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Capital region eyes six sewage plant sites

Report's 'best options' for treatment are two existing sites, plus three new areas in West Shore, one in Saanich

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The Capital Regional District has identified six possible locations for sewage treatment plants.

Three of sites outlined in a consultant's report released Wednesday are in the West Shore and close to ocean outfalls or existing pipe lines — the Glen Lake area of Langford, the Royal Roads University area of Colwood, and the Albert Head area at the Metchosin and Colwood border. Another location is at Finnerty Cove between Gordon Head and Cadboro Bay in Saanich.

Two unsurprising site selections are Macaulay Point in Esquimalt and Clover Point in Victoria. Approximately 129 million litres of raw sewage a day is already pumped down outfall pipes at those two locations into the ocean.

Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe, the CRD sewage committee chairman, stressed the locations are merely potential areas. No land has been secured and no decisions have been made. However, this is the only consultant's report to specifically examine locations, he said.

The CRD has until June 30 to present plans for building treatment plans to the provincial government.

The consultant's report is one of eight being used to inform politicians and the public about technology, odour, cost and locations.

"We asked the consulting firm to look at the region as a whole to see what they feel would be the best options," said Lowe.

"We essentially had a blank canvas. We said besides having our infrastructure where it is at this point, besides having the two outfall locations right now, what can we do when we're looking at decentralized plants?"

Not all six locations would have plants. It depends on how spread out, or decentralized, the CRD decides to make the system.

The report lists three options:

1. Have just two plants at Macaulay and Clover points. But usable land there is limited.
2. Keep option one and add two more plants — one in Saanich East to produce "high quality" reusable water, and one in West Shore either near Royal Roads or Albert Head to accommodate that region's growing population.
3. Keep both options and add a fifth plant in Langford, which would use advanced technology to recover reusable resources, such as water.

No matter what is decided, the "not in my backyard" mentality for treatment plants has long been considered the biggest fight facing politicians.

"I think that the [CRD sewage] committee is going to have to be strong in supporting whatever locations we feel is best for this system," said Lowe. "From there we're going to have to communicate well to the public the reasons for the various locations and the benefits for them."

It is likely the CRD won't be able to identify exact locations for the plants by the time it has to submit plans to the government, said Lowe.

The government realizes it is a large project and can accept certain things temporarily missing from the report, he said. The idea of a treatment plant in residential Saanich East was a surprise to Mayor Frank Leonard, but he said he'd like to see the University of Victoria possibly benefit from some of the heat and water resources that could be recovered from the waste.



Six sites are being considered for sewage treatment facilities.

It would be unrealistic for Saanich residents to assume a treatment plant won't be built somewhere in that municipality, said Leonard.

"I'd hope we just take a deep breath and put it in the larger context," he said. "Pick a neighbourhood in any community and people are going to think of a better reason for it to be somewhere else. But you can't have sewage treatment without sewage plants."

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