



MEMO

TO: ADVISORY PLANNING COMMISSION
FROM: BRIGID REYNOLDS, CONSULTING TOWN PLANNER
SUBJECT: DRAFT SCOPE OF WORK TO UPDATE THE TOWN OF LAKE COWICHAN FLOODPLAIN PROVISIONS
MEETING DATE: MAY 21, 2026

Zoning Bylaw No. 1055, Section 4.3.13 establishes floodplain provisions for the Town including setbacks and flood construction levels (FCL). The FCL identified in the bylaw is for Lake Cowichan, not the Cowichan River. Provincial Floodplain mapping (dwg no. 84-33-4A) dated July 1984 identifies FCL for other points on the Cowichan River, but these are not identified in the Zoning Bylaw. The Zoning Bylaw states that the elevations shall be ‘to the satisfaction of the Town’.

The OCP Bylaw No. 1097, Section 3.3.1 identifies policies to minimize risks associated with climate change. And Section 6.3 establishes development permit areas for natural hazards. The introductory paragraph references the FCL for the Lake, not the River. It also states that living areas shall be a minimum of 0.5 m above the 200-year floodplain, but Section 6.3.5 8) states one foot of freeboard is necessary.

The DP guidelines and Zoning Bylaw are contradictory regarding the use of fill to achieve the flood construction elevation. The list of exemptions doesn’t refer to possible exemptions outlined in the Flood Hazard Area Land Use Management Guidelines, prepared by the MWLAP, May 2004 with amendments in 2011 and 2018.

Map No. 4 – Natural Hazard Lands – Floodplain and Steep Slopes and establishes the floodplain DPA that appears to rely on the 1984 floodplain mapping by the Province.

Northwest Hydraulic Consultants (NHC) prepared various reports for the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD)

- *Risk Assessment of Floodplains and Coastal Sea Level Rise: Strategic climate Risk Assessment for the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), Final Report*, dated 9 May 2019 for the CVRD. This was an assessment of (then) present day and future flood scenarios for four study regions including Cowichan Lake and portion of Cowichan River that flows through the Town.
- *Updated Cowichan-Koksilah River Flood Mapping Project, Final Report*, dated 17 February 2021 was prepared to assist with updating floodplain mapping for the lower Cowichan watershed.
- In 2015 Kerr Wood Leidal completed the *Town of Lake Cowichan Integrated Rainwater Management Plan Vol 1 and Vol 2* to assess the existing storm drain network as well as address flooding and erosion issues.

The Town is requesting a review of the Zoning Bylaw regulations, OCP policies, DP guidelines related to development within the floodplain, as well as its floodplain mapping. The policies, DP guidelines and zoning regulations need to be reviewed in the context of the above noted documents and other provincial guidance, so they are as up to date as possible, accurate, consistent and provide clear guidance. This review also needs to consider any climate change implications.

This review is based on existing data and does not propose new data collection or modelling to be completed.

Deliverables

- A summary report with recommendations for updates to the Zoning Bylaw, OCP policies and DP guidelines
- Digital mapping information and printable (.pdf format) flood hazard maps that define the flood extent and FCLs. The digital data would be shared with Cowichan Valley Regional District as the Town does not yet have a GIS program.