

2019 Water Quality Report

Comox Valley Water System



Comox Valley
REGIONAL DISTRICT

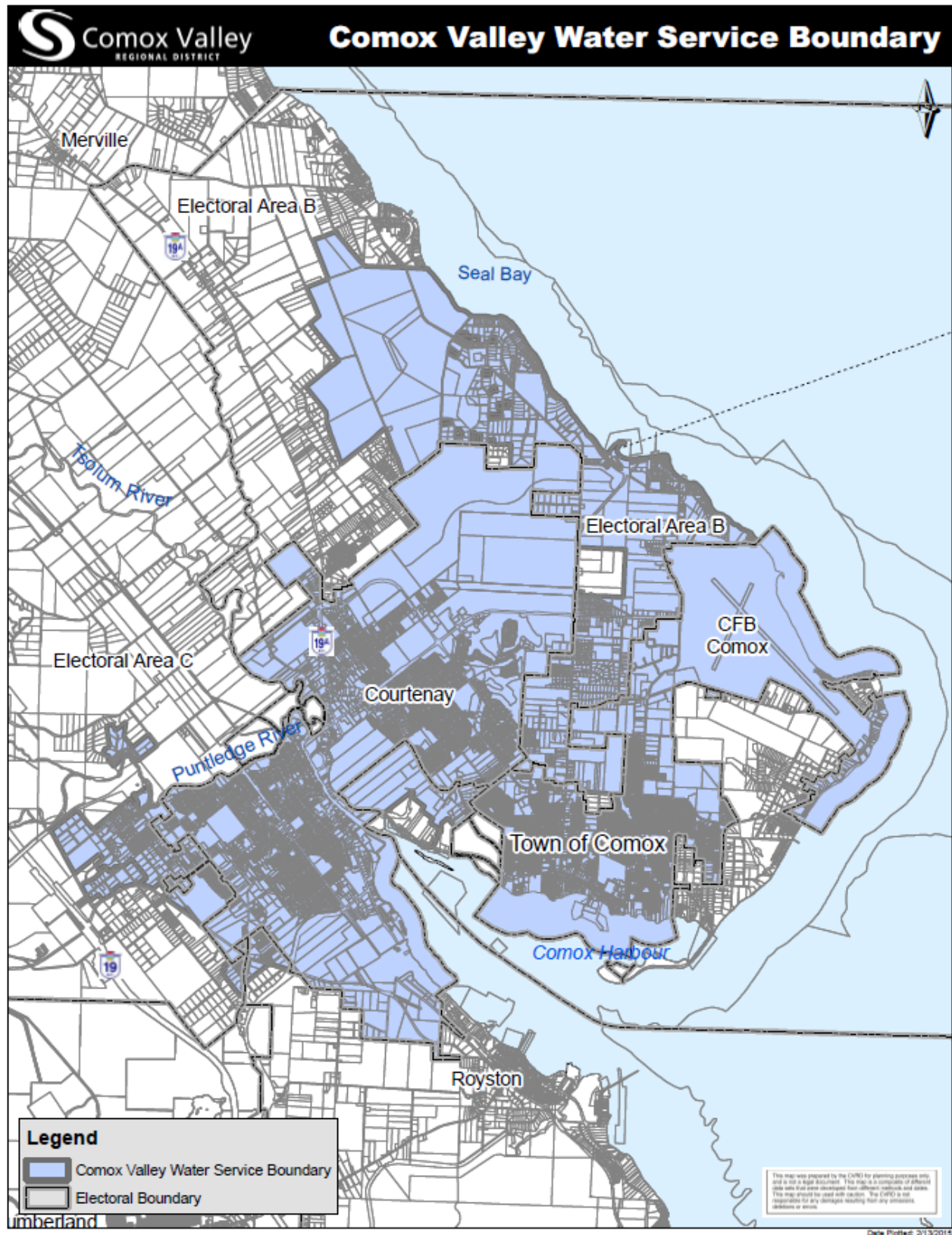
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Map of Service Area



Introduction

The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) strives to provide high quality drinking water to the Comox Valley Water Service Area, through responsible operation, monitoring, and management of the water system. The CVRD is regulated by Island Health as part of the Ministry of Health for its activities as a potable water supplier. Under the *Drinking Water Protection Act* (DWP Act), the CVRD is required to report annually on the Comox Valley Water System (CVWS). This report covers the period from January 1 to December 31, 2019 and includes information on water quality, consumption, maintenance and capital projects.

The CVRD owns and operates the CVWS that provides domestic water to approximately 45,000 residents, including supplying bulk water to both the Town of Comox and the City of Courtenay. The system also provides water and system maintenance to the Comox Valley Water Local Service Areas (WLSA).

Water for the CVWS is sourced from Comox Lake and collected from the Puntledge River via BC Hydro's penstock. Water travels through two pipes to the CVRD's chlorination station where it is metered, sampled and disinfected before entering the distribution system. The system utilizes 33.6km of pipe, four pump stations and six reservoirs with ability to store a combined volume of 31ML.

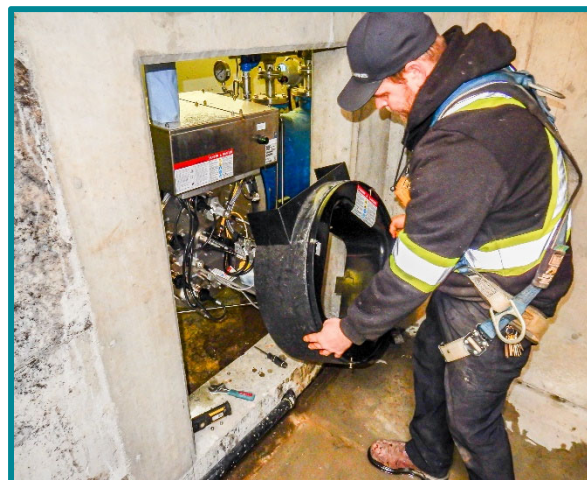


Figure No.1: UV Bulb Replacement

Operations

Goals

To provide high quality drinking water to all customers through efficient and effective disinfection and distribution operations.

Water Quality Summary

Parameter ¹	2018	2019	Target
Source Water			
Chlorine Dosing Set Point (mg/L)	1.45	1.41	<2.0
Trihalomethanes (mg/L)	0.027	0.030	<0.1
Distribution System			
Chlorine Residual-Distribution System (mg/L)	0.79	0.84	>0.2
Total Coliforms (Positive samples)	2	1	0
E.Coli (Positive samples)	0	0	0
Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines			
Source Water Turbidity (Average nephelometric turbidity unit (NTU))	0.33	0.29	<1.0
Source Water Temperature (Celsius)	14.0	13.9	15.0
Source Water pH Levels	7.11	6.90	7.0-8.5

¹More information for each parameter is available later on in the report.

The Ministry of Health regulates municipal drinking water quality through the DWP Act and the *Drinking Water Protection Regulation* (the Regulation). The DWP Act and Regulation are administered by regional health authorities, and for the CVRD, the administering authority is Island Health. Both the DWP Act and Regulation set out certain requirements for drinking water operators and suppliers to ensure the provision of safe drinking water to their customers.

The CVRD manages the CVWS which includes supplying bulk water to the City of Courtenay and the Town of Comox as well as providing and managing water for the Comox Valley WLSA. In 2018, the six WLSAs, which were the Arden, Greaves Crescent, Marsden/Camco, Comox Valley, Sandwick and England Road were merged into the Comox Valley WLSA to create one WLSA to maximize efficiencies. Conversion of the Sandwick WLSA to connect to the CVWS began in 2017 and was completed in 2019. The CVRD takes weekly water quality samples at six reservoirs and within the distribution system, to ensure that water is meeting provincial objectives. Sampling for distribution by-products and an annual water chemistry report occurs quarterly. A summary of water quality and a description of sampling results can be found below.

Disinfection

The CVWS utilizes surface water that is sourced from Comox Lake. All water supply systems using surface water are governed by Island Health and are required to adhere to provincial 4-3-2-1-0 surface water treatment objectives to ensure effective elimination of disease causing viruses, bacteria and parasites. The 4-3-2-1-0 objectives are as follows:

- 4-log (99.99 per cent) removal/inactivation of viruses;
- 3-log (99.9 per cent) removal/inactivation of *Giardia* cysts and *Cryptosporidium* oocysts;
- 2 treatment processes, usually filtration and disinfection;
- 1 NTU turbidity (maximum) in finished water;
- No detectable *E. Coli*, fecal coliforms and total coliforms in treated water.

Water from Comox Lake enters the chlorination station via the Puntledge River and is treated before being distributed throughout the system. The system currently does not filter incoming source water and is mandated by Island Health to construct a water filtration plant. A water filtration plant will remove suspended particles within the source water, ultimately eliminating boil water notices related to turbidity. This work was initiated in 2015, construction of the plant began in 2019 with commissioning scheduled for 2021.

Installation of temporary Ultraviolet Light (UV) disinfection at the existing chlorination station was completed in 2018. This is an interim measure to help reduce the number of boil water notices experienced prior to completion of the water treatment plant. The CVRD currently treats water with chlorine and UV disinfection.



Figure No.2: Installation of UV Equipment

By dosing the water with chlorine at the chlorination station, a free chlorine residual is established throughout the distribution network to help prevent water from bacteriological regrowth. The CVRD strives to achieve a free chlorine residual of 0.3 to 0.5mg/L at the end of the system. In 2019 the average residual throughout the whole system was 0.84mg/L and at the end of the system the residual was 0.71mg/L meeting Island Health's minimum requirement of 0.2mg/L. Figure No.3 below shows the average free chlorine residual at each reservoir.

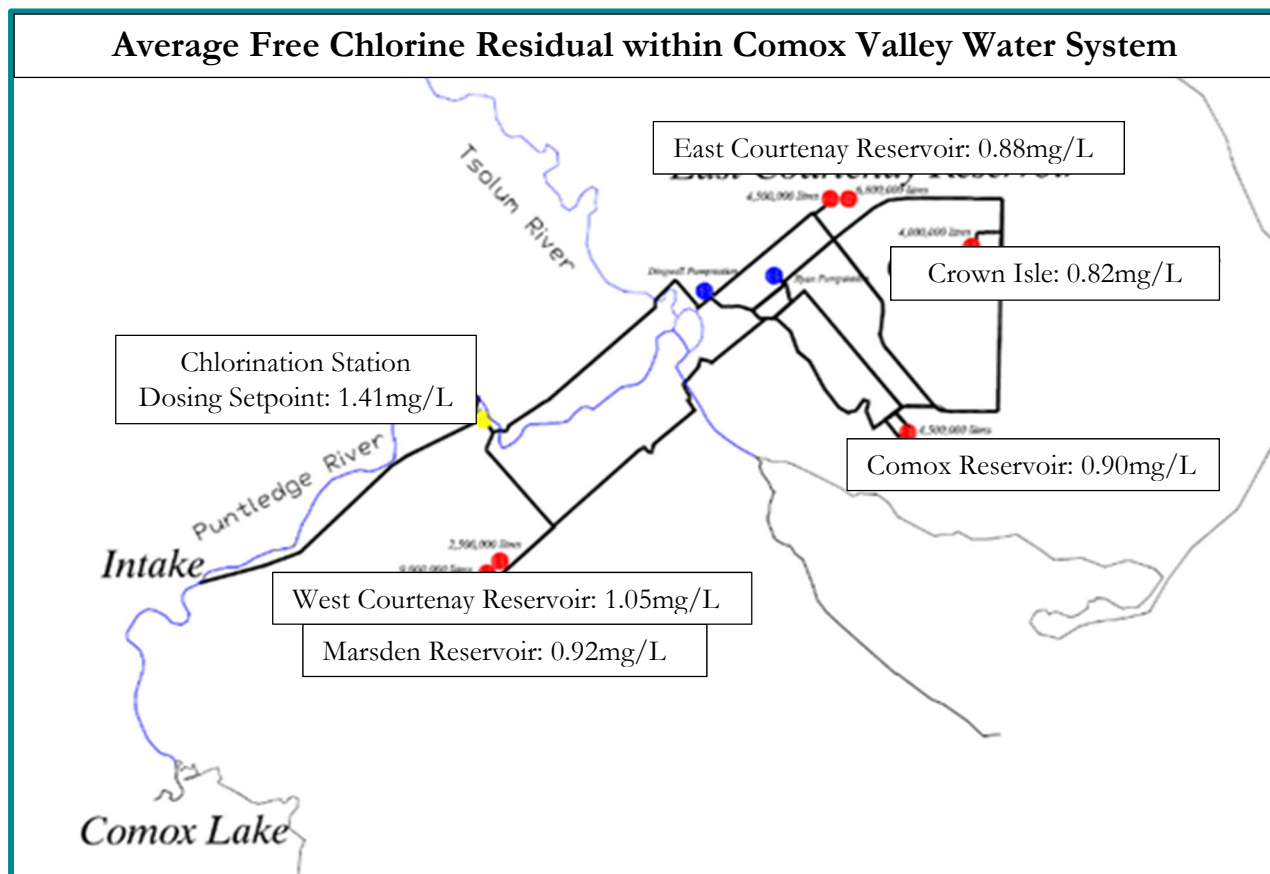


Figure No.3: Average Free Chlorine Residual within CVWS

The CVRD samples quarterly for disinfection by-products within the distribution system. Trihalomethanes (THM's) are the organic compounds that form as a by-product of chlorination, the CVRD samples for THM's at the West Courtenay reservoir. There are four types of THM's that contribute to total THM's. Chloroform is the most commonly regulated THM and is formed when natural organic matter reacts with chlorine and/or bromine in disinfected water. The guidelines require that total THM's for drinking water must be less than 0.1mg/L, Table No.1 below shows the average total THM's from the tri-annual samples.

Table No.1: Total THM Concentration at the West Courtenay Reservoir

Trihalomethanes	West Courtenay Reservoir
Chloroform	0.029
Bromodichloromethane	0.0011
Dibromochloromethane	<0.001
Bromoform	<0.001
Total Trihalomethanes (mg/L)	0.030

Bacteria

E.Coli and total coliform bacteria are microorganisms that if present in water samples indicate possible contamination with sewage or animal wastes. Chlorination helps to remove harmful pathogens within the water supply network. Table No.2 illustrates that the CVRD's water disinfection system met the bacteriological standards for potable water.

Table No.2: Bacteriological Standards and Sampling Results

Parameter	Standard	Result
E.Coli	No detectable E.Coli per 100mL	0 exceedances per 540 samples
Total Coliform Bacteria	At least 90 per cent of samples have no detectable total coliform bacteria per 100 ml and no sample has more than 10 total coliform bacteria per 100 ml	1 exceedances per 540 samples (99.999 per cent of samples have no detectable total coliform bacteria, no sample exceeded 2 total coliform bacteria per 100ml)

Canadian Drinking Water Guidelines

Health Canada develops the *Canadian Drinking Water Guidelines*. These are guidelines for limits on microbial, chemical, physical, radiological substances in drinking water. In the guidelines, health-based limits on a substance are assigned a maximum allowable concentration. The guidelines also assign aesthetic objectives to substances that do not cause risk to human health but influence consumer acceptance of the water based on factors such as taste, odour and colour. Table No.3 shows the West Courtenay reservoir concentration averages compared to guideline concentrations. Distribution water was sampled once in 2019, from four different reservoir locations and the system was below all guideline concentrations.

More information on the parameters listed below, including common sources and health considerations, can be found on the [Health Canada website](#).

Table No.3: Average of Chemical and Physical Parameters at Four Different Reservoir Locations Compared to Guideline Concentrations

Parameter	Average Concentration (mg/L)	Guideline Concentrations (mg/L)
Aluminum	0.010	≤0.1
Arsenic	<0.0001	0.01
Barium	<0.001	1.0
Boron	<0.05	5.0
Chloride	2.08	≤250
Chromium	<0.001	0.05
Copper	0.0046	1
Fluoride	<0.050	1.5
Iron	0.010	≤0.30
Lead	<0.0002	0.01
Manganese	<0.001	≤0.05
Nitrate (as N)	0.023	10
Nitrite (as N)	<0.005	1
Selenium	<0.0001	0.05
Sodium	0.69	≤200
Zinc	<0.005	≤5.0

Turbidity

By adding UV to the disinfection process, Island Health is able to increase the allowable turbidity limit for boil water notices from 1.0 nephelometric turbidity unit (NTU) up to 3.0 NTU as the community awaits the construction of the new water treatment plant. Over 80 per cent of boil water notices in recent years have been within this range. Once it is constructed, the new water treatment plant will add filtration as an additional barrier to meet provincial drinking water guidelines and eliminate turbidity related boil water notices completely.

In 2019, turbidity did not exceed 3 NTU and one boil water notice was issued. The boil notice lasted one day,

as BC Hydro completed maintenance on their system, shutting down the penstock and requiring the CVRD to rely on the back up pumping station, where water quality was poorer. Figure No.4 shows turbid water entering Comox Lake. Figure No.5 shows the average source water turbidity entering the system.



Figure No.4: Turbid Water from Beech Creek Entering Comox Lake

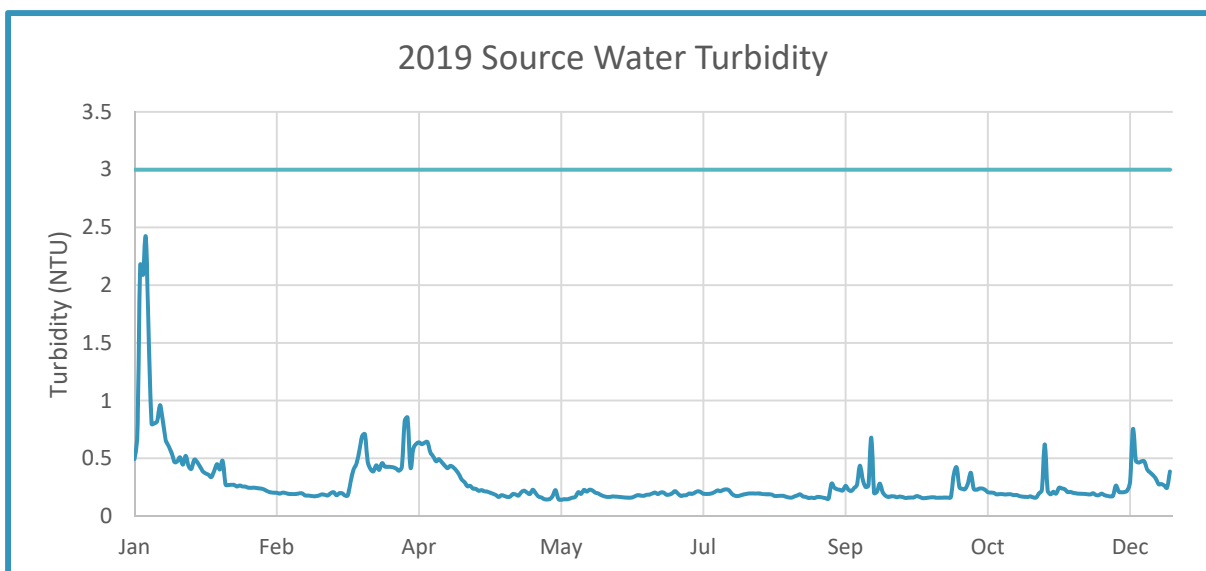


Figure No.5: Average Daily Source Water Turbidity

Temperature

Temperature is described as an aesthetic objective (a parameter that may impair the taste, smell or colour of water) and a physical characteristic of water. Gradual variations in water temperature occur throughout the seasons, however significant changes in water temperature can upset chlorination and chemical water treatment processes. The guidelines recommend the temperature to be less than 15° celsius, the average source water temperature for the CVWS was 13.9° celsius. Figure No.6 below shows the incoming source water daily temperature from the BC Hydro penstock, it can be seen that the water temperature increases in the summer months and decreases in the winter months.

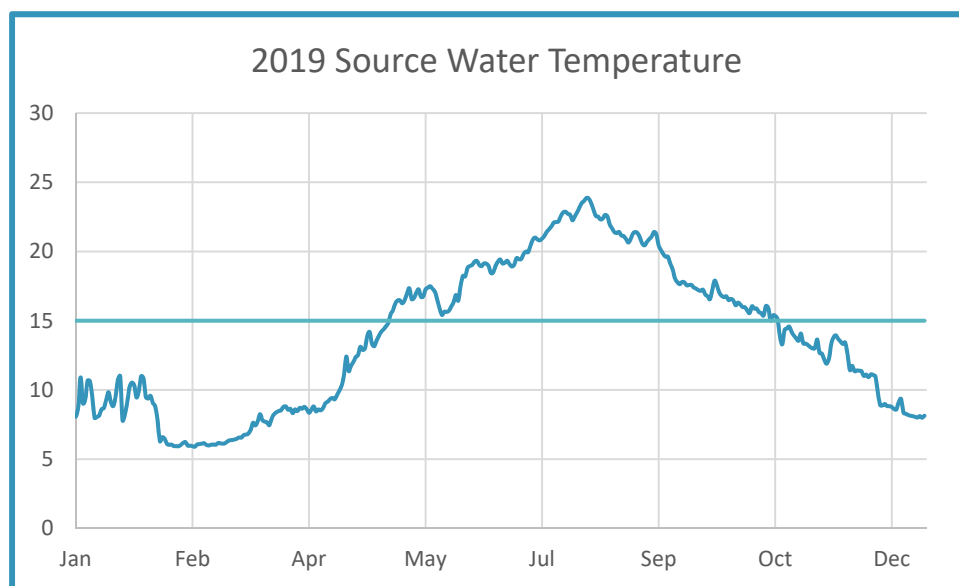


Figure No.6: Source Water Temperature

pH

The pH of water is a measure of acidity. pH has minimal impact for water consumers however it is very important for many operational water quality parameters. The *Canadian Drinking Water Guidelines* recommend the pH ranging between 7.0 to 10.5. pH varies greatly depending on the water source and in 2019 the average pH of the source water was 6.90. Figure No.7 below shows the pH of the incoming source water.

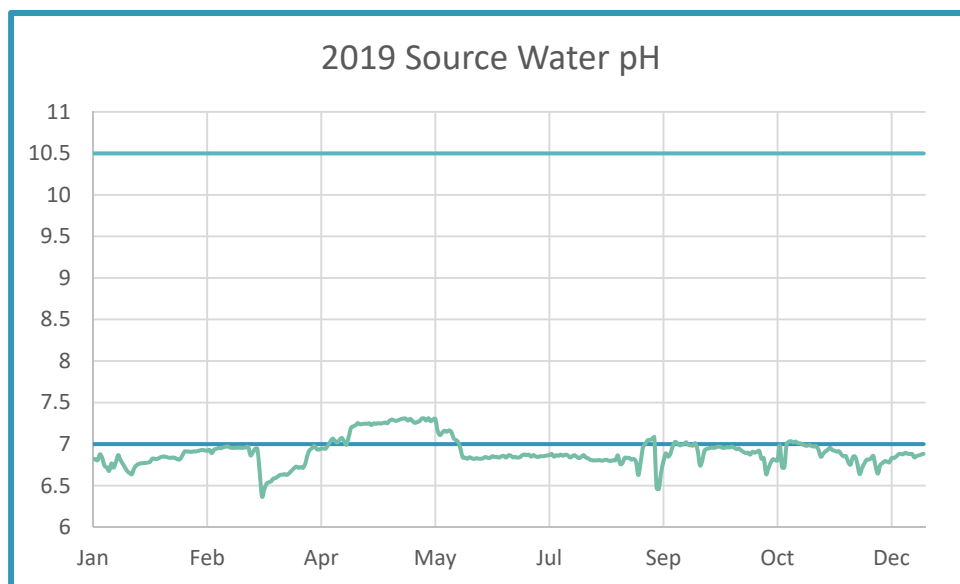


Figure No.7: Source Water pH

Water Quality Concerns

The CVRD continues to monitor water quality in the Comox Lake watershed through a series of programs. In 2009, the CVRD entered into a partnership with the water and aquatic sciences program at the University of Victoria and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada to study long term climate change impacts and a water quality monitoring project for Comox Lake.

Ensuring high-quality drinking water also requires preservation of water at its source. Continued implementation of the Watershed Protection Plan occurred in 2019. This included collaboration with the many stakeholders within the watershed, hydrodynamic modelling and continued water quality monitoring within the watershed. Turbidity and water quality is monitored at all major tributaries to the Comox Lake and all data is recorded within a watershed database to help inform and provide insight on water quality. Figure No.8 illustrates the size and extent of the Comox Lake watershed.

In 2019 the CVRD partnered with the Town of Comox, City of Courtenay, Village of Cumberland and K'omoks First Nation to begin a multi-year initiative with the Municipal Natural Asset Initiative (MNAI). The goal of the project is to value natural assets in the watershed to better understand, measure and manage the drinking water services that are provided.

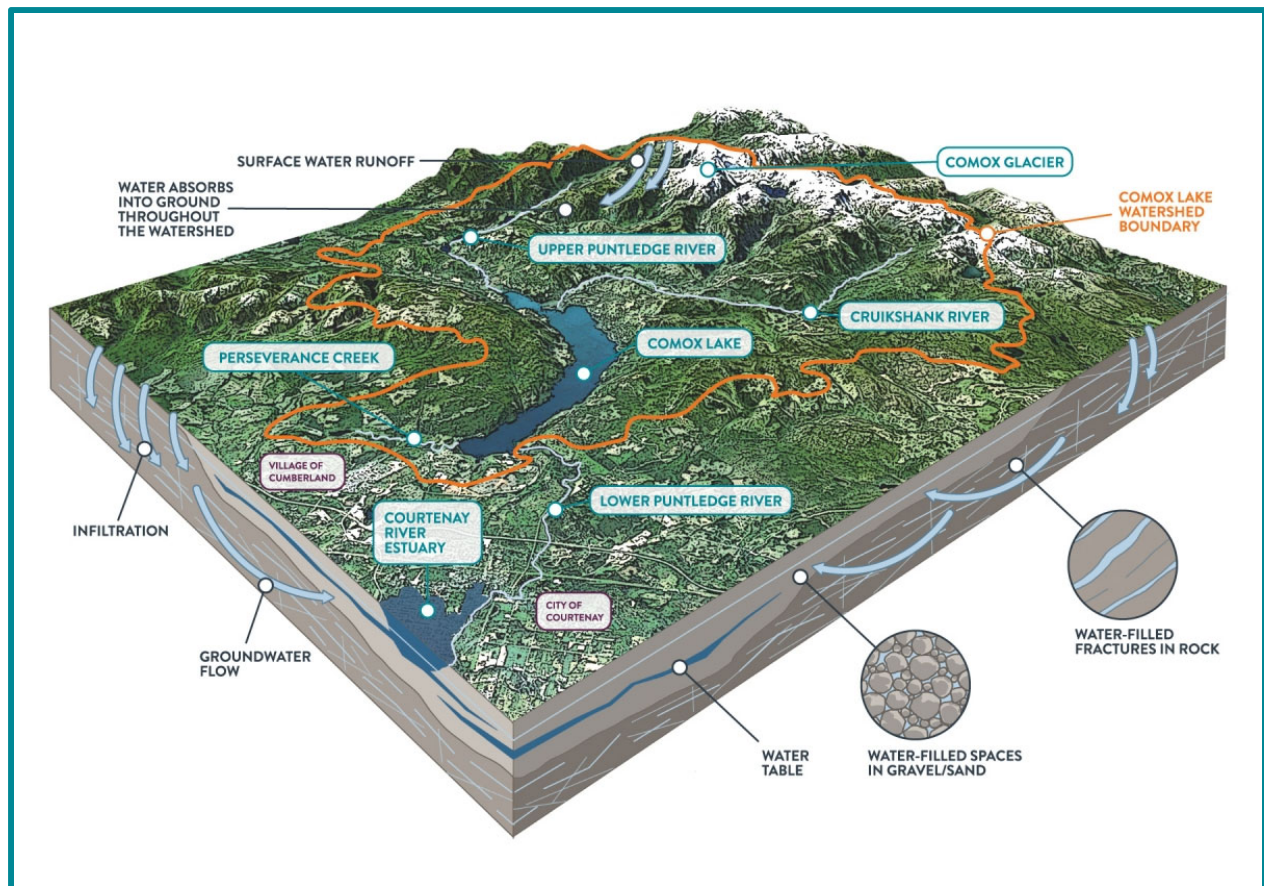


Figure No.8: Comox Lake Watershed

Planning

Goals

To ensure effective long-term planning and management programs are in place to meet the needs of all users groups while minimizing operation and infrastructure costs.

Consumption

The average daily water consumption for the system in 2019 was 23.7ML/day. A leak was discovered in one of the major transmission mains of the system, resulting in increases to total consumption for the year. The leak was in a section of the transmission main that runs underneath the Puntledge River and was repaired in April 2019.

To help reduce consumption the CVRD have multiple rebate programs in place to encourage Comox Valley residents to be water efficient. Rebates in 2019 included smart control outdoor irrigation and BC Hydro appliance rebates.

The CVRD closely monitors water demand and compliance to restrictions throughout the year and during summer months water demand increases approximately two fold from normal winter demand, as shown in Figure No.9 below.

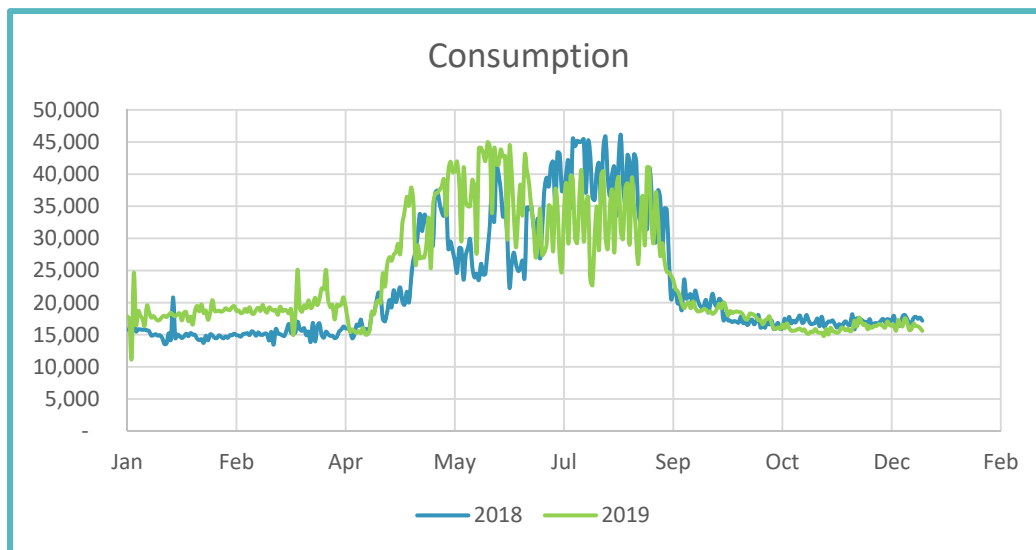


Figure No.9: CVWS Daily Consumption in 2018 and 2019

During times of scarcity the CVRD implements watering restrictions, the CVRD has a four stage system in place for managing water consumption. Stage one is the least restrictive and comes into effect May 1 yearly unless noted otherwise. Stages two, three and four are increasingly more restrictive and are implemented for varying reasons including increasing seriousness of the water shortages, BC Hydro maintenance and peak demand management.

In 2019, emergency stage four restrictions were in place from April 12 to 22 as major repair to a leaking transmission main under the Puntledge River was completed. The CVRD moved to stage two watering restrictions from July 15 to September 3. A brief period of stage three restrictions was implemented from September 3 to 19 as BC Hydro completed annual maintenance and the CVRD was required to supply water from the standby pump station. The standby pump station cannot meet peak demand and maintain fire flows for the system resulting in stage three water restrictions being required.

The maximum daily demand (MDD) was 45.0ML and occurred on June 15, 2019. In comparison to 2018, the MDD decreased from 46.0ML to 45.0ML. The decrease in the MDD can be attributed to multiple factors, including weather and current watering restrictions.

Maintenance

The waterworks staff consists of eight operators with varying ranges of certification. Each operator is registered with the Environmental Operator's Certification Program within BC and is required to remain in good standing by taking yearly continuing education courses.

The waterworks staff carries out preventive, corrective and emergency maintenance to all parts within the CVWS. This ensures continued operation and supply of safe, clean water to all users. The chlorination facility, reservoirs and distribution system are regularly inspected and maintained.

296 service requests within the system were investigated by the CVRD's Waterworks Operations Staff. Operator's time is primarily dedicated to the operations and maintenance of transmission mains and the treatment system, however Figure No.10 shows the breakdowns of service requests by category.

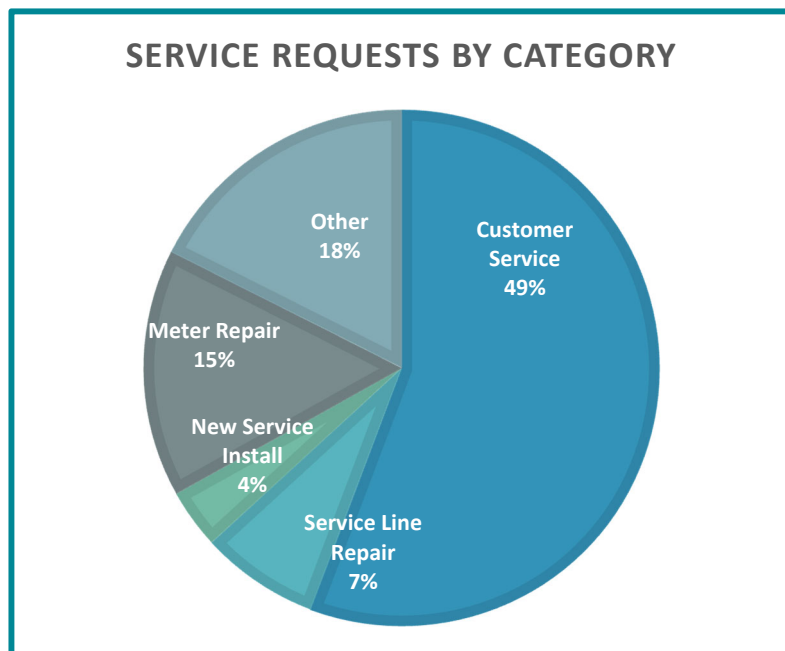


Figure No.10: 2019 Service Requests by Category

Financial

In 2019, the CVRD treated a total of 8.66 million cubic meters of water. Bulk water rates increased in 2019 from \$0.75/m³ to \$0.80/m³ to increase the contributions to the capital works reserve in order to reduce borrowing for the Comox Valley Water Treatment Project. Further increases to the bulk water rate will occur in 2019 and 2020.

The CVRD is moving forward with the Comox Valley Water Treatment Project to comply with the surface water treatment objectives. A number of project milestones were completed in 2019:

- Award of a design-build contract to AECON Water Infrastructure Ltd.
- Construction commencing, including clearing and grubbing of the site and site offices being set-up at both the raw water pump station and water treatment plant sites.
- Signing of Mutual Benefit Agreement between CVRD and K'ómoks First Nation

The project cost was updated to \$126 million in 2019 and the new system is expected to be operational by summer 2021. The five major components of the new system are listed below and shown in Figure No.11.

1. Lake intake to provide water security and conserve water for fish flows down the Puntledge River.
2. Raw water pumping station near the intake.
3. Raw water pipeline from pump station to the treatment plant.
4. Water treatment plant including filtration and disinfection.
5. Treated water pipeline from the plant to the distribution system.

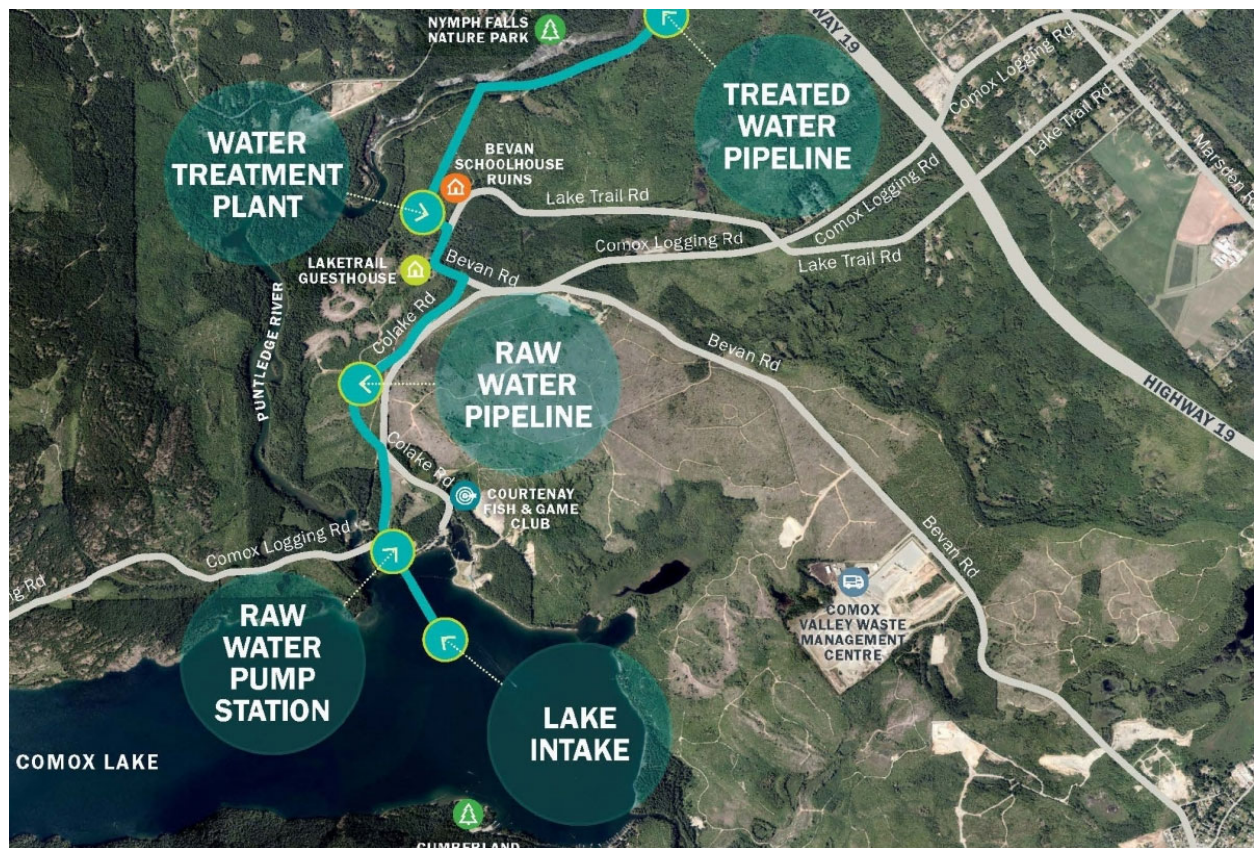


Figure No.11: Water Treatment Project

Funding for the Comox Valley Water Treatment Project is to be through a combination of reserves, grant funding and borrowing. Phase one and two of the project being the pre-implementation and implementation phase received 83 per cent grant funding through the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund. In 2018, the CVRD secured grant funding to offset at least 50 per cent of the total project costs with funding from the provincial and federal governments. This will require the CVRD to borrow up to \$29 million, as approved in the alternate approval process.

A detailed asset management plan for the service was completed in 2019, and includes development of an asset inventory, review of the condition of current infrastructure required levels of service and long term asset replacement requirements. In 2020, water rates will be reviewed as part of this work to ensure sufficient revenue is being collected to help fund future upgrades.

In 2018, the CVRD worked towards merging the six WLSA's into one service area, being the Comox Valley WLSA. The purpose of merging the six service areas is to streamline budget preparation, simplify billing and communications and to reduce the financial burden for small service areas in the case of unplanned/ emergency repairs. 2019 was the first year of operating the merged Comox Valley WLSA and provided a number of operational benefits.

2019 Accomplishments

- ✓ Continued implementation of the Comox Lake Watershed Protection Plan.
- ✓ First year of work for the Municipal Natural Asset Initiative.
- ✓ Began construction on the Comox Valley Water Treatment Project.
- ✓ Completed a detailed asset management plan for the Comox Valley Water System.
- ✓ First year of operating the merged Comox Valley WLSA.

2020 Objectives

- Continue implementing the Comox Lake Watershed Protection Plan.
- Use the detailed asset management plan to complete a comprehensive rate review and develop a long term water rate schedule.
- Continue construction of the Comox Valley Water Treatment Project.
- Continue work on for the Municipal Natural Asset Initiative.

Appendix A

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