



# Update on Cowichan Weir

Kirk Stinchcombe  
27 October 2025

# Presentation Overview

1. How we got here
2. Regulatory approvals
3. Project financing and budget review
4. Next steps



# How We Got Here





# economics

Our mission is to sustain water systems and  
the communities that depend on them.



# TIMELINE



2019

Cowichan River “on life support” for the first time,  
needing electric pumps to sustain minimal flows.  
Repeated in 2023.



**2020**

Federal government commits \$14M to weir replacement, pending conditions. This is part of a larger Cowichan River contribution agreement with Cowichan Tribes.



Cowichan Tribes natural resources biologist, Tim Kulchyski, in Cowichan River north fork. Photo by Parker Jefferson. Weir design crew. Photo by Leroy Van Wieren

**2022**

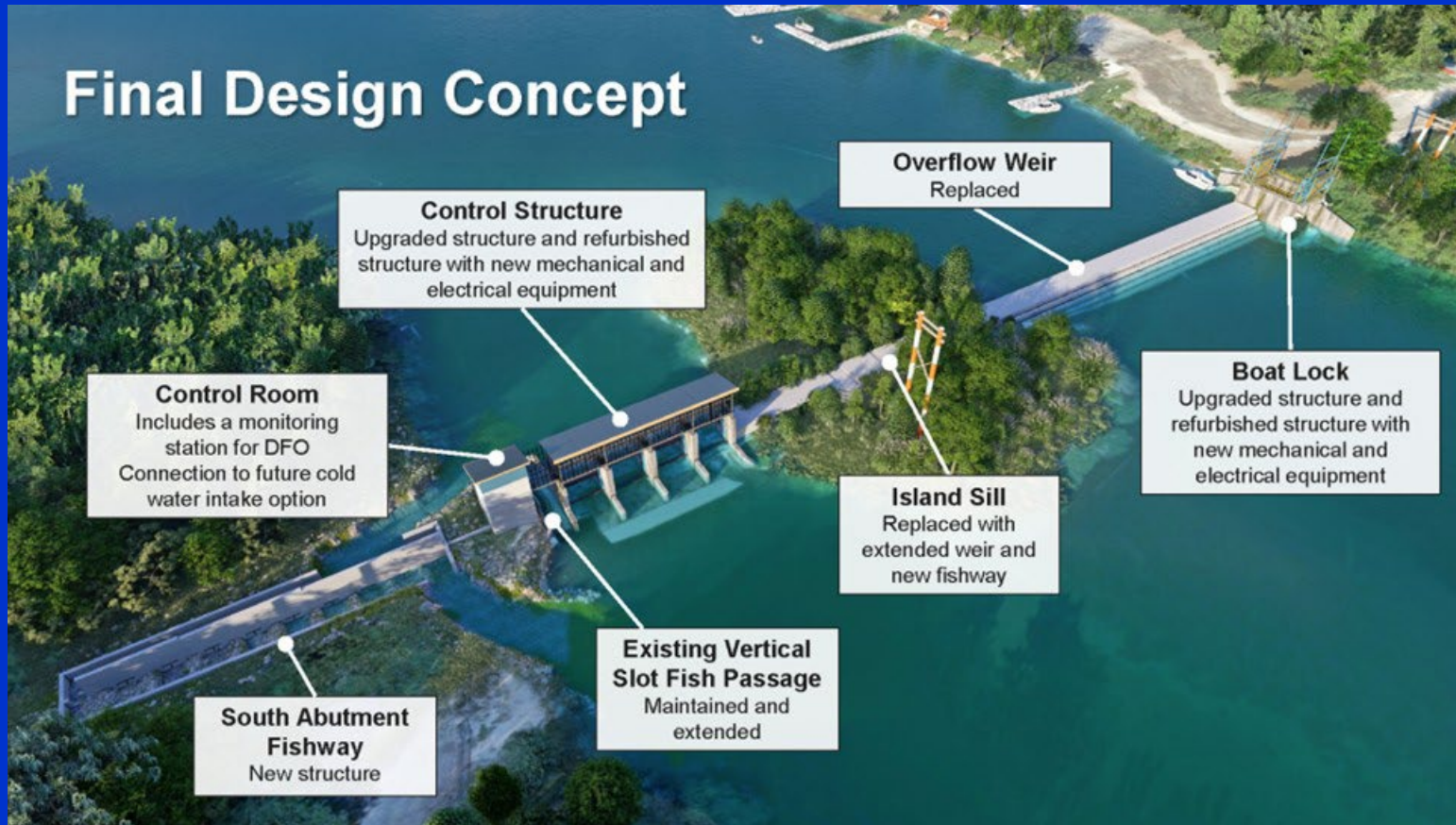
Memorandum of Understanding signed by Cowichan Tribes, Cowichan Valley Regional District & Catalyst Mill to achieve long term water supply to maintain the health of the Cowichan River watershed.



Chief Lydia Hwitsum and CVRD Chair Lori Iannidinaro.  
(Catalyst missing in photo.) Photographer unknown.

2019-22

New fully engineered weir design completed by Stantec, managed by CVRD and funded through a \$4 million grant through the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund



July 2023

Massive fish mortality event, estimated at over 100,000 dead, due to a combination of river conditions exacerbated by low flows.

## *In a Storied River, Fish Are Dying in Droves as Climate Change Scorches Canada*

The effects of a summer of environmental catastrophes were felt everywhere in Canada, from its vast boreal forests to a river on Vancouver Island once fished by Hollywood royalty.

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The Cowichan River, on Canada's Vancouver Island, saw hundreds of young salmon and trout die last month. The river, a renowned fly-fishing destination, is suffering from the effects of climate change, including a low water level and high water temperatures. Alana Paterson for The New York Times



By **Norimitsu Onishi**  
Reporting from Cowichan Valley, British Columbia

Aug. 30, 2023

**Feb 2024**

Provincial Government commits  
\$14M matching funds to Cowichan  
Tribes. Total = \$28M.

Premier David Eby and Chief Cindy Daniels  
World Water Day, 22 March 2024  
Funding announcement at Lake Cowichan  
Photo by Dirk Heydemann



## Spring 2024+

Cowichan Tribes and the Province work together, with technical support from partners, to determine ownership, licensing and operational arrangements.

A technical working group (all partners) and a G2G table are formed to move the process forward

[cowichanlakeweir.ca](http://cowichanlakeweir.ca)

# Rebuilding the Weir

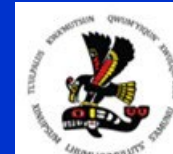
## A Cowichan River Resiliency Project

*Hulitun tst tu qa' (Water is Life).*

Planning for a new weir at Cowichan Lake is underway to help keep the Cowichan River flowing well throughout the dry seasons. A higher weir is needed for everyone and everything the river sustains.

Visit Leroy's Corner for project updates.

 Subscribe ...



# Regulatory Approvals

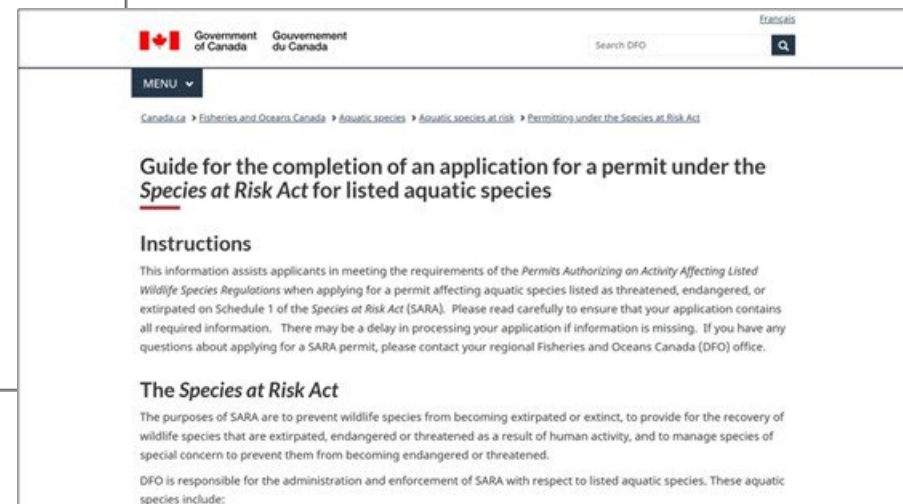
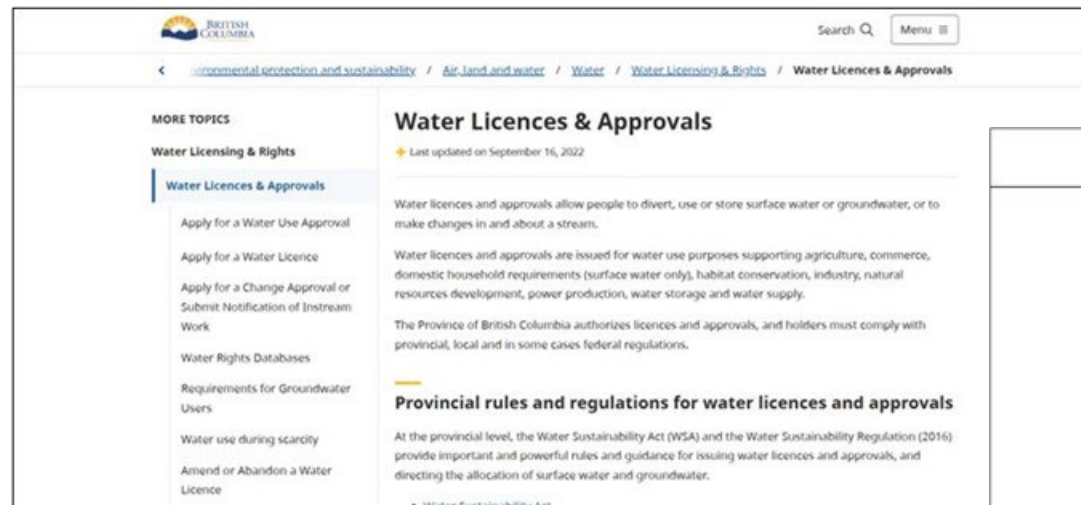
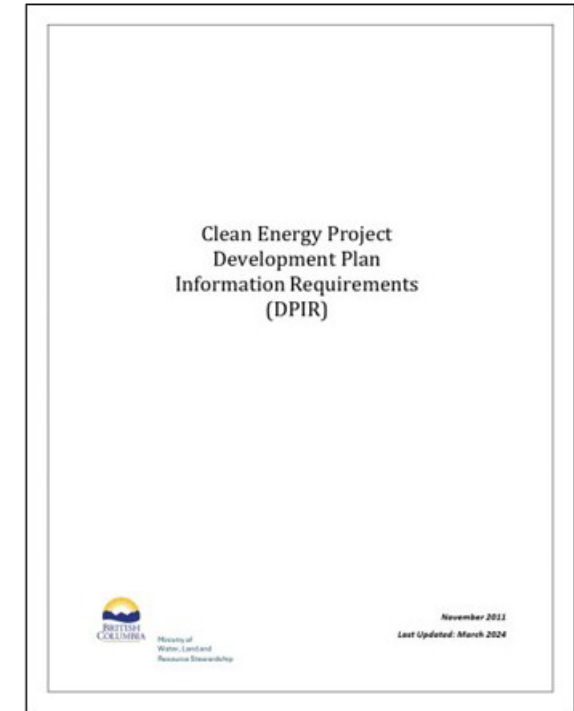
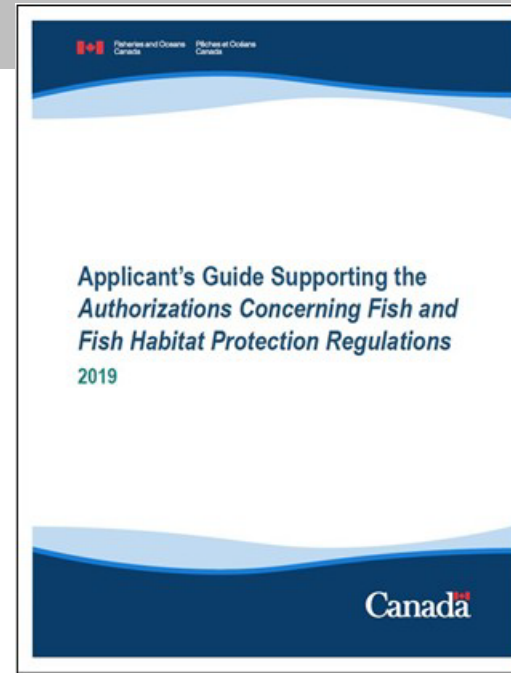
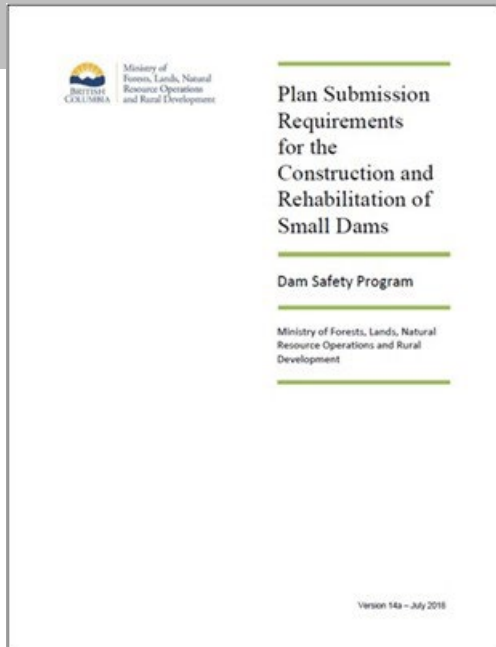


## Key Approvals

1. Water Licence under the BC *Water Sustainability Act*
  - Including Dam Safety Regulation requirements
2. Federal *Fisheries Act* authorization
3. Permit under the Federal *Species at Risk Act*
  - Focused primarily on Cowichan lamprey







Section	Information Requirement	Provided (Y/N)
7.5	Consultation with First Nations	
7.6	Potential Project Effects on First Nation Interests	
7.7	Commitments to First Nations	
8	<b>MONITORING PROGRAMS</b>	
8.1	Construction Environmental Monitoring	
8.2	Operational Environmental Monitoring	
9	<b>FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS</b>	
10	<b>SUMMARY OF COMMITMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS</b>	
10.1	Summary of Project Commitments	
10.2	Concluding Remarks	
	<b>APPENDICES</b>	
1	Private/Federal Land Requirements	
2	Additional Considerations for Crown Land Resources	
3	Matrix of Project Activities and VCs	
4	Residual Impact Assessment Table Template	
5	Region-Specific Requirements	

Section	Information Requirement	Provided (Y/N)
	Risk	
4.4.3	Forest and Range Considerations	
4.4.3.1	Forest Health	
4.4.3.2	Invasive Plants	
4.4.3.3	Forest Resource Features	
4.4.3.4	Range and Forage	
4.5	Summary of Environmental Effects, Mitigation, and Significance	
5	<b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT</b>	
5.1	Regional Economy	
5.2	Resource Objectives, Land Use Plans or Other Designations	
5.3	Implications for Adjacent or Overlapping Crown land and Resource Values	
5.3.1	Wildfire Protection	
5.4	Navigation, Transportation, and Access	
5.4.1	Roads, Bridges and Railroad	
5.4.2	Flight Path	
5.4.3	Public Access	
5.5	Water Rights	
5.6	Human Health and Safety	
5.7	Summary of Socio-economic Effects, Mitigation, and Significance	
6	<b>PROJECT ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES</b>	
6.1	Record of Engagement Activities	
7	<b>FIRST NATION INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS</b>	
7.1	Consultation Obligations of the Province	
7.2	Identification of First Nations	
7.3	Project Setting – Traditional Use and Aboriginal Rights/Title Issues in the Project Area	
7.4	Project Setting - Archaeological Resources	

Section	Information Requirement	Provided (Y/N)
2.5	Project Activities	
2.5.1	Construction and Commissioning	
2.5.2	Operations and Maintenance	
2.5.3	Future Project Phases	
2.5.4	Decommissioning Activities	
2.6	Schedule for Development	
3	<b>SCOPE OF THE ASSESSMENT</b>	
3.1	Scope of Issues & Valued Components	
3.1.1	Spatial Boundaries	
3.1.2	Temporal Boundaries	
3.1.3	Baseline Conditions	
3.2	Environmental Assessment methodology	
4	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT</b>	
4.1	Aquatic Environment	
4.1.1	Aquatic Habitat	
4.1.2	Aquatic Fauna	
4.1.2.1	Fish and Fish Habitat	
4.1.2.2	Other Aquatic Species	
4.1.3	Aquatic Vegetation	
4.1.4	Water quality	
4.2	Atmospheric Environment	
4.3	Geophysical Environment	
4.3.1	Surface Hydrology and Hydrogeology	
4.3.2	Geotechnical / slope stability	
4.3.3	Geomorphology	
4.3.4	Geology and Geochemistry	
4.4	Terrestrial Environment	
4.4.1	Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat	
4.4.2	Rare Plants, Plant communities and Ecosystems at	

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN INDEX

This index will be used by proponents to identify what information is provided in the DP and to provide rationale for any information not included. Where a project triggers a formal review by the provincial or federal Environmental Assessment (EA) agencies, proponents will provide a cross reference to the information provided in the EA application documents.

Proponents must use the items listed in this index in their DP. Doing so will give agency staff confidence that the project proponent and their qualified professionals will review and address all the key issues that provincial staff anticipate with the project. Using the Provided (Y/N/P) column, proponents can indicate which information requirements will be included in their DP by specifying yes (Y), no (N) or partially provided (P). If the proponent selects partially provided or no, they must indicate the rationale for excluding the information in the Comments column. If the project is also undergoing an assessment through the BC Environmental Assessment Office list the equivalent section in the EA application in the EA Reference column.

It is recommended that the proponent use the table provided below to develop their draft DP.

Section	Information Requirement	Provided (Y/N/P)	Comment	EA Reference
1	<b>PROJECT SUMMARY</b>			
1.1	Project Proponent			
1.2	Overview of Proposed Project			
1.3	Summary of Non-Provincial Agency Authorizations/ Approvals			
1.4	Summary of Provincial Authorizations			
2	<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>			
2.1	Project Planning and Design Approach			
2.1.1	Project Background and Rationale			
2.1.2	Location of Project and Mapping			
2.1.3	Project Facilities			
2.1.4	Labour Pool Requirements			
2.2	Environmental Setting			
2.3	Energy Production and Market for the Product			
2.4	Description of Land Requirements			

## “Other” Relevant Regulation

1. *Canadian Navigable Waters Act*
2. *BC Heritage Conservation Act*
3. *BC Wildlife Act*
4. Town of Lake Cowichan Bylaws
  - Zoning Bylaw, Traffic Regulations, etc.



# Regulatory Approval Submissions

KWL/Stantec “Phase 1” report completed (October 2025)

- Gap analysis
- Most information needs are addressed by previous work

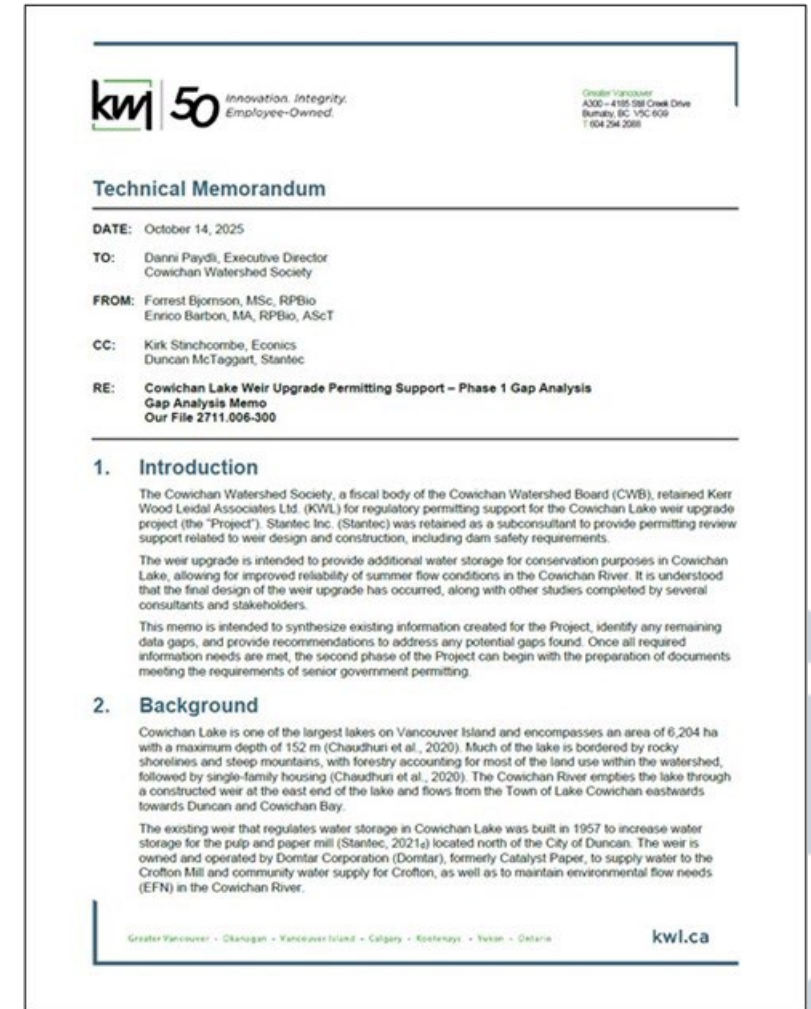




Table 2: Documents Reviewed

	Document	Author	Date Published
<b>Review and Permitting</b>			
1	Cowichan Lake Weir Document Review and Data Gap Analysis	Stantec	2020 <sub>a</sub>
2	Environmental Assessment Determination Calculations	KWL	2021
<b>Environmental</b>			
3	Cowichan Lake Lamprey Habitat Survey	Fundy Aqua Services	2011
4	Cowichan Lake Shoreline Habitat Assessment Volume 1	BC Conservation Foundation	2012
5	Cowichan Lake Shoreline Habitat Assessment Volume 2	Ecoscope Environmental Consultants Ltd.	2012
6	Fish and Fish Habitat Technical Data Report	Stantec	2020 <sub>b</sub>
7	Site Assessment Report Cowichan Lake Weir	Stantec	2020 <sub>c</sub>
8	Fluctuating Water Levels Influence Access to Critical Habitats for Threatened Cowichan Lake Lamprey	Chaudhuri, C., Wade, J., and Robertson, C.	2020
9	Cowichan Lake Weir Replacement Project Construction and Environmental Management Plan	Stantec	2021 <sub>a</sub>
10	Cowichan Lake Shoreline Assessment Final Report (also reviewed under Socio-Economic)	Kerr Wood Leidal Ltd.	2022
11	Cowichan River Proposed In-River Restoration Projects Presentation	Cowichan Tribes	2025
<b>Socio-Economic</b>			
12	Cowichan Water Use Plan	Compass Resource Management	2018
13	Environmental Appeal Board Decision (2013) <a href="#">2013wat013b_015c_016b_017c_018c_019c.pdf</a>	BC Environmental Appeal Board	2013
14	Consultation Plan Cowichan Valley Weir Design	Stantec	2020 <sub>d</sub>
15	Cowichan Valley Weir Design Consultation Summary Report	Stantec	2021 <sub>b</sub>
16	Cowichan River DMAF Projects Development and Selection	Northwest Hydraulics Consultants	2024
17	Insurance Cost Estimate for Cowichan Weir	Acera Insurance	2025
<b>Safety and Access</b>			
18	Cowichan Lake Weir: Dam Breach and Consequence Classification Assessment	Stantec	2020 <sub>e</sub>
19	Cowichan Lake Weir – Handover Summary	Stantec	2021 <sub>c</sub>



	Document	Author	Date Published
<b>Design</b>			
20	Final Design Report: Cowichan Lake Weir	Stantec	2021 <sub>d</sub>
21	Preliminary Design Report	Stantec	2021 <sub>e</sub>
22	Design Basis Memorandum	Stantec	2021 <sub>f</sub>
23	Cost Estimate Memo	Stantec	2021 <sub>g</sub>
24	Lake Cowichan Weir Replacement Constructability Review	Aecon Group Inc.	2021
25	Cowichan Lake Weir – Boat Lock and Control Structure Concrete Condition Assessment	Metro Testing + Engineering	2021
26	Cowichan Lake Weir: Dam Site Characterization Report	Stantec	2021 <sub>h</sub>
27	Cowichan Lake Weir – Preliminary Structural Assessment	Stantec	2021 <sub>i</sub>
28	Memorandum to Jeff Moore, MRM (CVRD) from Bryan Gallagher, P.Eng. Struct. Eng. Cost Estimate Summary – August 2024 Update – Rev 1.	Stantec	2024
29	Technical Memorandum Information on Inspection, Operations & Maintenance of the Cowichan Lake Weir.	Stantec	2025

29 Previous Studies & Reports!



# Regulatory Approval Submissions

1. But...three key gaps
  - Archeology
  - First Nations engagement
  - Vegetation study (already started)
2. Phase 2 set to kick off imminently
3. KWL preparing budget, schedule
4. Complete in early 2026



# Project Financing and Budget Review



# Project Funding

- ◆ \$28 million in funding secured
  - \$14 million each from Federal and Provincial Governments
- ◆ Construction budget developed by Stantec
  - Subsequently revised
- ◆ “Other” costs
  - Operations and maintenance
  - Permitting
  - Insurance
  - Etc.
- ◆ Still a shortfall, but exact amount TBD



# Project Cost Review

- ◆ Working with MNP to scope review of project costs
- ◆ Will aid agencies with future funding decisions
- ◆ MNP revising scope. Aim to kick off in November

**MNP**



# Next Steps



## Next Steps

- ◆ Phase 2 to prepare regulatory approval submissions
  - Complete early 2026
- ◆ Complete cost review and work with partners to update funding strategy





## Contact Us

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