



Agenda No: 5.2

Mtg. Date: June 11, 2015

Governance & Services Committee

TO: Governance & Services Committee
FROM: Ron Fralick, Planning Manager
DATE: June 2, 2015
SUBJECT: Presentation from the Okanagan Basin Water Board on the Okanagan Wetland Strategy – Phase II

Purpose: To update the Governance & Services Committee on the status of the Okanagan Wetlands Strategy – Phase II facilitated through the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB). A presentation will be provided by Nelson Jatel, Water Stewardship Director.

Executive Summary: Wetlands provide unique and critical habitat for many rare plant and wildlife species and also provide valuable ecological services. Phase I of the Okanagan Wetlands Strategy focused on data collection, outreach, mapping of Okanagan wetlands, and prioritization to identify high risk wetlands for management or protection. Phase II focuses on collaboration with Okanagan organizations to assist in wetland outreach and extension work including the management of hands-on wetland projects throughout the Okanagan. The presentation will provide an overview of Phase II activities.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT this staff report and the presentation on the Okanagan Wetlands Strategy be received for information.

Respectively Submitted by:

Ron Fralick, MCIP, RPP
Manager of Planning

Chris Radford
Director of Community Services

Prepared by: *Margaret Bakelaar, Environmental – Land Use Planner*

Approved for Board's Consideration

Brian Reardon
Brian Reardon, CAO

Implications of Recommendation:

Strategic Plan: The Regional Board has articulated in the Strategic Plan that responsible environmental protection and water stewardship is a goal and that the RDCO should be a region with protected biodiversity throughout. It also identifies the Board's desire to be "a region that is a recognized leader and innovator on many fronts (environmental, social, community, economic, government, etc.); and "[contribute] to a safe and healthy environment for residents, visitors and future generations, while maintaining and promoting a balance of responsible environmental protection". The Okanagan Wetlands Strategy addresses this strategic direction.

Policy: A goal of the Regional Growth Strategy is to manage and protect water resources. A policy is to continue in partnership with the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and regional partners to encourage valley wide cooperation and coordination regarding the conservation of water and protection of all water sources.

Legal/Statutory Authority: The *Local Government Act*, Part 26 Planning and Land Use Management enables local government to develop policies through Official Community Plans relating to the preservation, protection, restoration and enhancement of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity.

Background:

Wetlands provide unique and critical habitat to a broad range of plant and wildlife species, including many species at risk. Wetlands also have numerous functions and values (ecological services) such as supporting biodiversity, water purification, flood protection, storm water management, groundwater recharge, and erosion control as well as providing a source for recreation and education.

Wetlands are rare in the arid climate of the Okanagan and have been heavily impacted by development including: urban growth, agriculture, changes in the hydraulic regime, fragmentation of the land base and climate change. According to local studies nearly 85% of low elevation wetlands have been lost and wetlands continue to be lost at a rate of 1.4%/year.

This project builds on previous work to develop an Okanagan Wetland Strategy that will provide a foundation of future conservation, preservation and rehabilitation efforts on Okanagan wetlands. Phase I focused on data collection, outreach, inventory and mapping of Okanagan wetlands, and prioritization to identify high risk wetlands for management or protection. For Phase II, the focus of the work is to encourage collaboration, develop extension material and manage wetland restoration projects. In the RDCO, a wetland fencing project at McLachlan Lake southwest of the District of Peachland was coordinated through the Okanagan Wetland Strategy Phase II. The presentation will provide an overview of Phase II activities.

Considerations not applicable to this report: *Financial; Alternatives; Organizational Issues; External Implications*