the territory of several First Nations who have been custodians of these lands and waters since time immemorial. The CRD is committed to working collaboratively with First Nations to respect their longstanding and ongoing interests in the Water Supply Area. Several First Nations are also customers of the Service and have all the same responsibilities of other water suppliers.

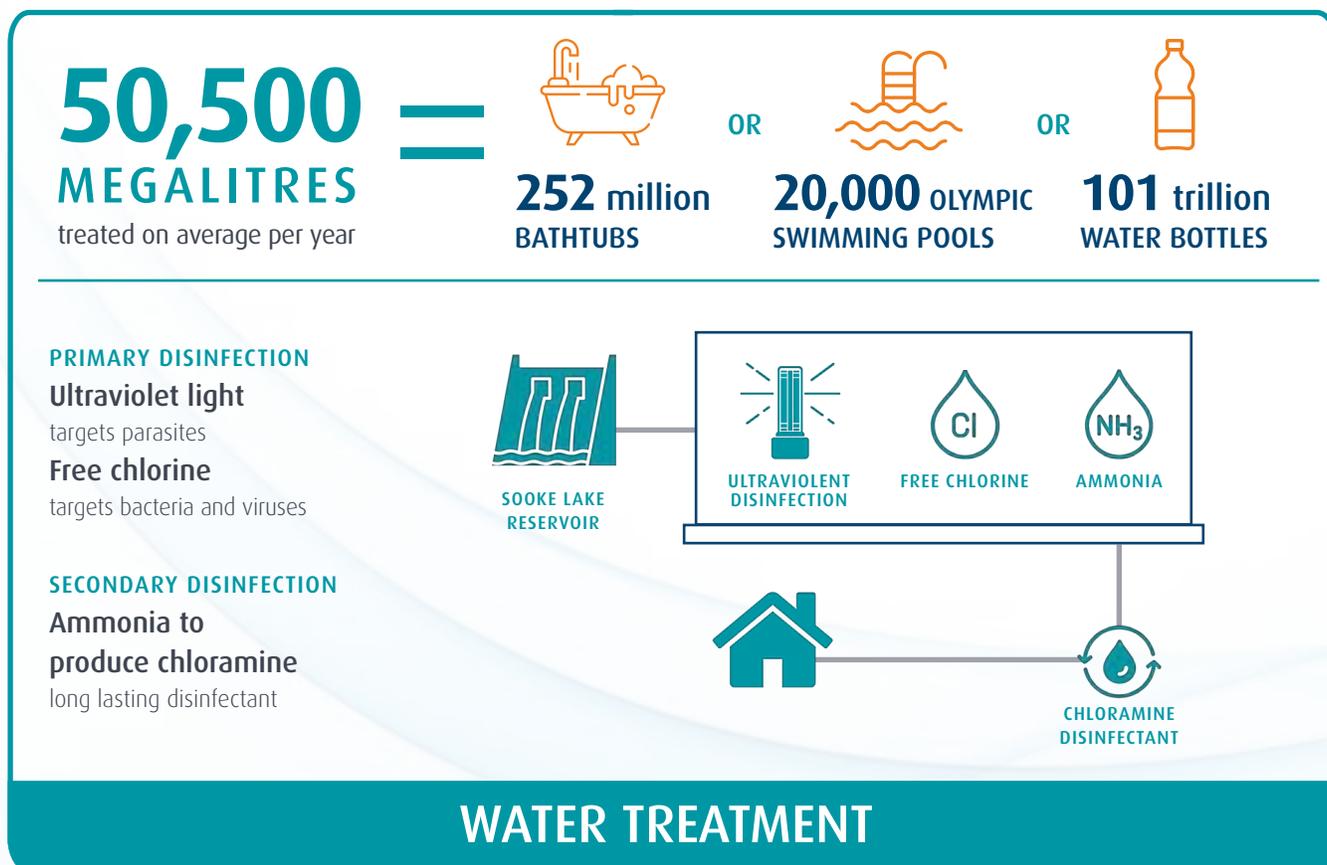
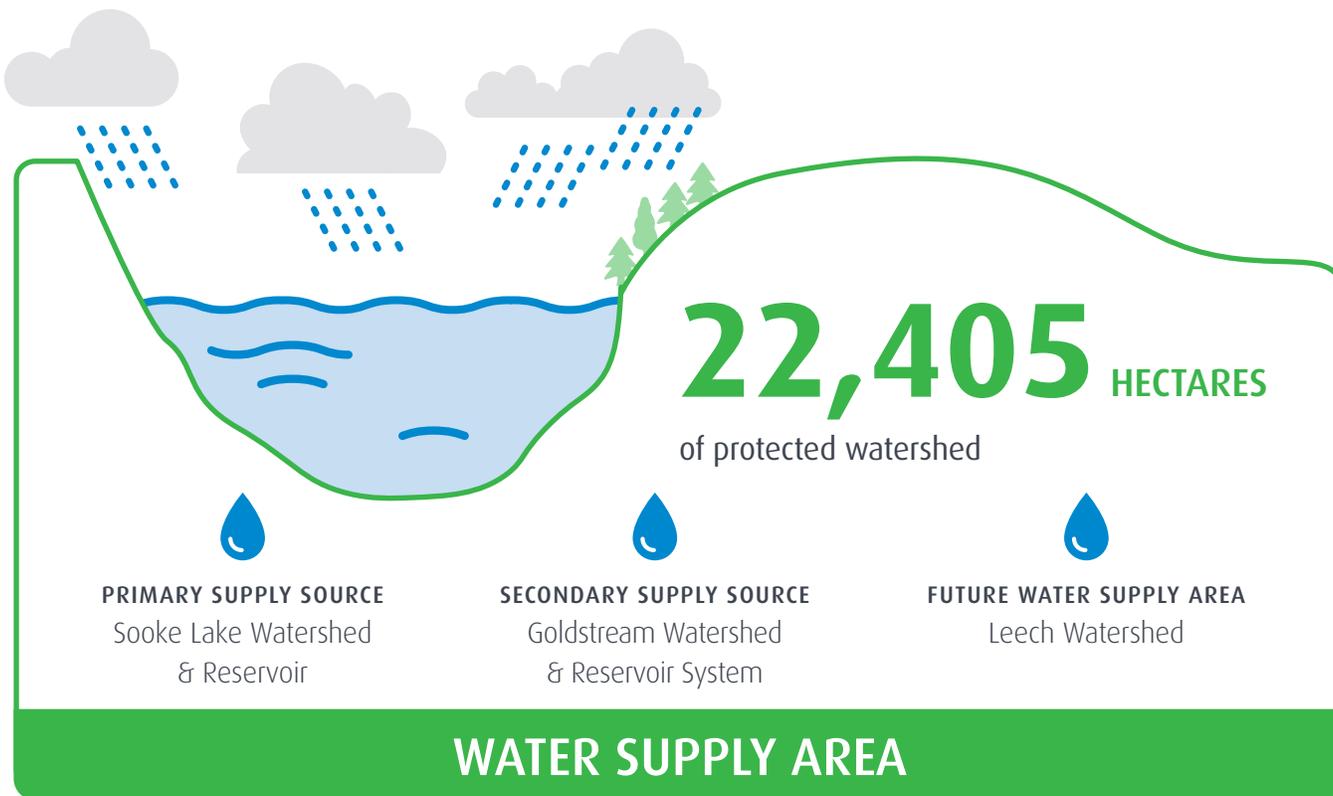
WATER CUSTOMERS

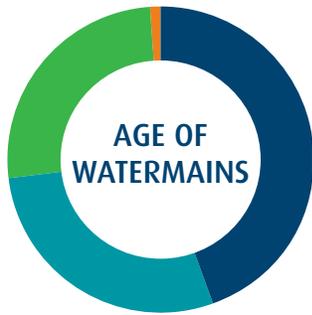
All water customers connected to a public water system are responsible for ensuring that the public system is not exposed to any contamination that could be introduced through private water plumbing systems by cross connection or backflow, and for using water responsibly, particularly when using water for discretionary purposes, to assist with management of the Region’s water supply.



Regional Water Supply System







- 45% 50 to 75 years old
- 29% 25 to 50 years old
- 26% Less than 25 years old
- 1% older than 75 years

130 KM
of pipe and tunnel
Size range:
0.4m – 2m in diameter

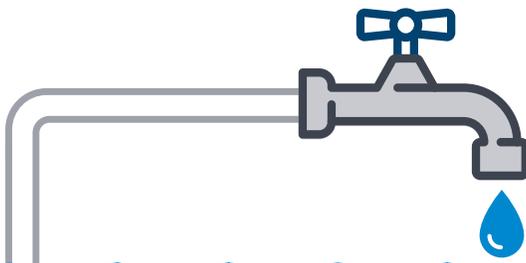
2 Active Transmission
Reservoirs with
34,000m³ of storage
which allows the system
to manage peak demands

POST DISASTER RESPONSE PLANNING



Focusing on seismic upgrades, emergency water distribution solutions, preparedness training, and stockpiling essential repair components.

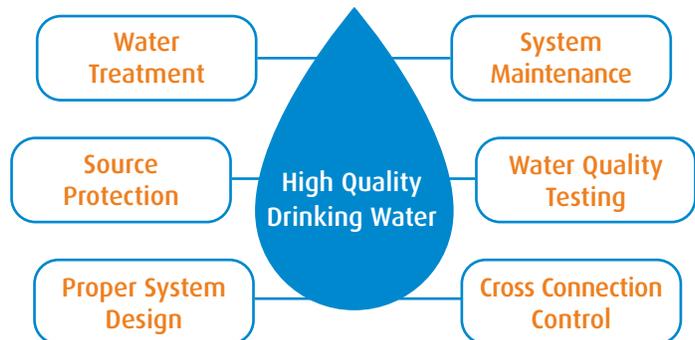
WATER TRANSMISSION & STORAGE



DRINKING WATER SUPPLIED TO
430,000
people in the region

342 LITRES
used per capita per day on average

**MULTI-BARRIER APPROACH TO
PROTECTING DRINKING WATER**



WATER QUALITY & USAGE

The Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan Overview

This update of the Strategic Plan for Regional Water Supply sets out the Commitments, and Strategic Priorities for the Regional Water Supply Service.

MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement is a concise description of organizational purpose, intention and objectives. This mission statement is a recognition of the role staff and decisions makers play in supporting the vitality of our communities. The mission is aligned with the CRD Mission and the Board and Organizational Visions.

COMMITMENTS

There are three key water supply commitments the CRD makes today and into the future. These long-term commitments are foundational to the plan and to achieving the service authority and mandate. The commitments are expected to remain virtually unchanged for decades.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & ACTIONS

Each commitment has supporting strategic priorities and actions which will guide shorter term initiatives as well as service planning and delivery. It is expected that strategic priorities would be reviewed and updated every five to ten years and actions would be planned, budgeted and implemented over the five-year cycle. Examples of actions that may be taken to achieve the strategic priorities have been outlined in the appendix. The actions may be adopted over time to meet changing pressures.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our guiding principles are specific to the 2025 Strategic Plan and reflect the current context and the factors we consider when making decisions about services and long-term commitments. The principles appear in no particular order.

PLANNING HORIZON

The planning horizon for the development of the Strategic Plan is to 2055 based on the following considerations:

- 💧 2045 is the projected earliest date that the Leech Water Supply Area may be required to supplement the Sooke Lake Reservoir to meet regional water supply demand, based on historical average population growth rate projections.
- 💧 Water supply system infrastructure can have a useful life as short as 15 years and as long as 80 years or more.
- 💧 The 30-year planning horizon strikes a balance with what can reasonably be planned, considering the projected water supply needs of the region and other factors such as climate change and advances in technology, while looking far enough ahead to allow informed decision making regarding key infrastructure and financial decisions.



Water quality lab

Mission Statement

“Together we provide reliable, high-quality drinkable water to help ensure the health and sustainability of the growing communities we serve today and in the future.”

Commitments and Priorities



COMMITMENT 1

Provide high quality, safe drinkable water

PRIORITY ① Protect and manage the watershed to ensure sustainable high-quality source water.

PRIORITY ② Ensure drinking water quality with a multi-barrier risk-based approach.

PRIORITY ③ Advance our understanding of the watershed and source water to prepare for the future.



COMMITMENT 2

Provide an adequate, reliable, long-term supply of drinkable water

PRIORITY ① Continuously plan and prepare for future water supply needs.

PRIORITY ② Enhance public connection to, confidence in and responsibility for our water supply.

PRIORITY ③ Optimize our available water supply through water conservation.

PRIORITY ④ Implement a sustainable and equitable long-term financial plan.



COMMITMENT 3

Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure

PRIORITY ① Make evidence-based and community-responsive infrastructure decisions to ensure reliable system performance and sustainability.

PRIORITY ② Assure sustainability and capacity of water management operations through sufficient resources, robust processes, strategic partnerships, effective tools, and continuous innovation.

PRIORITY ③ Enhance the security and sustainability of the water supply by effectively managing risks and enhancing emergency response capabilities.

PRIORITY ④ Attract, develop, and retain a diverse, knowledgeable and empowered workforce.

Guiding Principles

EMPOWERING STAFF FOR SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT

Our staff are the cornerstone of our operations, essential for maintaining the reliability and efficiency of our water supply service. Through strategic investments in training, retention, recruitment, and safety protocols, we cultivate a supportive environment where our team can thrive. Prioritizing their well-being and fostering a culture of innovation ensures the continued success and resilience of our water management efforts and our service.

SUPPORTING A GROWING REGION WITH RELIABLE SERVICE

Our commitment to the region is to provide clean, reliable water to our customers now and into the future. We achieve this through forward-thinking planning to ensure we are preparing for the future demands on our water system. We carefully balance internal and external pressures, costs, and investments over time to meet the changing needs.

RESPECTING AND ADAPTING TO THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

We foster a culture of respect and stewardship of the watershed lands to supply high quality source water, while also protecting biodiversity and forests. We strive to maintain forest and watershed resilience and to adapt infrastructure and operational practices to enhance resilience to extreme weather events and other climate and environmental changes.

MANAGING OUR RESOURCES EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY

The sustainability and longevity of the water supply cannot be achieved through infrastructure investments alone. Implementing strategies to manage, maximize and optimize utilization of existing resources is at the heart of preparing for the future. We are improving efficiency by equipping staff with the information and tools they need to make better informed decisions.

PROACTIVELY MANAGING AND BALANCING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RISKS

The implementation of a comprehensive risk management strategy is integral to all aspects of our work serving the region. This involves balancing opportunities and risks, with a focus on allocating resources effectively to maintain and enhance current operations. We continue to prioritize the identification and mitigation of risks to our water supply system and water quality, particularly those related to climate change impacts, service reliability, and associated health and safety concerns for both staff and the communities we serve.

FOSTERING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CUSTOMERS AND PARTNERS TO IMPROVE OUR SERVICE

We must demonstrate the value of and effort behind the water supply service to foster appreciation and respect for this essential resource. We advance this by openly sharing information about the water supply system and its operations to the public, while seeking feedback on our service. We also collaborate with municipal and First Nations staff to continue improving and aligning our services to the needs of the region's residents. We build strong partnerships and create opportunities for collaboration so we can continue to improve.

ADVANCING RECONCILIATION THROUGH SHARED WATER STEWARDSHIP

We recognize that the region's water supply system exists within the traditional territories of many First Nations. We are committed to meaningful collaboration with First Nations as rights holders and stewards of the land. By integrating Indigenous knowledge, removing barriers to participation, and building respectful relationships, we honour cultural connections to water and advance reconciliation through shared responsibility for the protection and sustainability of our watershed.

Advancing the Strategic Plan

A safe and adequate supply of drinkable water is critical to the livability and sustainability of Greater Victoria and the capital region. The Greater Victoria area is fortunate to have a protected water catchment, a well-established water supply system and a climate that with continued foresight will supply water into the future.

The commitments outlined in the Plan will ensure that the CRD continues to provide clean, safe, reliable drinkable water to the communities we serve. The strategic priorities and actions will guide service planning and delivery over the coming years. The CRD continues to be responsive to factors affecting the uncertainty of water supply, such as climate change and future water demand, to ensure our long-term commitments to our customers are achieved.

Progress and outcomes will be tracked and reported to the Regional Water Supply Commission to ensure the ongoing achievement of the commitments, strategic priorities and actions in the Strategic Plan.



Sooke watershed tour

Appendix: Commitments, Strategic Priorities, Actions



COMMITMENT 1

Provide high quality, safe drinkable water

PRIORITY ① Protect and manage the watershed to ensure sustainable high-quality source water.

ACTIONS

Near-Term Actions

- 💧 Protect water supply and ecosystems from contaminants and invasive plants, animals, and pathogens by completing a study to document biosecurity risks and revise or implement new biosecurity protection measures.
- 💧 Continue to monitor the watershed and implement climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives to reduce the impacts associated with the magnitude and rate of projected climate change on ecosystems, water quality and infrastructure in the watershed. Example Initiatives:
 - a. Undertake a feasibility study to determine optimal siting and operating procedures for a second intake on the Sooke Lake Reservoir.
 - b. Develop a forest management strategy or plan to maintain and enhance forest resilience.
- 💧 Expand opportunities for First Nations to access the watershed lands for cultural and ceremonial use, such as food and medicine harvesting.
- 💧 Explore additional opportunities for First Nation Guardian programs to conduct environmental monitoring in their territories.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Continue to enhance capabilities in wildfire prevention, preparedness, early detection, suppression, forest fuel reduction and post-wildfire emergency rehabilitation measures to reduce and mitigate the potential impacts of a large-scale wildfire in the watershed on water quality and supply. Example Initiatives:
 - a. Increased use of infrared and drone technology and monitoring software to provide early fire detection and inform fire response.
 - b. Trial the use of prescribed burning and other techniques to manage forest fuel build up.
- 💧 Expand opportunities for First Nations involvement in stewardship of watershed lands.
- 💧 Continue to seek ownership, management, or influence of watershed lands and watershed buffer lands in alignment with the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area land acquisition priorities.
- 💧 Collaborate with First Nations on implementation and mitigation strategies for works that impact the watershed lands, waters and wildlife.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Develop a management strategy specific to non-catchment lands within the watershed.
- 💧 Develop a policy that defines the parameters and requirements for consideration of renewable energy or environmentally sustainable enterprises in the watershed.

**COMMITMENT 1**

Provide high quality, safe drinkable water

PRIORITY ② Ensure drinking water quality with a multi-barrier risk-based approach.

ACTIONS**Near-Term Actions**

- 💧 Continue to update and expand the Drinking Water Safety Plan and Water Quality Risk Registry.
- 💧 Refine the schedule and develop a delivery implementation strategy for infrastructure improvements identified in the 2022 Master Plan.
 - a. Undertake early engagement with First Nations and consultation, as required.
- 💧 Continue baseline water sampling and research projects which support future infrastructure design.
- 💧 Ongoing water quality monitoring to verify proper system operations and identify potential water quality risks. This also includes research and studies into contaminants of emerging concern.
- 💧 Maintain and enhance the regional cross-connection program to ensure the drinking water system is not contaminated by connection to non-potable water sources.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Commence water filtration pilots to refine the design parameters for future water treatment processes and cost estimates, to inform preliminary design.
- 💧 Maintain ISO 17025 Laboratory accreditation and Provincial Health Officer certification.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Enhance/expand water quality network monitoring, including the development of a remote and continuous lake monitoring system that can track water quality changes in the source water.

**COMMITMENT 1**

Provide high quality, safe drinkable water

PRIORITY ③ Advance our understanding of the water supply area and source water to prepare for the future.

ACTIONS**Near-Term Actions**

- ◆ Complete modelling of climate change effect on forests and effectiveness of forest management treatments to help guide management of the watershed forests into the future.
- ◆ Explore options for enhanced First Nations participation in decision making within Regional Water Supply Service.

Medium-Term Actions

- ◆ Develop reservoir inflow and circulation models and conduct analyses to improve the understanding of these linkages and how they affect drinking water quality and the health of aquatic ecosystems.
- ◆ Expand and integrate the monitoring of watershed hydrology and water quality in the watershed to improve understanding of the linkages among weather, stream flows, reservoir circulation and source water quality.
- ◆ Continue to partner with other agencies, First Nations, and educational institutions to better understand the water supply area forest and aquatic ecosystems, risks from climate change, insects, diseases, and invasive species; to inform management for water supply and natural values.
- ◆ Assess forest management trials such as, thinning, juvenile spacing, and prescribed burning, to assess the impact of the treatment on forest fuel, tree and stand growth and health, and fire danger.

Longer-Term Actions

- ◆ Undertake post-wildfire and sediment delivery modelling to inform water treatment and water quality preparedness plans and filtration design prior to and after the introduction of alternate water sources.



COMMITMENT 2

Provide an adequate, reliable, long-term supply of drinkable water

PRIORITY ① Continuously plan and prepare for future water supply needs.

ACTIONS

Near-Term Actions

- 💧 On a prescribed timeframe, routinely update assumptions and future growth projection as it relates to the Master Plan and Development Cost Charge Programs.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Define a strategy to increase additional water resources, building on alternatives outlined in the Master Plan.
Example initiatives:
 - a. Refine infrastructure needs to access additional water capacity to meet 2055 projected demands.
 - b. Define maximum water supply capacity using sources within existing CRD owned watershed lands.

- 💧 In collaboration with water suppliers, develop a regional strategy and standards regarding storage capacity (reservoirs) within the transmission and municipal distribution systems.

- 💧 Work collaboratively with municipal and First Nation partners to clarify and define service levels related to water supply and system boundaries.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 If required, develop a land acquisition strategy to expand long-term water supply to meet the needs beyond 2055.

**COMMITMENT 2**

Provide an adequate, reliable, long-term supply of drinkable water

PRIORITY ② Enhance public connection to, confidence in and responsibility for our water supply.

ACTIONS**Near-Term Actions**

- 💧 Continue to expand and promote public tours of the watershed and expand information relating to the water supply system on the CRD website.
- 💧 Develop and promote curriculum for schools on drinking water and watersheds.
- 💧 Continue with public engagement through official channels like the Water Advisory Committee.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Develop a long-term media/communication strategy that engages the public on efforts to protect and improve the resilience of the drinking water system.
- 💧 Assess opportunities for two-way communication with customers related to the quality of service provided.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Develop a Live Data stream/website or App on the water system — outages, facts, and construction projects.
- 💧 Work with Municipal partners to provide added clarity on water bills.
- 💧 Develop a speaker series for the public that would include presentations by third-party experts on emerging topics concerning water.

**COMMITMENT 2**

Provide an adequate, reliable, long-term supply of drinkable water

PRIORITY ③ Optimize our available water supply through water conservation.

ACTIONS**Near-Term Actions**

- 💧 Define the “by sector” demand baseline and define long term targets.
- 💧 Develop a water conservation plan.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Assess baseline data to define targets and develop a multi-year demand management strategy.
- 💧 Develop policy and bylaws to support effective water conservation and maximizing water supply.
- 💧 Investigate opportunities for creating shared and consistent data sets with municipalities to facilitate analysis and trend monitoring.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Continuously refine policy and practices to adjust demand management to optimize water supply.
- 💧 Identify and study existing and future stressors on water demands to refine water use trends.



COMMITMENT 2

Provide an adequate, reliable, long-term supply of drinkable water

PRIORITY ④ Implement a sustainable and equitable long-term financial plan.

ACTIONS

Near-Term Actions

- 💧 Implement a Development Cost Charge (DCC) program and Bylaw for the Regional Water Supply Service along with a waivers or reductions bylaw.
- 💧 Continue to engage First Nations and put in place Bulk Water Supply Agreements supporting the development of stronger government-to-government relationships.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Continue to refine the long-term financial plan.
- 💧 Investigate the introduction of a framework that measures the investment in climate adaptation and mitigation vs. the cost of inaction.
- 💧 Identify grant and partnership opportunities to fund future infrastructure needs.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Continue to assess opportunities to streamline or strengthen governance of the Regional Water Supply Service.

**COMMITMENT 3**

Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure

PRIORITY ① Make evidence-based and community-responsive infrastructure decisions to ensure reliable system performance and sustainability.

ACTIONS**Near-Term Actions**

- 💧 Continue to develop and consolidate various risk registries to prioritize expenditures based on those identified risks.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Mature our asset and maintenance management processes to maximize data driven decision-making.
Example Initiatives:
 - a. Define data standards and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to maintenance and asset management and develop dashboards to track and identify trends.
 - b. Refine the comprehensive asset management plan to prioritize key maintenance and capital projects.
- 💧 Refine maintenance plans to optimize and extend asset life.
- 💧 Continue to develop and improve our SCADA system to inform operational decision making.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Create and automate an integrated process narrative for the transmission system to optimize system performance and improve energy efficiency.
- 💧 Expand the critical spare parts program to continue to reduce system downtime or service interruptions.
- 💧 Invest in technology for decision-making support and reporting.
- 💧 Explore the technology, tools and sensors that can further inform and enhance maintenance plans.

**COMMITMENT 3**

Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure

PRIORITY ② Assure sustainability and capacity of water management operations through sufficient resources, robust processes, strategic partnerships, effective tools, and continuous innovation.

ACTIONS**Near-Term Actions**

- 💧 Continuously assess and improve processes and procedures to streamline operations, reduce costs and increase efficiency.
- 💧 Modernize contract and project management tools to support more efficient and effective procurement and project delivery.
- 💧 Participate in industry associations to leverage applicable operational experience and best practices that can add value to our system.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Continuously evaluate and integrate innovative solutions, such as smart meters, leak detection technologies, and renewable energy sources, to enhance system resilience and sustainability and support our corporate energy efficiency and emissions reduction goals as outlined in the CRD Climate Action Strategy.
- 💧 Cultivate strategic partnerships with skilled contractors and consultants, including First Nations, ensuring access to expertise and resources to meet operational and capital needs.
- 💧 Foster partnerships with technology providers and research institutions to stay at the forefront of innovation in water management.
- 💧 Develop agreements with municipalities for shared capital delivery of contracts.
- 💧 Explore opportunities for Mutual Aid Agreements for enhanced emergency response.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Develop educational initiatives (workshops, webinars, etc.) to assist potential vendors to understand and navigate the procurement process effectively.

**COMMITMENT 3**

Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure

PRIORITY ③ Enhance the security and sustainability of the water supply by effectively managing risks and enhancing emergency response capabilities.

ACTIONS**Near-Term Actions**

- 💧 Foster partnerships with municipalities and First Nations to develop a robust integrated drinking water plan for emergency response and natural disasters in alignment with the evolving requirements of the *Emergency and Disaster Mitigation Act*.
- 💧 Continue regular safety training and drills for employees focusing on WorkSafeBC requirements, hazard awareness, operating equipment safely, and responding to emergencies effectively.
- 💧 Continue to actively protect the watershed and water supply infrastructure from unauthorized physical activities or access.
- 💧 Identify and mitigate risks to our digital environment to safeguard against cyber threats and data breaches.
- 💧 Develop and implement dam safety public engagement and communication plans, including a public-facing webpage with dam safety and emergency preparedness information.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Enhance the risk register with physical and cyber security threats and identify mitigation measures.
- 💧 Implement dam safety instrumentation improvements at large dams to improve dam safety, early warning response and emergency preparedness.
- 💧 Reassess risks to the dam portfolio, including regional seismic risk, flood risk, and plan for capital improvements.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Formalize and document the dam safety management system.
- 💧 Design and implement seismic rehabilitation and capital improvements at higher consequence dams, including Sooke Lake Dam and Deception Gulch Dam.

**COMMITMENT 3**

Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure

PRIORITY ④ Attract, develop, and retain a diverse, knowledgeable and empowered workforce.

ACTIONS**Near-Term Actions**

- 💧 Continue the IWS Utility Operator cross training program within each Environmental Operator Certification Program discipline.
- 💧 Partner with post-secondary co-op programs to develop and recruit future job applicants.
- 💧 Ongoing evaluation of the CRD's Utility Operator Program. This is a CRD program designed to provide career development and progression as utility staff gain additional experience and related British Columbia Environmental Operators Certificate Program certifications.
- 💧 Continue to partner with CRD People, Safety and Culture division on training opportunities, including personal and professional development.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Enhance personal and professional development opportunities to better support career advancement, including formal and informal mentorship opportunities.
- 💧 Develop a long-term resource strategy and succession planning program for the service that considers the strategic priorities, as well as the changing infrastructure landscape within the service.
- 💧 Ongoing training for Management staff through the CRD's iLead program in partnership with Royal Roads University.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Provide training to management, team leads and supervisors on Effective Utility Management or equivalent.



Making a difference...together

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Making a difference...together

Regional Water Supply

DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

FEBRUARY 2025

Territorial Acknowledgment

The CRD supplies drinking water to several First Nations throughout the region. The Regional Drinking Water Supply Area encompasses a geographical area of 20,643 hectares on the Territories of the T'Sou-ke Nation, Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay) First Nation, MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat) Nation, P'a:chi:da?ahť (Pacheedaht) First Nation, SĪÁUTŪ (Tsawout) First Nation, ŪSIKEM (Tseycum) First Nation, BOKÉĆEN (Pauquachin) First Nation, ŪJOŁEŁP (Tsartlip) First Nation, Cowichan Tribes, Tsu'uubaa'asatx First Nation, Penelakut Tribe, Halalt First Nation, Lyackson First Nation, Stz'uminus First Nation, and x^wsepsəm (Kosapsum) Nation.

The CRD respectfully acknowledges that First Nations have long-standing relationships with the lands and waters in the Regional Water Supply Area since time immemorial that continue to this today. The Infrastructure and Water Services Department is committed to supporting the CRD's path to reconciliation through the development and implementation of the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan. We recognize the critical importance of the lands making up the Regional Drinking Water Supply Area to these First Nations for traditional and cultural uses and for the expression of their Aboriginal and treaty rights. In this spirit, we commit to working collaboratively with First Nations to increase our understanding of and apply learnings from Indigenous knowledge and environmental management practices, and to provide space within the Regional Drinking Water Supply Area for cultural and ceremonial use, food, and medicine harvesting.



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Introduction

The Capital Regional District (CRD) supplies drinkable water to more than 430,000 people, supporting residential, commercial, institutional, light industrial, agricultural and public safety uses across the Greater Victoria area on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. Greater Victoria is growing and factors affecting water supply continue to change, however, a safe and adequate supply of drinking water is critical to the livability and sustainability of the Region. Recognizing this, the CRD makes three commitments (the “commitments”) to ensure a safe and healthy water supply:

- 

1 Provide high quality, safe drinkable water
- 

2 Provide an adequate, reliable, long-term supply of drinkable water
- 

3 Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure

The Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan (the “Strategic Plan”) sets commitments and identifies Strategic Priorities, with a planning horizon to the year 2055, that will guide the future direction for the Regional Water Supply Service (the “Service”). The Strategic Plan will also support CRD Board priorities, provide context for water servicing policy, and align with other CRD strategies and plans.

Context for the Strategic Plan

In 1997, the province transferred the Greater Victoria Water District to the CRD as part of a provincial direction aimed at creating a new system for water delivery in the region with the goal of fostering high-quality water provision, encourage conservation and ensure stewardship over the water supply catchment area.

The Regulation required the CRD to establish a strategic plan for managing the CRD’s water supply. The CRD completed the first Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan in 1999 and reviewed and updated it in 2004, 2012, and 2017. The CRD is reviewing and updating the 2017 Strategic Plan in 2025. The previous plans resulted in the development and implementation of several initiatives in the areas of water conservation, management of watershed lands, investment in treatment and transmission infrastructure, adapting to climate change, and addressing changing water use trends.

The 2017 Strategic Plan had a significant focus on improving the overall resiliency of the system through risk mitigation and long-term planning. One of the key outputs from the 2017 Strategic Plan was the preparation of the 30-year Regional Water Supply Master Plan which identifies infrastructure needs to meet our growth and resiliency objectives. As we move into the 2025 Strategic Plan there will be a larger focus on the implementation of those longer-term planning efforts.

The CRD will use the 2025 Strategic Plan to guide the CRD’s commitments to the Regional Water Supply Service’s customers, and to inform the day-to-day activities and decision making associated with the Service. This will ensure the safe, reliable, and efficient delivery of water supply for current and future customers in Greater Victoria. The actions outlined in the Strategic Plan will direct the initiatives, projects and studies that will form the annual and five-year work programs, with progress reported to the Water Advisory Committee and Regional Water Supply Commission.

A PEOPLE POWERED PLAN

The Infrastructure & Water Services department is dedicated to ensuring the Regional Water Supply Service operates reliably and efficiently. Our team of experts in water operations maintenance, engineering, watershed protection, water quality, demand management, and capital project delivery work tirelessly to serve our communities.

Every team member contributes to ensuring that water flows from the taps, impacting the lives of everyone in our service areas. Our staff’s professionalism and commitment to excellence are the backbone of our success.

Staff have played a crucial role in developing and advancing strategic plans, including this one. Their insights and efforts will be essential in implementing the plan’s actions and meeting our longer-term commitments. Staff will continue to identify and recommend the most sustainable and affordable ways to achieve our goals. Continued investment in our people remains the most important factor in ensuring the success of this plan.

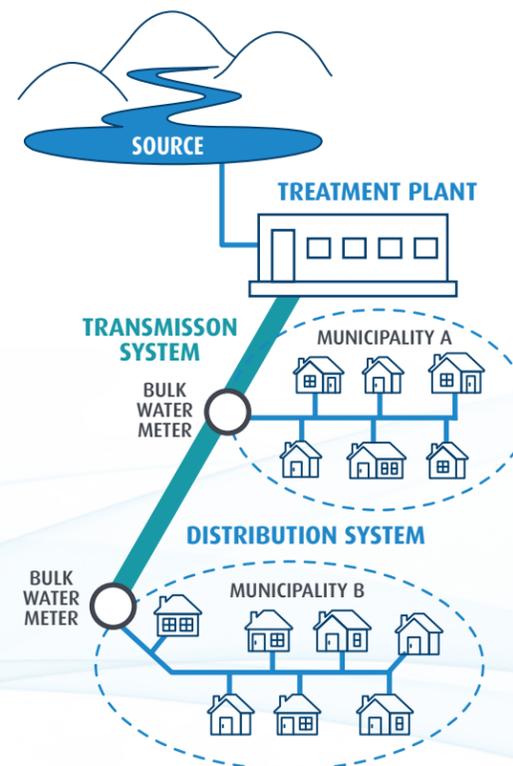


Service Governance & Interest Holders

The water supply system operates under a CRD regional service, known as the Regional Water Supply Service, which is administered by the Regional Water Supply Commission, a Commission of the CRD Board.

The Regional Water Supply Commission (the “Commission”) is a body of 22 elected officials who represent and provide political leadership and decision making on behalf of the local authorities that receive water supply service. The Water Advisory Committee is the public advisory committee that provides advice to the Commission on matters related to the service including water supply, water quality, water conservation and stewardship of the Regional Water Supply Area (the watershed). There are many interest holders involved in the supply and delivery of safe drinking water, each with specific roles and responsibilities.

WATER SYSTEM



The Regional Water Supply Service is responsible for the treatment and transport of drinkable water through the transmission system. Water suppliers are responsible for the delivery of water through the distribution system to end users, being homes and businesses. The Regional Water Supply Service provides bulk water to the communities listed below and the CRD, who operate water distribution systems that deliver water directly to customers across Greater Victoria.*

- ◆ District of Central Saanich
- ◆ District of North Saanich
- ◆ District of Oak Bay
- ◆ District of Saanich
- ◆ Town of Sidney
- ◆ City of Victoria/Township of Esquimalt
- ◆ Sc’ianew (Beecher Bay) First Nation
- ◆ xw’sepsəm (Kosapsam) Nation
- ◆ CRD Juan de Fuca Water System (Serving Town of View Royal, City of Colwood, City of Langford, District of Metchosin, District of Highlands, District of Sooke, portions of East Sooke in the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area, Songhees First Nation, T’Souke First Nation)

* Represents service agreements at the time of publishing.

Regional Water Supply System

Some of the key interest holders are:

CANADA

The Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality, published by Health Canada, set out health and aesthetic limits for microbiological, chemical and radiological parameters and physical characteristics, such as taste and odour. Water utilities, such as the Regional Water Supply System, strive to achieve these guidelines in order to ensure clean and safe drinking water is provided to the community they serve.

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

The provincial Public Health Act and Regulation sets out the role and powers of health officials and the requirements for planning, reporting and regulation of activities that may affect public health, including the provision of drinking water. The Public Health Act works in concert with the Drinking Water Protection Act and Regulation which pertains specifically to drinking water supply and protection requirements.

The CRD also meets the requirements of the Water Sustainability Act which sets out requirements to ensure a sustainable supply of fresh, clean water that meets the needs of BC residents today and into the future.

ISLAND HEALTH

Island Health is the Vancouver Island Health Authority that administers and enforces the applicable provincial legislation through water system operating permits. The CRD holds operating permits with Island Health for the Regional Water Supply System and regularly reports drinking water quality information to Island Health.

WATER SUPPLIERS

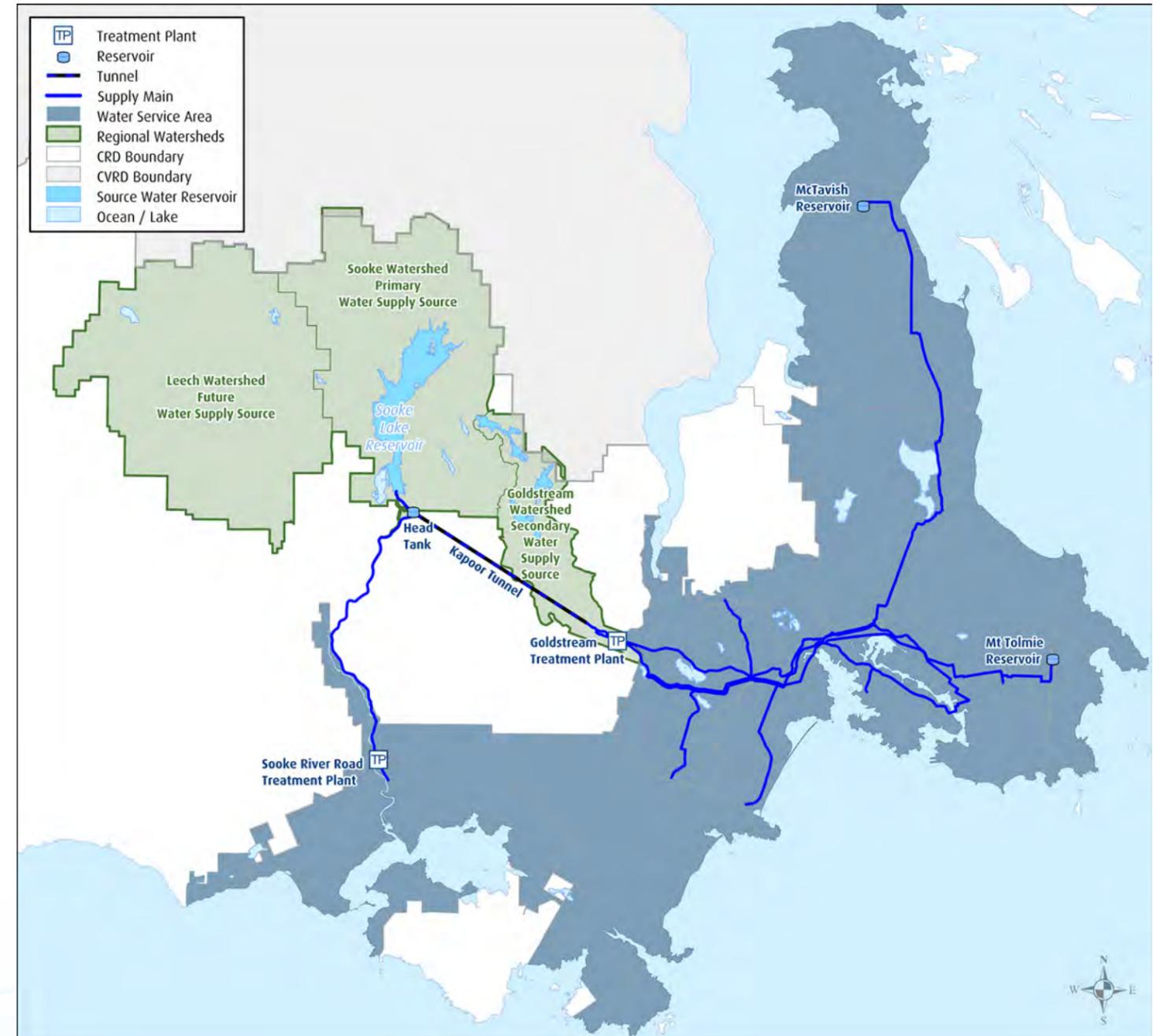
The CRD and municipalities in the region own and operate water systems that receive water from the Regional Water Supply Service, then distribute water directly to water customers. Water suppliers are responsible for the supply of safe drinking water as well as managing all other aspects of the distribution system.

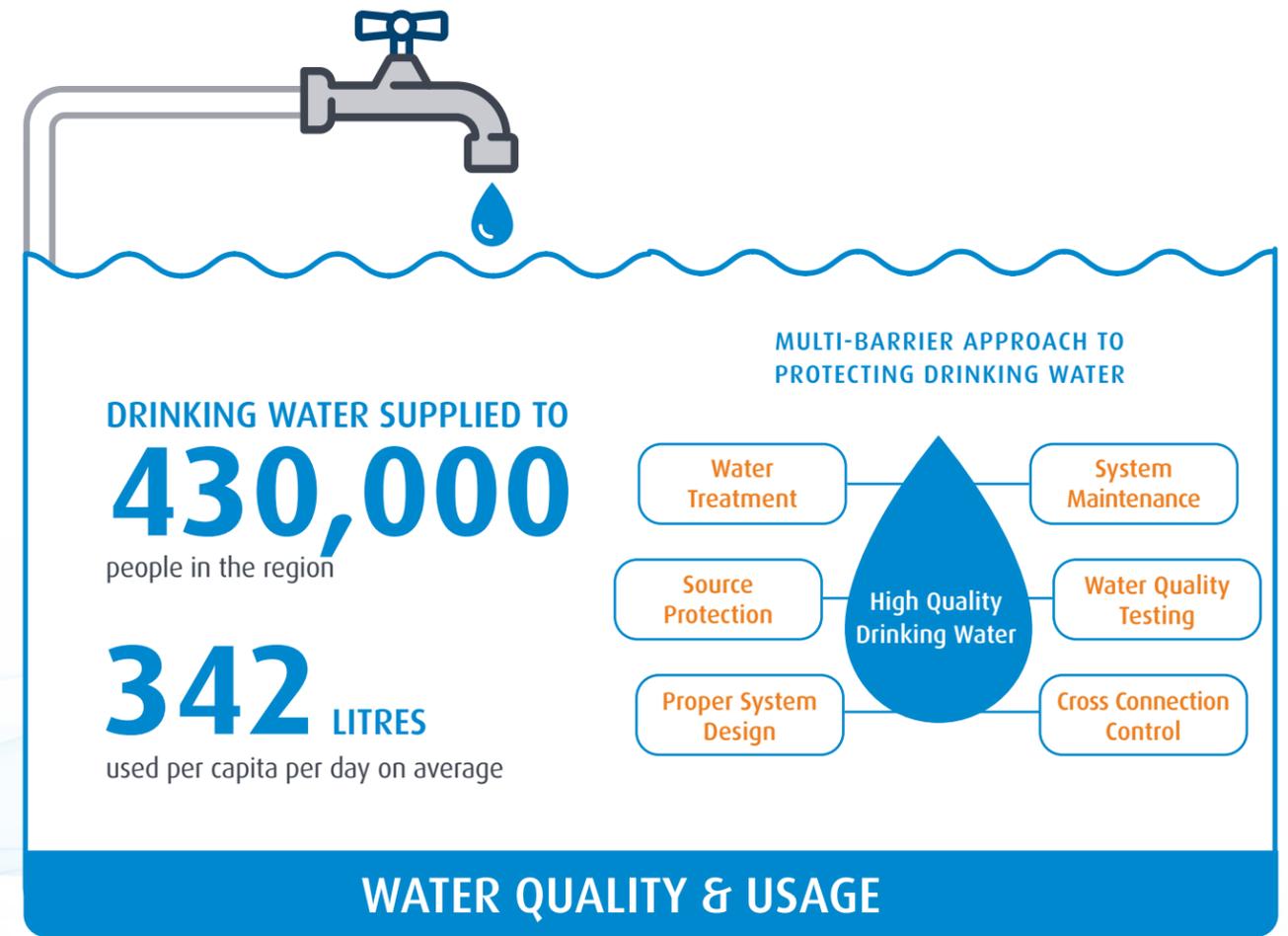
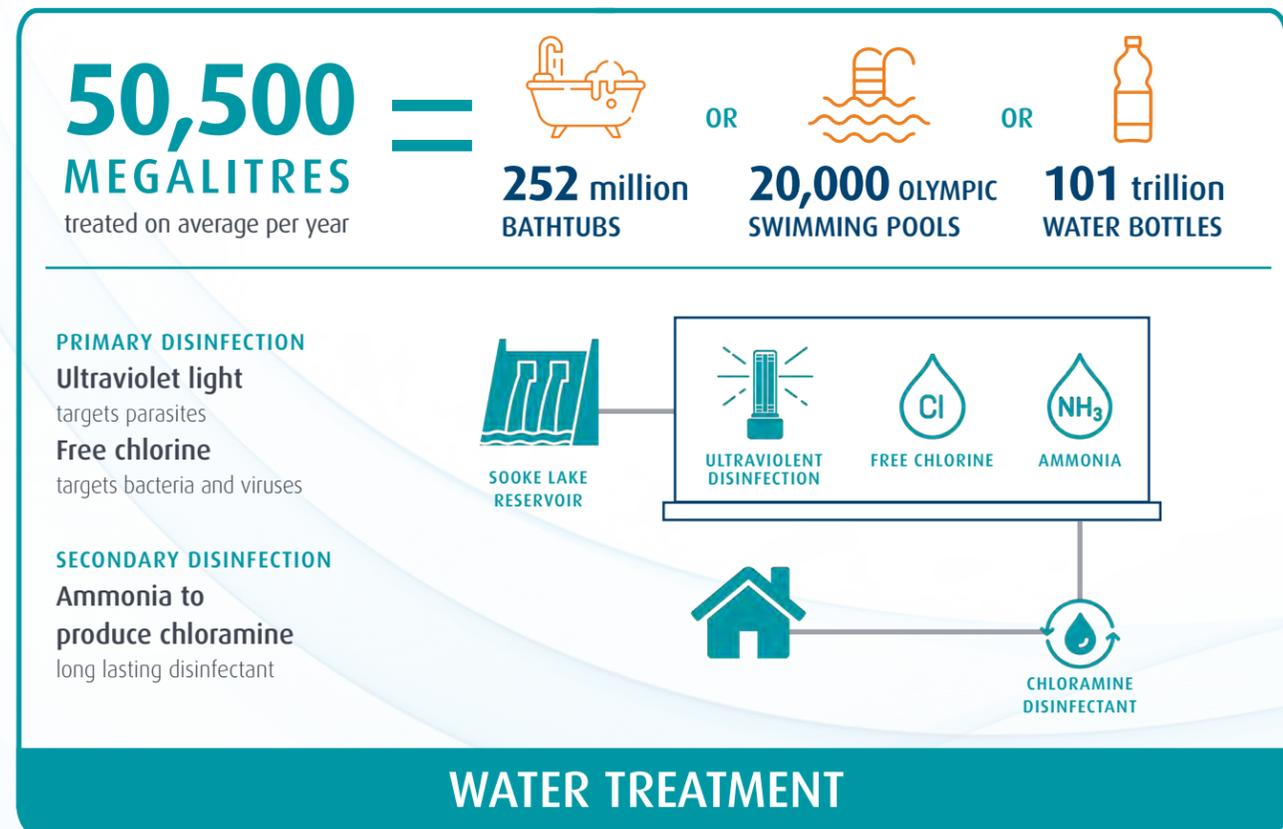
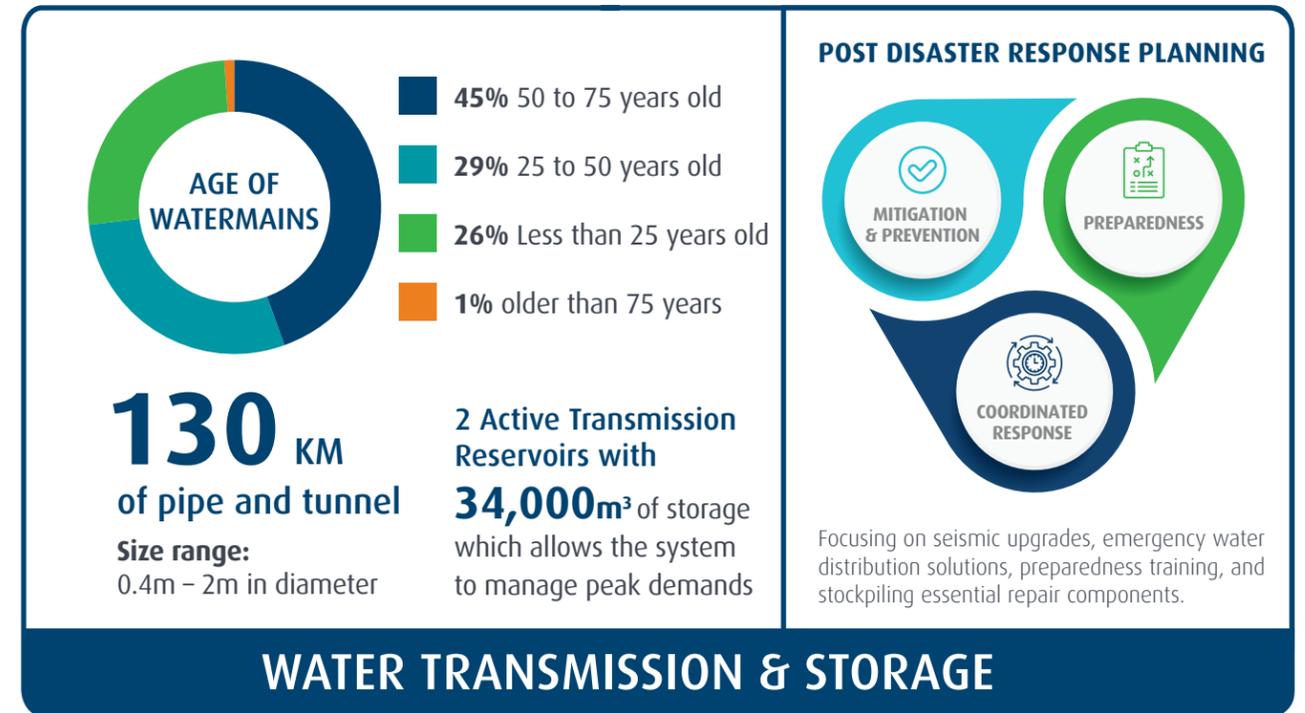
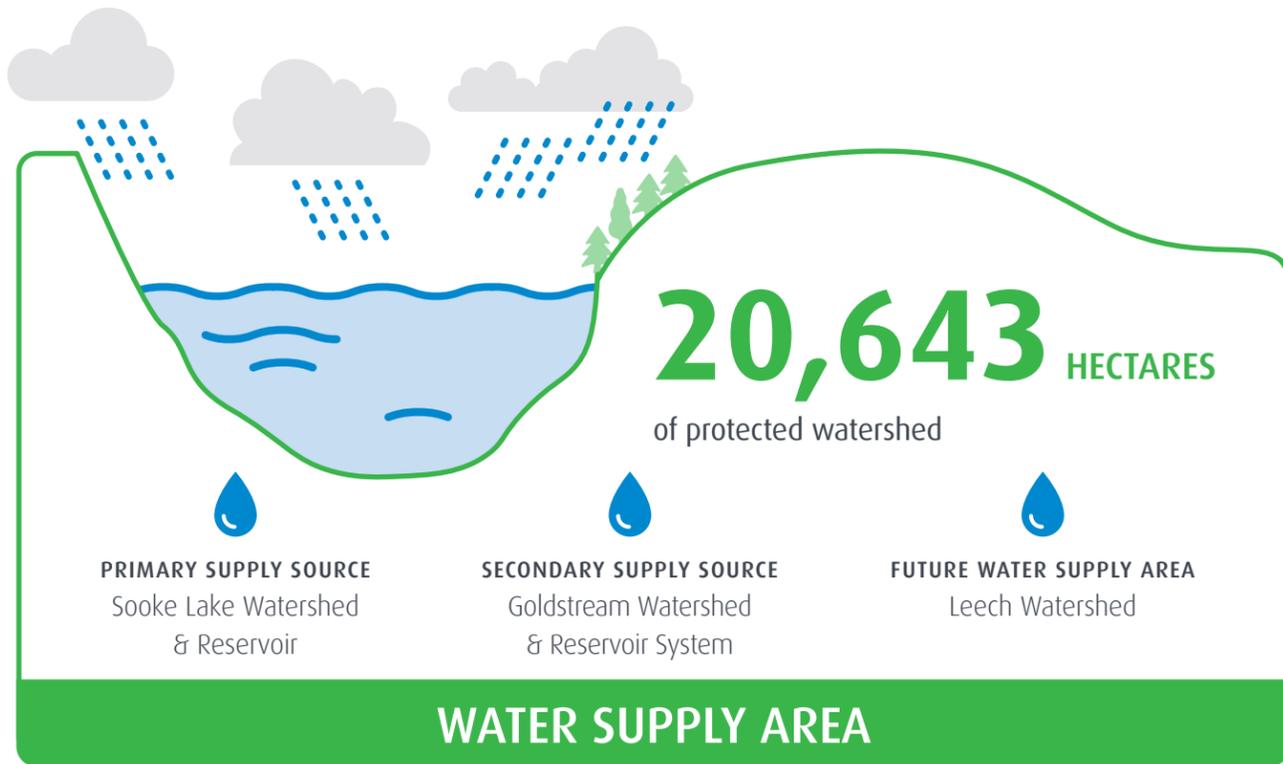
FIRST NATIONS

The Regional Water Supply Service source water is provided by the Sooke, Goldstream and Council watersheds and in the future, the Leech watershed. These watersheds are in the territory of several First Nations who have been custodians of these lands and waters since time immemorial. The CRD is committed to working collaboratively with First Nations to respect their longstanding and ongoing interests in the Water Supply Area. Several First Nations are also customers of the Service and have all the same responsibilities of other water suppliers.

WATER CUSTOMERS

All water customers connected to a public water system are responsible for ensuring that the public system is not exposed to any contamination that could be introduced through private water plumbing systems by cross connection or backflow, and for using water responsibly, particularly when using water for discretionary purposes, to assist with management of the Region's water supply.





The Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan Overview

This update of the Strategic Plan for Regional Water Supply sets out the Commitments, and Strategic Priorities for the Regional Water Supply Service.

MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement is a concise description of organizational purpose, intention and objectives. This mission statement is a recognition of the role staff and decisions makers play in supporting the vitality of our communities. The mission is aligned with the CRD Mission and the Board and Organizational Visions.

COMMITMENTS

There are three key water supply commitments the CRD makes today and into the future. These long-term commitments are foundational to the plan and to achieving the service authority and mandate. The commitments are expected to remain virtually unchanged for decades.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & ACTIONS

Each commitment has supporting strategic priorities and actions which will guide shorter term initiatives as well as service planning and delivery. It is expected that strategic priorities would be reviewed and updated every five to ten years and actions would be planned, budgeted and implemented over the five-year cycle. Examples of actions that may be taken to achieve the strategic priorities have been outlined in the appendix. The actions may be adopted over time to meet changing pressures.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our guiding principles are specific to the 2025 Strategic Plan and reflect the current context and the factors we consider when making decisions about services and long-term commitments. The principles appear in no particular order.

PLANNING HORIZON

The planning horizon for the development of the Strategic Plan is to 2055 based on the following considerations:

- ◆ 2045 is the projected earliest date that the Leech Water Supply Area may be required to supplement the Sooke Lake Reservoir to meet regional water supply demand, based on historical average population growth rate projections.
- ◆ Water supply system infrastructure can have a useful life as short as 15 years and as long as 80 years or more.
- ◆ The 30-year planning horizon strikes a balance with what can reasonably be planned, considering the projected water supply needs of the region and other factors such as climate change and advances in technology, while looking far enough ahead to allow informed decision making regarding key infrastructure and financial decisions.



Mission Statement

“Together we provide reliable, high-quality drinkable water to help ensure the health and sustainability of the growing communities we serve today and in the future.”

Commitments and Priorities



COMMITMENT 1:

Provide high quality, safe drinkable water

- PRIORITY ①** Protect and manage the watershed to ensure sustainable high-quality source water.
- PRIORITY ②** Ensure drinking water quality with a multi-barrier risk-based approach.
- PRIORITY ③** Advance our understanding of the watershed and source water to prepare for the future.



COMMITMENT 2:

Provide an adequate, reliable, long-term supply of drinkable water

- PRIORITY ①** Continuously plan and prepare for future water supply needs.
- PRIORITY ②** Enhance public connection to, confidence in and responsibility for our water supply.
- PRIORITY ③** Optimize our available water supply through water conservation.
- PRIORITY ④** Implement a sustainable and equitable long-term financial plan.



COMMITMENT 3:

Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure

- PRIORITY ①** Make evidence-based and community-responsive infrastructure decisions to ensure reliable system performance and sustainability.
- PRIORITY ②** Assure sustainability and capacity of water management operations through sufficient resources, robust processes, strategic partnerships, effective tools, and continuous innovation.
- PRIORITY ③** Enhance the security and sustainability of the water supply by effectively managing risks and enhancing emergency response capabilities.
- PRIORITY ④** Attract, develop, and retain a diverse, knowledgeable and empowered workforce.

Guiding Principles

EMPOWERING STAFF FOR SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT

Our staff are the cornerstone of our operations, essential for maintaining the reliability and efficiency of our water supply service. Through strategic investments in training, retention, recruitment, and safety protocols, we cultivate a supportive environment where our team can thrive. Prioritizing their well-being and fostering a culture of innovation ensures the continued success and resilience of our water management efforts and our service.

SUPPORTING A GROWING REGION WITH RELIABLE SERVICE

Our commitment to the region is to provide clean, reliable water to our customers now and into the future. We achieve this through forward-thinking planning to ensure we are preparing for the future demands on our water system. We carefully balance internal and external pressures, costs, and investments over time to meet the changing needs.

RESPECTING AND ADAPTING TO THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

We foster a culture of respect and stewardship of the watershed lands to supply high quality source water, while also protecting biodiversity and forests. We strive to maintain forest and watershed resilience and to adapt infrastructure and operational practices to enhance resilience to extreme weather events and other climate and environmental changes.

MANAGING OUR RESOURCES EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY

The sustainability and longevity of the water supply cannot be achieved through infrastructure investments alone. Implementing strategies to manage, maximize and optimize utilization of existing resources is at the heart of preparing for the future. We are improving efficiency by equipping staff with the information and tools they need to make better informed decisions.

PROACTIVELY MANAGING AND BALANCING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RISKS

The implementation of a comprehensive risk management strategy is integral to all aspects of our work serving the region. This involves balancing opportunities and risks, with a focus on allocating resources effectively to maintain and enhance current operations. We continue to prioritize the identification and mitigation of risks to our water supply system and water quality, particularly those related to climate change impacts, service reliability, and associated health and safety concerns for both staff and the communities we serve.

FOSTERING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CUSTOMERS AND PARTNERS TO IMPROVE OUR SERVICE

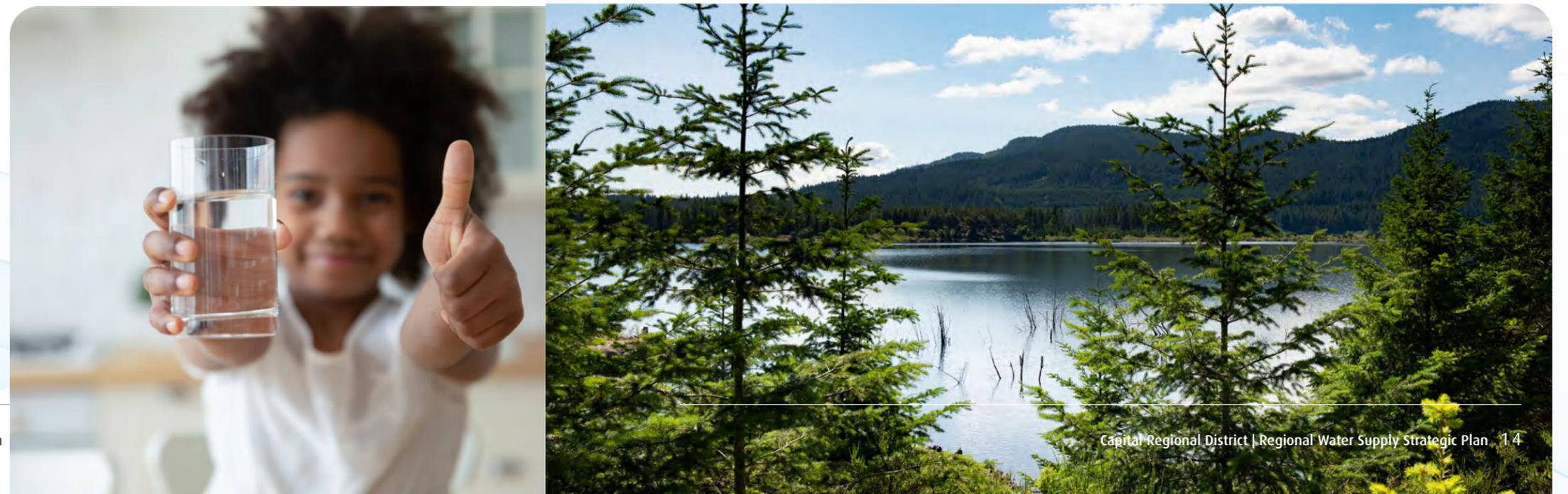
We must demonstrate the value of and effort behind the water supply service to foster appreciation and respect for this essential resource. We advance this by openly sharing information about the water supply system and its operations to the public, while seeking feedback on our service. We also collaborate with municipal and First Nations staff to continue improving and aligning our services to the needs of the region's residents. We build strong partnerships and create opportunities for collaboration so we can continue to improve.

Advancing the Strategic Plan

A safe and adequate supply of drinkable water is critical to the livability and sustainability of Greater Victoria and the capital region. The Greater Victoria area is fortunate to have a protected water catchment, a well-established water supply system and a climate that with continued foresight will supply water into the future.

The commitments outlined in the Plan will ensure that the CRD continues to provide clean, safe, reliable drinkable water to the communities we serve. The strategic priorities and actions will guide service planning and delivery over the coming years. The CRD continues to be responsive to factors affecting the uncertainty of water supply, such as climate change and future water demand, to ensure our long-term commitments to our customers are achieved.

Progress and outcomes will be tracked and reported to the Regional Water Supply Commission to ensure the ongoing achievement of the commitments, strategic priorities and actions in the Strategic Plan.



Appendix: Commitments, Strategic Priorities, Actions



COMMITMENT 1:

Provide high quality, safe drinkable water

PRIORITY ① Protect and manage the watershed to ensure sustainable high-quality source water.

ACTIONS

Near-Term Actions

- 💧 Protect water supply and ecosystems from contaminants and invasive plants, animals, and pathogens by completing a study to document biosecurity risks and revise or implement new biosecurity protection measures.
- 💧 Continue to monitor the watershed and implement climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives to reduce the impacts associated with the magnitude and rate of projected climate change on ecosystems, water quality and infrastructure in the watershed. Example Initiatives:
 - a. Undertake a feasibility study to determine optimal siting and operating procedures for a second intake on the Sooke Lake Reservoir.
 - b. Develop a forest management strategy or plan to maintain and enhance forest resilience.
- 💧 Explore opportunities for partnering with First Nations Guardians on environment monitoring initiatives.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Continue to enhance capabilities in wildfire prevention, preparedness, early detection, suppression, forest fuel reduction and post-wildfire emergency rehabilitation measures to reduce and mitigate the potential impacts of a large-scale wildfire in the watershed on water quality and supply. Example Initiatives:
 - a. Increased use of infrared and drone technology and monitoring software to provide early fire detection and inform fire response.
 - b. Trial the use of prescribed burning and other techniques to manage forest fuel build up.
- 💧 Expand opportunities for First Nations involvement in stewardship of watershed lands.
- 💧 Continue to seek ownership, management, or influence of watershed lands and watershed buffer lands in alignment with the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area land acquisition priorities.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Develop a management strategy specific to non-catchment lands within the watershed.
- 💧 Develop a policy that defines the parameters and requirements for consideration of renewable energy or environmentally sustainable enterprises in the watershed.



COMMITMENT 1:

Provide high quality, safe drinkable water

PRIORITY ② Ensure drinking water quality with a multi-barrier risk-based approach.

ACTIONS

Near-Term Actions

- 💧 Continue to update and expand the Drinking Water Safety Plan and Water Quality Risk Registry.
- 💧 Refine the schedule and develop a delivery implementation strategy for filtration and other related infrastructure improvements.
- 💧 Continue baseline water sampling and research projects which support future infrastructure design.
- 💧 Ongoing water quality monitoring to verify proper system operations and identify potential water quality risks. This also includes research and studies into contaminants of emerging concern.
- 💧 Maintain and enhance the Regional cross-connection program to ensure the drinking water system is not contaminated by connection to other water sources.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Commence water filtration pilots to refine the design parameters for future water treatment processes and cost estimates, to inform preliminary design.
- 💧 Maintain ISO 17025 Laboratory accreditation and Provincial Health Officer certification.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Enhance/expand water quality network monitoring, including the development of a remote and continuous lake monitoring system that can track water quality changes in the source water.



COMMITMENT 1:

Provide high quality, safe drinkable water

PRIORITY ③ Advance our understanding of the water supply area and source water to prepare for the future.

ACTIONS

Near-Term Actions

- Complete modelling of climate change effect on forests and effectiveness of forest management treatments to help guide management of the watershed forests into the future.

Medium-Term Actions

- Develop reservoir inflow and circulation models and conduct analyses to improve the understanding of these linkages and how they affect drinking water quality and the health of aquatic ecosystems.
- Expand and integrate the monitoring of watershed hydrology and water quality in the watershed to improve understanding of the linkages among weather, stream flows, reservoir circulation and source water quality.
- Continue to partner with other agencies, First Nations, and educational institutions to better understand the water supply area forest and aquatic ecosystems, risks from climate change, insects, diseases, and invasive species; to inform management for water supply and natural values.
- Assess forest management trials such as, thinning, juvenile spacing, and prescribed burning, to assess the impact of the treatment on forest fuel, tree and stand growth and health, and fire danger.

Longer-Term Actions

- Undertake post-wildfire and sediment delivery modelling to inform water treatment and water quality preparedness plans and filtration design prior to and after the introduction of alternate water sources.
- Create a digital ‘dashboard’ with real-time reporting on key weather, stream flow, reservoir level, reservoir release and other water quality and supply data to facilitate decision-making and communication with regulators and interest holders, including the public.



COMMITMENT 2:

Provide an adequate, reliable, long-term supply of drinkable water

PRIORITY ① Continuously plan and prepare for future water supply needs.

ACTIONS

Near-Term Actions

- On a prescribed timeframe, routinely update assumptions and future growth projection as it relates to the Master Plan and Development Cost Charge Programs.

Medium-Term Actions

- Define a strategy to increase additional water resources, building on alternatives outlined in the Master Plan.
Example initiatives:
 - a. Refine infrastructure needs to access additional water capacity to meet 2055 projected demands.
 - b. Define maximum water supply capacity using sources within existing CRD owned watershed lands.
- In collaboration with municipal partners, develop a regional strategy and standards regarding storage capacity (reservoirs) within the transmission and municipal distribution systems.
- Work collaboratively with municipal and First Nation partners to clarify and define service levels related to water supply and system boundaries.

Longer-Term Actions

- If required, develop a land acquisition strategy to expand long-term water supply to meet the needs beyond 2055.



COMMITMENT 2:

Provide an adequate, reliable, long-term supply of drinkable water

PRIORITY ② Enhance public connection to, confidence in and responsibility for our water supply.

ACTIONS

Near-Term Actions

- 💧 Continue to expand and promote public tours of the watershed and expand information relating to the water supply system on the CRD website.
- 💧 Develop and promote curriculum for schools on drinking water and watersheds.
- 💧 Develop a speaker series for the public that would include presentations by third-party experts on emerging topics concerning water.
- 💧 Continue with public engagement through official channels like the Water Advisory Committee.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Develop a long-term media/communication strategy that engages the public on efforts to protect and improve the resilience of the drinking water system.
- 💧 Assess opportunities for two-way communication with customers related to the quality of service provided.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Develop a Live Data stream/website or App on the water system — outages, facts, and construction projects.



COMMITMENT 2:

Provide an adequate, reliable, long-term supply of drinkable water

PRIORITY ③ Optimize our available water supply through water conservation.

ACTIONS

Near-Term Actions

- 💧 Define the “by sector” demand baseline and define long term targets.
- 💧 Develop a water conservation plan.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Assess baseline data to define targets and develop a multi-year demand management strategy.
- 💧 Develop policy and bylaws to support effective water conservation and maximizing water supply.
- 💧 Investigate opportunities for creating shared and consistent data sets with municipalities to facilitate analysis and trend monitoring.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Continuously refine policy and practices to adjust demand management to optimize water supply.
- 💧 Identify and study existing and future stressors on water demands to refine water use trends.



COMMITMENT 2:

Provide an adequate, reliable, long-term supply of drinkable water

PRIORITY ④ Implement a sustainable and equitable long-term financial plan.

ACTIONS

Near-Term Actions

- 💧 Implement a Development Cost Charge (DCC) program and Bylaw for the Regional Water Supply Service.
- 💧 Continue to engage First Nations and put in place Bulk Water Supply Agreements supporting development of stronger government-to-government relationships.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Continue to refine the long-term financial plan.
- 💧 Investigate the introduction of a framework that measures the investment in climate adaptation and mitigation vs. the cost of inaction.
- 💧 Identify grant and partnership opportunities to fund future infrastructure needs.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Continue to assess opportunities to streamline or strengthen governance of the Regional Water Supply Service.



COMMITMENT 3:

Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure

PRIORITY ① Make evidence-based and community-responsive infrastructure decisions to ensure reliable system performance and sustainability.

ACTIONS

Near-Term Actions

- 💧 Continue to develop and consolidate various risk registries to prioritize expenditures based on those identified risks.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Mature our asset and maintenance management processes to maximize data driven decision-making.
Example Initiatives:
 - a. Define data standards and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to maintenance and asset management and develop dashboards to track and identify trends.
 - b. Refine the comprehensive asset management plan to prioritize key maintenance and capital projects.
- 💧 Refine maintenance plans to optimize and extend asset life.
- 💧 Continue to develop and improve our SCADA system to inform operational decision making.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Create and automate an integrated process narrative for the transmission system to optimize system performance and improve energy efficiency.
- 💧 Expand the critical spare parts program to continue to reduce system downtime or service interruptions.
- 💧 Invest in technology for decision-making support and reporting.



COMMITMENT 3:

Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure

PRIORITY ② Assure sustainability and capacity of water management operations through sufficient resources, robust processes, strategic partnerships, effective tools, and continuous innovation.

ACTIONS

Near-Term Actions

- 💧 Continuously assess and improve processes and procedures to streamline operations, reduce costs and increase efficiency.
- 💧 Modernize contract and project management tools to support more efficient and effective procurement and project delivery.
- 💧 Participate in industry associations to leverage applicable operational experience and best practices that can add value to our system.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Continuously evaluate and integrate innovative solutions, such as smart meters, leak detection technologies, and renewable energy sources, to enhance system resilience and sustainability and support our corporate energy efficiency and emissions reduction goals as outlined in the CRD Climate Action Strategy.
- 💧 Cultivate strategic partnerships with skilled contractors and consultants, ensuring access to expertise and resources to meet capital needs.
- 💧 Foster partnerships with technology providers and research institutions to stay at the forefront of innovation in water management.
- 💧 Develop agreements with municipalities for shared capital delivery of contracts.
- 💧 Explore opportunities for Mutual Aid Agreements for enhanced emergency response.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Develop educational initiatives (workshops, webinars, etc.) to assist potential vendors to understand and navigate the procurement process effectively.
- 💧 Explore the technology, tools and sensors that can further inform and enhance maintenance plans.



COMMITMENT 3:

Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure

PRIORITY ③ Enhance the security and sustainability of the water supply by effectively managing risks and enhancing emergency response capabilities.

ACTIONS

Near-Term Actions

- 💧 Foster partnerships with municipalities and First Nations to develop a robust integrated drinking water plan for emergency response and natural disasters in alignment with the evolving requirements of the *Emergency and Disaster Mitigation Act*.
- 💧 Continue regular safety training and drills for employees focusing on WorkSafeBC requirements, hazard awareness, operating equipment safely, and responding to emergencies effectively.
- 💧 Continue to actively protect the watershed and water supply infrastructure from unauthorized physical activities or access.
- 💧 Identify and mitigate risks to our digital environment to safeguard against cyber threats and data breaches.
- 💧 Develop and implement dam safety public engagement and communication plans, including a public-facing webpage with dam safety and emergency preparedness information.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Enhance the risk register with physical and cyber security threats and identify mitigation measures.
- 💧 Implement dam safety instrumentation improvements at large dams to improve dam safety, early warning response and emergency preparedness.
- 💧 Reassess risks to the dam portfolio, including regional seismic risk, flood risk, and plan for capital improvements.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Formalize and document the dam safety management system.
- 💧 Design and implement seismic rehabilitation and capital improvements at higher consequence dams, including Sooke Lake Dam and Deception Gulch Dam.

**COMMITMENT 3:**

Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure

PRIORITY ④ Attract, develop, and retain a diverse, knowledgeable and empowered workforce.

ACTIONS**Near-Term Actions**

- 💧 Continue the IWS Utility Operator cross training program within each Environmental Operator Certification Program discipline.
- 💧 Partner with post-secondary co-op programs to develop and recruit future job applicants.
- 💧 Ongoing evaluation of the CRD's Utility Operator Program. This is a CRD program designed to provide career development and progression as utility staff gain additional experience and related British Columbia Environmental Operators Certificate Program certifications.
- 💧 Continue to partner with CRD People, Safety and Culture division on training opportunities, including personal and professional development.

Medium-Term Actions

- 💧 Enhance personal and professional development opportunities to better support career advancement, including formal and informal mentorship opportunities.
- 💧 Develop a long-term resource strategy and succession planning program for the service that considers the strategic priorities, as well as the changing infrastructure landscape within the service.
- 💧 Ongoing training for Management staff through the CRD's iLead program in partnership with Royal Roads University.

Longer-Term Actions

- 💧 Provide training to management, team leads and supervisors on Effective Utility Management or equivalent.

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 1)



Capital Regional District | November 12, 2024

Background

An online survey was made available for public input from August 29 to September 30, 2024. The survey was designed to understand public interest in the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan's commitments and how they prefer to be engaged for future engagement.

The survey consisted of nine questions asking about age and location demographics, support levels for the commitments, how people want to stay informed about the Strategic Plan and how people want to provide feedback about the Strategic Plan. Participants also had the opportunity to provide comments as part of the survey. 297 individual responses were received. A summary is provided below.

Response Summary

Demographic questions

Question 1: Where do you live?

Responses were received from all 13 municipalities, rated as a percentage of total responses received and ranked greatest to least. Please note that 2 of the 297 respondents chose to skip this question.

1. Victoria (21.0%)
2. Saanich (20.0%)
3. Sooke (13.6%)
4. Langford (12.2%)
5. Oak Bay (5.8%)
6. View Royal (5.1%)
7. Colwood (4.7%)
8. Esquimalt (4.1%)
9. Central Saanich (3.7%)
10. North Saanich (3.7%)
11. Sidney (3.4%)
12. Metchosin (1.4%)
13. Highlands (1.4%)

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 1)



Capital Regional District | November 12, 2024

Question 2: What is your age range?

Responses were received from six of the seven age groups, rated as a percentage of total responses received and ranked greatest to least. Please note that 6 of the 297 respondents chose to skip this question.

1. 65+ years old (41.6%)
2. 55-64 years old (19.2%)
3. 35-44 years old (18.6%)
4. 45-54 years old (12.4%)
5. 25-34 years old (6.9%)
6. 19-24 years old (1.4%)
7. Under 18 (0%)

Note: 60.8% of total survey respondents were aged 55+ and 39.3% of respondents were aged 19-55.

Questions about the Commitments

Question 3: Reflecting on our water supply and future needs, how important are the following commitments to you?

Respondents were given a Likert Scale to rate how important each commitment was to them. The scale had five selection options: **Not Important**, **Neutral**, **Somewhat Important**, **Important** and **Very Important**. Overall, all three commitments resonated with the majority of respondents, with most respondents indicating the commitments were Very Important or Important to them. See chart below for detailed responses to each commitment.

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 1)

Capital Regional District | November 12, 2024

Commitment	Not Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Total Responses
Provide high quality, safe, drinkable water	0	3	3	9	282	297
Provide an adequate, long-term supply of drinkable water	2	3	4	20	267	296
Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of water system infrastructure	6	6	24	72	186	294

Question 4: Do the above commitments meet your needs as a customer? If no, why not? (Question 5)

Respondents were given an option of Yes or No. If respondents clicked No, a secondary question of **Why Not** was asked (**Question 5**). 81% of respondents said the commitments met their needs as customers and 19% of respondents said the commitments did not meet their needs.

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 1)



Capital Regional District | November 12, 2024

For those who said the commitments did not meet their needs, comments focused on the following topics:

- Emergency preparedness
- Food security
- Agricultural use
- Climate change
- Watershed ecosystems
- Affordability
- Population trends
- Water conservation
- Sustainable service delivery
- Transparency
- Treated water use
- Safety
- Education (how the Regional Water Supply works)

Question 6: What is the best way to keep you informed about the Strategic Plan? (check all that apply)

Preference responses were noted in all seven categories, rated as a percentage of total responses received and ranked greatest to least. Please note that 11 of the 297 respondents chose to skip this question.

1. Email (29%)
2. Social Media (19%)
3. CRD Website (17%)
4. Newspaper (14%)
5. Radio (10%)
6. TV News (9%)
7. Other (1%)

NOTE: Percentages above are calculated on the total number of responses provided (637), (remembering that respondents could select more than one response), divided by the total number of responses per category.

What We Heard Report



Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 1)

Capital Regional District | November 12, 2024

Question 7: How do you prefer to provide feedback about the Strategic Plan? (check all that apply).

Preference responses were noted in all eight categories, rated as a percentage of total responses received and ranked greatest to least. Please note that 16 of the 297 respondents chose to skip this question.

1. Online Survey (38%)
2. Email (29%)
3. Online/Virtual Open House (14%)
4. In person open house (9%)
5. Written letter (4%)
6. Paper survey (drop off or mail in) (4%)
7. Phone survey (1%)
8. Other (less than 1%)

NOTE: Percentages above are calculated on the total number of responses provided (537), (remembering that respondents could select more than one response), divided by the total number of responses per category.

Question 8: Is there anything more you would like to know about the Regional Water Supply Services and our commitments?

91 responses were received. Comments varied and included several comments related to services beyond the Regional Water Supply. Of the comments related to the drinking water service, respondents indicated a desire to learn more about the following topics:

- Emergency preparedness
- Environmental protection
- Population growth
- Drought management
- Sustainability
- Cost
- Safety
- Filtration and the future treatment plant
- Risk
- Logging within the watershed

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 1)

Capital Regional District | November 12, 2024

- Watershed management
- Affordability
- Planning and project management for Regional Water Supply
- Demand management
- Water quality
- Education about the Regional Water Supply
- Grey water use
- Rainwater use
- Water conservation

Question 9: Do you have anything else you would like to share with us about the Regional Water Supply Strategic plan?

104 responses were received. Comments varied and included several comments related to services beyond the Regional Water Supply. Of the comments related to the strategic plan, comments focused on the following topics:

- Emergency preparedness
- Environmental protection
- Water access (including equitable access to water)
- Watershed ecosystems
- Population growth
- Drought management
- Sustainability
- Cost
- Affordability
- Support for current water management
- Filtration and the future treatment plant
- How to stay informed about the Strategic Plan
- Watershed management
- Demand management
- Water quality
- Watershed tours

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 1)

Capital Regional District | November 12, 2024

- Grey water use
- Rainwater use
- Water conservation

Conclusions

Overall, the commitments resonated with the majority of respondents, with 94% of respondents indicating the commitments were Very Important or Important to them.

Responses from the Phase 1 Strategic Plan engagement indicate Phase 2 engagement for the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan should use digital tools to share information or collect feedback. This includes but is not limited to providing online surveys, virtual information sessions/open houses, social media and an email address where people can provide unscripted responses.

Education and learning about the water supply were also common themes amongst the survey comments. Many respondents noted a lack of understanding of how the water system works, where their water comes from, how the watershed is managed and how all the pieces connect to one another. These inputs will be used to inform phase 2 engagement materials and aligns with proposed actions in the Strategic Plan under commitment #2 - Enhance public connection and confidence of the water supply and value of water.

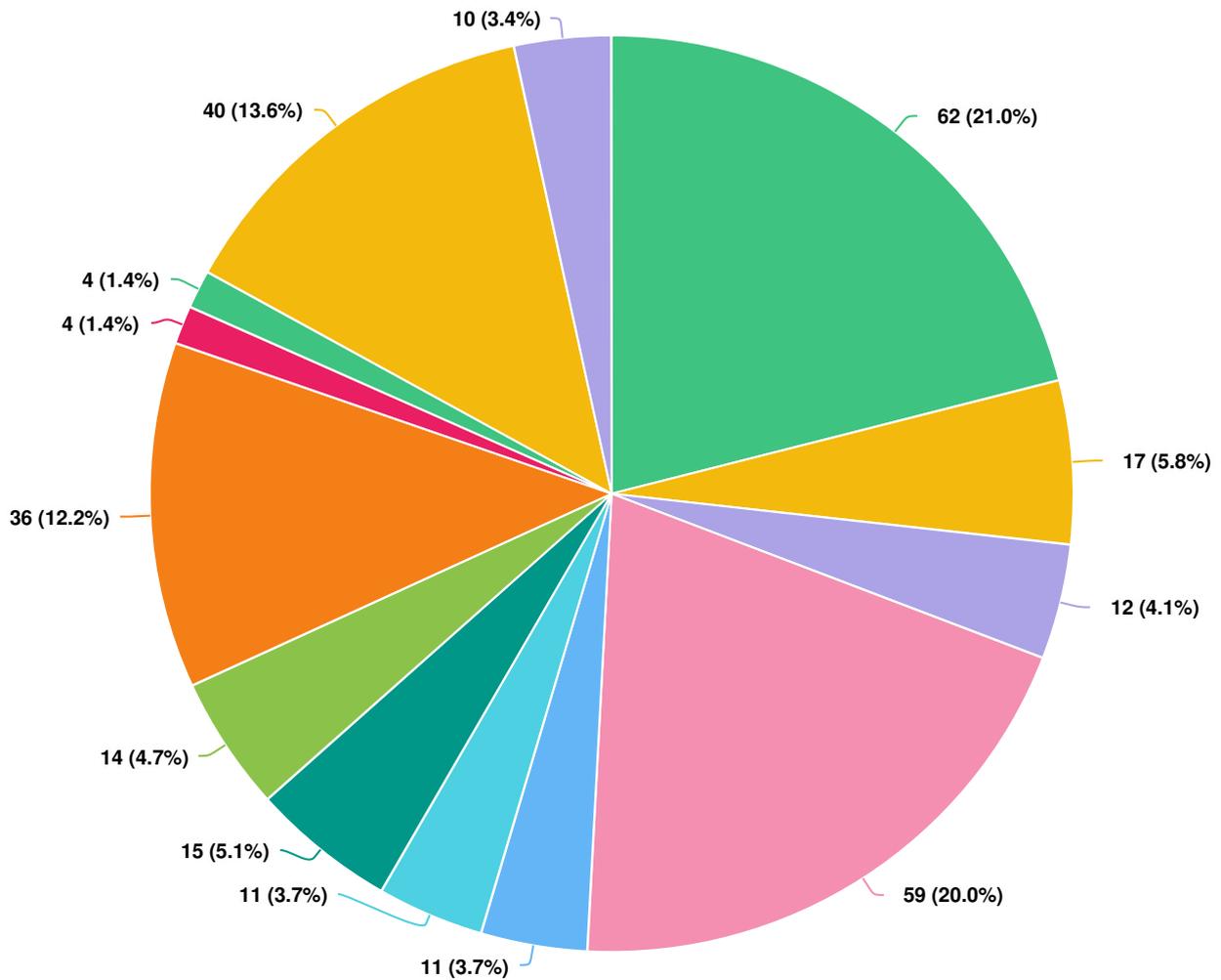
The survey also revealed less uptake from younger age categories. This could be due to lack of awareness as well as various day-to-day realities of competing for time and attention. To reach a broad range of participants, phase 2 engagement activities will include digital advertising on social channels as well as planned displays or information booths at community locations such as recreation centres or libraries.

Appendices

Survey Results

Integrated Water Services - Strategic Plan 2025

Where do you live?



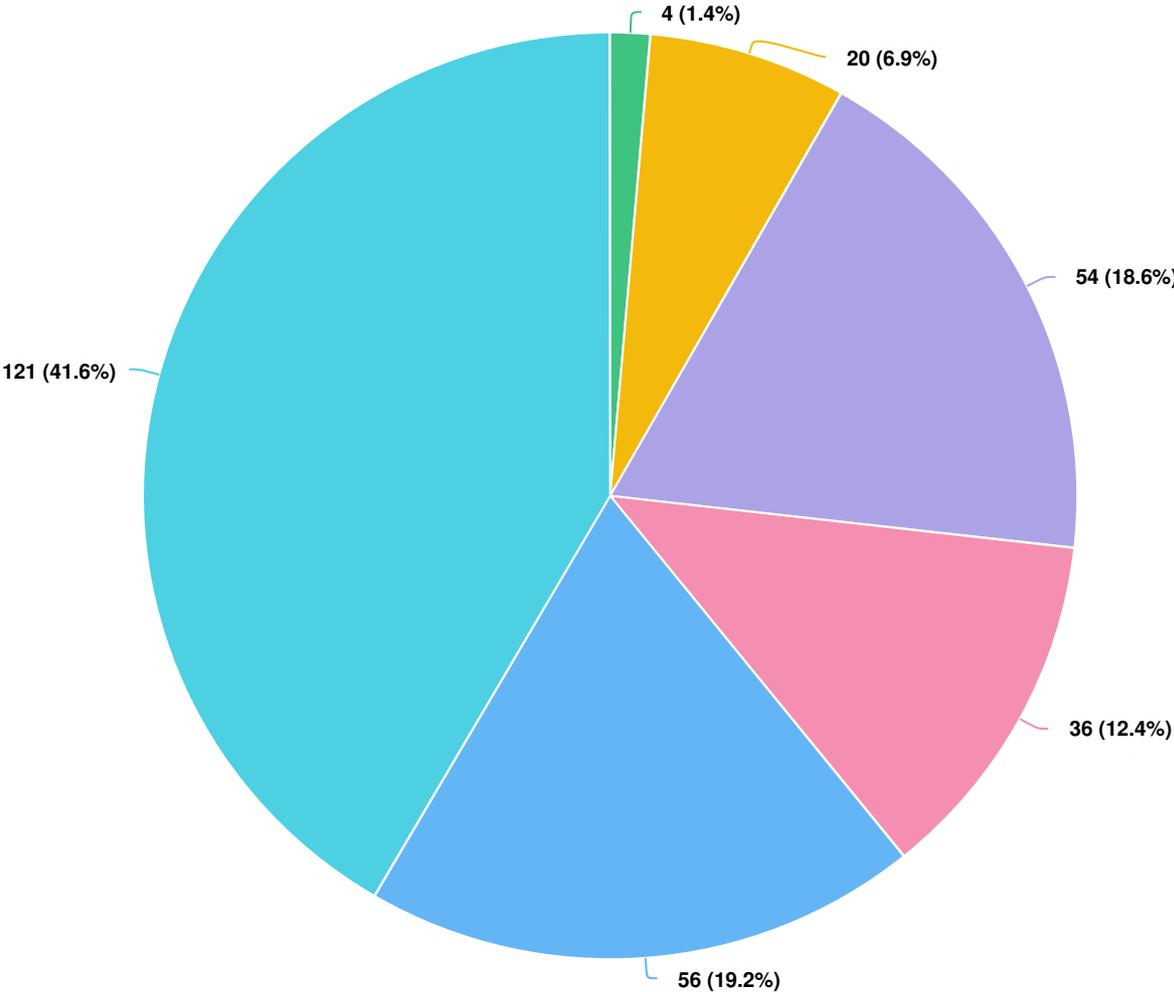
Question options

- Victoria
- Oak Bay
- Esquimalt
- Saanich
- North Saanich
- Central Saanich
- View Royal
- Colwood
- Langford
- Highlands
- Metchosin
- Sooke
- Sidney

Optional question (295 response(s), 2 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

What is your age range?



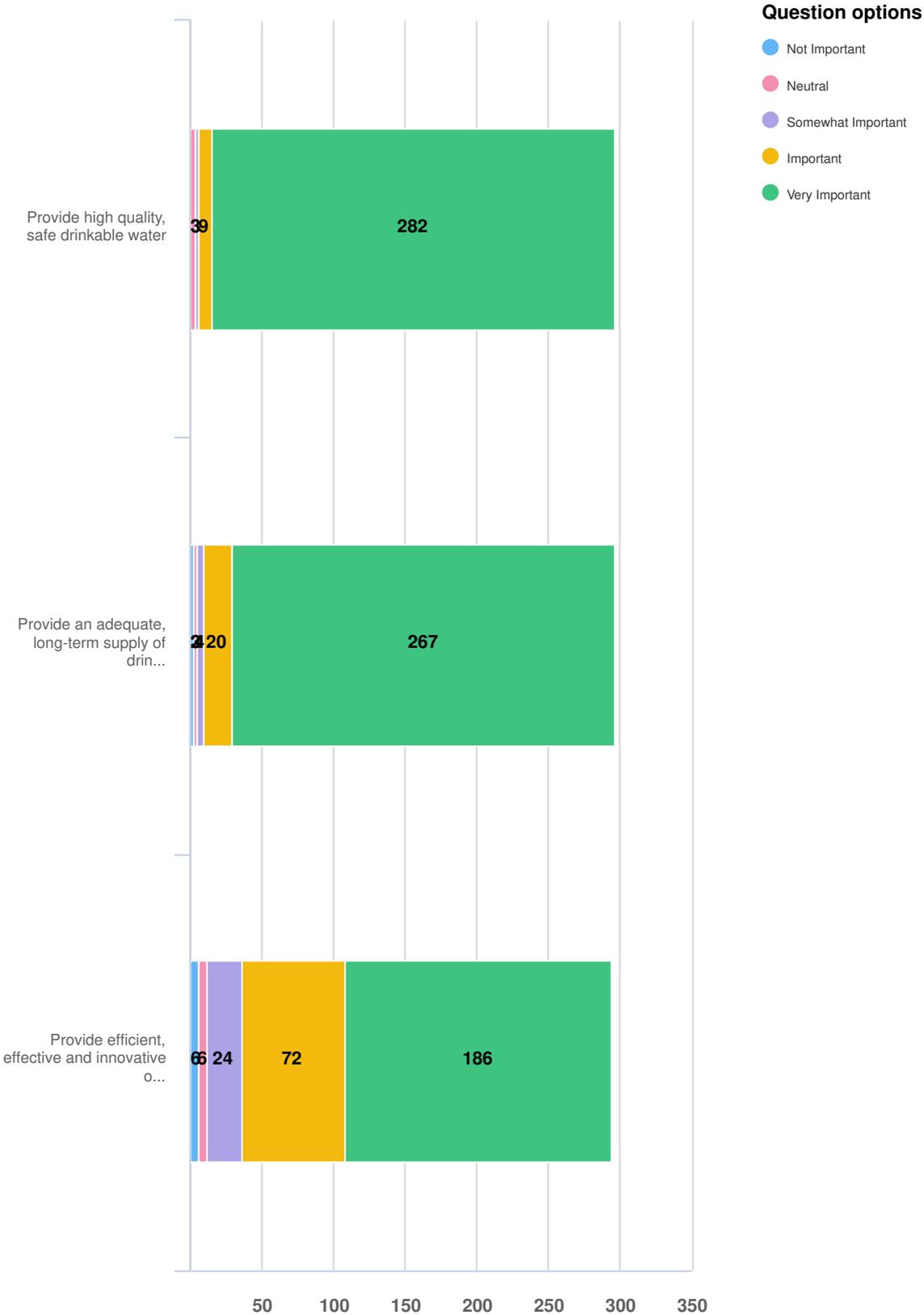
Question options

- 19-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

Optional question (291 response(s), 6 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

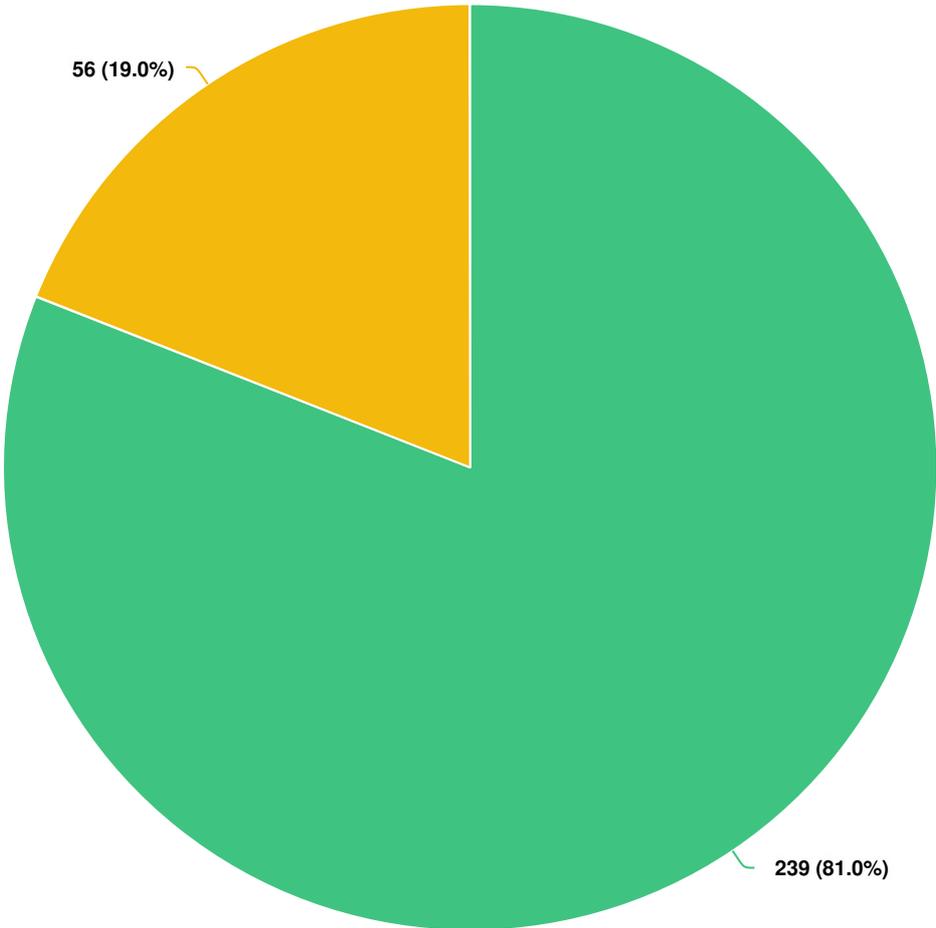
Reflecting on our water supply and future needs, how important are the following commitments to you?



Optional question (297 response(s), 0 skipped)

Question type: Likert Question

Do the above commitments meet your needs as a customer?



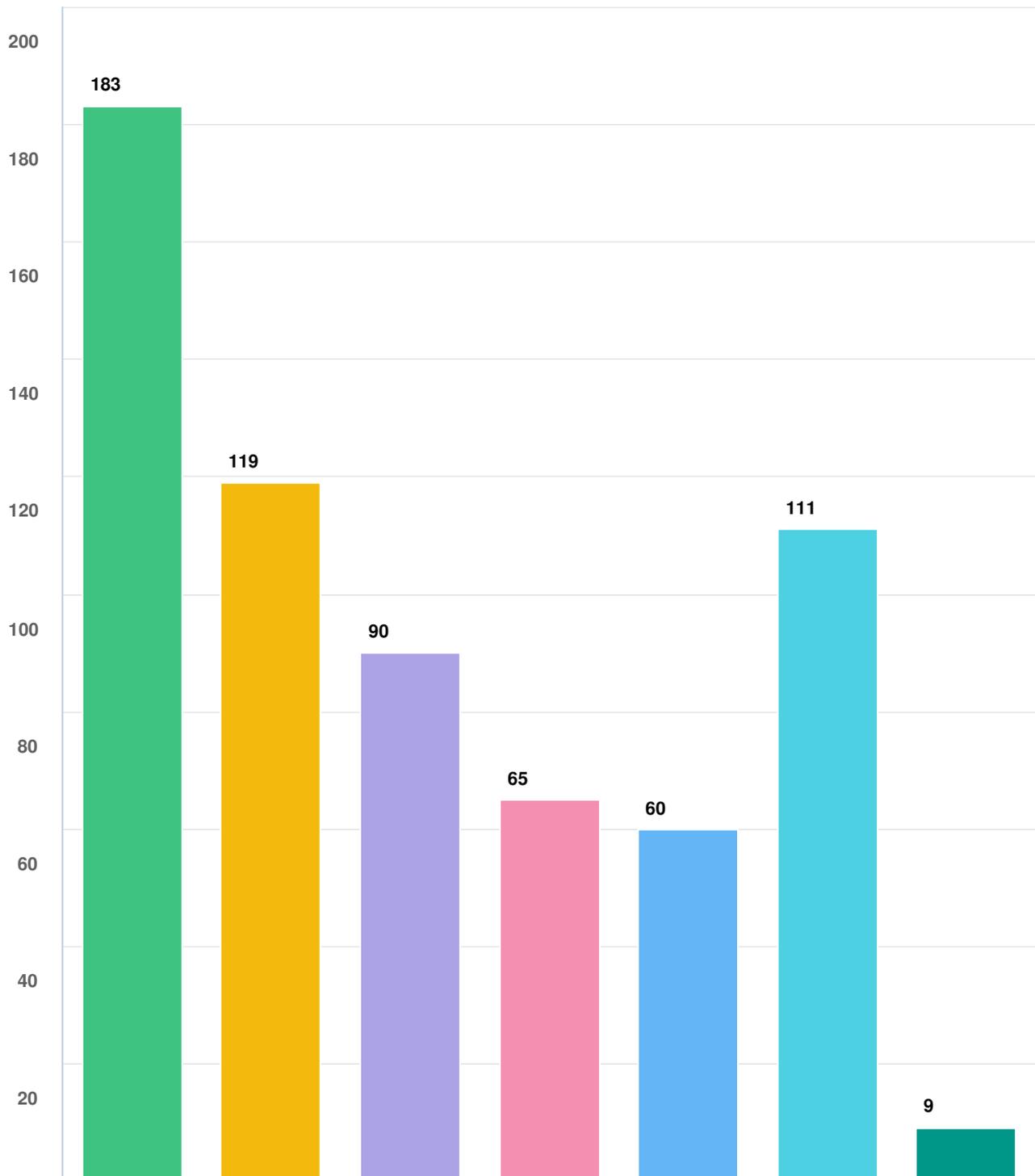
Question options

- No
- Yes

Optional question (295 response(s), 2 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

What is the best way to keep you informed about the Strategic Plan? (check all that apply)



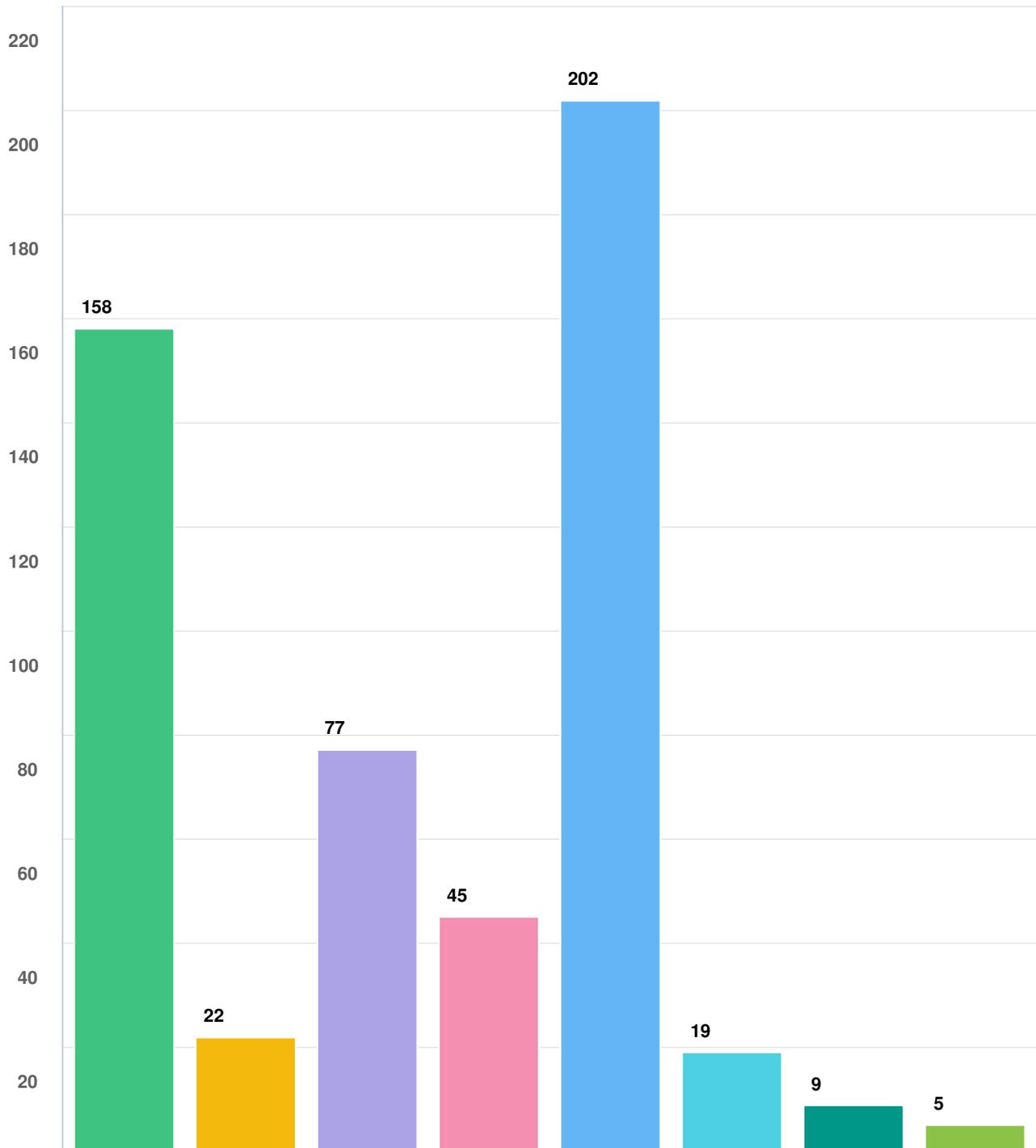
Question options

● Other (please specify) ● Website ● TV News ● Radio ● Newspaper ● Social media ● Email

Optional question (286 response(s), 11 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

How do you prefer to provide feedback about the Strategic Plan? (check all that apply)



Question options

- Other (please specify) Survey (by phone) Survey (paper drop off or mail-in) Survey (online)
In person open house Online/virtual open house Written letter Email

Optional question (281 response(s), 16 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Background

The 2017 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan set the overall direction and objectives for Infrastructure & Water Services for the past seven years. The 2017 Strategic Plan considered many of the trends, challenges and values that are still relevant today, such as providing high quality, safe drinking water, providing an adequate long-term supply of drinking water and providing an efficient, effective and innovative transmission system. At the same time, many things have changed in the region since the adoption of the 2017 Strategic Plan. For example, climate action and reconciliation with First Nations are key priorities of the CRD and need to be more robustly reflected in the 2025 Strategic Plan.

At the July 17, 2024, Regional Water Supply Commission (RWSC) meeting, staff proposed to undertake a two-stage public engagement process to gain feedback on the 2025 draft Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan. Phase 1 engagement ran from August to September 2024 and focused on informing the public about the planning framework, understanding community priorities and asking for feedback on preferred ways to participate (in person or virtual). For information on our Phase 1 engagement, check out our [What We Heard Report](#). Phase 2 engagement ran from February 18 to March 31, 2025, and focused on seeking feedback from interested parties regarding the proposed mission, commitments, priorities and actions in the draft Strategic Plan that will guide Infrastructure & Water Services over the next decade.

The CRD is committed to involving the public in the development of the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan. The aim of the engagement process was to inform interested parties and the public about the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan update process and to seek input and information from affected individuals and groups to assist the CRD with setting the future direction for the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan. Other goals of the engagement process included information sharing, dialogue and discussion, building ongoing relationships, developing understanding and trust and producing a Strategic Plan that reflects organizational needs and public interests. The engagement process allowed interested individuals to actively contribute to the Strategic Plan ahead of a final draft to be brought forward later in 2025 for approval by the RWSC.

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

The CRD is also committed to engaging and involving First Nations in the development of the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan. First Nations engagement is underway and will be reported on separately from this report.

This report includes a summary of the engagement processes and responses received along with a Conclusion & Next Steps. Feedback received from the engagement process is highlighted in Appendix B.

Engagement Approach

Several tools and approaches were used to raise awareness about the Strategic Plan and invite participation, including:

- A series of pop-up information booths at SEAPARC, Panorama and Esquimalt Recreation Centres
- Participation in UVic's World Water Day event on March 20 to advertise the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan and upcoming watershed tours
- A public information session via Zoom on March 6, 2025
- Print ads
- Social media
- [Interview](#) with Times Colonist Newspaper
- Media releases and email to Get Involved subscribers sent out on August 29, 2024 & February 18, 2025
- A [project web page](#) was established on the CRD's Get Involved online platform on August 29, 2024, with information and a survey for Phase 1 engagement that ran from August 29 – September 30, 2024. The page was subsequently updated on February 18, 2025, with additional information, the draft strategic plan and the Phase 2 survey that ran from February 18 – March 31, 2025
- Samples of engagement materials are provided in **Appendix A**

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Project Web Page & Survey

The project webpage includes an overview of the Regional Water Supply, a high-level overview of the Strategic Plan, our new mission statement, our commitments to customers, CRD staff contact information, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and key documents and videos informing the Strategic Plan update. Between February 18 and March 31, 2025, there were approximately 1,580 visitors to the Get Involved project page, of those who visited, 452 completed the survey.

The survey was open to all members of the public including residents, businesses, homeowners, tenants, farmers etc. The survey included 16 questions, with a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions. Close-ended questions were measured through a five-point rating scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree or by offering pre-determined categories. Close-ended questions were used to reduce the response burden for participants. Open-ended questions were also included to allow respondents the option to offer additional comments and clarify their responses. Questions about participants' demographic characteristics such as age and what municipality they live in were also included in the questionnaire. For a detailed analysis of the survey results, please refer to Appendix B.

Community Pop-up Information Booths

A series of pop-up community information booths were held between February 18-27 CRD at SEAPARC, Panorama and Esquimalt Recreation Centres. Each recreation centre had two days of staffed booths where the public was able to engage with CRD staff ask questions about the Regional Water Supply, the Strategic Plan and the feedback survey. Between staffed times, the informational booths were left static with brochures and information about the Strategic Plan. Additionally, general water conservation information sheets and brochures were also available for the public to take.

To celebrate World Water Day on March 22, UVic reached out to the CRD to participate in their World Water Day Event. A community informational booth was set up at this one-day event on March 20 to advertise the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan and upcoming watershed tours.

In total, the community informational booths reached approximately 130-200 people; this number does not include the number of passive engagements for recreation centre information booths. Passive engagements are defined as people visiting the information booth while it was unstaffed.

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Municipal Partners Information Session

On February 24, 2025, a municipal information session was held for regional engineers and Chief Administrative Officers. In total, 15 municipal staff attended the information session, with representation from Colwood, Langford, Highlands, Sidney, Esquimalt, Central Saanich, North Saanich, Saanich, Victoria, View Royal and Oak Bay. The information session consisted of an overview of the proposed 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan, a question-and-answer session and an opportunity to provide feedback. Generally, the participants were supportive of the proposed Strategic Plan, but highlighted the importance of engaging key partners in managing communications with the public regarding Master Plan investments.

Virtual Information Session

One online information session was held via Zoom on March 6, 2025. The one-hour information session provided an overview and context about the CRD Regional Water Supply Service, the proposed Strategic Plan and was followed by a question-and-answer session. A total of 5 participants attended the information session. The information session was recorded and posted to the Get Involved platform, for those unable to attend the information session.

Emails

A project email account was created for receiving comments and inquiries about the Strategic Plan update, waterplanning@crd.bc.ca and 2 emails were received from members of the public. Delegations and written submissions provided to the CRD Board are not included in this report.

Social Media

Weekly social media posts on CRD's Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn accounts were posted between February 18 and March 31, 2025, directing people to the project webpage and online survey. Two social media posts were boosted (paid ad spend) to generate greater reach. The boosted posts generated 56,665 reaches (unique viewers) and 253,677 impressions (total number of times the ads were seen). In addition, the municipalities of North Saanich and View Royal and the Quadra Cedar Hill Community Association created social media posts encouraging their residents to take the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan survey.

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Advertising

A media release was issued by the CRD on February 18, 2025, to announce Phase 2 engagement opportunities for the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan update and engagement process and encouraged the public to complete the online survey. Multiple news outlets received the media release and it was picked up by [Oak Bay News](#), [The District of Sooke](#) and [Township of View Royal](#). Additionally, the General Manager of Infrastructure & Water Services did an [interview](#) with the Times Colonist on March 20, 2025 to help raise awareness about the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan engagement survey.

Print ads were published in all Black Press Newspapers and the Times Colonist Newspaper as per the publication chart below. The ads directed readers to the project webpage to complete the online survey via a QR code and URL.

Publication	Date
Times Colonist	February 22 & March 1, 2025
Saanich News	February 19 & 26, 2025
Victoria News	February 20 & 27, 2025
Goldstream Gazette	February 19 & 26, 2025
Sooke Mirror	February 20 & 27, 2025
Peninsula News Review	February 20 & 27, 2025

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Conclusion & Next Steps

Overall, public responses to both phases of engagement indicate strong public support for the strategic plan commitments. Responses received from phase one of engagement indicated strong public support for the commitments and helped shape engagement in phase two. Results of Phase 1 engagement are available on our [project web page](#) and a summary of findings from Phase 2 engagement are available in Appendix B of this report.

Feedback about the draft strategic plan in Phase 2 also indicates strong public support for investments in: clean, safe and reliable water, adaptation to climate change, watershed management and associated infrastructure investments, with most respondents indicating that the above investments or values were very important or important to them. Additionally, when considering the value, importance and benefit of clean, drinkable water, most respondents felt that their water rates were “just right” in terms of pricing.

Comments and responses also revealed key themes related to shared commitments to resilience, good governance and sustainable planning. A consistent message was the desire for continued engagement and transparent communication as initiatives related to the strategic plan move forward.

Public feedback from both phases of engagement along with the inputs from the First Nation consultation will be considered and incorporated in the final revisions of the 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan.

The final draft of the 2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan will be presented to the Regional Water Supply Commission for review and approval later in 2025 and if approved, will be posted to the CRD website and Get Involved project page.

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Appendix A: Engagement Materials

CRD
Making a difference...together

Together we provide reliable, high-quality drinkable water to help ensure the health and sustainability of the growing communities we serve today and in the future.

Flip over to learn more

2025 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan Update Overview

- 1 More than 430,000 people in the region rely on clean, drinkable water every day.
- 2 The CRD is updating a long-range strategic plan to ensure the delivery of safe, reliable high-quality water to the region for generations to come.
- 3 This plan will guide water-related decisions for the next 30 years. Your voice is important to us.

DID YOU KNOW?

50,500 MEGALITRES
treated on average per year

=

252 MILLION BATHTUBS

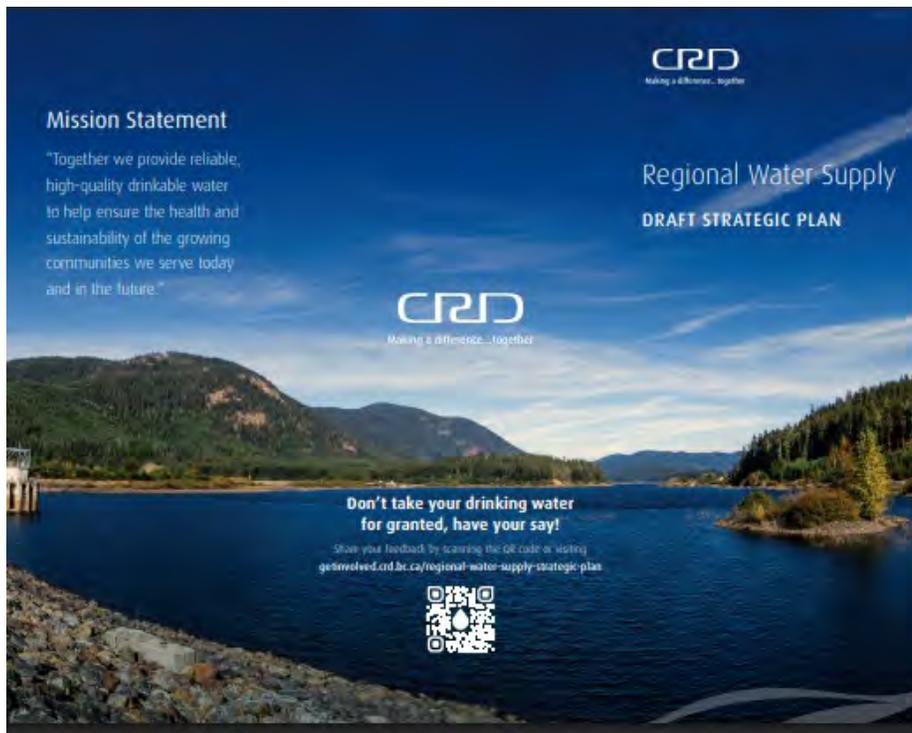
Don't take your drinking water for granted, have your say!
Join us for a virtual info session or take the online survey. Share your feedback by scanning the QR code or visiting getinvolved.crd.bc.ca/regional-water-supply-strategic-plan

Figure 1: Public Engagement Postcard

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)

Capital Regional District | May 2025



Commitments and Priorities

COMMITMENT 1:
Provide high quality, safe drinkable water

PRIORITY 1
Protect and manage the watershed to ensure sustainable high-quality source water.

PRIORITY 2
Ensure drinking water quality with a multi-barrier risk-based approach.

PRIORITY 3
Advance our understanding of the water supply area and source water to prepare for the future.

COMMITMENT 2:
Provide an adequate, reliable, long-term supply of drinkable water

PRIORITY 1
Continuously plan and prepare for future water supply needs.

PRIORITY 2
Enhance public connection to, confidence in and responsibility for water supply and value of water.

PRIORITY 3
Optimize our available water supply through water conservation.

PRIORITY 4
Implement a sustainable and equitable long-term financial plan.

COMMITMENT 3:
Provide efficient, effective and innovative operations of our water system infrastructure

PRIORITY 1
Make evidence-based and community-responsive infrastructure decisions to ensure reliable system performance and sustainability.

PRIORITY 2
Assure sustainability and capacity of water management operations through sufficient resources, robust processes, strategic partnerships, effective tools, and continuous innovation.

PRIORITY 3
Enhance the security and sustainability of the water supply by effectively managing risks and enhancing emergency response capabilities.

PRIORITY 4
Attract, develop, and retain a diverse, knowledgeable and empowered workforce.

DID YOU KNOW?

50,500 = 252
MEGALITRES = MILLION BARRELS
(based on average 1000 L)

Don't take your drinking water for granted, have your say!

Show your feedback by scanning the QR code or visiting getinvolved.crd.bc.ca/regional-water-supply-strategic-plan



Figure 2: Public Engagement Trifold Brochure

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)

Capital Regional District | May 2025

CRD REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

The draft plan outlines proposed strategic priorities that are intended to ensure the Regional Water Supply Service is responsive to challenges and opportunities facing the system while maintaining focus on the three long term commitments:



Provide high quality,
safe drinkable water



Provide an adequate, reliable,
long-term supply of drinkable water



Provide efficient, effective
and innovative operations of our
water system infrastructure

Engagement & Implementation

A key part of the development of the Strategic Plan is to engage with the public to share the plan, answer questions you may have on our system and gather your feedback on your priorities related to your drinking water.

The current draft strategic plan is available for feedback on our engagement platform and we are hosting a virtual information session in early March. The feedback deadline is March 31, 2025. The revised final Strategic Plan incorporating feedback from our public engagement will be presented to the Regional Water Supply Commission for approval in Spring of 2025.

Don't take your drinking water for granted, have your say!

Visit getinvolved.crd.bc.ca/regional-water-supply-strategic-plan for more information.



Figure 3: Public Engagement Display Board

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)

Capital Regional District | May 2025



Planning for Our Ongoing Drinking Water Needs

The Capital Regional District (CRD) is updating its long-range Strategic Plan to ensure the delivery of safe, reliable and high quality water to the region for generations to come.

More than 430,000 people in the region rely on clean, drinkable water every day. A key part of the development of the Strategic Plan is to engage with the public to share the plan, answer questions, and gather feedback on your priorities related to your drinking water.

The current draft Strategic Plan is available for feedback on our engagement platform. We are also hosting a virtual information session in early March.

Don't take drinking water for granted. Have your say!

Give your feedback on the proposed strategic plan using the link or code below. Please provide your comments by **March 31, 2025**.

getinvolved.crd.bc.ca/regional-water-supply-strategic-plan



Scan to
learn more!




 Making a difference...together

Figure 4: Black Press Newspaper Ad

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025



Planning for Our Ongoing Drinking Water Needs

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getinvolved.crd.bc.ca/regional-water-supply-strategic-plan



Scan to
learn more!



Figure 5: Times Colonist Newspaper Ad

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Appendix B: Regional Water Strategic Plan Survey Summary

Prepared by: Catapult Strategy for the Capital Regional District - April 2025

A total of 452 online surveys were completed between February 18, 2025, and March 31, 2025. Below is a summary of the online survey responses.

Section 1: Demographics

Q1: Where do you live?

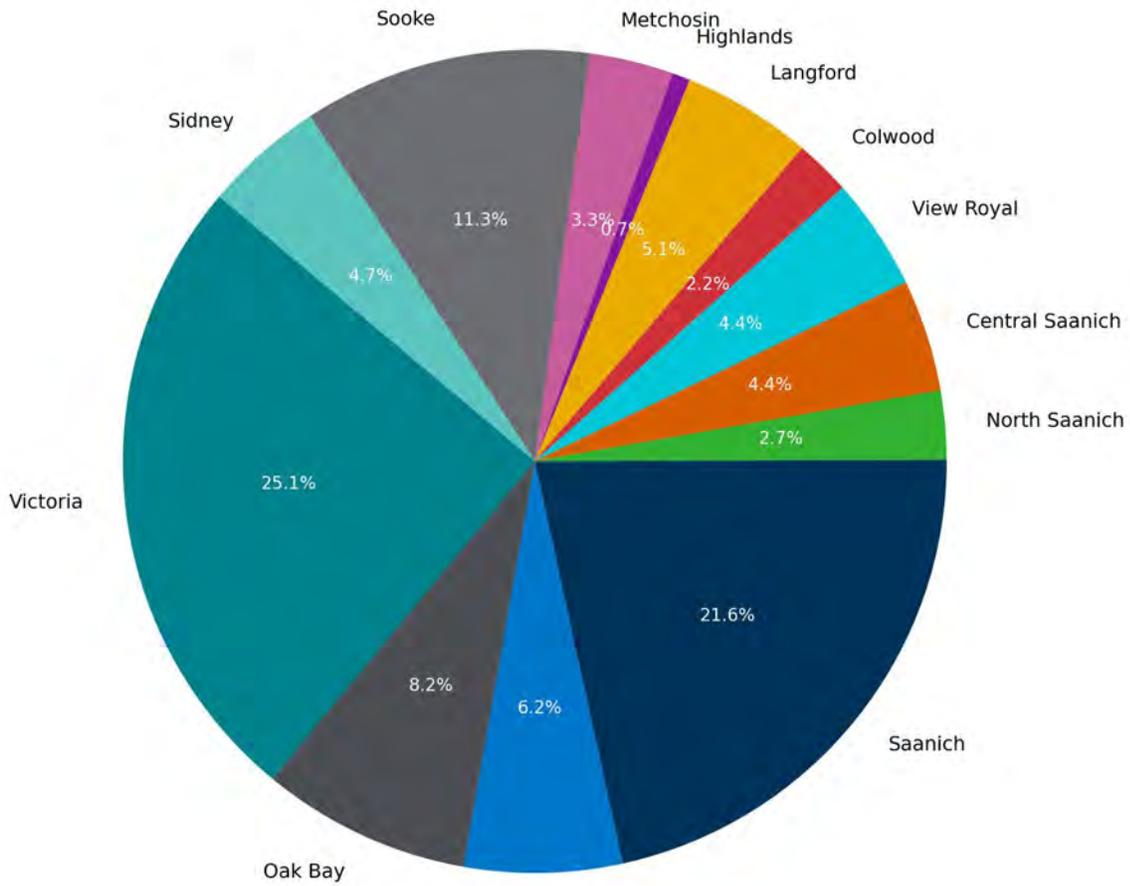
The survey reached residents across the region, with strong participation from Victoria at 25.1% and Saanich at 21.6%. The respondent distribution suggests a well-rounded geographic representation although Sooke at 11.3% and Oak Bay at 8.2% are slightly overrepresented and Langford at 5.1% are slightly underrepresented relative to their population.

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025



What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)

Capital Regional District | May 2025

Community	# Responses	% Responses
Central Saanich	20	4.4%
Colwood	10	2.2%
Esquimalt	28	6.2%
Langford	23	5.1%
Metchosin	15	3.3%
North Saanich	12	2.7%
Oak Bay	37	8.2%
Saanich	97	21.6%
Sidney	21	4.7%
Sooke	51	11.3%
Victoria	113	25.1%
View Royal	20	4.4%
Highlands	3	0.7%

What We Heard Report

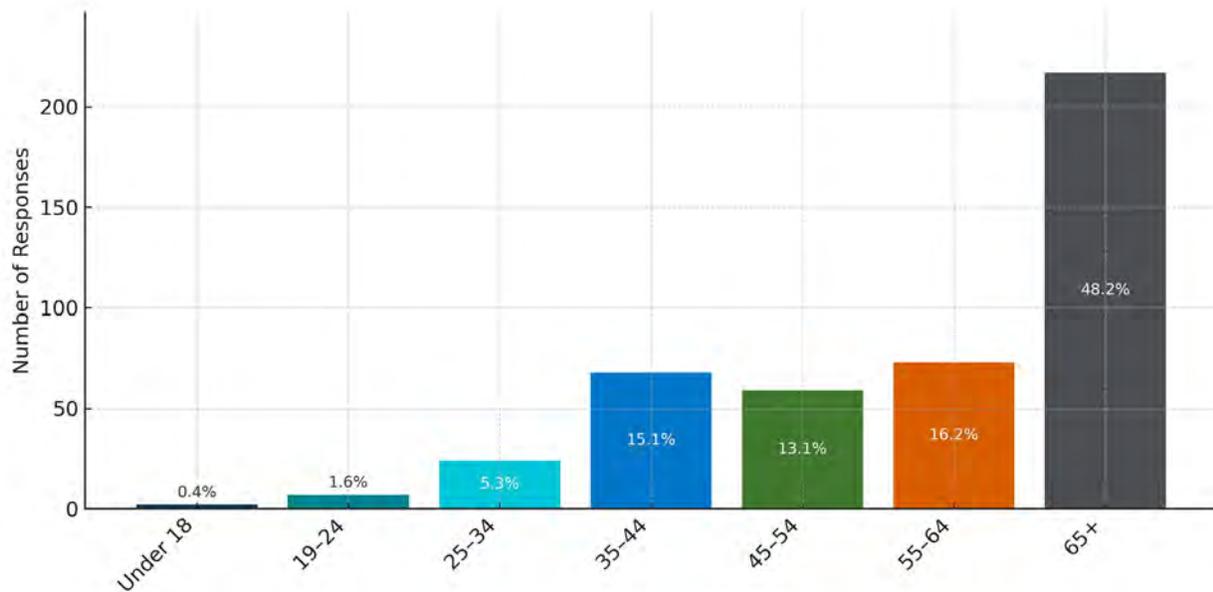
Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Q2: What is your age range?

Survey respondents skewed older, with nearly half 48.2% of respondents being aged 65+, followed by 55–64 years at 16.2% and 35–44 years at 15.1%. This strong engagement from older residents likely reflects a high level of interest in infrastructure, planning and regional services among retirees and long-term community members as well as availability of time to complete the survey.



What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)

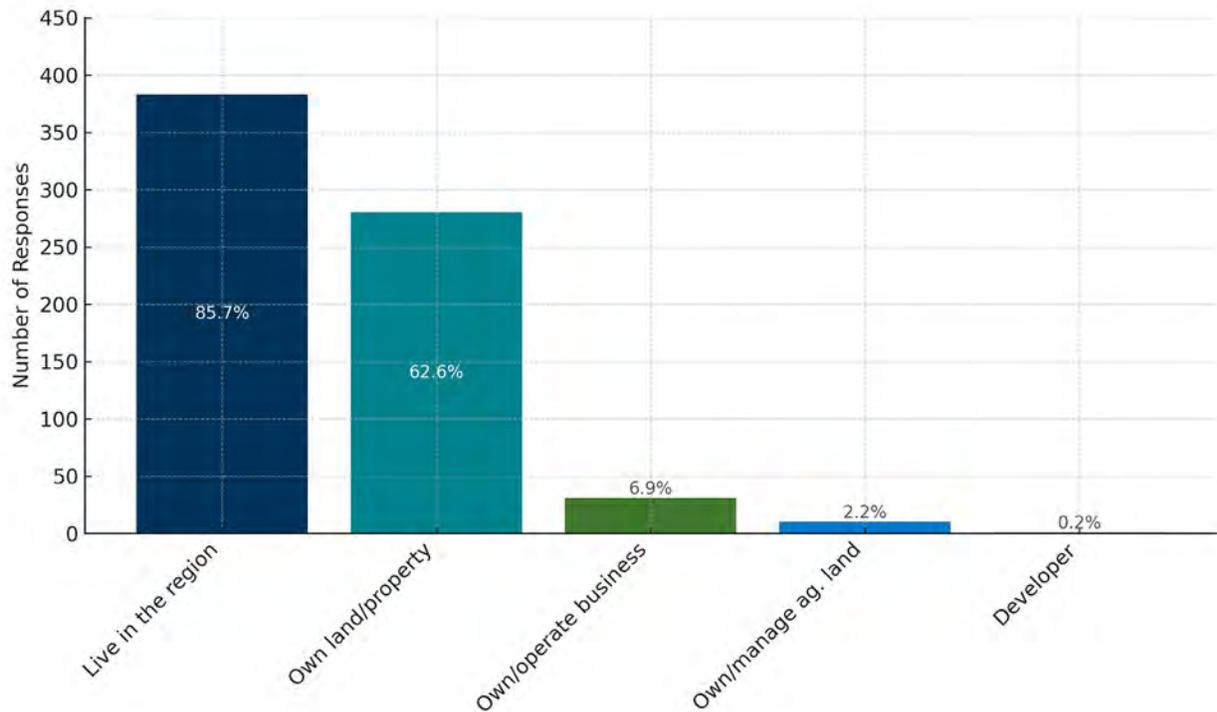
Capital Regional District | May 2025

Q3: How would you best describe your connection(s) to the Regional Water Supply Service?
 (Respondents checked all responses that were applicable to them).

The vast majority of survey respondents (85.7%) indicated they live in the region, with 62.6% stating they also own land or property.

Smaller segments of the population reported owning or operating a business (6.9%) or managing agricultural land (2.2%). Less than 1% identified as developers.

These results suggest the feedback largely reflects residential perspectives, with business and agricultural viewpoints comparatively underrepresented.



What We Heard Report

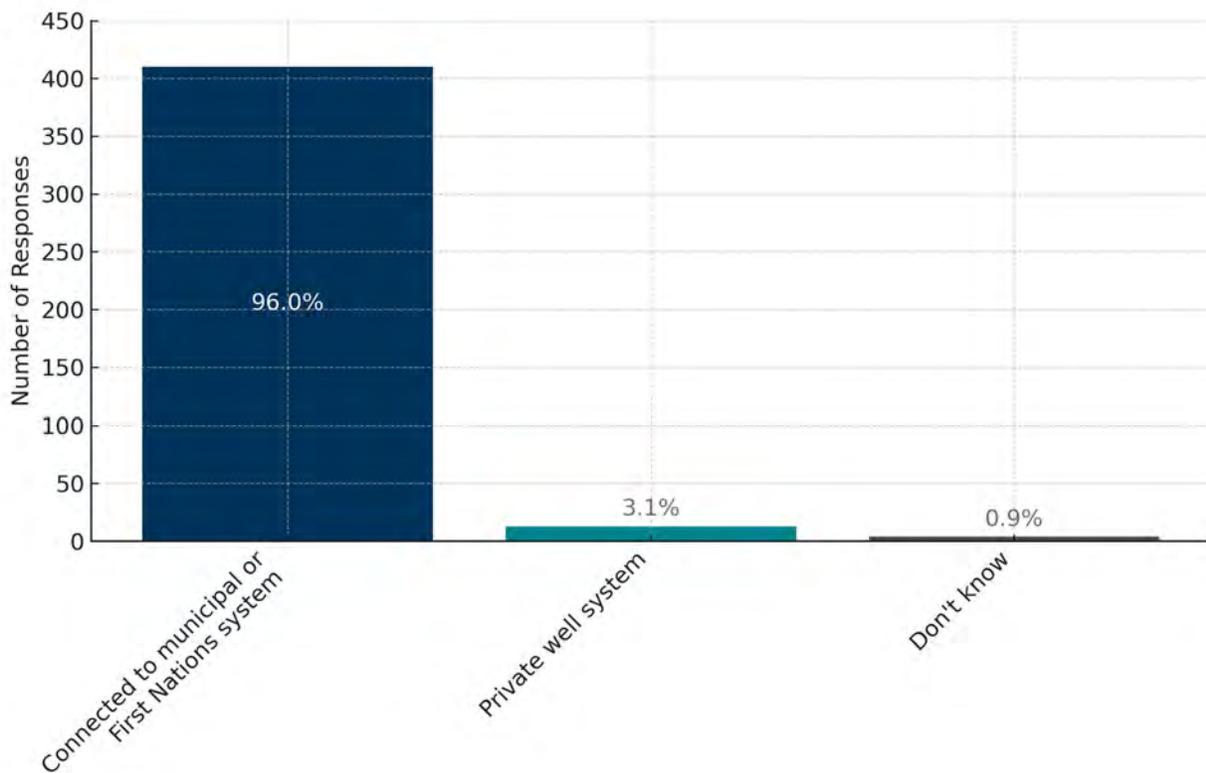
Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Q4: What is your current drinking water source?

The vast majority of respondents 96% report being connected to a municipal or First Nations drinking water system. A smaller portion 3.1% use a private well system, while 0.9% indicated they were unsure of their source. This suggests most respondents have consistent access to regulated systems, although private well users may face different challenges around supply and safety.



What We Heard Report

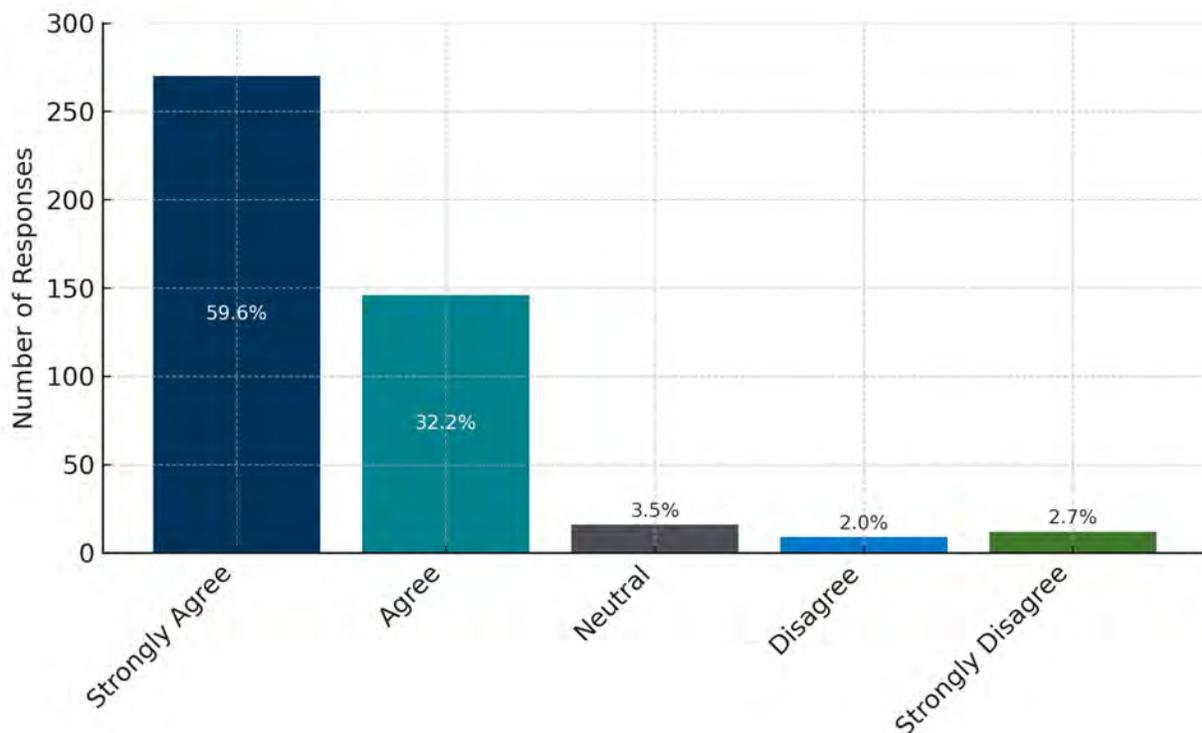
Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Q5. Rate your level of agreement or disagreement: "Historically, the Regional Water Supply Service has met my expectations."

A strong majority of participants expressed confidence in the historical performance of the Regional Water Supply Service, with 91.8% either strongly or somewhat agreeing that it met their expectations. An additional 3.5% were neutral, suggesting a relatively modest portion of uncertainty or disengagement. Very few respondents indicated dissatisfaction, with only 4.7% expressing disagreement. These results reflect a generally positive perception of the service's historical delivery.



What We Heard Report

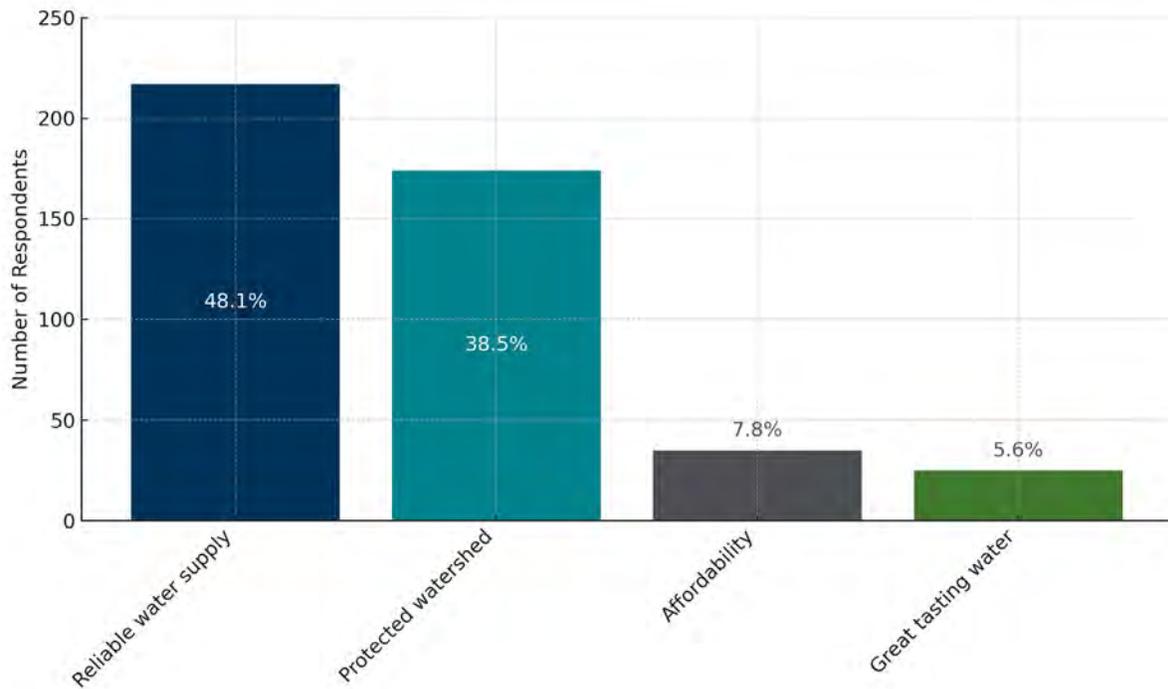
Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Q6. Rank what aspect of the Regional Water Supply Service you value the most.
(Respondents ranked from 1-5 with 1 being most valued).

A clear majority of respondents 48.1% selected a reliable water supply as their top priority followed by a protected watershed at 38.5%. Fewer respondents ranked affordability and great tasting water as their top priorities. The results highlight a strong focus on core services and environmental protection.



What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Q7. Are there other aspects of the Regional Water Supply Service you value that were not mentioned in the previous question? If yes, please explain.

Responses were grouped in the common themes noted below.

- **Water Quality Testing and Monitoring**

Some respondents mentioned their appreciation for regular water quality testing and real-time data sharing, reinforcing their trust in the system.

- **Emergency Preparedness**

A few respondents emphasized the importance of robust planning and system redundancy to handle emergencies like earthquakes, wildfires, or system failures.

- **Equity in Access and Planning for Growth**

There were remarks related to ensuring equitable access across communities (urban and rural) and incorporating future population growth into infrastructure planning.

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)

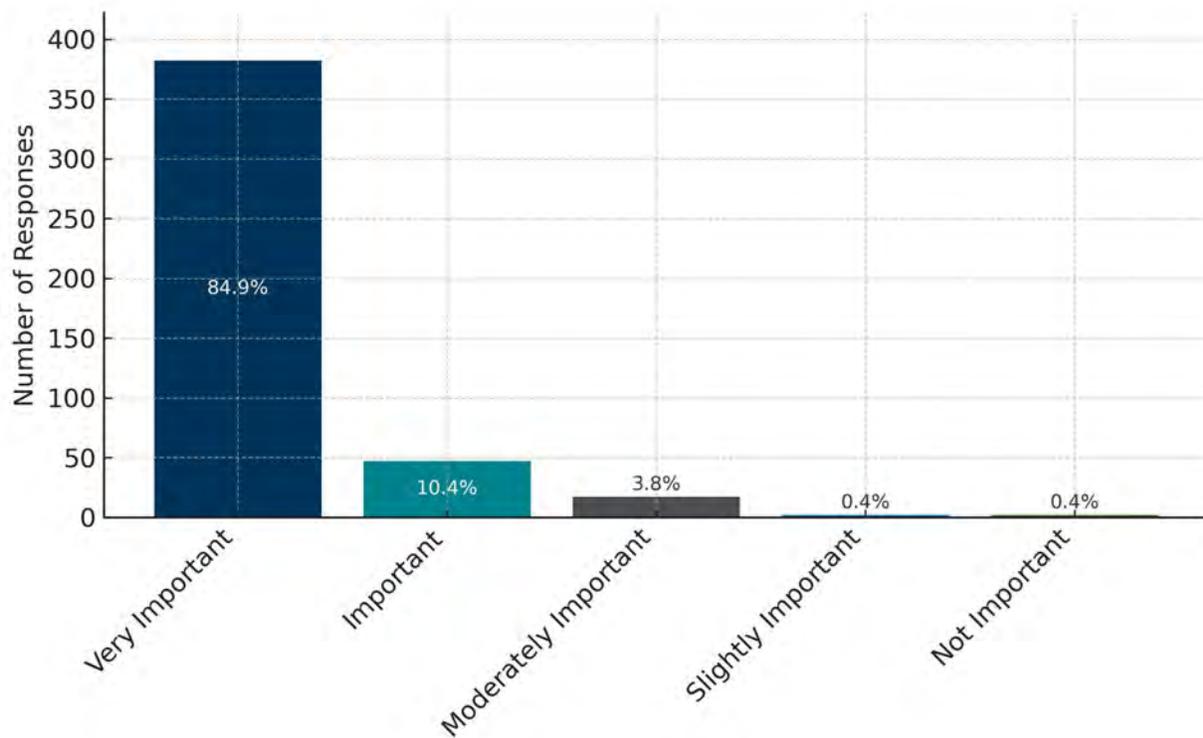


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Section 2: Priorities

Q8: Reflecting on our current water supply and future water needs, how important is it that the CRD continues to invest in high quality, safe and reliable drinkable water?

There is near-universal agreement on the importance of continuing investment in safe and reliable drinking water. An overwhelming 95.3% of respondents said it is either very important or important for the CRD to continue investing in safe and reliable drinking water. This confirms exceptionally strong regional support for core infrastructure maintenance and renewal.



What We Heard Report

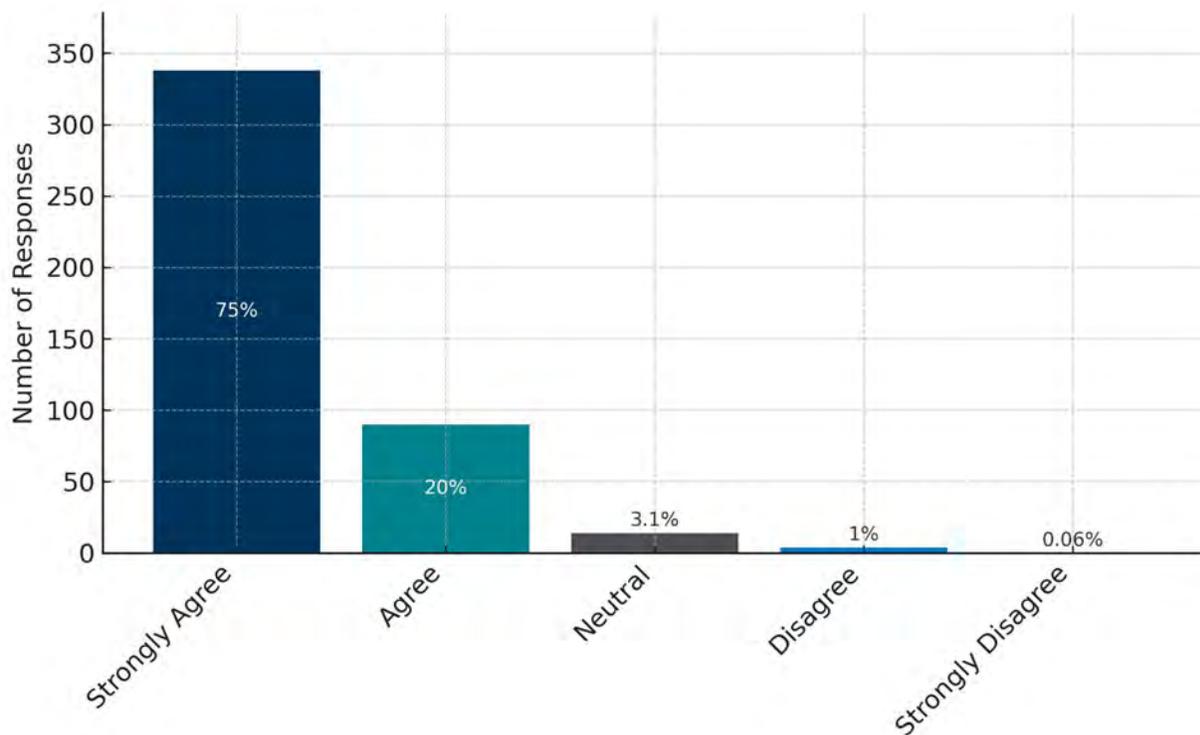
Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



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Q9: Ensuring clean, safe and reliable water is a complex process involving investments in watershed management, reservoirs, underground infrastructure, treatment, safety protocols and more. Do you believe the above long-term investments are good for the region?

The vast majority 95% of participants strongly agree or agree that long-term investments in water systems are beneficial. This reinforces public support for strategic planning and budgeting that takes future needs into account.



What We Heard Report

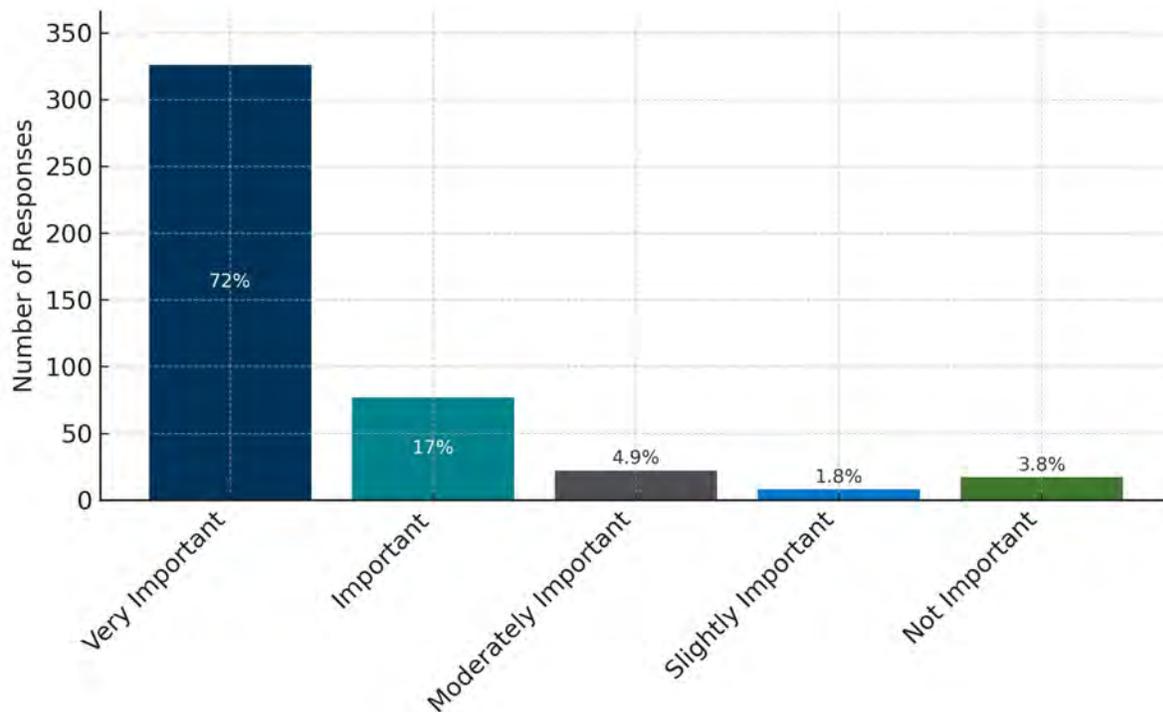
Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



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Q10: Changing weather patterns, warming temperatures and a growing population are changing the supply, demand and usage of water. How important is it to you that the CRD adapts to climate change and prioritizes investments in long-term strategies to ensure a reliable water supply for future generations?

The vast majority 93.9% of respondents consider climate adaptation very important, important, or moderately important with only 3.8% rating it as not important. This indicates broad awareness of how climate impacts may affect water security and strong endorsement of future-focused strategies.



What We Heard Report

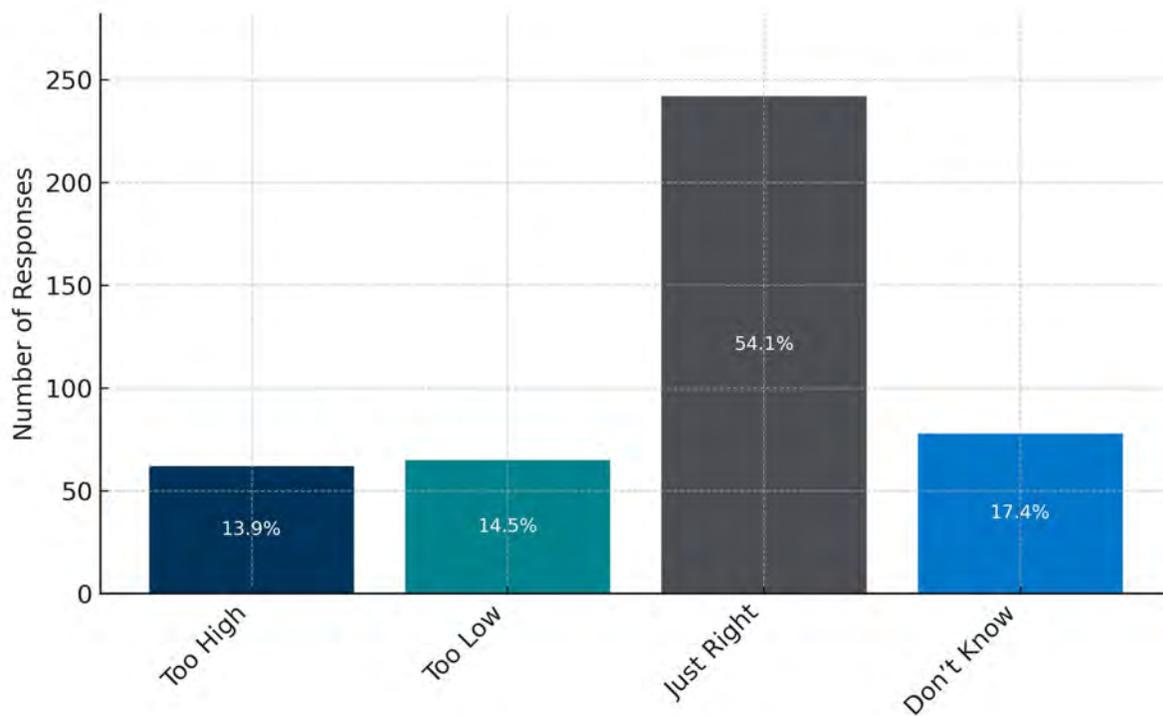
Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Q11: To keep costs affordable, the draft Strategic Plan balances infrastructure investments and continuous innovation with fiscal responsibility and efficiency. When you consider the value, importance and benefit of clean, drinkable water, would you say the current costs for your home or business are:

A majority of respondents 54.1% felt that current costs were just right, while a smaller share viewed rates as either too high or too low. Notable 17.4% were unsure, suggesting some uncertainty or lack of awareness around pricing. Overall, affordability does not appear to be a major barrier to support for continued investment.



What We Heard Report

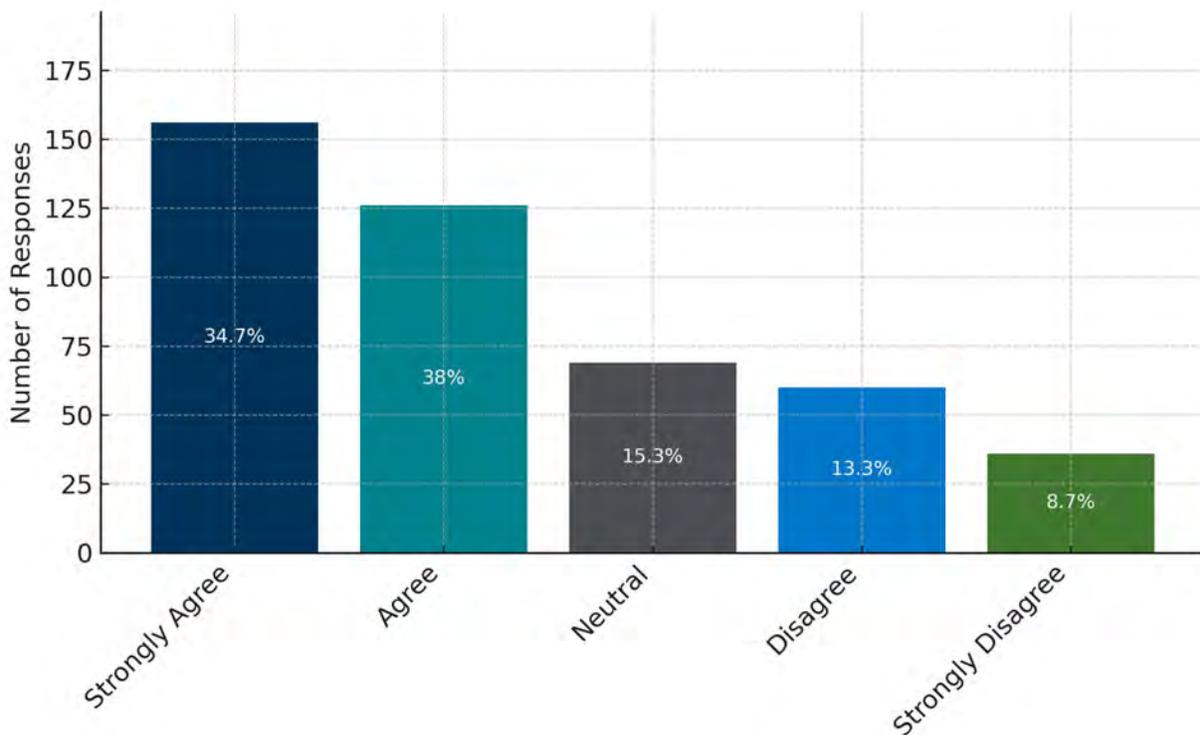
Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Q12: Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement: "The CRD should promote and enforce year-round water conservation, even when water shortages are not expected."

Support for conservation is generally strong, with 72.7% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the initiative. A smaller share 15.3% were neutral, while 22% expressed some level of disagreement. While overall support is high, the level of consensus is somewhat lower than seen in other areas, indicating room for continued public education or engagement.



What We Heard Report

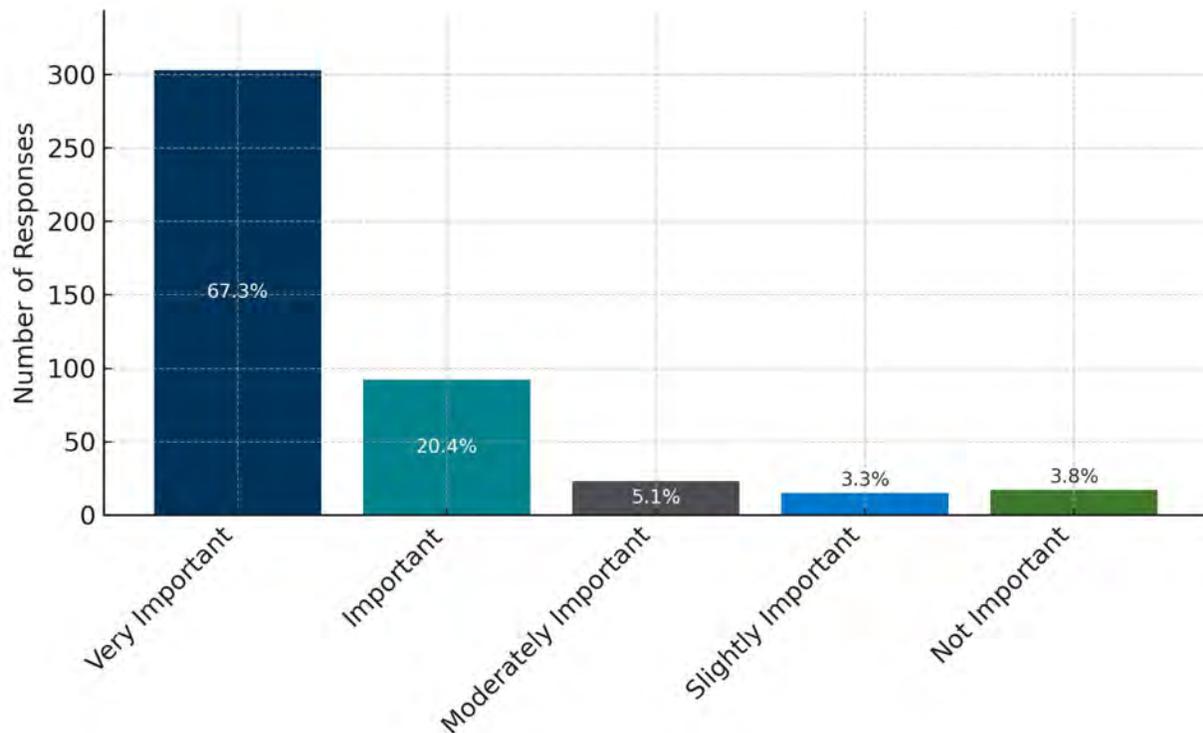
Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Q13: For years, the CRD has been investing in measures to safeguard the region from potential water shortages or water supply interruptions resulting from natural disasters and impacts from climate change. How important is this to you?

Investment in emergency preparedness is widely supported. Residents recognize the value in proactively mitigating future risks and ensuring resilience to climate events or infrastructure failure. Most respondents 92.8% feel that emergency preparedness is very important, important or moderately important. These results suggest high public support for proactive planning to handle risks related to climate and infrastructure failure.



What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Q14: If there were something you could improve about the Regional Water Supply Service, what would it be?

When asked what could be improved, respondents most frequently pointed to a need for clearer communication and greater transparency, particularly regarding water quality and decision-making. Others suggested enhancing rural service equity, investing in leak detection and infrastructure renewal, and doing more to protect watersheds and prepare for future climate challenges. A few also expressed confusion over water taste and chlorine use, asking for more public education.

A. Planning for Growth & Future Demand

Several respondents called for more clarity on how the CRD is planning for population growth and future water demand:

"Is the service able to meet future water demands in light of urban expansion and climate change?"

B. Emergency Preparedness & Resilience

There is strong interest in knowing how the CRD will provide water in emergencies or during major infrastructure failure:

"Yes, how do you provide water in the event of a critical pipe break or disaster?"

C. Accountability & Oversight of Development Impacts

Some residents expressed concern about how new developments are affecting water supply and infrastructure resilience.

"I've been hearing a lot about how development is straining infrastructure. Is anyone measuring that?"

D. Transparency & Public Communication

Many respondents asked for better access to information about forecasts, planning metrics and rationale for infrastructure priorities. Billing was a recurring concern, with several asking for more transparency in how water bills are calculated and what the charges represent.

"Better clarity on water billing. The charges are confusing and not well explained?"

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)

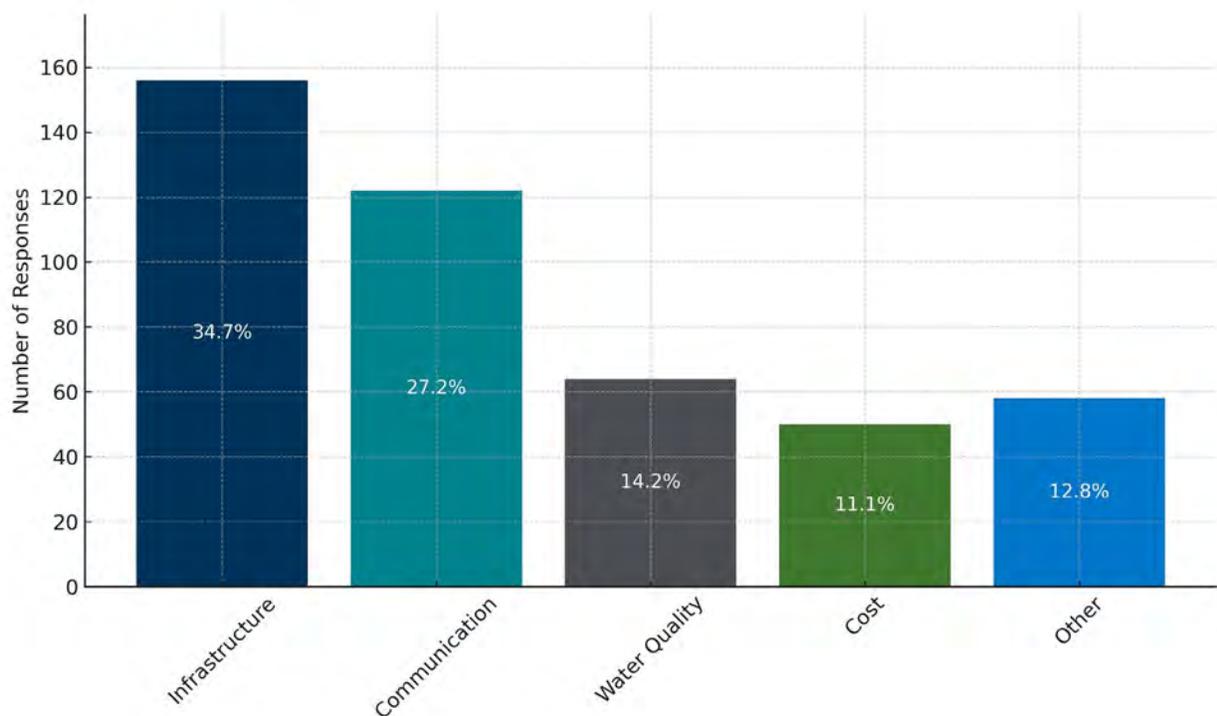


Capital Regional District | May 2025

E. Innovation and Infrastructure Investment

A smaller but vocal group called for more innovative thinking, including alternative sources like desalination or upgrades to aging systems:

“Are there any plans for constructing a desalination plant or better storage reservoirs?”



This chart above summarizes key themes that emerged from respondents' written comments. Responses were coded based on recurring topics such as cost, communication, water quality, transparency and infrastructure needs.

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Q15: Is there any other feedback you would like to provide about the Regional Water Supply Service, the draft Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan or this engagement?

Overall, respondents echoed many of the themes found throughout the survey, including a shared commitment to resilience, good governance and sustainable planning. A consistent message was the desire for continued engagement and transparent communication as planning moves forward.

Several respondents praised the quality of the water system and CRD's foresight:

"Overall, the quality and supply of water in Greater Victoria is very well done. Keep it up."

"We very much appreciate the CRD's past and present foresight regarding our regional water supply."

Others emphasized the need for future-focused investment and infrastructure resilience:

"Install a second main from the reservoir to prevent shortages like Calgary experienced in 2024."

"In the next 50 years, water is going to be the new oil/gold. We need to spend the money to invest in our supply."

There were also suggestions for increased public education, clearer communication and alternative engagement methods:

"Communicate more proactively. I only hear about water issues when something goes wrong."

"We need a regional approach to water supply and less fragmentation between jurisdictions."

A few voices urged spending caution or budget transparency, reflecting a desire for balance between ambition and fiscal prudence:

"The CRD needs to be more transparent about where water-related funds are going."

"Before raising costs, show us how current budgets are being used to improve service."

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

16. What additional information or ongoing communication would help you better understand and support the CRD's decisions related to water?

A. Transparency on Water Bills & Costs

Respondents want clearer explanations of how their water rates are calculated and how funds are being used. There is interest in understanding what influences their bills and how they relate to infrastructure investments.

"More clarity on water billing. The charges are confusing and not well explained."

"Break down of what's included in our water costs and how they're determined."

B. Communication About Planning & Future Projects

Several participants requested ongoing updates about infrastructure upgrades, water demand forecasts and long-term strategic planning.

"Updates on where the CRD plans to expand or improve the system."

"Better communication about how climate change is factored into planning."

C. Real-Time or Frequent Water Usage & Quality Data

There was repeated mention of wanting more immediate or routine updates on water quality and consumption trends.

"A dashboard showing daily water use or system status would be helpful."

"Share water quality testing results more regularly."

D. Education & Engagement Opportunities

Some respondents asked for more public education, including explanations of CRD priorities, conservation tips and how residents can participate in decision-making.

"Workshops or online sessions explaining water systems and plans."

"Simple guides on what people can do to support conservation."

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

E. Coordination with Local Municipalities

A few expressed confusion about whether communication should come from CRD or their local municipality, suggesting room for clarification and collaboration.

“Sometimes hard to tell what’s municipal vs CRD. Make it clearer who does what.”

Key Survey Themes

Insight: Strong Support for Investment in Safe, Reliable Water

Nearly all respondents view continued investment in safe and reliable drinkable water as critically important. Over 95% rated it as very important or important.

Quote: *“Grateful that the CRD is engaging citizens! The groundwork laid by earlier generations needs to be maintained and improved.”*

Demographic Note: This sentiment is consistently high across all age groups and locations, showing strong regional consensus.

Insight: Clear Consensus on Adapting to Climate Change

A large portion of respondents 93.9% emphasized the importance of the CRD adapting to climate change and planning for long-term water supply needs.

Quote: *“We’ve inherited an incredible legacy from previous generations. Let’s make sure we leave future generations with the same security.”*

Demographic Note: Support for climate adaptation is strong across all age ranges with all age categories having an average rating of 4.4 or higher on a 5-point Likert scale.

Insight: Most Believe Water Costs Are Reasonable

A majority of respondents 68.6% felt that current water rates are either just right or too low, indicating that most people believe they’re receiving good value for the cost.

What We Heard Report

Regional Water Supply 2025 Strategic Plan: Community Engagement (Phase 2)



Capital Regional District | May 2025

Quote: *"I think our water is priced fairly given the quality and security. I'm ok with paying for the infrastructure that keeps it that way."*

Demographic Note: Younger respondents under 35 were slightly more price sensitive, but even among this age group, affordability concerns were relatively low.

Insight: Year-Round Water Conservation Garner Moderate Support

While many agree with the idea of year-round water conservation, enthusiasm is more mixed. Responses show a wider range, with 34.7% strongly agreeing and 27.3% rating as neutral, disagree or strongly disagree reflecting a range of comfort levels with permanent restrictions.

Quotes:

- *"I strongly agree with year-round restrictions — we can't assume the water will always be there." (High Support)*
- *"I support conservation but don't think heavy restrictions make sense when reservoirs are full. Education is a better first step." (Moderate Support)*
- *"Neutral — I think it depends on whether there's actually a drought." (Mixed/Neutral)*
- *"It feels performative when there's clearly no shortage." (Critical View)*

Demographic Note: Support for year-round conservation was consistent overall. Younger respondents under 35 (4.0 average rating) were slightly more likely to strongly agree, while older age groups expressed a broader mix of views (65+ average rating 3.67).

What We Heard Report

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Insight: High Value Placed on Disaster Preparedness

Most respondents see value in CRD's investments to mitigate risks from disasters and climate events. It's seen as a responsible and future-facing strategy.

Quote: *"A clear indicator to users of how much water they're using daily would help. People are more likely to prepare if they understand their own usage."*

Demographic Note: This priority was expressed across all age ranges.

Demographic Insights

Insight: Perspectives by Age Group

While all age groups find water cost reasonable, younger residents aged 25-34 years and older respondents aged 65+ tend to be slightly more critical of costs but the difference across age groups is relatively minor. However, they still support water safety investment.

- Ages 65+: Cost rating = 1.99
- Ages 25-34: Cost rating = 2.11

Insight: Location Matters — But Mostly Reinforces Broader Themes

No single municipality dramatically departs from the regional averages on investment, conservation, or climate priorities. Saanich, Victoria and Oak Bay respondents show nearly identical support for investment in water safety and climate readiness, this indicates broad regional alignment, which is useful for the CRD in justifying a cohesive approach to water planning.

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NOTE: Understanding Average Scores

Average scores such as '2.15' or '2.53' represent the mean response on a 5-point Likert scale (or in select questions a 4-point scale). For example, when respondents were asked how they would describe the current cost of water for their home or business, the response scale was:

Likert Scale

- 1 = Too high
- 2 = Just right
- 3 = Too low
- 4 = Don't know

So, an average of 1.99 indicates that most respondents selected between *too high* and *just right*.



CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT

REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY STRATEGIC PLAN

FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT - WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

Prepared by Jemma Scoble & Associates Consulting Inc.

November 2025



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Capital Regional District (CRD) began engagement with First Nations on its Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan in March 2025. CRD's intent is to update the 2017 strategic plan to reflect regional changes and commitments to reconciliation.

From March to November 2025, CRD's regional water supply management team reached out to 15 First Nations whose traditional territories overlap CRD's regional water supply area to receive feedback and input on a draft Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan.

This report summarizes the input received from First Nations during the engagement period and is reflective of key interests expressed by First Nations who were available to participate. The CRD asked Jemma Scoble & Associates Consulting to review the feedback from First Nations and prepare this report.

Eight First Nations responded, with seven providing input on the draft strategic plan. This input is not reflective of the interests and concerns of all First Nations. The report includes key themes that emerged from the feedback received through meetings, written correspondence, and during a site visit to the Sooke Lake Reservoir on September 12, 2025.

Key themes heard during the engagement period included reconciliation, governance and representation, watershed access, the desire for greater collaboration on watershed stewardship and protection, cultural and spiritual connection to water, and cumulative impacts on water resources.

The final plan, incorporating input from First Nations, will be presented to the Regional Water Supply Commission in late 2025.

1. Introduction

The Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan outlines the CRD’s commitments and priorities over a 10-year horizon to ensure sustainable management and maintenance of the region’s water infrastructure and supply system.

In 2024, CRD staff began a two-step process to update the 2017 Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan to reflect changes in the region such as the need for climate change response, and key priorities of the CRD such as reconciliation with First Nations.

In 2025, CRD staff engaged with 15 First Nations with traditional territories within the regional water supply area on a draft water supply strategic plan, sharing the document for input and discussing individual Nation interests in water supply management across the region.

1.1 Context for the report

This report summarizes the feedback received from First Nations regarding the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan. Jemma Scoble & Associates Consulting (JSCO) were retained to review the feedback provided by First Nations in written submissions and meeting notes and to identify key themes for consideration by the CRD in a “what we heard” summary document. JSCO were not involved in the planning or implementation of consultation with First Nations.

The next steps are to bring the report and updated Strategic Plan to the Commission in late 2025. The updated strategic plan incorporates the input from First Nations, and these adjustments have been shared with each Nation individually for their information. Following approval, the CRD will move forward with the plan, prioritizing the action related to watershed access which was raised as a top priority by many First Nations.

2. First Nations Consultation

2.1 Engagement Approach

The CRD is committed to engage First Nations communities respectfully and appropriately in the development of regional plans and strategies, and to support decision making around shared interests.

The following First Nations with territory within the Regional Water Supply Area were invited to engage on the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan:

- BOKÉĆEN (Pauquachin) First Nation
- Cowichan Tribes
- Halalt First Nation
- Lyackson First Nation
- MÁLEXEL (Malahat) Nation
- P’a:chi:da?ah (Pacheedaht) First Nation
- Sc’ianew (Beecher Bay) First Nation
- Spune’luxutth (Penelakut) Tribe
- SʔÁUTW (Tsawout) First Nation

- T'Sou-ke Nation
- W SIKEM (Tseycum) First Nation & W JOŁEŁP (Tsartlip) First Nation through the W SÁNEĆ Leadership Council
- x^wsepsəm (Kosapsəm) Nation
- Tsu'uubaa'asatx First Nation

2.2 Engagement Methods & Activities

The following describes the engagement methods used during engagement on the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan:

- Initial Letters
 - All identified First Nations were sent a letter from the CRD in March 2025 regarding the Regional Water Supply Master Plan.
 - All identified First Nations were sent a copy of the draft Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan for review and invited to meet to discuss.
- Emails
 - All identified First Nations were contacted by email with follow-up information, meeting requests, and other details as requested.
- Meetings and Follow-ups
 - Meetings took place with First Nations, in-person or virtually, as requested.
 - Follow up occurred, as needed, to ensure the feedback provided was properly captured and additional thoughts could be shared, as appropriate.
- Feedback
 - Feedback was provided through meetings, phone calls, emails, and written submissions, according to the preferences of each First Nation.

Seven First Nations provided feedback on the draft strategy either through in-person meetings or written comments. One First Nation deferred the project to the other local First Nations.

3. Key themes

First Nations expressed appreciation for the opportunity to review the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan, and to engage in a discussion with CRD regarding the approach to water supply management in the region.

The following themes were present in most of the discussions with First Nations and in written feedback received during the engagement period.

3.1 Reconciliation as a Guiding Principle

First Nations recommended the inclusion of CRD's commitment to reconciliation as a guiding principle, in addition to the importance of healthy ecosystems for watershed health, and shared stewardship. This feedback included aligning the strategic plan with the CRD's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) noting that the RAP should provide guidance to the strategic plan, and related CRD plans. Several First Nations noted the need to incorporate their rights and interests into future water planning, noting the importance of drinking water safety, fishing, and Douglas Treaty rights.

First Nations emphasized the need to acknowledge their Nations as rights holders, and to focus collectively on the shared goal of protecting water supplies, managing lands sustainably, and partnerships to protect water resources considering climate change impacts.

3.2 Governance and Representation

First Nations seek formal roles in the governance and decision-making around water as there is currently no mechanism for their direct representation on the Regional Water Supply Commission. As the *Capital Region Water Supply and Sooke Hills Protection Act*, its regulation, and the *Local Government Act* currently only permit local governments to participate on the Regional Water Supply Commission, some First Nations suggested joint advocacy to the provincial government for by-law amendments that would allow for direct representation. First Nations also suggested that the governance framework for decision-making on water should consider the province's commitment to align legislation with the *Declaration Act*. One First Nation suggested the creation of a governance table for structured feedback on water-related decisions and initiatives.

Many First Nations emphasized the importance of Nation-to-Nation decision-making protocols when it comes to water supply, and others requested more clarity on CRD's approach to water services, storage, distribution, and treatment, and how these align with reconciliation and water security.

Some First Nations spoke strongly about their responsibility to care for the lands and waters within their territory, and as such to be involved in decision-making about the watershed.

3.3 Watershed Access

First Nations raised strong concerns regarding the lack of access to watershed lands for hunting, harvesting and cultural use in alignment with their Douglas Treaty rights. One First Nation expressed interest in understanding the historic decision to close access to the Sooke Lake Water Supply Area, while others queried closure of Goldstream Watershed access, noting that this is an area of shared territory and a place used for traditional purposes. First Nations expressed interest in guardian or access agreements to support First Nations involvement in responsible watershed management.

3.4 Desire for Greater Collaboration on Watershed Stewardship and Protection

First Nations emphasized the need for watershed protection, and the importance of the ecosystem, and indicated strong interest in greater collaboration, and a greater role for their communities, in watershed stewardship planning and implementation.

Some areas identified for greater collaboration include stream restoration and cumulative impact assessment; fire management, prescribed burns, and forest fuel reduction; environmental monitoring; employment and training programs; data collection programs including wildlife, and support for First Nations Guardian programs focused on watershed protection.

Several First Nations noted the importance of First Nations involvement in the implementation of strategic plan actions related to watershed protection and monitoring and asked if capacity considerations and/or funding had been considered. One First Nation raised concerns regarding the transparency of current research and creek sampling activities of several government agencies and expressed interest in greater involvement in reservoir activities and water sampling.

Some Nations noted the need for early consultation on water infrastructure projects and proposed land acquisitions, noting the need to obtain Free, Prior and Informed Consent from First Nations.

3.5 Cultural and Spiritual Connection to Water

First Nations emphasized the importance of their cultural and spiritual connection to water, noting that it is a fundamental Aboriginal right and core interest for First Nations. They also noted that the plan omits cultural use, harvesting and spiritual relationships as priorities for First Nations.

First Nations highlighted the distinction between stewardship of the land and cultural use, indicating that in addition to expanding opportunities for First Nations' involvement in stewardship of watershed lands, the strategic plan should include the elements of cultural and ceremonial use, food, and medicine harvesting. Some First Nations noted the importance of the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, cultural use, harvesting, and spiritual relationships into watershed planning and management. Others suggested the elements of cultural and ceremonial use, food and medicine harvesting be included as a medium-term action.

3.6 Cumulative Impacts on Water Resources

First Nations emphasized the need for watershed protection, and the importance of the ecosystem, waterflow, species and access to resources. Cumulative impacts on species and ecosystems that depend on water was a strong theme, with some feedback focusing on the lack of recognition of historical, ongoing cumulative impacts from water management resulting from colonization and development. Some First Nations requested CRD undertake collaborative assessments of the environment with First Nations and co-develop strategies to mitigate past harm. Some Nations questioned whether CRD would limit development due to water resource constraints. Some First Nations suggested including language in the plan to reflect the CRD's responsibility to protect fish and wildlife.