



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Public Works and Transportation Committee **Date:** March 11, 2019
From: Peter Russell, MCIP RPP **File:** 10-6175-01/2019-Vol 01
Senior Manager, Sustainability and District Energy
Re: **Mitchell Island Environmental Stewardship Initiatives**

Staff Recommendation

That the outreach initiatives proposed within the staff report titled “Mitchell Island Environmental Stewardship Initiatives” dated March 11, 2019 from the Senior Manager, Sustainability and District Energy, be endorsed.

Peter Russell, MCIP RPP
Senior Manager, Sustainability and District Energy
(604-276-4130)

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Sewerage & Drainage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Community Bylaws	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Policy Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE	INITIALS: 	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

Mitchell Island is an important industrial hub within the City of Richmond that is connected to the ecologically sensitive Fraser River through the City's drainage infrastructure. Persistent environmental concerns such as spills to the environment have been noted and staff have identified an opportunity to implement an island-specific outreach program to promote environmental stewardship among local land and business owners and improve collaboration between staff and senior governments regarding management objectives on the island.

Background

Mitchell Island is a human-made island in the North Arm of the Fraser River that is within the municipal boundaries of the City of Richmond. The 135 hectare island was created in the mid-1920s, when the channels between the former Mitchell Island, Twigg Island and Eburne Island were filled to create a single land mass. The area primarily supported fishing and agricultural activities until the early 1930s, when industrial activities began to increase. Richmond's first zoning bylaw was adopted in 1949 and officially zoned the Island for industrial use.

Mitchell Island remains zoned for industrial use and the City's Official Community Plan (2041) recognizes its socio-economic and environmental importance within the community by designating the land for industrial uses. Mitchell Island is located in the Fraser River estuary, which supports all species of Pacific salmon and an abundance of other wildlife at varying times of the year.

Mitchell Island currently hosts a variety of traditional industrial businesses such as auto wreckers but the area has begun to attract the attention of businesses from the region's emerging technology sector including bio-technology. There is an extensive network of infrastructure including a closed and open drainage network that conveys surface water to the Fraser River. The City has designated the foreshore as an Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Area that regulates development with a review and permitting process to promote conservation of the aquatic resource. The drainage infrastructure requires a disproportionate amount of maintenance than other areas of the city to remove the excess buildup of sediment introduced by the various business operations. Considerable effort is also spent by staff responding to operational complaints including drainage impacts, spills and fires.

Council adopted the City's *Pollution Prevention and Clean-up Bylaw No. 8475* in 2009. The bylaw prohibits the introduction of polluting substances into the environment and was recently updated in 2018 to include additional provisions to respond to spill incidents. Staff propose to develop a series of community engagement initiatives to promote stewardship and improve awareness within the Island's business community regarding persistent operational and environmental concerns pursuant to Bylaw No. 8475.

Analysis

Aquatic environments, such as the Fraser River Estuary, are particularly sensitive to the introduction of pollution due to the abundance of flora and fauna that utilize the area. Pollution has the ability to disrupt the form and function of ecosystems and is regulated by all levels of government. Staff have implemented some positive initiatives to improve non-compliant operating practices, including distributing informative material outlining eco-friendly best management practices and supporting local owners interested in improving their wastewater onsite treatment systems.

Staff document and track spills and non-compliance reports utilizing an electronic mapping resource at the City. The data is used to identify areas with persistent pollution concerns which will allow staff to monitor the success of stewardship initiatives if endorsed.

Mitchell Island is located in the Fraser River and subject to municipal, provincial and federal pollution prevention regulations. Staff understand the complexities of the Island's regulatory framework and sees an opportunity to work collectively with senior governments to align management objectives related to pollution. Staff have taken a leadership role in this regard and hosted an intergovernmental working group meeting in November 2018 that included representatives from various city departments and senior governmental departments. Staff facilitated an effective engagement session and collected valuable information from participants that is being used to support the stewardship initiatives herein and design future stewardship activities on the Island. Feedback from the event was very positive and participants were enthusiastic about the future collaboration opportunities.

Staff recognize that strengthening relationships with land owners on the Island will help to promote operational and environmental awareness and will implement the following initiatives in 2019, if endorsed:

- **Local Business Outreach:** Staff propose a local business outreach program designed to promote community stewardship and operational responsibility. A package of informative material for businesses will be distributed. Staff will focus initial efforts on businesses such as stone cutting operations, auto repair, and concrete and asphalt recyclers. Materials provided will include information on environmental expectations, industry-specific best environmental practices, and other useful resources.

Staff will host a community information session in May 2019 to launch the outreach program. Representatives from local businesses as well as regulators will be invited to begin a dialogue on management objectives and promote environmental awareness. Staff intend on taking advantage of one of Island's green spaces, overlooking the Fraser River, to host an outdoor event for stakeholders.

- **Multi-jurisdictional Collaboration:** Individual regulators typically respond independently to minor concerns with minimal input from other jurisdictions. Staff have identified an opportunity to improve collaboration among regulators.

Regular meetings with senior regulators to discuss persistent compliance concerns are proposed. It is expected that this organized approach to environmental management will improve staff efficiency, build local relationships and improve environmental responsibility among business owners and employees.

- **Environmental Monitoring:** Staff recognize the need to collect baseline information to measure the effectiveness of the outreach program. Staff will implement a simple monitoring program on the Island to collect qualitative such as vegetation assessment and quantitative information such as water quality monitoring pursuant to Bylaw No. 8475. Data will be used internally to support future outreach initiatives and improve the City's pollution tracking system. Staff intend to provide an update within one year of the launch of the program.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

Mitchell Island is an important industrial hub in Richmond that is connected to the Fraser River by open and closed drainages that convey stormwater runoff from roads and properties. Staff have noted some operational concerns in the area and recommend initiating an island-specific outreach program intended to improve local relationships and reduce the introduction of pollution originating from the Island into the Fraser River.



Chad Paulin, M.Sc., P.Ag.
Manager, Environment
(604-247-4672)