



Wastewater Recovery Community Working Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE and **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

*Prepared for: Regional District of North Okanagan /
Township of Spallumcheen / Okanagan Indian Band*

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INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO), Township of Spallumcheen (ToS), and Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) struck a partnership to address environmental challenges and enhance economic opportunities within the Swan Lake Corridor (SLC), the ToS south-east industrial area, and OKIB IR4. Led by a Partnership Committee that includes elected officials and senior staff from all three jurisdictions, the resulting initiative is the North Okanagan Wastewater Recovery Project.



WASTEWATER RECOVERY COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP

The partnership is committed to wastewater recovery and reuse to protect environmental assets, support area agriculture, enable and encourage economic growth, and enhance recreational use.

To ensure community insights and ideas are reflected in project design, construction, and start-up, the partnership is establishing a Wastewater Recovery Community Working Group consisting of 13-15 members.

The Working Group's role is to work with the partners and other key stakeholders to build awareness, and to ensure project outcomes reflect community wants and needs.

These Terms of Reference outline the role, expectations and required commitment of Working Group members during the launch, design, construction and start-up of the North Okanagan Wastewater Recovery Project.

PURPOSE

The Working Group will:

- Working with the partnership committee to build awareness of the need for providing wastewater recovery, treatment, and reuse;
- Provide a community perspective on the project development and implementation; and,
- Identify and assess options for meeting partnership objectives.

TASKS

Individual Working Group members are expected to:

- Attend meetings as required;
- Review materials and provide feedback to the Working Group;
- Act as liaison to area residents, businesses, and larger stakeholder groups; and,
- Assist in various public meetings and open house events.

MEETINGS

- It is anticipated the Working Group will hold two meetings per month in the early stages of the project.
- Working Group meetings will be facilitated by RDNO staff and/or project consultants.
- Discussion will be recorded as 'meeting notes'.
- Decisions regarding recommendations to the partnership committee will be made by a majority vote.

RESOURCES

Staff, technical experts, and project consultants will support the Working Group through a variety of functions, such as conducting research, arranging meetings, developing and distributing meeting agendas and materials, and preparing meeting notes.

APPLICATION and SELECTION PROCESS

The partners wish to establish a Working Group that includes residents and business owners from throughout the project area, and individuals representing technical and non-technical interests.

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Willingness and ability to commit the necessary time;
- Willingness to assist with public information and engagement activities;
- Ability and desire to work respectfully toward consensus with people holding different views; and
- Willingness to recognize and respect the Working Group process.

Participation on the Working Group is voluntary, with no remuneration provided.

CONFLICT of INTEREST

Working Group members are tasked with making recommendations for the good of the whole community and therefore cannot be seen to be influenced by personal interests such as financial gain, special consideration or advantage, or obligation to others. Potential conflicts must be declared and Working Group members must not participate in discussion topics involving a conflict.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historically, septic systems have been used to treat residential and commercial/industrial wastewater within the Swan Lake corridor, ToS south-east industrial area, and OKIB IR4. Water quality assessments have shown that many of these systems are now leaching contaminants into Swan Lake, thereby impacting surface and groundwater quality, bird habitat, and recreational use of the corridor.

Additionally, economic development in all three jurisdictions is compromised by the corridor's lack of community sewer. Ideal for commercial and light industrial uses, the corridor requires a wastewater recovery system to enhance business growth and the jobs it brings. Wastewater recovery and reuse would also benefit agriculture in the area, as growers are constantly looking for new sources of irrigation water during the hot summer months.

The partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the three jurisdictions in 2015 outlines the following project objectives and guiding principles.

OBJECTIVES

- Preserve Swan Lake and surrounding wetlands; and
- Improve opportunities for economic development.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Wastewater is a resource.
- Collaboration, and the sharing of human and financial resources, achieves better results.

- Respect for each partner’s mandates and decision-making processes strengthens the partnership.
- Open and transparent communication among the parties and with the public optimizes project support and success.

An updated and more detailed and action-focused MOU, signed by all partners in 2018, outlines factors such as administrative functions, ownership of sewer works, decision-making authority, operations and systems management, allocation of plant capacity, capital costs recovery, and wastewater recovery regulations.

GOVERNANCE

Having the three jurisdictions working together on this project:

- *Increases leverage when applying for provincial and/or federal funding;*
- *Facilitates the development of consistent and integrated plans, policies, and programs;*
- *Ensures an integrated approach to public outreach and engagement; and*
- *Sets the stage for future collaborations.*

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To date, partners have worked together to:

- Assess existing environmental conditions (i.e., water quality analyses conducted in 2015, 2016 and 2017 confirmed that leaching from septic systems is impacting lake health);
- Identify existing and potential commercial and industrial uses in the plan area (i.e., *2016 RDNO Employment Lands Report*); and
- Identify wastewater treatment, reuse and disposal strategies, options, and costs (i.e., *2016 Phase 1 Feasibility Study* and *2018 Phase 2 Feasibility Study*).

Research outcomes, in all cases, support construction of a wastewater recovery plant and associated water storage facilities to address environmental challenges, enhance economic growth, and provide much-needed irrigation water to area farmers.

CONCURRENT PROCESSES

- Swan Lake Commercial Area and Neighbourhood Plan; and
- Natural Capital Assets Planning, with approved federal funding of \$120,000 under the Strategic Priorities Fund Capacity Building Stream.

FUNDING

- An application for \$24.3 million of the \$36.9 million total project cost has been submitted to the *Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program*. If grant funding is approved, the additional amount will be funded from the Okanagan Basin Water Board Sewerage Facilities Assistance Grant (\$5.9 million), Spallumcheen reserves (\$1.5 million), and RDNO borrowing (\$5.2 million).

FEASIBILITY STUDIES

- Undertaken in 2015/16, the Phase 1 Feasibility Study prepared by Urban Systems explored options for providing wastewater treatment and supported development of wastewater recovery and reuse in principle.
- A Phase 2 Feasibility Study is underway to refine technical aspects of the project and examine funding options and governance structures.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH and ENGAGEMENT

The North Okanagan Wastewater Recovery Project is a multi-year undertaking requiring specific outreach and engagement strategies and actions for each stage: Launch, Design, Construction, and Implementation.

Partners are committed to building community awareness and support for the project and have established a Wastewater Recovery Community Working Group to ensure project outcomes reflect community wants and needs.

Given that the project has potential local impacts (e.g. concern about odour, disruptions during construction, cost), the Working Group will help solicit input and feedback from project area residents and businesses and other government agencies in an inclusive and consultative process.

For more information:

Leah Mellott / Regional District of North Okanagan / leah.mellott@rdno.ca

Doug Allin / Township of Spallumcheen / cao@spallumcheentwp.bc.ca

Victor Rumbolt / Okanagan Indian Band / ed@okanagan.org