

## Cowichan Watershed Board

### Watershed IQ

#### Draft Target Backgrounder for Discussion by CWB

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##### **Target Focus:**

Cowichan Watershed Residents clearly understand the nature of their water resources and value those resources.

##### **Background:**

Goal 5 of the Cowichan Basin Water Management Plan is to “Educate, Engage and Empower citizens in Water Management. The Plan includes four objectives for achieving that Goal including:

- ✓ Foster basin thinking among all water users in the Cowichan Basin and ensure they understand and support waters management initiatives:
- ✓ Build trust among water users , managers, regulations and residents through communication and involvement;
- ✓ Conduct regular monitoring of water related conditions I the Cowichan Basin and provide this information to the public; and,
- ✓ Conduct research to support knowledgeable decision-making and water management.

It is difficult for people to fully value what they don’t understand. To protect and enhance the Cowichan watershed and its resources it is important that those who live in the watershed develop a good understanding of the watershed, watershed resources as well as activities that are carried out to protect and enhance the watershed.

##### **Target 1**

*Grade 4s or Grade 5s Know Their Watershed -By 2013 all Grade 5 students in the area take part in a field trip or event to learn about the Cowichan watershed.*

Well designed events can have lasting effects on students. Other benefits include engaging teachers and parents.

This target is directly related to increasing watershed IQ and interest in the watershed and water resources among youth.

##### **Action Plan**

- Work with educators who are environmental champions over the summer on tentative pilot field trips/virtual field trip for selected Grade 4 or 5 classes in the fall of 2011.
- Based on those experiences, and subject to funding, expand the opportunity to include more classes in 2012 with the goal of engaging all Grade 4s or Grade 5s beginning in 2013.

## **Target 2**

*Residents Increasingly Know and Value Their Watershed.*

*As a result of an ongoing series of popular articles for web sites and local newspapers/newsletters and other initiatives residents' (including opinion leaders') knowledge and appreciation of the watershed increases.*

This initiative will encourage understanding and develop pride regarding the watershed. It is based on the notion that you don't value what you don't understand. Surveys will determine whether understanding is increasing over time and areas of knowledge that require more attention.

### **Action Plan**

- Prepare weekly articles for local newspapers, monthly newsletter and website supplemented with occasional radio spots etc.
- Through VIU Geography program support an annual survey of watershed knowledge is used to assess that level of knowledge and appreciation of the watershed. Compare results over time. VIU faculty member is interested in long term survey initiatives.
- Provide ongoing briefings of local politicians and other groups of opinion leaders to help increase their knowledge and support.

### **Resource Requirements**

Pursuing Target 1 will require significant incremental resources. The 2011-2013 Gas Tax Funding request includes \$8,000 for a 2011 pilot and \$8,000 per year as seed money to expand the initiative with partners in future years.

Pursuing Target 2 will require enhanced operations funding for basic communications. (The Board is currently seeking provincial support for operations.) In addition the 2011-2013 Gas Tax request includes public education funding of \$4000 for the remainder of 2011 and \$10,000 in each of 2012 and 2013 to support communications initiatives and an annual survey.