



### **Our 'Regional Team Approach' - why it is different but perfect for us**

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Kate Miller, Manager, Environmental Services  
Engineering & Environmental Services Department  
Cowichan Valley Regional District  
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“In nature, form and function are key to how things develop. In the Cowichan Valley Regional District our regional landscape outside the established towns is dramatically different than those of our CAVI partners - we do not own or control our watersheds, we do not have urbanized areas with attendant funding resources or regulatory frameworks. Nor have we had mandated development of unified watershed plans. But we do have a dominance of electoral areas with proudly distinct communities, capable and engaged municipal partners, and a leadership that is characterized by true independence and internal reliance.”

“The outcome is a unified perspective on the issues across our region and a deeper understanding of the distinctive local and organizational frameworks in which we work. We are partners, but have distinctly different ways of applying the underlying issues and philosophies of a ‘design with nature’ approach – one that respects the broad range of our communities and political and organizational imperatives we live and work with.”

“This has resulted in a rich tapestry of watershed planning across our region. There is no one model. Rather, we have a range of applications that are sensitive to the environment in which it was formulated and to the core drivers and champions that brought it forward. The range of participants is truly astounding and brings richness to the regional approach. This cannot be developed in a linear manner. No amount of funding or imposed organizational structure can create a sense of the genuine unless it has come from the heart, and in our region it has. Each plan and initiative is distinct, place-based, and respectful of its community of interest and of others. Each makes room for the circle to be continually enlarged by sharing of learning and resources.”

“We truly have a rich basis in which to begin the process of stepping back, learning and reflecting on our next steps. It started with the foundational Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable’s collaborative and participatory model under Cowichan Tribes leadership that brought the first community together. It continued with the CAVI partnership for technical and professional support which brought the full range of local government players to the table. It encompasses the evolving panoply of local plans as each community stepped forward (Cowichan, Somenos, Quamichan, Shawnigan, Bonsal, Yellow Point) and put the various visions into action.”

“As we look out into the future in a changing environment – our new normal - this richness and the depth of community participation can only help our region’s future resiliency. While we can build the tools and the technical backstops at a professional and technical level, at the end of the day we need to have everybody at the table.”