



REGIONAL
DISTRICT
OF NANAIMO

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW: DRINKING WATER & WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board receive the "2025 Year in Review: Drinking Water & Watershed Protection Program" report for information.

BACKGROUND

The Regional District of Nanaimo's (RDN) Drinking Water and Watershed Protection (DWWP) program is structured around four interconnected themes: Water Awareness and Stewardship, Water Information and Science, Water-Centric Planning and Policy Support, and Water Collaboration. These themes provide a comprehensive framework for safeguarding the region's drinking water sources and supporting sustainable watershed management. Progress within these themes is measured using indicators outlined in the [2020-2030 DWWP Action Plan](#) (see Section 7.1 for the full list).

This report provides a synopsis of 2025 program performance based on those indicators. A detailed summary of key accomplishments under each theme is included in Attachment 1. Additionally, this report outlines priority work plan items for 2026.

2025 Progress Indicators

Water Awareness and Stewardship

- Metered water use
 - Over 30% reduction in per capita water demand in the City of Nanaimo over the past 14 years
 - Continued overall reduction in use across the 9 RDN Water Service Areas (variable from year to year with an overall 2.3% reduction)
 - Convened monthly check-in meetings with regional water purveyors between April and October to communicate and coordinate watering restrictions and communications on water conservation.
- Number of watercourse enhancement or restoration projects completed
 - In 2025, the RDN supported 8 projects through RDN DWWP Stewardship Seed Funding; 43 have been supported to date since seed funding program initiation in 2016.
- Trends in groundwater and surface water
 - Groundwater trends were reported in Regional Groundwater Level Analysis Pre-Summer 2025 with 10 / 21 aquifers reporting increasing or stable 10-year groundwater level trends and 3 / 22 aquifers reporting decreasing 10-year groundwater level trend, and 8 / 21 aquifers showing spatially variable trends with observation wells ranging from large decline to increasing.

- Surface water quality trends analysis was completed in 2024, with one stream added in 2025 due to reaching a six-year threshold to be able to describe trends in parameters monitored, which include include turbidity, temperature, oxygen, and specific conductivity.

Water Information and Science

- Number of monitoring sites with > 3 years of datasets in open platforms
 - 95 water monitoring sites (84 surface water quality; 11 groundwater level)
- Water budgets completed
 - Initiated the Cedar-Yellowpoint-Cassidy Phase 3 Water Budget, to be completed in early 2026
- Participation of community volunteers
 - 13 returning stewardship groups representing approx. 55 volunteers
 - 31 volunteer well owners participating in ongoing groundwater level monitoring
 - 3 “streamside dialogues” with participating community groups to support water monitoring program planning
- Publications
 - Completed the Groundwater Connections mail-out and associated RDN Get Involved page launch
 - Completed and shared the Climate-Informed Water Supply Planning Communications material
 - Co-presented at the BC Water and Waste Association (BCWWA) Conference sharing methods and outcomes of the French Creek Water Budget model

Water-centric Planning and Policy Support

- Planning processes informed by DWWP
 - Supported the initiation of an Electoral Area Servicing Study to support RDN Electoral Area Official Community Plan updates by providing context for aquifer protection and rainwater management considerations.
 - Supported the development of a Proof of Water Policy with RDN Current Planning.
 - Supported integration of Community Watershed Monitoring Network data into City of Nanaimo Monitoring Strategy for City Plan implementation.
- Watershed performance targets / implementation of rainwater management practices
 - Ongoing progress on implementation of rainwater performance targets in French Creek Water Region with updates to draft DPA guidelines and a rainwater management plan checklist.
- Advocacy with outside agencies
 - Participated in the Integrated Rebuilding Plan for the Nanaimo River Summer Chinook and the interagency Nanaimo River Flow Committee led led by DFO / Snuneymuxw First Nation partnership.
 - Presented to the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) Climate Leadership Committee on DWWP "data-to-action" approaches for integrating watershed monitoring into planning and policy.

2026 Highlighted Workplan Items

In 2026, the RDN DWWP program will continue to deliver key collaborative region-wide initiatives related to water stewardship, monitoring, and planning – as detailed in the DWWP Action Plan, RDN Financial Plan, and RDN Operational Plan. Progress updates will be provided four times a year via the DWWP Technical Advisory Committee as well as periodic report(s) to the Board. Highlighted work plan items in 2026 include the following:

- Complete the Cedar-Yellowpoint-Cassidy Water Budget Phase 3
- Community Watershed Monitoring Network Strategic Planning supported through Riparian Spatial Analysis map updates and engagement with stewardship groups and monitoring partners

- Support Long-Range Planning with Electoral Area Official Community Plan updates (ie. Servicing studies and aquifer assessments as needed)
- Water Attitudes / Freshwater Perspectives Benchmark – Five-Year Progress Survey
- Supporting Rainwater Management / Watershed Protection Demonstration Sites, including signage and outreach materials
- Providing Stewardship Seed Funding to support watercourse enhancement projects
- School Freshwater Stewardship Education Delivery Contract (NALT) & Watershed Field Trips
- Ongoing water monitoring network operation, (including groundwater, surface water quality, hydrometric, lakes, wetlands) and reporting
- Ongoing rebate program delivery - Rainwater harvesting, Wellhead upgrades, Well Water Testing, Irrigation & Soil Improvements

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The work summarized here is all accounted for in DWWP Operating Budgets.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Water Security:

- Understand our water resources and their risks, to manage our water resources effectively and sustainably
- Evaluate our land use decisions through a water security lens.
- Collaborate with regional partners including First Nations, land trusts, federal, provincial, and local governments, to ensure water resources are managed and shared equitably and responsibly

REVIEWED BY:

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ATTACHMENT

2025 RDN Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program Accomplishments: Detailed Highlights by Theme