

# Report

Date

November 16, 2022

File:

Subject

2023 Community Resiliency Investment Funding Application

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## PURPOSE

To consider which projects (if any) to apply for grant funding through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities' Community Resiliency Investment program under the FireSmart Community Funding and Supports Stream Program.

## BACKGROUND

The provincial government introduced the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) program in 2018 to reduce wildfire risks and impacts in British Columbia. Administered by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), communities are provided funding and support to complete FireSmart initiatives that include priority fuel management activities on Crown and private land. The UBCM, First Nations' Emergency Services Society and the Forest Enhancement Society of BC are working with the Ministry of Forests to administer the FireSmart Community Funding & Supports portion of the program for local government and First Nation applicants.

Since 2019, the Municipality of North Cowichan has been successful in receiving grant funding through the CRI program to support local FireSmart initiatives. In 2019, the Municipality of North Cowichan received \$34,500 to update the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), which was completed in 2020, approved by UBCM in 2021 and later adopted by Council on September 1, 2021 (Attachment 1).

While the CWPP was being updated, further grant funding of \$15,100 was received in 2020 to provide the residents of North Cowichan an opportunity to dispose of yard waste/wood debris during a community event called "Chipper Days" in an effort to reduce potential fire hazards in the community. However, due to the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic, this project was postponed and funding was returned due to the unknown and ever changing Provincial Health Orders.

Through the 2021 CRI application process, the Municipality of North Cowichan was awarded funding of \$110,345 to continue with the recommendations from the 2020 CWPP. A contractor was hired to conduct detailed fuel management prescription in high-risk areas and FireSmart assessments on critical infrastructure. The scope of work also included developing a Wildfire Development Permit area which will be used by Planning staff in the future to update and modernize the current development permit guidelines, making them easier to follow and administer.

In 2022, the Municipality of North Cowichan was again awarded further funding of \$143,610 through the CRI program to begin fuel reduction treatments in the identified high-risk area on Mount Tzouhalem. Due to high treatment costs and funding limitations, only a small portion of the total identified area could be treated annually. The treatment area for 2022 was selected given its proximity to homes, planned future development and high public visibility. This work is anticipated to begin in late November 2022 and be completed by the end of the year.

A website and interactive project page have been set up to provide information updates about the project, which can be found at: [www.northcowichan.ca/wildfire](http://www.northcowichan.ca/wildfire)

## DISCUSSION

Several recommendations within the CWPP were identified to reduce and manage wildfire risk through fuel management, FireSmart planning, community education and wildfire response. These recommendations were priority ranked and designed to be implemented through a phased-in approach to reduce vulnerability while increasing the community's resilience to wildfire activity. With a sustained focus on reducing wildfire hazards in high-risk areas near critical infrastructure, staff are committed to moving forward with the CWPP recommendations for 2023.

For 2023, staff are proposing to continue the fire risk mitigation activities from the 2022 treatment area on Mount Tzouhalem (Attachment 2) to create a larger buffer area around the adjacent homes, parking lot and several high-use hiking and biking trails. Seeking funding of up to \$200,000 the application also includes the entire recommended treatment area for Maple Mountain (Attachment 3), which is adjacent to a communications tower that has also been identified as critical infrastructure.

A grant application has been submitted to UBCM, as this is the only project that is currently shelf-ready. However, a resolution of Council supporting this application is required before UBCM will process the application. The proposal includes an educational component to ensure that clear, concise and timely information is made available to the public about the proposed project, with regular updates made at key milestones. This will also include the project manager making a presentation to Council at the end of the project to summarize the work completed and highlight the proposed next steps based.

## OPTIONS

1. **(Recommended Option)** THAT Council authorize staff to submit a grant application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities' Community Resiliency Investment program under the FireSmart Community Funding and Supports stream for 2023 of up to \$200,000 to conduct fuel hazard reduction treatments in the proposed areas in accordance with the Mount Tzouhalem and Maple Mountain Fuel Management Prescriptions.
2. THAT Council direct staff to report back with alternative projects/proposals for Council's consideration for a grant application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities' Community Resiliency Investment program under the FireSmart Community Funding and Supports stream for 2023.

## IMPLICATIONS

Personnel: Staff time will be required to coordinate, implement, advertise, oversee and promote the project.

Financial: There are minimal direct financial impacts on North Cowichan. Should partial or no funding be received for the project, staff will report to Council for further direction.

Environmental: Continuing to implement the recommendations within the CWPP will help reduce the impacts that wildfires can have on the community and the surrounding environment. The environmental impacts of any potential activity will be taken into account/considered before any activity takes place to ensure environmentally sensitive features/areas are protected appropriately.

Communications: Staff will work with the communications team to provide any related project or educational material to the public through the North Cowichan website and social media platforms. Regular updates and information will be made available through the municipal wildfire mitigation project webpage.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

THAT Council authorize staff to submit a grant application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities' Community Resiliency Investment program under the FireSmart Community Funding and Supports stream for 2023 of up to \$200,000 to conduct fuel hazard reduction treatments in the proposed areas in accordance with the Mount Tzouhalem and Maple Mountain Fuel Management Prescriptions.

Report prepared by:

*Shaun Mason*

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Shaun Mason, RPF  
Municipal Forester

Report reviewed by:

*Neil Pukesh*

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Neil Pukesh  
Director, Parks and Recreation

## **Approved to be forwarded to Council:**



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Ted Swabey  
Chief Administrative Officer

## **Attachments:**

- (1) 2020 Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- (2) CRI 2023 Mount Tzouhalem treatment zone map
- (3) CRI 2023 Maple Mountain treatment zone map