



# City of Richmond

## Report to Committee

**To:** Public Works and Transportation Committee  
**From:** Dave Semple  
 General Manager, Parks and Recreation and  
 Robert Gonzalez, P. Eng.  
 General Manager, Engineering and Public Works  
**Re:** Fraser River Discussion Forum

**Date:** November 4, 2010

**File:**

### Staff Recommendation

1. That City staff continue to work with the Fraser Basin Council and other key stakeholders, to coordinate a Lower Fraser River Discussion Forum in 2011.
2. That City staff continue to work with other Fraser River stakeholders and senior levels of government to develop a framework for a multi-agency organization that governs a province-wide Fraser River Sustainability Management Strategy, based on collaboration and consensus.

Dave Semple  
 General Manager, Parks and Recreation  
 (604-233-3350)

Robert Gonzalez, P. Eng.  
 General Manager, Engineering and  
 Public Works  
 (604-276-4150)

Att. 2

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<b>ROUTED TO:</b>	<b>CONCURRENCE</b>		<b>CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER</b>
Engineering	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Sustainability	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>REVIEWED BY TAG</b>	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REVIEWED BY CAO</b>
			YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> 

## Staff Report

### Origin

In June 2009 the report, "Local Channel Dredging", was presented to Council outlining the impacts of Port Metro Vancouver's new dredging policy and the importance of the Fraser River to the future of British Columbia. The referral adopted by Council in July 2009 was as follows:

- 1) *That City staff work in partnership with Port Metro Vancouver, Steveston Harbour Authority, the Ladner Sediment Group, the Shelter Island Group, and any other interested groups to seek funding from the Provincial and Federal government for the dredging and long term capital and maintenance of local channels as outlined in Attachment 1;*
- 2) *That the attached report from the Director of Parks and Public Works Operations entitled "Local Channel Dredging" dated June 29, 2009, be sent to Metro Vancouver board, the Fraser Basin Council, the Lower Mainland Local Government Association, Members of Parliament, Members of the Legislative Assembly, Vancouver International Airport, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada for information; and*
- 3) *The local Federal and Provincial representatives be advised as to the change in support and consequent reduction of funding available for dredging in the Fraser River and implications to local Maritime users.*

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on a number of issues and discussions held with key stakeholders over the summer months, and recommend that the City take a leadership role in facilitating a Fraser River Discussion Forum and continue to work with stakeholders to discuss joint issues and opportunities.

### Analysis

In August 2008, Port Metro Vancouver (PMV) developed a new dredging policy for the Fraser River that focuses on the main deep-sea channels, and reduces their responsibility for dredging of local navigation channels, such as the Steveston Harbour and Middle Arm. In order to provide a transition into the new policy, PMV has established a "local channel dredging contribution program". However the overall funding is capped at \$7 million, resulting in a limit of \$500,000 per channel, for all municipalities over a 10-year period.

Dredging is the core management strategy that has been traditionally used to maintain the function and economic viability of the waterfront. Ensuring that funding is available for Richmond and other municipalities remains a priority, and City staff will continue to work together with other stakeholders, as directed by Council, to seek funding from the Provincial and Federal Governments (attachment 1).

However, in addition to the immediate need to dredge, the discussions with other stakeholders illustrated and confirmed that there are many interrelated issues, not only in the Lower Mainland but also upriver. A repeated theme was the need to 'look at the big picture' and the importance of working together to have our voices heard at the Provincial and Federal level. Economic vitality of the river is essential to not only British Columbia, but all of Canada. In 2008 alone, over 33 million tonnes of cargo was transported on the Fraser River, generating \$9.6 billion in economic output and generating over 53,000 jobs.

The City of Richmond has shown strong leadership and a proactive approach to a number of river related issues through Council approved strategies such as: the 2008-2031 Richmond Flood Protection Strategy, the Corporate Sustainability Framework, the 2009 Waterfront Strategy, and the City Centre Area Plan.

An interdepartmental Waterfront Committee has formed to begin to address projects and issues that arise, and to ensure that existing corporate initiatives and plans are aligned and coordinated.

Key Issues Identified from the Stakeholders Meetings:

Meetings and initial discussions have been held with all the key stakeholders identified in the Council referral. The topics discussed began with local dredging and quickly moved onto more global issues and concerns:

- *Dredging:* The secondary channels, such as the Middle Arm and Steveston Harbour, have not been systematically and regularly dredged and are showing signs of substantial infill that has begun to disrupt maritime operations within these channels. This is coupled with a lack of dedicated funding to both 'catch up' and ensure a fully functional waterfront in the future. The City of Delta together with Metro Vancouver recently approached the Federal Government in Ottawa to raise the profile of this issue. The need to take a regionally coordinated approach to seek funding from the Province and the Federal Government was cited by all stakeholders.
- *Sediment Disposal Plan:* Dredged material is a valuable resource and regional uses could entail land reclamation, agricultural material, or the construction of dyke improvements. Finding an economic use of sediment could potentially offset the cost of dredging. Currently, Port Metro Vancouver is developing a regional habitat banking and land reclamation initiative called the 'Fraser Framework Agreement', in partnership with FREMP and DFO.
- *Strategies to reduce the requirement for dredging:* This requires a multi-prong approach, including determining and managing the upriver source of the sediment, to more localized solutions such as reorganizing marina operations and deflecting the deposition of sediment. Reconfiguring the shoreline to deflect sediment and, thereby, ultimately reduce the need to dredge is the core objective of the Steveston Harbour Long-term Development Plan presented by Small Craft Harbours to City Council in September 2008. (A separate report will be coming to Council in Fall 2010 discussing this plan in more detail)
- *Salinity:* A number of farmers on the Fraser River are concerned that high salinity in the river is affecting their ability to irrigate crops. Further research is required to determine if there has been a change over the last 25 years, and to determine what may be causing this change in the salinity wedge in the river.
- *Research and Science:* Updated and more detailed data about the river is required that would benefit all communities and governmental agencies in decision-making and prioritizing actions. While multiple agencies undertake research, funding has been cut over the years. At times individual agencies or municipalities will undertake research for a specific intent e.g. applying for a CEAA approval for a project. Others may be unaware that information exists or the information resides with a consultant firm, not a public agency. A coordinating body is needed to determine those research priorities that will benefit all communities and to oversee the gathering, interpretation, and sharing of science based data.
- *Upriver Activity:* The Lower Mainland river communities are the recipients of decision-making, activities and environmental conditions that occur upriver. All communities along the river, and the Province at large, depend upon the health of the river. The effectiveness of local strategies and action plans could be impacted or compromised by any number of factors occurring further up the

Fraser. e.g. forestry practices, gravel extraction. There is a sense of urgency that it is critical to take a holistic and sustainable approach to managing the health of the river.

- *Global Impacts and Adapting to Climate Change:* Many of the stakeholders identified a concern about the future and recognized that major changes are rapidly occurring on a number of fronts that will have significant short-term and long-term implications. Key global and local issues include rising sea levels, loss of eco-system health and lack of established funding for dikes. The need to adapt to change was acknowledged by many stakeholders but how and what that would look like remains unclear.

The City of Richmond has been proactive and a leader in preparing a number of detailed comprehensive strategies and action plans to protect and increase the resiliency of our community.

- *Fraser Basin Council:* The Fraser Basin Council is a unique non-governmental organization created in 1997, the Fraser Basin Council's mandate is to advance sustainability within the Fraser Basin. The Council does excellent work and has recently published the Sustainability Snapshot 2010 Working Together in the Lower Mainland Report; an Environmental Protection in Flood Hazard Management Guide for Practitioners, and is currently researching water related climate change adaptation issues in the Lower Mainland. It must be noted, that ultimately the Council does not have the authority or the funding to implement many of the identified strategies and actions towards a sustainable future. However, the Council is interested in exploring the idea of a Lower Fraser River Discussion Forum, to bring together key stakeholders, to identify and prioritise coordinated action on river issues from Hope to the Salish Sea. The Council currently has a funding proposal in the works to develop a business plan for hosting a forum.

### Moving Forward – Taking a Leadership Role

The need to maintain the operational viability of local waterfronts through the traditional core management strategy of dredging was the initial reason to meet with other local stakeholders. This quickly expanded to discussions on the urgent need for coordination, collaboration, and a strong voice to work with senior government on the management of the many issues impacting the economic and environmental health of the Fraser River.

Richmond is proactive on many fronts in developing a range of comprehensive strategies and action plans: the 2008-2031 Richmond Flood Protection Strategy, the Corporate Sustainability Framework, the 2009 Waterfront Strategy, and the Emergency Management Plan, that will protect our built environment and increase our resiliency as a river community. However, Richmond together with other Lower Mainland communities, are also impacted by activities that occur throughout the Province along the Fraser River. No community can work in isolation even with the best laid plans.

The Fraser Basin Council says it quite clearly in the 'Sustainability Snapshot 2010 Working Together in the Lower Mainland' report:

*“Collaboration is vital to enable shared enjoyment of the social, economic and natural wealth of this region. Each of us influences the health and sustainability of our communities with the choices and decisions we make, with effects occurring now and long into the future. As residents and citizens, planners and policy-makers, businesses and community organizations, staff and elected officials, we have a shared responsibility to be stewards of this great region”.*

The message from many of the stakeholders that staff recently engaged is that there is a need to take these ideas of collaboration, consensus, and stewardship, and focus specifically on the issues and opportunities of this great national heritage river, the Fraser. The health of the river and natural eco-systems, the economic growth potential, the maritime operations, and waterfront developments, are all interconnected and need to be considered in a holistic manner.

Leadership is needed that can bring together the stakeholders and multiple levels of government, both in the local region and throughout the Province. Working with a strong corporate vision, the City of Richmond is recognized as a leader in strategic and legacy planning. Being innovators and leaders in sustainability, as well as economic development, are core Council term goals.

The first step towards implementing a new sustainable management strategy on the Fraser River is to bring key stakeholders together. City staff has been in discussions with the Fraser Basin Council regarding the potential of a Lower Fraser River Discussion Forum, to be held in the spring of 2011. This forum would begin to identify ways to coordinate complex river issues from Hope to the Salish Sea. Subsequently, the next step would be to work with other Fraser River stakeholders and senior levels of government to develop a framework for a multi-agency organization that governs a province-wide Fraser River Sustainability Management Strategy, based on collaboration and consensus.

In comparison to other jurisdictions around the world, a deficiency of collaboration and consensus exists regarding overall sustainable management practices on the Fraser River. Conversely, in Europe for example, an organization called *SedNet* ([www.sednet.org](http://www.sednet.org)) exists with 130 members, which brings together experts from the scientific community, government and industry, to collectively implement sustainable environmental and sedimentary management practices (Attachment 2). A similar organization is needed to govern the Fraser River Basin. Together with others stakeholders, Richmond is committed to protecting the river and working towards a sustainable future.

### **Financial Impact**

There is no financial impact at this time.

### **Conclusion**

The Fraser River is a Canadian Heritage River and the social, environmental and economic well-being of our community and others are dependant upon the many policies, decisions and actions made by a wide range of stakeholders along the whole length of the river. A province-wide Fraser River Sustainability Management Strategy, based on collaboration and consensus, is required to ensure the long-term sustainability of the river. The Fraser Basin Council is seeking funds from others to host a Lower Fraser River Discussion Forum in 2011, with key stakeholders including Richmond, to discuss joint issues and opportunities. This would be the first step towards the development of a comprehensive and large scale strategy and for the whole river.



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SedNet is a European network aimed at incorporating sediment issues and knowledge into European strategies to support the achievement of a good environmental status and to develop new tools for sediment management.

Our focus is on all sediment quality and quantity issues on a river basin scale, ranging from freshwater to estuarine and marine sediments.

SedNet brings together experts from science, administration and industry. It interacts with the various networks in Europe that operate at a national or international level or that focus on specific fields (such as science, policy making, sediment management, industry, education).

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Report on the SedNet Round Table Discussion [Sediment Management – an essential element of River Basin Management Plans](#).



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