



Mayor's Report – December 12, 2022

This month, Councillor Van Alphen and I have been immersed in meetings at the Regional District – strategic planning, budget deliberations, and regular Board meetings on Dec 1st and again this Thursday. In strategic planning last Thursday, the Board together with senior staff threw a range of priorities onto the wall and in January we'll revisit them to see what sticks.

Budget discussions have been on-going with reviews of regional grants-in-aid, program changes, and capital projects. While the budget is still at the committee stage and has yet come to the Board for first reading, it's anticipated the District will be asked to requisition small increases to support the 911 emergency call centre and mosquito control.

As in previous years, after the budget receives first reading, the RDOS manager of finance will come to Council as a delegation to make a presentation on the budget.

At the regular RDOS Board meeting on Dec 1st, Directors considered applications to the South Okanagan Environmental Conservation Fund and approved \$282,215 in funding for seven projects.

The Conservation Fund was established in 2016 by the District of Summerland, City of Penticton, Town of Oliver, and six RDOS rural areas – "A", "C", "D", "E", "F" and "I". Each year there's an open call for applications and all submissions are reviewed by a Technical Advisory Committee, which recommends projects for the RDOS Board to consider.

This year's funding includes support for one new project: \$20,000 to the Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society (OSSS) to work with local farmers and vineyard managers to deal with encroaching wildlife. The idea is to develop nature-based solutions to protect wildlife in agricultural areas, especially species at risk.

The six other projects receiving funding are all continuations from last year, including \$100,370 to the Okanagan Nation Alliance and Penticton Indian Band for Phase 2 of the Lower Trout Creek Re-naturalization project. This project aims to restore the natural form and function of the lower reach of Trout Creek, including restoring the floodplain, the riparian forest, and the creek's mainstem structure to include riffle-pools and spawning habitat.

Phase 1 of the project was completed in September with 80 metres of setback and channel widening, and installation of the first riffle-pool. Apparently, salmon have been seen spawning at this pool already. Phase 2 involves a further 350 metres of widening, the installation of three more riffles, and restoration of dryland habitat areas.

The project is guided by Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and involves collaboration with all levels of government, including the District of Summerland. The project receives financial contributions from several sources, of which the Conservation Fund is one.

There are two other continuing projects receiving support from the Conservation Fund that are of particular interest to Summerland. The Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society will receive \$25,000 to continue to work with property owners in Garnet Valley to suppress yellow flag iris, which is an invasive species, and replace it with native seed mix, native trees and shrubs. And the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS) will receive \$19,670 to develop local curriculum to teach school students about invasive species.

And finally, as it's our last Council meeting of the year, I would like to wish a very merry Christmas to everyone in Summerland and beyond. I look forward to returning to the opportunities and energy of a new year.

Doug Holmes

Mayor of Summerland