



Governance & Services Report

TO: Governance & Services Committee

FROM: Todd Cashin
Director of Community Services

DATE: July 18, 2019

SUBJECT: Okanagan Lake Protection Strategy (File: 6440-30)

Purpose: To inform the Governance & Services Committee on the proposed Okanagan Lake Protection Strategy and request Regional Board support, in principle, for the Phase 1 initiative.

Executive Summary:

Through coordination by Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP) and South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP), the Okanagan Lake Protection Strategy is intended to address current challenges of shoreline protection, and planning for the region's future at a multi-regional scale. The main objectives are to identify the most pertinent issues impacting the lake including water quality, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem health, cultural and recreational values, and ultimately collaborating to develop a practical and enforceable strategy to enhance shoreline management and source water protection.

A critical next step in the process is establishing formal inter-regional support. A Board resolution for the initiative has been requested by OCCP and SOSCP with respect to supporting and participating in the development of the Okanagan Lake Protection Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Governance & Services committee receive for information the report dated July 18, 2019 regarding the development of the Okanagan Lake Protection Strategy,

AND FURTHER THAT the Committee recommends the Regional Board support, in principle, Phase 1 development of the Okanagan Lake Protection Strategy.

Respectfully Submitted:

Todd Cashin
Director of Community Services

Approved for Board's Consideration

Brian Reardon, CAO

Prepared by: Danika Dudzik, Environmental Planner

Implications of Recommendation:

Strategic Plan:	Support of the initiative meets the 2015-2018 Strategic Priorities Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic Priority #1: Strengthen all partnership relationships to collaborative effectively• Strategic Priority #1: Promote responsible environmental protection and Support biodiversity initiatives with OCCP.
Policy:	Support of the initiative complies with <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1336

Background:**History:**

Okanagan Lake is one of the most important natural features of the region. It provides several key economic and ecological benefits to the communities that surround its shores. Due to its attractiveness, there has been a dramatic increase in development pressure, especially on the foreshore and adjacent terrestrial upland areas.

The 2016 update to the Foreshore Inventory and Mapping (FIM) of Okanagan Lake identified the cumulative impacts of development on natural areas over the past seven years. The results of the study indicate significant losses, with only 41% of natural shoreline areas remaining. What is at stake is the future of our fisheries, our wildlife, our places to live and recreate, our tourism, and the ability of communities to attract investment. Each of these is dependent on the abundance, safety, and quality of our water.

At this time, there are various shoreline policy documents that have been prepared across the region in response to significant development pressures. However, there is a need for multijurisdictional and consistent shoreline management in order to be effective and protect remaining natural areas for generations to come.

Through coordination provided by Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP) and South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP), the Okanagan Lake Protection Strategy is a partnership of various organizations, agencies, local governments, First Nations, and the province. Each of the partners will have a key role in the project and subsequent phases. Responsibilities will include expert review and guidance on the approach and deliverables moving forward. Each partner will be involved in varying capacities. It is anticipated that the partners will work collaboratively to provide direction and feedback informing the overall development of the Okanagan Lake Protection Strategy.

Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program:

The OCCP is a partnership of organizations and government with shared goals, which include maintaining regional biodiversity, protecting Species at Risk, maintaining ecological connectivity throughout the Okanagan Basin, and balancing regional growth with conservation.

Partners in the OCCP include local, provincial and federal levels of government (Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), BC Ministry of Environment (BC MOE), land trusts, stewardship and outreach organizations.

South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program:

The SOSCP is a partnership of fifty organizations that work together to conserve the unique biodiversity and environment of this region. The membership is a diverse array of government, non-government, First Nations and academic institutions. SOSCP has been working collaboratively in the South Okanagan Similkameen community, coordinating and facilitating partner activities and improving the effectiveness of conservation efforts for over 17 years.

Project Description:

The goal of the Okanagan Lake Protection Strategy is to identify policies, regulations, and best practices to enhance multi-jurisdictional shoreline management to protect water quality and environmental values of Okanagan Lake.

In November 2018, the OCCP and SOSCP met with partners throughout the region to discuss the important issue of protecting our region's greatest resource – Okanagan Lake. At the workshop participants identified the need for formal support by way of council resolution or a letter of support from their respective agencies, local government, or First Nations to help foster regional collaboration, commitment and communication for this project. Formal support will enable elected officials and decision makers with the opportunity to discuss and address local water challenges and the importance of protecting Okanagan Lake.

This initiative is supported by the objectives and policies of all three Regional Growth Strategies in the Okanagan with regards to water stewardship, ecosystems, and natural lands and additionally, aligns with both the 2016 *State of the Basin Report*, and the ongoing implementation of *Keeping Nature in Our Future – A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy* for the Okanagan Region.

Deliverables for Phase 1:

As supported by OCCP and SOSCP, the collaborative working group will:

- Engage with all applicable agencies, First Nations, and partners to gather input, build consensus, and establish support for developing an approach/model for a region-wide protection strategy for Okanagan Lake.
- Formalize a Terms of Reference.
- Review existing policies, discussion papers, and other previous works related to shoreline development for Okanagan Lake, and review shoreline management plans that have been developed in other jurisdictions in British Columbia.
- Conduct a high-level gap analysis and create recommendations for policy and direction to effectively manage shoreline development.
- Establish a Communications Strategy for public engagement.
- Develop a framework for the Okanagan Lake Protection Strategy.

Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1336

- Policy No. 3.2.1.12: “Encourage cooperation and information sharing with regional partners to identify data and information necessary to improve hazard and resiliency planning”.

- Policy No. 3.2.3.1: “Consider water resources in land use planning decisions”.
- Policy No. 3.2.3.3: “Work with local governments, provincial agencies to assess and mitigate the risks in floodplains”.
- Policy No. 3.2.3.4: “Utilize best management practices to protect and manage water resources, groundwater and surface water, through integrated watershed planning to improve water quality, and adequate supply for the Region”.
- Policy No. 3.2.3.5: “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”.
- Policy No. 3.2.8.2: “Encourage collaboration to adopt consistent terminology, policies and actions that support the protection and conservation of environmental features and watersheds within the Region”.
- Policy No. 3.2.8.3: “Manage growth to minimize disturbance to habitat, watershed and natural drainage areas and systems”.
- Policy No. 3.2.8.4: “Encourage collaboration with regional partners on enhancing wildlife corridor linkages to improve habitat connectivity that avoids fragmentation and isolation of important habitats”.
- Policy No. 3.2.8.4: “Protect natural environments, parks and water systems, as these systems are essential to the quality of life in the Okanagan that support active and healthy lifestyles”.
- Policy No. 3.2.8.12: “Encourage collaboration with regional partners, provincial ministries and stakeholders to consider regional conservation, watershed and other ecosystem-based plans and strategies that will update existing inventories”.
- Policy No. 3.2.10.3: “Continue to build and enhance communications and relationships with local First Nations communities”.
- Policy No. 3.2.10.4: “Support opportunities for regional partners to collaborate, communicate and coordinate on matters of regional significance”.

The initiative also supports the ongoing implementation of Keeping Nature in Our Future – The Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the Okanagan Region by promoting a collaborative approach to conservation, and ensuring decision-makers and citizens have the information and tools needed to protect sensitive ecosystems.

Financial Considerations:

The first phase of development of the Okanagan Lake Protection Strategy has funding approved from the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant. Further, RDCO staff were successful in securing provincial funding (\$10,000) which will assist in implementing a number of the focus areas identified in the RGS Priority Projects Plan and also may leverage additional funding in the future.

Alternative Recommendation:

No recommendation.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

- *General*
- *Organizational*
- *External Implications*

Attachment:

- Request for Expression of Support – Okanagan Lake Protection Strategy