

**RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER**

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STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: April 9, 2024
FROM: Climate & Environment
SUBJECT: UBCM COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FUND APPLICATION –
STRATEGIC CLIMATE RISK AND RESILIENCE ASSESSMENT

REPORT: 24-036
FILE: 1855-20-0541

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Climate Action, Planning and Development Services be endorsed.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council endorse and authorize staff to apply to the Union of BC Municipalities' Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF) to prepare a strategic climate risk and resilience assessment for the Resort Municipality of Whistler; and if successful, direct staff to provide overall grant management in accordance with the CEPF grant's requirements.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report outlines a request for Council's support for staff to apply for a Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF) grant under the Disaster Risk Reduction-Climate Adaptation (DRR-CA) stream (grant application program guide included as Appendix A) to prepare a strategic climate risk and resilience assessment (Climate Risk Assessment) for the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW).

☐ Information Report

☒ Administrative Report (Decision or Direction)

DISCUSSION

Background

In August 2022, Council adopted RMOW Climate Action Big Moves Implementation Plan (Big Moves CAIP) which outlines the six Big Moves and three Adaptation Goals with the overall goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent below 2007 levels by 2030 and to increase Whistler's resilience to the projected impacts of climate change.

The focus of the Big Moves CAIP Adaptation Goals is to minimize the risk and extent of impacts posed by climate change and to reduce Whistler's vulnerability and increase its resilience to all climate change related impacts. As a first step to achieving these goals, it will be essential to gain a thorough and rigorous understanding of key climate-related risks and vulnerabilities for Whistler and to examine

APRIL 9, 2024

Whistler's current adaptive capacity to withstand and recover from anticipated climate change related impacts.

RMOW's 2016 Community Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) first identified key community risks associated with the projected climate change impacts. Additional work to understand various aspects of climate change impacts and related risks, natural hazards and other disaster risks in Whistler include but are not limited to existing fire and flood mapping, evacuation plans, water supply protection and conservation plans and wildfire plans.

In 2022, the RMOW retained BGC Engineering Inc. to summarize climate change projections and associated potential vulnerability and risks for the Whistler community. The report provides historical data and compares it to climate change projections to predict regional outcomes (Appendix B – 2022 BGC report pp. 10 & 11). While all previous work and this report highlight some key risks in relation to projected climate changes, there is no detailed, comprehensive analysis of all climate change related risks and vulnerabilities in Whistler. In addition, none of the previously outlined reports summarize strategies to mitigate key risks, nor is there a comprehensive assessment of any aspect of Whistler's resilience to climate change.

Given the anticipated increase in frequency and severity of climate-related events, RMOW staff recommends closing this gap through the development of the Climate Risk Assessment. This includes further assessing the social, economic, and environmental climate change related risks and vulnerabilities in Whistler with the goal to gain a clear understanding of the potential consequences these events may have on the community. Based on the outcome, strategies for Whistler prepare for, mitigate, and adapt to key risks can be developed.

In November 2023, the modernized *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* came into force in BC, replacing the *Emergency Program Act*. The updated legislation reflects the realities of the modern world including global pandemics, climate change and security threats. By 2026, the new *Emergency and Disaster Management Act* will require that all local governments in BC include climate change related risks and climate resilience in formal emergency planning work. To help inform and support this direction, the Province has released multiple documents such as the Preliminary Strategic Climate Risk Assessment (2019: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/climate-change/adaptation/risk-assessment>), the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy (2022: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/climate-change/adaptation/cpas>), as well as the upcoming Disaster and Climate Risk and Resilience Assessment framework (anticipated in 2024). The proposed RMOW Climate Risk Assessment is intended to provide the RMOW Emergency Management team with a strong and thorough foundation as they work through this new approach to emergency management. The Climate Risk Assessment will significantly enable climate change integration into RMOW's emergency management work, in alignment with the new provincial regulatory requirements.

The CEPF is a suite of funding streams provided by the UBCM with the intent to enhance the resilience of local governments, First Nations and communities in responding to emergencies and to reduce risks from future disasters due to natural hazards and climate-related risks. The intent of the DRR-CA funding stream under the CEPF is to support eligible applicants to reduce risks from future disasters due to natural hazards and climate-related risks through the development and implementation of, for example:

- accurate foundational knowledge of the natural hazards they face, and the risks associated with BC's changing climate; and
- effective strategies to prepare for, mitigate, and adapt to those risks.

APRIL 9, 2024

Risk and resilience assessments are named as one of the key foundational activities eligible for this funding stream. Foundational activities support community resilience by providing data, building partnerships, and supporting long-term disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation planning. Knowledge that is up-to-date and accessible will help guide decisions and helps to identify areas of high risk, including enhanced awareness, education, and nature-based solutions.

If successful with this funding application (included as Appendix C), RMOW staff will work in collaboration with a consultant to develop the Climate Risk Assessment for Whistler.

Analysis

The goals of the proposed Climate Risk Assessment are to identify key social, economic and environmental impacts that climate-related events may have on the Whistler community and to assess Whistler's capacity for and current approach to climate resilience. This work will build off many initiatives and technical assessments completed to address both disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation. It is important to consider both climate adaptation and DRR together in developing resilience, at a time when extreme events are occurring with increased frequency and severity throughout the province with unprecedented effects on communities. Further, this work will align with Provincial and Federal initiatives in both disaster management and climate action.

In a first phase of the Climate Risk Assessment, climate change related risks to Whistler will be identified and evaluated according to likelihood and consequence with the goal to categorize risk levels. This information will be used to assess current adaptation goals and key initiatives for potential gaps or reprioritization. The Climate Risk Assessment will align with Provincial and Federal initiatives in emergency planning, and disaster management and climate action.

In a second phase, Whistler's resilience to the identified climate change related risks will be analyzed. This means assessing the ability of the community to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to or recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management. This will include a review of Whistler's infrastructure, assets, services and systems, including programs around community health and well-being to assess Whistler's capacity and willingness to adapt to the challenges posed by climate change.

In a third and final phase, gaps in current strategies and actions to achieve greater resilience in Whistler will be identified and recommendations may be made for new approaches and/or reprioritization of existing initiatives to meet Whistler's climate change adaptation goals.

If the CEPF grant application is successful, the project plan is to start competitive procurement for a consultant after the summer. Upon finalization of a service contract with the successful applicant, the project plan is to kick off the work in the fall with a background review to identify risks, followed by risk analysis and evaluation, and then the resilience assessment. The Climate Risk Assessment's target completion date is fall 2025.

Ultimately, the development of a Climate Risk Assessment will support Whistler in being more informed and better positioned to plan, respond, and adapt to the challenges of climate change strategically and successfully. In addition, this Climate Risk Assessment will enable climate change integration into RMOW's emergency management work, in alignment with the new provincial regulatory requirements.

APRIL 9, 2024

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions

The CEPF application and proposed funded activities directly supports the Big Moves CAIP, with the following goals (and their subsequent key initiatives):

Adaptation Goal 1 – Minimize threats from wildfire

Adaptation Goal 2 – Increase resilience to extreme weather and environmental events

Adaptation Goal 3 – Protect local ecosystems and biodiversity

2023-2026 Strategic Plan

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan outlines the high-level direction of the RMOW to help shape community progress during this term of Council. The Strategic Plan contains four priority areas with various associated initiatives that support them. This section identifies how this report links to the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Priorities

☐ Housing

Expedite the delivery of and longer-term planning for employee housing

☒ Climate Action

Mobilize municipal resources toward the implementation of the Big Moves Climate Action Plan

☐ Community Engagement

Strive to connect locals to each other and to the RMOW

☐ Smart Tourism

Preserve and protect Whistler's unique culture, natural assets and infrastructure

☐ Not Applicable

Aligns with core municipal work that falls outside the strategic priorities but improves, maintains, updates and/or protects existing and essential community infrastructure or programs

Community Vision and Official Community Plan

This initiative directly supports the RMOW's Community vision and the following OCP goals:

- **Goal 7.1** – Whistler's sensitive ecosystems, wildlife, habitat and biodiversity are protected, managed and restored.
- **Goal 7.2** – Natural areas are proactively managed for and resilient to climate change.
- **Goal 7.3** – Water quality and quantity in local water bodies, streams and groundwater are protected.
- **Goal 10.5** – Increase the resilience of Whistler's infrastructure, natural environment and socioeconomic assets from the potential impacts of a changing climate.

APRIL 9, 2024

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

A total of \$50,000 in funding is being requested through the CEPF under the DRR-CA stream for a two-year project period (from date of notification of funding approval). Applicants can receive funding up to 100 per cent of total project costs, without a requirement for matching RMOW funding. Therefore, no budgetary contribution from the RMOW will be required for this funding application, apart from dedicated staff time to procure a consultant and manage the project.

The Climate Risk Assessment as outlined above will not be initiated in 2024 if the RMOW is not successful in acquiring this funding. Should this funding be acquired, RMOW staff time will be required for the selection of a consultant, management, and successful delivery of the project.

LÍŁWAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the Líl'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.

Consultation with the Líl'wat Nation and Squamish Nation is part of this project, as engagement with relevant First Nations is a required component of this funding. To date, letters of support from both the Líl'wat Nation and the Squamish Nation have been received to accompany the CEPF grant application (included as Appendix D and Appendix E). If this grant is successful, continued engagement will build on these first conversations with both First Nations throughout the development of the Climate Risk Assessment.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

☒ Inform ☐ Consult ☐ Involve ☐ Collaborate ☐ Empower

While the level of general public engagement for this project will be simply to inform, RMOW staff plans to engage in consultation with several specific parties.

Further, the Association of Whistler Area Residents for the Environment (AWARE) has sent a letter of support to accompany this grant application. As Whistler's core environmental non-profit group with a strong interest and involvement in climate action, the project teams plan to engage AWARE throughout the project.

REFERENCES

Appendix A – CEPF DDR-CA 2024 Program Guide
Appendix B – 2022 BGC Report: Whistler General Climate and Climate Change Assessment
Appendix C – CEPF DDR-CA 2024 RMOW Application
Appendix D – Letter of support from Líl'wat Nation
Appendix E – Letter of support from Squamish Nation

APRIL 9, 2024

SUMMARY

The RMOW has an opportunity to receive \$50,000 in grant funding from the UBCM CEPF under the DRR-CA stream. If successful, RMOW staff will work in collaboration with a qualified consultant to develop a Climate Risk Assessment for Whistler.

SIGN-OFFS

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