



Regional Board Report

TO: Regional Board

FROM: Todd Cashin
Director of Community Services

DATE: September 27, 2021

SUBJECT: Permit Fees -White Rock Lake Wildfire

Voting Entitlement: *(Electoral Areas – Weighted Stakeholder Vote – Simple Majority – LGA 209)*

Purpose: To consider waiving various permit fees under the Building Bylaw and to further consider extending the period of recreational vehicle use as temporary dwellings for those residents in the process of rebuilding after the White Rock Lake wildfire.

Executive Summary:

The White Rock Lake wildfire continues to place a significant strain on residents who have properties impacted by the fire. Given the emotional, financial, and administrative strain on many residents, RDCO staff continue to explore options for those impacted by the wildfire, and who will require RDCO services.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Regional Board receive the report, dated September 27, 2021, from the Director of Community Services regarding permit fees and the extended use of recreational vehicles for those property owners impacted by the White Rock Lake wildfire;

AND THAT the Regional Board approve waiving fees for Demolition Permits for those properties impacted by the White Rock Lake wildfire;

AND THAT the Regional Board approve waiving fees for Temporary Building Permits for those properties impacted by the White Rock Lake wildfire;

AND FURTHER THAT the Regional Board approve extending the use of recreational vehicles as Temporary Buildings from one year to two years for those properties impacted by the White Rock Lake wildfire.

Respectfully Submitted:



Todd Cashin
Director of Community Services

Approved for Board's Consideration



Brian Reardon, CAO

Implications of Recommendation:

Strategic Plan: More severe weather and wildfire events can be associated with climate change. Through the recovery process, we plan to support communities by adapting them to climate change and future natural disasters.

Policy: Some policy decisions, particularly around rebuilding and permitting may need Regional Board input and decisions as recovery progresses.

Financial: The impact of lost revenue and increased Inspection Services costs may affect future budgets for Inspection Services.

Background:

The evacuation order for the White Rock Lake wildfire was issued on August 2, 2021. The order was downgraded to an evacuation alert on September 2, 2021. During this time, the wildfire significantly damaged or destroyed approximately 78 properties and impacted more than 1300 properties in the community of North Westside.

While recovery preparations are now well underway, many property owners will face significant emotional, financial, and administrative burdens from the event. Given this, staff continue to explore options to minimize these impacts.

Building Bylaw No. 835:

Demolition Permits:

As per *RDCO Building Bylaw No. 835*, Demolition Permits require the following:

- Minimum Building Permit fee of \$100.
- Ensure permit conditions are met with respect to hazardous waste, disposal sites and remediation requirements before construction can occur.
- Ensure issued and completed building permits are reported monthly to:
 - Statistics Canada;
 - BC Safety Authority;
 - BC Assessment;
 - BC Housing Homeowner Protection Branch; and
 - Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

The first opportunity to reduce financial impacts in the building permit process is through the waiving of demolition permit fees. However, given the need for permit conditions and monthly reporting, staff recommend that demolition permits continue to be required for properties impacted by the White Rock Lake wildfire.

Recreation Vehicle Use as a Temporary Building:

As per *RDCO Building Bylaw No. 835*, the provision to use a recreation vehicle as a temporary building is contingent on the following:

- A Building Permit issued for a single-family dwelling.
- Construction is actively taking place on the property.
- An application is submitted for the temporary building use (e.g. recreation vehicle).
- The permit expires one (1) year from the date of issue.

The Regional District permits a recreational vehicle to be used as a temporary building during the construction period of single family dwelling for a period of one year. The use of a recreational vehicle is specific to the site of a single family dwelling project where a permit has been issued and active construction is occurring for the dwelling on the same site. Staff recognize that the process for rebuilding homes lost in the wildfire may take additional time and has proposed an extension for the use of a recreational vehicle to be used as a temporary building during the re-construction period.

Staff further note that on a vacant property that is not in the process of being constructed, the use of a recreational vehicle as a form of residential accommodation is not permitted. RDCO bylaw enforcement may issue tickets and associated fines when it has been determined that a property owner is using a recreational vehicle on site that is not undergoing active construction.

Given the above information, staff are recommending that the expiration date for temporary building permits (for recreation vehicle use) be extended from one (1) year to two (2) years for those properties impacted by the White Rock Lake wildfire.

Proposed Permit Fee Adjustments:

Permit Type	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Demolition Permit	\$100 (minimum)	\$0
Temporary Building Permit	\$100	\$0

Financial Considerations:

Fee Reduction Impact

Staff are proposing to waive various permit fees for approximately two years (from approximately August 15, 2021 to September 30, 2023). In the short-term, it will lead to some reduction in financial costs to a number of property owners impacted by the wildfire.

Based on the number of impacted properties, the loss in revenue to Inspection Services is estimated to be:

- Demolition Permits: \$8,000

- Temporary Building Permit (Recreational Vehicle): \$4,000

Budget Impact

The proposed loss of revenue associated with these permit fees and the use of temporary recreational vehicles will result in minimal budget challenges for Inspection Services for the remainder of 2021 but may necessitate a minor budget amendment once the final costs are known.

Inspection Services operates under a cost-recovery model and currently operates without taxation. Given the expected increase in workload and necessary resources, staff continue to explore alternative sources of funding (e.g. EMBC funding, provincial grants and/or operating reserve) to meet the expected demands on staff resources in the future.

Alternative Recommendation:

THAT the Regional Board receives for information the report from the Director of Community Services regarding permit fees and the use of recreational vehicles for those property owners impacted by the White Rock Lake wildfire.