

**RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER**

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STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: June 21, 2022
FROM: Emergency Planning
SUBJECT: UBCM EXTREME HEAT RISK MAPPING, ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING GRANT

REPORT: 22-093
FILE: 1855-20

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager Corporate and Community Services be endorsed.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council endorse and support the grant application to the Union of B.C Municipalities', for the Extreme Heat Response Risk Assessment and Planning Project under the Extreme Heat Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning funding stream to a maximum of \$30,000 as described in Appendix A to this Administrative Report 22-093; and if successful, support the Resort Municipality of Whistler's Emergency Planning department providing overall grant management; and further

That Council support the addition of a new project to the Five Year Financial Plan to track and accommodate the spending, and direct staff to bring forward a future amendment to the Five Year Financial Plan for Council consideration, if successful.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the 2022 heat response planning and to obtain Council's endorsement and support for the proposed grant application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Extreme Heat Mapping, Assessment and Planning grant, which aims to support a hazard risk assessment, heat mapping and the development of a heat response plan.

For the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) to be eligible for UBCM grant funding, a council resolution indicating support for the grant applications and direction to provide overall grant management must be submitted with the application.

☐ Information Report

☒ Administrative Report (Decision or Direction)

DISCUSSION

Background

In the summer of 2021, Whistler experienced extreme heat well above the historical average of June which is typically a high of 23 degrees. The most extreme heat in 2021 was recorded from June 20 to July 6 with the highest recorded temperature reaching 42.7 degrees celsius on June 29. During this period, there were 18 heat related hospitalizations to VCH emergency departments; three of which were to the emergency department in Whistler.

The natural landscape of Whistler offers many areas with a tree canopy including purpose built green spaces that can provide natural protective cooling. Prior to the record-breaking heat wave, the RMOW offered tips to keep cool in the resort, including visiting:

- one of Whistler's quieter parks to spend time in the shade (find one at whistler.ca/parks);
- the library;
- the Audain Art Museum or the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre;
- the spray park at Meadow Park; or
- shaded areas at Whistler Olympic Plaza.

In response to the extreme heat event, the RMOW also opened the Meadow Park Sports Centre as a cooling centre on June 28 and offered free public skate sessions, including rentals, to help locals and visitors keep cool, while local hotels also provided lobbies as cooling centres.

2022 Heat Response Planning:

In recent years, climate change has created environments where extreme heat conditions can challenge many communities for extended periods of time. These extreme heat conditions can result in increased heat related illnesses and may require certain preventative measures to be enacted by local governments to prepare residents for the impacts of extreme heat related events.

The Province has created a new Extreme Heat Preparedness Guide targeted at helping people prepare their residences for extreme heat and that provides advice about how to stay safe when temperatures rise. Actions people can take to keep themselves and others safer during a heat event include identifying cool zones inside and outside their homes (community centres, libraries etc.), taking cool baths or showers, drinking plenty of water and checking in with vulnerable neighbours.

Key Findings from Heat Dome Events as reported by BC Heat Alert Response System 2022 Pilot (BC HARS) include:

- Need for improvements to coordination and role clarity;
- Need for clear communication of heat warnings and alerts, as well as cooling centre availability;
- Need for better understanding on vulnerable populations to heat;
- Use targeted engagement and/or outreach strategies, including use of community organizations/businesses; and
- Consistent messaging to public, increase accessibility, awareness/education and use of diverse channels.

Locally, responding to a potential extreme heat event, and building on the aforementioned BC HARS insights, the RMOW extreme heat response for 2022 will include:

- Continuing to offer Meadow Park Sports Arena and the library as cooling centres and extend hours of access as needed;
- Developing a communications plan to ensure members of the public are given advanced notice of cooling centre facilities and heat mitigation strategies prior to an event;
- Collaborating with community non-profits and service providers to provide outreach to vulnerable populations during a heat event; and
- Adapting the two-stage BC HARS into ongoing and adaptive planning and providing additional alerting as needed. The two alerts include:
 - **Stage 1 (Heat Alert)** This will be issued by Environment Canada for the Southwest Region when temperatures are forecasted at 29-16-29 (daytime high, nighttime high, daytime high) for two consecutive days. These alerts will be issued up to 72 hours prior to the event to notify the public of a moderate risk to public health. A Regional Coordination call will be provided by Emergency Management B.C. (EMBC) to local authorities that will alert the RMOW.
 - **Stage 2 (Extreme Heat Emergency)** This will be issued when the heat warning criteria has been met and forecast indicates that daily highs will substantively increase day-over-day for three or more consecutive days. Coordination calls from EMBC for impacted regions will continue to occur. Additionally, the BC Provincial Heat Committee will consult with Environment Canada, EMBC and Public Health and issue updated alert through ECCC (Environment and Climate Change Canada) with language/messages specific to an extreme heat emergency, and Broadcast Intrusive Alerts through the Environment Canada Alert Ready system will be issued.

Analysis

UBCM is currently accepting grant applications to the Extreme Heat Risk Mapping, Assessment and Planning funding stream. The 2022 grant program and application guide can be found in Appendix A of this report. For the 2022 grant application, the RMOW seeks to conduct several strategies to mitigate the impacts of heat on the community including risk mapping, risk assessments and the development of a heat response plan.

2022 Grant Proposal Purpose

The purpose of this grant is to understand the risks associated with extreme heat, and how to prepare, adapt, and mitigate these risks. Extreme heat has the potential to be a significant threat to communities across British Columbia. As the climate changes, it poses a growing risk to the health and wellbeing of community members, disrupting natural systems, and could lead to serious economic losses and infrastructure damages.

2022 Grant Proposal Approach and Deliverables

All proposed activities will be reimbursed upon the submission of a final report no later than 30 days from project completion. Staff are applying for the maximum amount of \$30,000, but only the actual funds spent will be reimbursed based on the community's needs.

The proposed program will fund:

1) **Risk Assessments:**

Risk assessments identify the social, economic, and environmental impacts of extreme heat events, and the potential slow onset risks heat may have on the community, including identifying urban heat islands, community and infrastructure vulnerabilities, and risk tolerance or “risk threshold.”

2) **Heat Risk Mapping:**

Mapping extreme heat, populations disproportionately at risk, and adaptive responses allows a community to determine its vulnerabilities to extreme heat more accurately both now and into the future. This information may then be used in a risk assessment to inform ongoing planning activities.

3) **Extreme Heat Response Plans:**

Extreme heat response plans build off the learnings from extreme heat mapping, risk assessments, community engagements, and other available data and translate this information into frameworks for action. Plans may include special considerations for heat-sensitive populations and targeted response actions to mitigate impacts. Developing an extreme heat response plan also offers an opportunity for communities to identify the co-benefits that can be synergistically achieved through heat response, such as improving air quality, enhancing health and wellbeing, improving mobility and connectivity, or reducing greenhouse gas emissions. If successful in securing this funding, the RMOW will develop a heat response plan taking these factors into consideration.

Corporate Plan

The RMOW Corporate Plan is updated annually and articulates strategic direction for the organization. This section identifies how this report links to the plan.

Extreme heat is causing a significant risk to communities across BC. As the climate changes, it poses risks to the well being of community members, infrastructure and the environment. It is important to understand the risks of extreme heat as well as how to prepare and adapt to mitigate the impacts on our communities. This requires an informed approach and engagement of community stakeholders during the planning stage to ensure adaptation of mitigation strategies and effective allocation of resources.

Council Focus Areas

☒ Community Balance

*Effectively **balance resort and community needs** through deliberate planning, partnerships and investment*

☒ Climate Action

*Provide leadership to **accelerate climate action and environmental performance** across the community*

☐ Housing

*Advance strategic and innovative initiatives to enable and **deliver additional employee housing***

☐ Pandemic Recovery

*Leadership and support for **community and tourism recovery and sustainability** – priority focuses are where recovery needs intersect with other Council focus areas*

☐ Not Applicable

Corporate Goals

☐ Community character and mountain culture is reflected in municipal initiatives

☐ Municipal decision-making supports the effective stewardship of natural assets and ecological function

☒ Corporate policies and operations ensure continuous excellence in infrastructure, facility and program management

☐ A high level of accountability, transparency and community engagement is maintained

☐ Corporate financial health is optimized to ensure long-term community success

☒ A vibrant local economy and safe, resilient resort community is effectively reinforced by organizational activities

☐ Pandemic recovery

Community Vision and Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is the RMOW's most important guiding document that sets the community vision and long-term community direction. This section identifies how this report applies to the OCP.

8. Health Safety and Well Being

8.2. Goal: Promote efforts to enhance the quality of life for all residents and employees.

8.2.1. Objective: Strive to increase affordability for residents.

8.2.1.1. Policy: Create strategies and mechanisms to ensure basic needs, including housing, food, transportation, childcare, recreation and health care, are affordable for all who live and work in Whistler.

8.6. Goal: Create and embed effective governance mechanisms and partnerships to create trust, responsibility and accountability.

8.6.2. Objective: Work with partners to achieve mutual benefits.

8.6.2.1. Policy: Collaborate with community and regional partners wherever possible and practical.

8.11. Goal: Strive to ensure community health and social services and facilities meet the

physical, mental, spiritual and social needs of residents and visitors.

8.11.1. Objective: Engage with service providers and the community to maintain and coordinate high quality services with a particular focus on the needs of those who are most vulnerable.

8.11.1.9. Policy: Engage with social service providers to ensure an adequate level of services is maintained.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

There are no budget considerations. The costs of the proposed project will be 100% covered by the grant funds if successful.

LIL'WAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the Lil'wat People, known in their language as *L'il'wat7úl* and the Squamish People, known in their language as the *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* to: create an enduring relationship; establish collaborative processes for Crown land planning; achieve mutual objectives; and enable participation in Whistler's resort economy. This section identifies areas where RMOW activities intersect with these relationships.

There are no specific considerations to include in this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

☐ Inform ☒ Consult ☐ Involve ☐ Collaborate ☐ Empower

Comment(s):

The RMOW Emergency Program collaborated with community stakeholders to provide input as subject matter experts in their fields. This included Health Emergency Management BC, Whistler Community Services Society, and Vancouver Coastal Health.

REFERENCES

Appendix A – Extreme Heat Mapping, Assessment and Planning Program and Application Guide

SUMMARY

This report presents the grant application for the UBCM Extreme Heat Risk Mapping, Assessment and Planning Grant, which will enhance the capacity of the RMOW and community stakeholders to respond to the impacts of extreme heat related events. A council resolution indicating support for the grant application, and direction to provide overall grant management must be submitted with the application.

The RMOW will continue to provide the following resources for 2022 while awaiting potential funding from this grant to ensure an adequate response to a heat event;

- Continuing to offer Meadow Park Sports Arena and the library as cooling centres and extend hours of access as needed;
- Developing a communications plan to ensure members of the public are given advanced notice of cooling centre facilities and heat mitigation strategies prior to an event;
- Collaborating with community non-profits and service providers to provide outreach to vulnerable populations during a heat event; and
- Adapting the two-stage provincial BC HARS into ongoing and adaptive planning and providing additional alerting as needed.

SIGN-OFFS

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