

DATE OF MEETING MAY 15, 2024

AUTHORED BY [KIRSTY MACDONALD PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PLANNER]

**SUBJECT COMMUNITY WATERSHED RESTORATION GRANTS 2024**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To allocate the funds for the Community Watershed Restoration Grants (the “Grant”) for this year.

### **Recommendation**

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council:

- a) approve a total of \$17,366 of the \$20,000 allocated for the 2024 Community Watershed Restoration Grant as follows:

- **Applicant Name:** Antler Swamp Restoration Group
  - **Project:** Restoration of Antler Swamp in Smuggler’s Park
  - **Recommended:** \$3,500
- **Applicant Name:** Nanaimo Area Land Trust
  - **Project:** Cottle Creek Stream Flow
  - **Recommended:** \$2,960
- **Applicant Name:** Nanaimo Area Land Trust
  - **Project:** Joseph Creek Riparian Restoration
  - **Recommended:** \$1,700
- **Applicant Name:** Dover Bay Outdoor Education Program
  - **Project:** Rutherford Ravine Park Native Plant Restoration
  - **Recommended:** \$1,400
- **Applicant Name:** Pacific Garden Cohousing
  - **Project:** Watershed/Wildlife Habitat Restoration
  - **Recommended:** \$4,006
- **Applicant Name:** Wellington Action Committee
  - **Project:** Diver Lake Park Watershed Protection
  - **Recommended:** \$3,800
- **Applicant Name:** Wildcoast Ecological Society
  - **Project:** Nanaimo Natural Areas Education and Stewardship
  - **Not Recommended:** Staff recommendation is to not proceed with funding until more information can be obtained.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Community Watershed Restoration Grant was initiated by Council in 2022 to support organizations, environmental non-profits, or individual residents that aim to carry out projects that advance the City Plan’s green goals such as watershed restoration projects, urban stream and riparian restoration enhancement, natural environment protection, and climate change adaptation solutions. Since its inception, the Grant has been successful in various projects such as bank restoration on Walley Creek. Because many of the projects are being conducted on City parkland, administration of the Grant has moved from the Sustainability Section to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department. Coordination between the Grant, the Partners in Parks Program, and Parks Operations is now more streamlined.

The Grant intake for 2024 was launched on 2024-FEB-12 and remained open until 2024-APR-02.

Grant information was posted on the City’s website and advertised through news releases, social media, and direct emails to neighbourhood associations and community stewardship groups. Staff also held an information session on 2024-MAR-05 to discuss the Grant guidelines and Grant goals with prospective applicants. The evaluation of applications involved an integrated review committee with Staff from Parks, Recreation and Culture, Sustainability, Engineering and Environment, and Finance departments

## **DISCUSSION**

Seven Grant applications were received totalling \$23,826 in requests. Staff reviewed the applications according to the Grant guidelines and criteria (Attachment A) and City Plan and the Integrated Action Plan priorities. Below is a summary table of the Grant requests (Attachment B).

Table 1: 2024 Community Watershed Restoration Grant Application Summary (in ranked order).

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Requested Amount</b>	<b>Recommended Amount</b>
*1. Antler Swamp Restoration Group	Restoration Of Antler Swamp (Smuggler’s Park On Protection Island)	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00
*2. Nanaimo Area Land Trust	Cottle Creek Stream Flow	\$2,960.00	\$2,960.00
*2 Nanaimo Area Land Trust	Joseph Creek Riparian Restoration	\$1,700.00	\$1,700.00
*3. Dover Bay Outdoor Education Program	Rutherford Ravine Park Native Plant Restoration	\$ 260.00	\$1,400.00
*4. Pacific Garden Cohousing	Watershed/Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project	\$4,006.00	\$4,006.00
*5. Wellington Action Committee	Diver Lake Park Watershed Protection	\$6,400.00	\$3,800.00
*6. Wildcoast Ecological Society	Nanaimo Natural Areas Education And Stewardship (Bowen Park)	\$5,000.00	0
<b>TOTAL:</b>		\$23,826.00	\$17,366.00

- \*1. The Antler Swamp Restoration application scored highest in the staff review process. Their restoration focus is a wetland located in Smugglers Park on Protection Island adjacent to the existing community garden. All members of the restoration team are also involved in the community garden. Their goals include continuing removal of Himalayan blackberry, replanting with native plants, propagating native seeds, and educating the public on the ecological and traditional values of native plants. Funds would be spent on plants, seeds, signage and fencing. Their application demonstrated professional and practical expertise and community support from the adjacent community garden.
- \*2. The Nanaimo Area Land Trust (NALT) fronted two applications. The first is a partnership with biology professionals to monitor Cottle Creek and collect streamflow baseline data on a lesser developed watershed. This work can help to set a benchmark for what flows in healthy Nanaimo watersheds could be and also help inform ongoing planning work in Linley Valley Park. This application was also supported by the Stephenson Point Neighbourhood Association. Locations of the flow devices would be further discussed between staff and the applicants. NALT's second application is a demonstrated partnership with Rock City Elementary School and focusses on restoring stream banks on City property (road right of way) at Joseph Creek on Departure Bay Road. This creek flows into Departure Creek. The group plans to remove construction debris and invasive plants, then replant with native plant material.
- \*3. Students at Dover Bay are already removing invasive plants at Rutherford Ravine Park under the Partners in Parks program. Receipt of funding through this Grant to the Outdoor Education program would help support additional efforts at this site and the replanting of native plant material. Staff reviewed their budget and adjusted some miscalculations in their plant costs resulting in a discrepancy between their request and recommended allocation.
- \*4. This year, the Pacific Garden Cohousing submitted the only request for funds to spend on private property. Last year, they received funding from this Grant to develop a wetland on their property. This year their application focusses on removal of invasive plants (primarily blackberry, canary reed grass and daphne) and replanting of native plant materials. A buried waterline to the site is also included to improve plant viability. This site, although private, provides valuable water storage and habitat value along the banks of the Chase River which meets the criteria of the Grant. It also demonstrated support from NALT, Nature Nanaimo and receives input from the Nanaimo Professional Biologist Community.
- \*5. The Wellington Action Committee received funding in previous years for water quality monitoring at Diver Lake and Long Lake. They are actively removing invasive plants at Diver Lake Park and other neighbourhood locations under the Partners in Parks program. Their application for this grant intake focusses on an environmental study of the Diver Lake site and a restoration plan. Because the City has already holds some biophysical assessment information and a trail feasibility study for the Diver Lake area, Staff are recommending a reduced amount to cover native plant material purchases for their ongoing restoration work, but not the environmental study.
- \*6. The Wildcoast Ecological Society is a new organization in Nanaimo, with a past project track record in the Lower Mainland. Their application focussed on delivering nine school workshops and two community workshops/tours along the Millstone River to discuss

invasive and native plants. Their application suggested partnerships with School District 68 but none were demonstrated. Staff were concerned about the lack of a demonstrated partnership and also budget allocations to wages. Staff recommendation is to not proceed with funding until more information can be obtained.

Should Council support funding the projects as recommended by Staff, applicants will be advised that funding approvals will be conditional on ensuring that City processes are followed particularly those relating to work in potentially environmentally sensitive areas. Staff will meet with the applicants at their sites to review expectations before projects begin and monies are received. All projects must be completed within a year. A final report with visuals will be required to document successes and progress toward improving our community's green spaces and the monitoring of City Plan goals.

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **OPTIONS**

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve a total of \$17,366 of the \$20,000 allocated for the 2024 Community Watershed Restoration Grant as stated.
  - The advantages of this option: The recommended funding supports projects that fulfill the criteria of the grant and advance City Plan green goals. These are all projects that are community driven and would not otherwise get done without partnerships and efforts.
  - The disadvantages of this option: None of the projects are identified in the Integrated Action Plans or were previously priority projects in the Parks Operations workplans. Due to the smaller scale and nature of the projects, it's hard to measure or quantify their significance and impact.
  - Financial Implications: Council would not have the option to spend the funds on other projects in 2024.
  
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council not approve the \$17,366 of the \$20,000 allocated for the 2024 Community Watershed Restoration Grant to the seven organizations, but instead suggest priority site(s) as identified in the Integrated Action Plans and invite all groups to focus on that project i.e. Millstone River riparian area restoration as identified in the East Wellington Park Plan, Departure Creek and Catstream enhancement, or Linley Point environmental management.
  - The advantages of this option: This would help advance already identified strategic priorities.
  - The disadvantages of this option: Volunteers and community groups have their own goals and priorities that may not align with City projects. They may not participate in re-focussed projects.
  - Financial Implications: Allocated money would not go to community organizations but instead would be spent internally or by contract on trees, plant material and other project needs.
  
3. That Council provide other direction.

### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- The Community Watershed Restoration Grant supports community volunteers and organizations, with up to \$20,000 available for projects that advance Nanaimo City Plan’s policies and initiatives.
- Staff received seven applications, with total requested funding of \$23,826 in the 2024 intake.
- Staff are recommending full and partial requested allocations to all Seven groups
- The City supports environmentally focused community organizations and partnership projects through a number of funding sources and collaborations including the Community Watershed Restoration Grant, Community Environmental Sustainability Project grant, and Partners in Parks process and program.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

**ATTACHMENT A: COMMUNITY WATERSHED RESTORATION GRANT 2024.**  
**ATTACHMENT B: [HYPERLINK TO APPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY WATERSHED RESTORATION GRANT 2024](#)**

#### **Submitted by:**

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