



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Public Works and Transportation Committee **Date:** March 3, 2020
From: Peter Russell **File:** 10-6150-11-01/2020-
 Director, Sustainability and District Energy Vol 01
Re: **Proposed South Arm Jetty Tidal Marsh Project: Provincial Land Tenure Application**

Staff Recommendation

That, for the purposes of environmental enhancement and consistency with the City’s Flood Protection Management Strategy, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority’s Provincial Land Tenure Application for a 30 year lease, as identified in the “Proposed South Arm Jetty Tidal Marsh Project: Provincial Land Tenure Application” report dated March 3, 2020, from the Director, Sustainability and District Energy, be endorsed.

Peter Russell
 Director, Sustainability and District Energy
 (604-276-4130)

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Parks Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS:	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

The purpose of this report is to inform Council that the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority (the Port) has submitted an application to BC's Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (the Province) to obtain a (maximum) 30 year lease for lands that will support the construction of the South Arm Jetty Tidal Marsh Project. This report also provides an update on the Fraser River Estuary Connectivity Project located in the same general area.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #1 A Safe and Resilient City:

Enhance and protect the safety and well-being of Richmond.

Analysis

Provincial Land Tenure Application for the proposed South Arm Jetty Tidal Marsh Project

The Port's South Arm Jetty Tidal Marsh Project is proposed on provincially-owned land located along the southern edge of Sturgeon Bank, on the north side of the Steveston Jetty, and at the mouth of the Fraser River, all within the City's municipal urban boundary (Attachment 1). The area is currently an unvegetated intertidal sand flat with shallow sub-tidal areas. The proposed project will convert approximately 50 hectares of existing sand flat into marsh habitat that is intended to benefit local fish and wildlife as part of the larger Sturgeon Bank Wildlife Management Area (Attachment 2). The Port is pursuing the project, in part, to offset the anticipated impacts associated with the proposed Roberts Bank Terminal 2 Project, which is currently seeking an Environmental Assessment Certificate from the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

The Port submitted a land tenure application to the Province in January 2020. The Province requires stakeholder consultation as part of the land tenure procurement process and is seeking comments from the City by April 8, 2020. Staff have reviewed the Port's land tenure package, which included a long-term management plan, concept designs and letters of support from the Musqueam and Semiahmoo First Nations. Staff are working with the Province to understand their processes for applying long-term management responsibilities to land tenures.

The project will be constructed approximately two kilometres from the City's west dike. The project, including construction, is not expected to pose a risk to the community, impede viewpoints along the west dike trail system, or compromise the City's long-term flood protection plans. The Port has developed a long-term management plan that is consistent with current efforts to revitalize Sturgeon Bank, including the Fraser River Estuary Connectivity Project. The final project, when completed, will serve to improve Sturgeon Bank's natural environmental and flood attenuation properties along the west dike, consistent with the objectives of the City's Flood Protection Management Strategy.

Staff have no additional concerns regarding the Port's application and recommend that Council endorse the Port's application.

Fraser River Estuary Connectivity Project

Staff last updated Council on this project via memorandum on October 15, 2019. Raincoast Conservation Foundation (Raincoast) and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada are currently working along the Steveston Jetty to increase fish access, freshwater, nutrient loading, and sediment flow from the Fraser River to Sturgeon Bank through a series of breach points (illustrated in Attachment 1).

Raincoast concluded the first phase of the project in March 2019, which included constructing three, 50 metre-wide by 1.5 metre-deep, breaches along the Jetty to improve freshwater inputs to Sturgeon Bank at mid and high tide. Environmental monitoring is ongoing and Raincoast is pleased with its preliminary fish counts at the breach locations, which have exceeded expectations. Raincoast is currently planning the second phase of the work. Phase two activities include deepening the breaches to improve freshwater flow at low tide and is expected to be completed in 2020. Raincoast is also continuing discussions with regional stakeholders such as Metro Vancouver, regarding potential breaches on Iona Island and at McDonald Slough as part of the proposed Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrades. The potential for this future restoration work remains dependent on securing funding. A firm schedule has yet to be defined.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

Sturgeon Bank provides a critical habitat in the region and offers beneficial flood mitigation protection to the City's western most boundaries. Recognition of these key functions are also noted by several inter-jurisdictional stakeholders and assessments are currently underway to better understand the factors contributing to the observable changes on Sturgeon Bank.

Staff have reviewed the technical information related to the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority's Provincial Land Tenure Application and recommend that Council support the application. If endorsed, Staff will notify the Province of the resolution and will update Council accordingly when a final provincial decision is made, which is expected in May 2020.



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Att. 1: Fraser River Estuary Project Breach Locations

Att. 2: Proposed Port of Metro Vancouver South Arm Jetty Tidal Marsh Project



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Attachment 2. Proposed Port of Metro Vancouver South Arm Jetty Tidal Marsh Project



Current state at low tide.



Rendering of proposed new habitat at low tide

(Source: Port of Metro Vancouver)