



City of Maple Ridge

TO: Her Worship Mayor Nicole Read and Members of Council **DATE:** November 7, 2017
FROM: Chief Administrative Officer **MEETING:** Workshop
SUBJECT: Environmental Management Strategy Implementation Report – Phase Two;
Short Term High Priority Implementation Recommendations for 2017 – 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On February 12, 2016 Council endorsed the formation of the Maple Ridge Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) which held its first official meeting on September 14, 2016. As part of the overall EAC mandate, members were asked to familiarize themselves with the Maple Ridge Environmental Management Strategy (EMS), dated April 2014 as a key resource and guide for EAC members.

EAC members were also asked to review and recommend the next phase of high priority short term EMS strategies/action items for Council's consideration and endorsement from the remaining strategies originally identified by the consultant of record, Urban Systems. (*Appendix A*) The time frame for commencement and implementation of the second phase of short term high priority strategies is approximately three years, commencing late 2017 until 2020. These action items will also form an important part of the EAC annual business plan over the next several years will be reviewed on an annual basis by Mayor and Council.

At the March 15, 2017 Environmental Advisory Committee meeting, members voted unanimously in favour of five new short term high priority EMS implementation strategies. Some of these items are incremental steps or action items that can help move towards achieving some of the larger, more complex, medium and longer term strategies identified in the original EMS report. The staff liaison was directed to prepare a report for Council with the EAC's recommendations and forward them onto Council for consideration and endorsement.

The following 2017-2020 implementation items have been identified by the EAC:

1. Improve environmental communications including updates and clarification about existing environmental requirements and processes, raising awareness of municipal environmental initiatives and successes, and continue to support a strong community stewardship ethic;
2. Prepare recommendations for updating and improving the Watercourse Protection Bylaw;
3. Continue to work with educational institutions and innovative cost effective technologies to help update and develop the municipal natural asset inventory with emphasis on benefits and importance of natural assets such as urban forests, protected ESA areas/features, and green infrastructure;
4. Update OCP Natural Features mapping and provincial aquifer boundaries;
5. Prepare a scoping report with a comparative review of what other municipalities are doing to support resilient healthy watersheds, maintaining functional networks of habitat hubs/corridors for wildlife management, and how they are supporting more sustainable green infrastructure strategies/designs with ongoing development.

This report includes information on some background history about the EMS implementation process, the rationale and considerations behind the recommendations, along with a brief summary of potential implications, timelines, and resources required for the successful implementation of the 2017-20 implementation items identified by the EAC members.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Phase Two (2017-2020) Implementation items recommended by the Environmental Advisory Committee, identified in the report entitled “Environmental Management Strategy Implementation Report – Short Term High Priority Implementation Recommendations for 2017-2020” dated November 7, 2017 be endorsed.

BACKGROUND:

Overview of the EMS Implementation Selection Process

The overall purpose of the Maple Ridge Environmental Management Strategy (EMS) is to help recognize environmental strengths, challenges, and opportunities for the municipality. The EMS serves as a kind of road map or guide for the municipality to help continue to move towards its environmental goals of developing in a sustainable manner to maintain a healthy, safe, and natural environment for its citizens and future generations. The EMS document is also a key environmental resource document and guide for EAC members.

The EMS goals, findings and recommendations were identified through a community wide consultation process in 2013-2014. Overall, there was significant community support for the final EMS goals, objectives, findings, and recommendations. The environmental goals and objectives of the EMS report are closely aligned with the current OCP environmental management framework and corporate sustainability plans. The main environmental goals are listed below:

- Protect significant, unique, and fragile ecosystems, natural features, and ecologically significant processes in the Municipality;
- Anticipate and respond to the impacts of climate change on land, water, and air resources;
- Determine and develop appropriate information, regulations, standards and best practices that are necessary to promote and encourage sustainable development practices;
- Continue to invest in a strong community wide stewardship ethic.

In February 2016, Council endorsed the Environmental Management Strategy (EMS) report dated April 2014. In addition to the endorsement of the general findings and recommendations of the EMS report, there was an implementation framework that accompanied the original report back in 2014 with a list of recommended strategies prepared by the consultant of record, Urban Systems. Please see Appendix A.

The consultant developed a prioritization scheme for implementation strategies into low, medium, and high priorities. It also organized and categorized strategies into short, medium, and longer term implementation periods and included a number of considerations to help rank action items. The future environmental advisory committee members were to be responsible for recommending short term high priority action items for Council’s consideration and for implementation every three years.

Phase I (2014-2017) Short Term High Priority EMS Action Items

The first phase of short term, high priority implementation action items was selected by the consultant of record Urban Systems and endorsed by Council in April 17, 2014. Please refer to Appendix A. There were four implementation action items selected to commence and be undertaken during the three year period between 2015 and 2017. Council directed that the balance of the remaining EMS implementation items were to be referred to the “to be formed” EAC. The original Phase One Short Term High Priority action items that were endorsed by Council back in April 2014 are listed below:

Strategy – Action Item	Resources	Time Line
1. Establish An Environmental Advisory Committee	Planning staff	Completed
2. Review and Update the Tree Protection Bylaw	Planning staff	Completed
3. Update the Soils Bylaw	Planning staff	Completed
4. Improve Environmental Communications	Planning staff	Ongoing

Three of the four items were successfully completed or will likely be completed by the end of 2017. The fourth item which involves communications updates continues on as part of a long term strategy.

DISCUSSION:

Role of the Environmental Advisory Committee

With the endorsement of the first phase of high priority short term implementation items in 2014 and the more recent endorsement of the EMS report in 2016, the Council of the day noted that for future EMS implementation phases, high priority short term action items would be reviewed and recommended by the soon to be formed ‘Environmental Advisory Committee’ members.

One important role for EAC members is to help sort through the complexities and priorities of the remaining EMS implementation strategies every three years to determine and recommend to Council appropriate next steps for commencement and implementation.

Phase II (2017-2020) Short Term High Priority EMS Action Items

On March 20, 2017 EAC members considered, voted, and unanimously approved the second phase of recommended implementation items put forward in this report. The EAC reviewed the remaining 55 EMS strategies and action items that had been identified by the consultant of record in the original report. An initial list of 15 potential EMS strategies/action items was selected out of the original 55 based on a number of considerations which are outlined in this report. Some of the longer term recommendations had to be broken down into short term actionable items. This list was broken down and refined into a top five list which is outlined and discussed in this report.

The implementation strategies and action items require appropriate consideration with respect to costs, effective use of available resources, timeliness, relevance to current and long term municipal priorities, and chances of successful completion or commencement during the three year period.

Please refer to the colour coded list of strategies in Appendix B which includes a list of implementation items that have been completed, that are currently underway, and that have been selected to be the next Phase of action items.

Phase Two. Implementation Items

1. Improve communications and environmental awareness – (Ongoing)

Specific short term communications action items include the following:

- Continue to provide clarity for stakeholders involved with development and environmental permit related requirements, and environmental processes related to environmental review including watercourse protection requirements, hillside management, tree protection/management, soils management, and enhancement programs.
- Help to make the municipal environmental information more accessible and promote greater understanding of the rationale, requirements, and benefits associated with the current environmental framework. Raise awareness of the importance of existing environmental programs, tools, processes, and best management practices that help us continue to work towards achieving municipal environmental objectives and targets.
- Highlight and celebrate some of the important municipal environmental successes over the years including numerous awards and recognition received for environmental programs and efforts to protect, manage, and restore natural environmental & assets.
- Continue to support and invest in a strong stewardship ethic, promote connections, and raise awareness about the role of the EAC and community initiatives at public events.
- Support for an environmental outreach signage program that can help raise awareness about the significance, sensitivity, and values associated with natural heritage features, sensitive areas, and natural processes with assistance from community stakeholders.

Resources: Environmental Advisory Committee members will take the lead on these projects, with support from a sub-committee along with assistance from Planning, Information Services, Communications Department and possibly with help from other municipal Advisory boards including Heritage, Arts & Culture, Agriculture Committees.

2. Update and improve Watercourse Protection Bylaw & DP Guidelines (2018)

Provide appropriate updates to the Watercourse Protection Bylaw and Environmental DP guidelines to improve consistency and compliance with current senior environmental agency requirements. The updates would help provide greater efficiencies, clarity, and effectiveness to existing regulations, enforcement tools, and processes.

Staff Resources: The Planning Department would be the lead on these projects, with technical support from the Bylaws Enforcement and Finance Departments. The EAC will provide feedback on this project.

3. Prepare A Scoping Report - Ecological Network Management Strategies. (2019)

- The scoping report will include a comparative review of what other local governments are doing to protect and manage their natural assets, their unique, threatened or significant ecosystems, and how they are managing wildlife hubs and corridors.
- It will help determine what kinds of wildlife management strategies, plans, or tools are being utilized by local governments to help better manage significant natural assets, wildlife habitat, healthy ecosystems, and protect unique or endangered flora/fauna that isn't currently protected by legislation or regulations?

- What kind of services, benefits, and cost saving do our natural areas, natural assets, and natural features provide to the larger community. How can we identify and measure these important resources?
- How can the City better plan for, design, and manage development activity around the urban interface areas with forest edges to help with natural hazards, wildlife interface areas, and management of urban forest areas?
- Why is a watershed based approach important for the City of Maple Ridge. What can we do within our municipality to help ensure healthy watersheds? How can we continue to work together with stakeholders involved with surrounding crown lands and with adjacent municipalities to help support mutually beneficial and sustainable watershed management objectives?

Staff Resources: The Planning Department’s Environment Section would be the lead on this scoping report, possibly with the assistance of a consultant. Other departments will be asked to participate such as Parks, Communications, Corporate Sustainability, Finance, and EAC members will help with the findings and recommendations.

4. Green Infrastructure (Natural Asset) Strategy, Inventory, and Evaluation (Ongoing)

It will help to identify what kinds of ecological urban design strategies and incentives are being utilized by other local governments in urban infill areas, suburban, and green field or rural estate areas to support cost effective, safe, healthy, and attractive places to live, work and play? What lessons can we use from other communities to help Maple Ridge succeed?

A municipal green infrastructure strategy is required to help support ongoing urban development so it can become more sustainable, safe, and affordable. How can we use a green infrastructure approach and continue meet Council’s strategic objectives while facing challenges associated with densification, climate change impacts, and costs attached to conventional urban forms. Further research and study is required on this subject to determine what is suitable for new urban development areas.

Staff Resources: The Planning Department Environment Section would be the lead on this project with continuous support from Information Services, Parks, Engineering, Corporate Sustainability, and Communications Depts. The EAC will provide feedback on this project.

5. Update the OCP Natural Features Aquifer Mapping and Natural Features DP

Update municipal OCP Natural Features vulnerable aquifer maps and Natural Features DP guidelines to promote awareness and appropriate best management practices for development in these sensitive groundwater areas. In addition, review and update existing municipal ecosystem mapping including OCP mapping using more current and accurate information that has become available to the City of Maple Ridge over the past decade.

Staff Resources: The Planning Department Environment Section would be the lead on this project with continuous support from Information Services. The EAC will provide feedback on this project.

A. Establishing Priorities, Pacing and Timing.

The EAC was tasked with identifying the Phase Two Implementation Items for the next three years. In some cases a longer term strategy may require a series of ongoing short term action items to assist in moving towards and achieving longer term targets. Larger strategy recommendations were discussed and broken down into smaller actionable items where possible. Priority action items that could be successfully completed over the short term were given higher weighting. Short-term is defined as 1-3 years, medium-term 4-6 years, and long-term over 7 years. Some short term action items however are simply stepping stones to help the City move towards larger more complex strategies with longer term horizons.

B. Staff Complement and Interdepartmental Implications:

The EAC members will be responsible for assisting and taking the lead on the recommended communications strategy updates and public relations action item initiatives for the next several years, given the expertise and interest by members in assisting in this particular area. They will also be assisting with grant applications, public event planning, and training programs.

The Planning Department will be responsible for taking the lead on the majority of the implementation with some support from other departments.

Departments that are anticipated to be involved in the implementation from the short-term through to the long-term include:

- Planning
- Parks and Leisure
- Engineering and Operations
- Sustainability
- Finance
- Information Services

It is noted that the EAC will provide feedback on the Planning led initiatives.

C. Financial Implications:

It is noted that annual Business Planning will provide a mechanism to ensure that the Implementation Plan for the Environmental Management Strategy reflects Council priorities. This will provide an opportunity to reaffirm direction, consider budgets, and required resources.

CONCLUSIONS:

The *Environmental Management Strategy* contains a significant amount of information, findings and recommendations that will continue to aid in meeting future environmental demands over the short, moderate, and long-term. With the assistance of the Environmental Advisory Committee, there are opportunities for ongoing review and consideration of the information and recommendations.

The consolidated list of 2017-2020 Implementation Items recommended for endorsement in this report will help to provide additional improvements and new tools for helping the City meet its broader environmental objectives over the next several years.

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Attachments:

Appendix A – Environmental Management Strategy Implementation Plan April 2014

Appendix B – Colour Coded Update of EMS Implementation Table