

2024 Bouchie Lake Sewer System Pre-Feasibility Study Engagement

RESEARCH

BACKGROUND

The Cariboo Regional District is seeking to work directly with residents of the Bouchie Lake area about a proposed feasibility study for a sewer system. There is interest in assessing the feasibility of such a system to reduce the amount of phosphorus and nitrate contaminants entering the watershed from private sewer systems. Prior to doing so, the regional district is looking to test the desirability of such a study and has been mandated to do so by the Board.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

- A sewer system feasibility study is proposed for the “Bouchie Lake” community to reduce phosphate contamination of Bouchie Lake.
- Bouchie Lake suffers from chronic algae blooms, which contribute to deoxygenation events harming the lake’s ecosystem.
- A 2009 study indicates that a significant source of nutrients are from private septic tanks for properties along the lake which are either improperly located, not maintained, or failing.
- The defined Bouchie Lake (Figure 1) covers 178 hectares of land on or near Bouchie Lake, with 176 known dwellings and an estimated population of approximately 348 people (based on Statistics Canada’s 2.2 per square kilometre density estimate for the Cariboo Regional District).
- If it proceeds, the feasibility study will assess the costs of a community sewer system, including treatment and collection systems, to reduce the introduction of nutrients into the system.
- Records indicate that the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy has recommended such a system for Bouchie Lake.
- The CRD Board has directed staff to assess public opinion about whether a community sewer system is desirable before proceeding with a requested feasibility study.

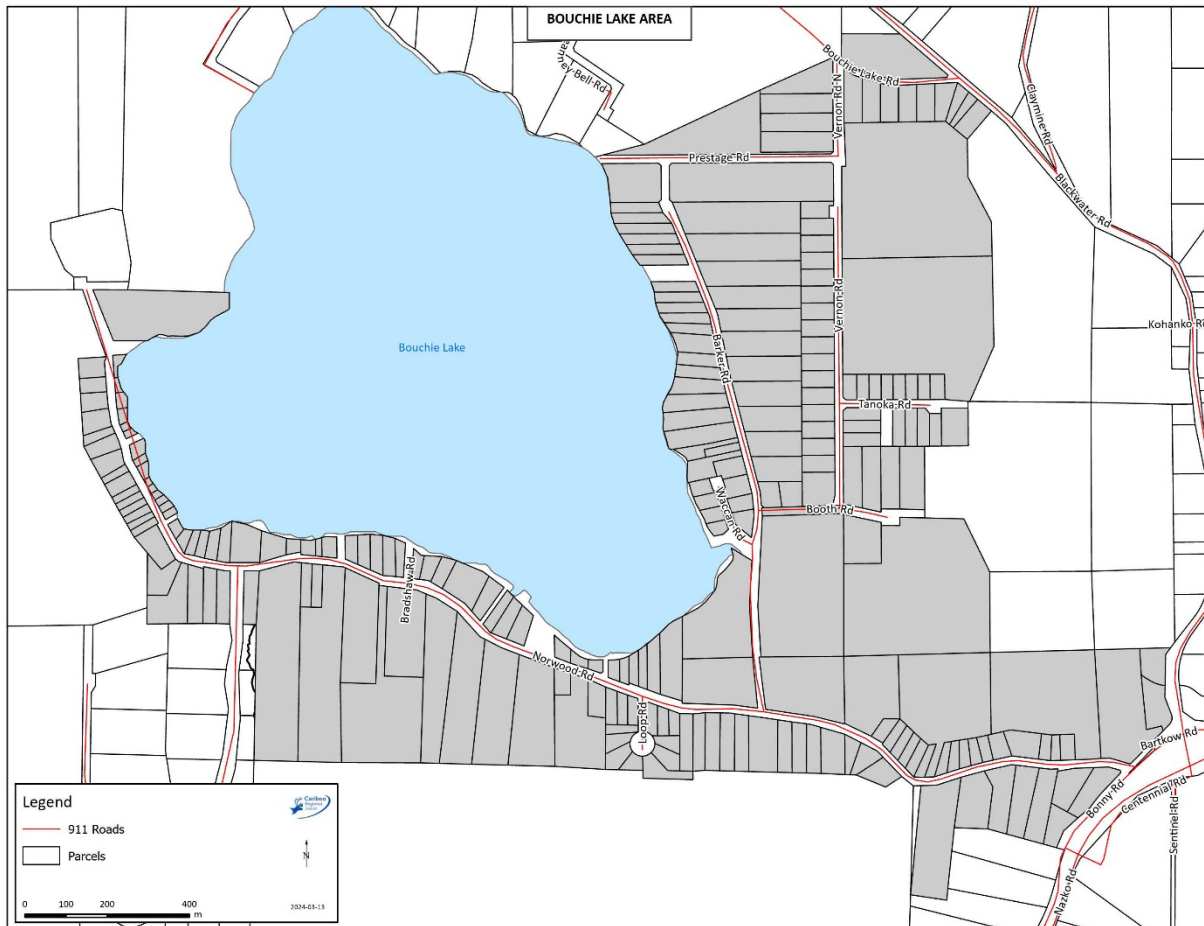


Figure 1: Area for consideration of proposed community sewer system in Bouchie Lake community.

RESEARCH CONDUCTED PRIOR TO ENGAGEMENT

- Review 2009 Water Quality Study of Bouchie Lake.
- Review Interior Health / Northern Health information about sewer system regulations for septic systems, including installation and maintenance requirements.
- Review Bouchie Milburn Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix “A” to Quesnel Fringe Area Official Community Plan).
- Collect background data about defined potential service area, including archived CRD records.

KEY ISSUES

- Because of regional district financing laws, the only persons who will pay for the system are residents and property owners of the defined service area.
- Grant funding may be available for capital costs, however, is not guaranteed.
- Grant funding will not support operating costs.
- The Board is committed to improved public communications and engagement as part of its reputation management and regional governance model.
- The Bouchie Milburn Neighbourhood Plan engagement process indicated a low-level desire for a sewer system. A sewer system was not included as an objective within the plan.
- Residents and property owners will be able to vote in a referendum if the feasibility study proceeds and a service establishment bylaw is introduced by the Board.

ACTION

OBJECTIVES & GOALS

Based on the research, the Regional District will be engaging residents to assess the community's desire for a sewer system. While the design phase indicated that engaging at the "Involve" level would be appropriate, agreement with the project team was reached that a more appropriate level would be to "Empower" residents with the final decision making.

Engagement which empowers residents has the goal of placing the final decision making in the hands of the public. Project scoping and the instructions of the Board indicated that this is the intent of the engagement. Conducting engagement at this level comes with the promise to implement what the public decides, despite the initial positions of individual decision makers.

Through this engagement plan, we will achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Inform the Bouchie Lake community about the engagement process and scope of engagement.
- 2) Empower residents and property owners of the Bouchie Lake Community to decide whether or not the regional district proceeds with a sewer system feasibility study.
- 3) Present the engagement's findings to the Board of Directors and ratify the decision.
- 4) Inform the public about the result and how public input influenced our decisions, along with any other pertinent information about future actions.

TARGET AUDIENCES

- Citizens
- Property owners
- Media
- Bouchie-Milburn Watershed Stewardship Society
- First Nations – Lhtako Dene FN, Nazko FN traditional territories
- Other interested parties

STRATEGIES

- Directly contact residents about the engagement opportunity through a mail-out.
- Use social media and the website to spread information to non-residents.
- Hold public meetings and café meetings at places where residents gather to share information and promote awareness
- Conduct online survey to collect results.

COMMUNICATION

KEY MESSAGES

- The Regional District's Board of Directors wants to know if residents of the Bouchie Lake Area are interested in assessing the feasibility of a community sewer system.
- A community sewer system was identified as one method of reducing algae blooms in Bouchie Lake by reducing the amount of nutrients entering the watershed from lakeshore properties.
- If the community expresses interest, the first step would be to initiate a feasibility study, which will assess the potential costs, revenues, and configuration of a sewer system.
- A feasibility study would be presented later and inform future actions along with continued community engagement.
- Residents will be able to participate by attending open house meetings, reviewing information online, and participating in a commitment survey to let the Board know what you think.

TIMELINE

Contact interested parties and agencies. Confirm desired level of commitment and involvement.	March 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024
Prepare and publish information for awareness campaign	March 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024
Public Awareness Campaign Front load information to citizens and interested parties.	April 1, 2024 – April 30, 2024
Collect Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Virtual Open House• In-Person Open House• Public commitment survey	TBD April 19, 2024 @ 4pm-7pm April 14, 2024 – April 30, 2024
Report to Board of Directors with findings	May 24, 2024
Report out to community	May 29, 2024

SPOKESPERSONS

- Barb Bachmeier, Electoral Area B Director – Project Representative
- Gerald Pinchbeck, Manager of Communications – Engagement Process Lead
- Peter Hughes, Manager of Environmental Services – Subject Matter Expert (Infrastructure)
- Murray Daly, Chief Administrative Officer – Subject Matter Expert (Service Administration)

TACTICS/BUDGET

Tactic	Notes	Date	Cost
News Releases (Email Blasts)	Create a news release outlining engagement scope, information meetings, and opportunities to participate	April 4	\$0
Resident Survey	Create survey to collect residents opinion, and distribute via mailout for security.	April 4	\$0
Social Media Posts	Promote engagement process on social media, including in relevant community groups	April 4 – 30	\$0
Website	Create a dedicated webpage for engagement process.	April 4	\$0
Mailout	Mailed directly to property owners and residents in identified area.	April 10 (arrival)	\$500
Public Meeting	Conduct one or more meetings in Bouchie Lake Community Hall as needed to provide information and understand concerns. Include briefing as introduction of issues.	April 19	\$600
Virtual Meeting	Conduct one or more virtual meetings as needed to provide information and understand concerns. Include briefing as introduction of issues.	TBD	\$0
Interviews	Meet individually with willing interested parties to discuss proposal scope and clarify issues.	As needed	\$0
TOTAL			\$1,100

ACTION PLAN/TIMELINE

Action Item <i>These are the potential 'tools' you can use to spread the word about your project.</i>	Person(s) Responsible <i>Who is taking the lead? Any others?</i>	Content/Focus <i>Add any specifics about the action item (e.g., Media release to include quotes from Mayor. Need to send with a photo in case they can't attend)</i>	Due Date <i>Be sure to account for time to get multiple approvals if required.</i>	Publication Date <i>This is the actual date that the materials will 'go public'.</i>
Website Content	Gerald P.	Content for website	March 30	April 4
Survey	Gerald P.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey Design Collectors set up Publish survey 	April 2	April 4
Social Media	Gerald P.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graphic design Content writing Post scheduling 	April 2	April 4
Mailout	Gerald P.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content development Layout & design Mailout to residents 	March 30	April 10
News Release	Gerald P.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft and publish news release 	April 2	April 4
Public Meeting	Gerald P.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting date set Facility booked Attendees confirmed Content prepared and printed Refreshments coordinated 	March 14 March 14 March 21 March 30 April 18	April 19
Virtual Meeting	Gerald P.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting date set Platform published Eventbrite tickets to manage attendance Attendees confirmed Content prepared and published 	TBD	TBD

Interested parties interviews	Gerald P.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact interested parties • Confirm interest and involvement • Conduct interviews as needed. 	March 14 – April 14 As needed As needed	As needed
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EVALUATION

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The budget for this engagement is \$1,200, and a core aspect of evaluating this engagement is ensuring that spending on awareness and advertising remains within this budget.

ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION

With the goals of “Inform citizens and interested parties of engagement opportunities to promote participation” and “Consult interested parties on concerns and aspirations related to proposal,” we will measure success based on the number of people who attend open house sessions and engagement with the CRD’s social media posts. Secondary evaluators include media coverage of the engagement, visible discussions or posts on community social media pages, and other information indicating community awareness of the engagement.

ENGAGE & DECIDE

With the goal of “[empowering] citizens of the Bouchie Lake area to decide the future of the proposed feasibility study,” we will evaluate success based on the number of surveys returned versus the estimated population of the Bouchie Lake Community (n=348, based on 1.7 people/house multiplied by 176 house points).