

## 3.6 Leadership and Innovation

### Introduction

#### Leadership and Innovation in the Cowichan Region

Communities within the Cowichan Region, as well as the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) itself, are increasingly concerned about making themselves more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. Sustainable Cowichan's "12 Big Ideas" starts by noting that:

*"If we carry on living for today and not thinking about tomorrow, we run the risk of losing some of our natural assets forever. We believe we must start right away to strengthen our environment and community by growing in smart ways, to repair the damage we have done to our natural assets and preserve them for future generations. And that local government must lead the way in this effort. This is why we put together our list of big ideas for making our region more sustainable. This list is made up of small, medium and large actions we need to take to build a strong, resilient Cowichan."<sup>192</sup>*

#### Measuring Leadership and Innovation

The intent of this section is not to provide statistical data, but rather to capture just a few of the ways that the Cowichan Region, governments, business and industry, community organizations, and individual citizens are striving to create a healthy and sustainable environment in the Cowichan Region.

This list is clearly incomplete. There are far too many initiatives, large and small, to capture in this report. However, the intent is to provide a flavour of the work taking place, and a sense of hope that among the many issues and challenges that we are facing, there are groups and individuals who are striving to make a difference to this region and beyond. These examples have been organized under the "12 Big Ideas" headings.

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<sup>192</sup> <http://www.12things.ca/12things/punchline.php>

## Leadership and Innovation

### Get Real about Climate Change

- > The Cowichan Action on Climate Change/Cowichan Carbon Busters is a group of citizens working to help the community make the transition to a non-fossil fuel economy.
- > The municipalities of Duncan, North Cowichan, Ladysmith and Lake Cowichan are putting emissions reductions targets into their Official Community Plans.
- > The CVRD is developing an integrated flood management plan to address flooding and drought issues in several parts of the region already being affected by climate change.
- > The CVRD is developing a greenhouse gas emissions reduction plan for its facilities.

### Eat Local Because Food Security Matters

- > Cowichan Green Community is developing a Cowichan Local Food Map to improve community access to food in the Cowichan Valley and encourage people to buy and grow local foods.
- > Economic Development Cowichan has developed an Area Agriculture Plan to look at the region's agricultural capacity. This includes an Issues and Opportunities Report which will form the basis for an action plan.

### Be Energy Smart

- > The Cowichan Valley School District 79's Live Smart BC initiative has reduced energy use in schools.
- > Queen Margaret's School Science and Technical Centre and renovations to Spurgin Hall have incorporated numerous energy efficient features including a heat recovery ventilation system, an HVAC system for in-floor radiant heat, passive solar features, and recycled building materials. The building was constructed using timber from the site and was located to take advantage of the surrounding woodlands, thereby reducing the impact to the natural environment.
- > Providence Farms' St. Ann's building utilizes numerous energy efficient construction elements, including passive solar energy, the first cob wall in North Cowichan, sensitive design, and materials and finishes that will not impact people with environmental sensitivities.
- > The CVRD is conducting a review of the energy and water efficiency of its buildings.

### Get Up to Speed on the New Green Economy

- > The Town of Ladysmith's Trolley Service supports sustainability by reducing greenhouse gases, provides increased mobility for residents and visitors of all ages, reduces parking congestion at the town's two major shopping areas, and strengthens the local economy by enabling more people to access local businesses.
- > Catalyst Paper's Crofton Mill implemented a "Power Watchers" program that identified potential electricity savings of 11 – 15% (\$4.7 – \$6.5 million in annual energy savings).

### Clear the Air to Reduce Carbon Emissions

- > The Idle Free BC program in Ladysmith educates people about reducing idling time to improve air quality.
- > The Municipality of North Cowichan and CVRD offer a rebate program to people who install newer, more efficient and less polluting wood burning stoves.
- > The Bings Creek Solid Waste Management Complex now accepts yard waste and wood trimmings free of charge as an alternative to backyard burning, thereby improving air quality.

### Don't Hog the Water so There is Enough for All

- > The CVRD is actively engaged in the Cowichan Basin Watershed planning process, and is developing a regional water quality monitoring plan. This plan will examine water quality and conduct a benthic analysis for each of the region's watersheds, including two marine sites (Cowichan Bay and Ladysmith harbour).
- > The City of Duncan, Town of Ladysmith and CVRD water service areas offer rebates to homeowners who replace older toilets with low flush (3l or 6l) toilets.
- > There are automatic summer watering restrictions throughout the Cowichan Region (June 1- October 31); these can be more severe if there are drought conditions.

### Grow Up, Not Out

- > North Cowichan's new Official Community Plan (OCP), currently under development, focuses on strategies related to smart growth, sustainable communities and the avoidance of sprawl.
- > The joint development of a South Cowichan OCP process is providing synergies in a subregional context and will strengthen smart growth principles.
- > The Regional District's decision to develop a regional sustainability plan will provide background information necessary to balance the rural nature of the majority of the region with the need to encourage smart growth development patterns (and the provision of associated services) in the future.

### Revive Biodiversity

- > The Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society operates, maintains, manages, and preserves the Somenos Marsh Conservation Area for the study of nature, the observance of flora and fauna, the protection of wildlife habitat and for public education.
- > The Quamichan Watershed Stewardship Committee works to restore and maintain the health of the Quamichan Watershed as an important fish and wildlife habitat and recreation area.
- > Trees for Tomorrow grants from the BC Provincial government have provided the opportunity to plant trees in several areas of the Cowichan Region.
- > CVRD Parks has a program to remove invasive species in parks.
- > The CVRD will be reviewing and updating the South Cowichan Liquid Waste Management plan in the coming year.

### Get Serious About Zero Waste

- > Local Thrifty's Food Stores stopped using plastic bags in 2009 and ask customers to use reusable cloth bags or compostable/recyclable paper bags.
- > Cowichan Recyclists<sup>193</sup> provide recycling services to local businesses by bicycle, picking up mixed recycling and organics for approximately 80 businesses in Duncan and Cowichan Bay.
- > Various CVRD departments are working to reduce waste by going paperless, encouraging recycling, and reducing the use of bottled water.

### Be Carbon Neutral

- > The Regional District and municipalities have all signed the BC Climate Action Charter, committing to be carbon neutral in respect to their operations by 2012.
- > The CVRD has replaced the oil furnaces at Mesachie Lake Main Hall and Honeymoon Bay Community Hall with new heat pumps.
- > Major retrofits have taken place at the Island Savings recreational centre to reduce energy usage.

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193 <http://www.cowichanrecyclists.com/index.html>

### Audit our Assets

- > The CVRD has a Sensitive Habitat Atlas that allows people to identify the location of various environmental features and data, including salmon streams, wetlands and hydrology.
- > The CVRD will be updating their aerial photography database and collecting valuable LIDAR data in the coming year.
- > This State of the Environment report is a way of tracking environmental values.

### Lead the Way

- > The CVRD will soon begin work on a regional sustainability plan.
- > The Cowichan Stewardship Round Table (CSRT) has established a forum to share information, identify communities of interest, rank projects at a watershed scale, pool resources, attract funders, and enable a new way of conducting stewardship business.
- > The Stolz slide remediation has been recognized as the largest river restoration in BC.
- > The Cowichan Watershed Board has been established and recognized by the Province as leading the way in the development of watershed-based governance.