Winter 2026/2027

SPROAT LAKE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Published by Penny Cote – Sproat Lake Director – Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

What's the future for Sproat Lake and Area? The ACRD is currently updating the Sproat Lake and Area (Area "D") Official Community Plan (OCP). Thank you to community members for all the feedback you've shared through this process. The OCP establishes a plan that reflects the community's needs and interests, while also aligning with updated provincial legislation and other ACRD plans and initiatives.
A draft Plan was built with the community through five-phases of community engagement that included information gathering events, presentations of "what we heard", background research and multiple engagements to collect community vision and goals. After going out to the community for feedback, the draft was revised and brought to the Board for first reading of the updated SL OCP bylaw. The community expressed concern about the complexity and length of the draft document and staff were directed to make the requested changes to the document. A third survey was conducted to better understand what changes were wanted by SL and Area OCP residents. ACRD staff will be publishing the results of the recent survey and are preparing a detailed report for the Board, to be presented by the end of the year, that highlights how the input can be reflected in the SL OCP bylaw. For more information on the project, updates see the ACRD website at www.acrd.bc.ca/ocp-updates and register to the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District's Lets Connect platform site (www.letsconnectacrd.ca/sproat-lake-ocp) for all the information on projects and upcoming engagement opportunities.

ACRD - Sproat Lake Electoral Area Director Penny Cote Retires after serving on the Board of Directors for 21 years through five local elections. Gratitude and appreciation go out to the many community volunteers, committee members, and the ACRD staff that supported our beautiful community and region through the many years.

ACRD Welcomes your newly elected ACRD Sproat Lake Electoral Area "D" Representative, Sabrina Zimmerman who Will serve a four-year term on the ACRD Board. Congratulations to the new and returning Board members.
Election results are posted on the ACRD website.

Sproat River Weir Steel Plates were removed by Domtar October 13, 2026. It is anticipated the weir plates will be reinstated at the lake outlet in the spring of 2027, managing the annual flow for fish migration.



This fall is the lowest recorded river and lake levels for fish flow resulting in very concerning management of the Sproat River weir plates and Central Lake dams.
It is to be noted that the Somass Fish Flow Committee is made up of an extensive membership covering the needed authorities who can provide suggested recommendations to assist Domtar management of the weir plates and dams. This committee includes community members in recognition of Sproat and Central Lake environmental and residential flood/drought concerns.

Thanks to the West Coast Aquatic for their facilitation of the Somass Fish Flow Committee and Joe Lamoureaux for providing weekly weir photos and updates on Sproat River and lake levels.

CARP IN SPROAT LAKE

In June 2024, Fisheries biologists trialed a new approach to capturing invasive carp at Sproat Lake, using a combination of boat electrofishing and gillnetting. This approach, which targets fish occupying shallow (<2 m depth) spawning habitat in early June, resulted in a very high catch per unit effort relative to previous attempts: in 2024, a total of 180 carp were removed over the course of two days. All fish were caught in the Sproat Landing slough and shallow bay (attached map).



This approach was repeated in June 2025 and included PIT tagging and release of a portion of the male carp (seven fish released of 21 caught). Released fish that can be identified via PIT tags may be recaptured in future removal efforts and allow biologists to estimate the total population of breeding carp via mark-recapture analysis. A better understanding of the total population will inform risk assessments for conservation and indicate the effectiveness of suppression efforts.

The low catch relative to 2024 was attributed to a shift in spawning period due to low water temperature. The removal effort is time-sensitive, as carp congregate in spawning areas when water temperatures reach 10 degrees, which typically happens between mid-May and mid-June. Fish caught in 2025 were determined to be ready to spawn but the high density of carp congregating in spawning habitat was not observed.

Biologists repeated the boat electrofishing and gillnetting method again in June 2026, which resulted in the removal of two mature female carp caught in the Tall Timbers Bay (attached map). Again, the high density of carp in shallow spawning habitat around Sproat Landing was not observed.

In 2025 and 2026 biologists also coordinated with the Sproat Lake Marine Patrol crew, who provided regular monitoring updates. The Marine Patrol monitored potential spawning habitat for signs of spawning activity so that Fisheries biologists could mobilize (sites monitored are marked on the attached map). Monitoring did not result in detection of spawning activity; therefore, both years, biologists planned removals to align with the successful removals in 2024 (early June). Boat electrofishing, gillnetting, and PIT tagging by Fisheries biologists, in coordination with monitoring provided by the Marine Patrol, is planned to repeat annually with the objective of population estimation and suppression.

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE RESILIENCY PLANS

As wildfire activity continues to increase across British Columbia, proactive planning is essential to help keep our communities safe. Through the development of Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans, local governments, First Nations, stakeholders, and residents are working together to better understand wildfire risk and identify opportunities to reduce hazards around our homes, neighbourhoods, and surrounding landscapes. This project includes development of plans for the City of Port Alberni, Sproat Lake, Beaver Creek, Cherry Creek, Beaufort, Tseshaht First Nation, and Hupacasath First Nation, along with a separate plan for Bamfield and Anacla (Huu-ay-aht First Nations). Through technical analysis, risk planning, community engagement, and development of the reports, we will be supported by Frontera Forest Solutions, a consulting firm specializing in wildfire planning.

We will be using this webpage to inform the public about the project, advertising events and engagement opportunities, and as a receptacle for housing any video presentations, documents and links we want to share with you: www.letsconnectacrd.ca/cwrp.

The team is hosting a CWRP Outreach Event at the Sproat Lake Fire Hall on November 24 from 4 to 6 pm. If residents would prefer to share their feedback electronically, they can take our survey on the Let's Connect ACRD website, or send us an e-mail at firesmart@acrd.bc.ca

Keep your eyes on this webpage for the most up-to-date info on Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans!

If you venture out into the backcountry, please do so with extreme caution. Wildfires are a reality no one wants to experience.

BRITISH COLUMBIA FireSmart™

Call the ACRD for a free FIRESMART home assessment. Wildfires have been a natural part of our coastal forest environment for thousands of years. Building our homes in the interface with forested areas increases the risk from wildfires. With proper planning, it is possible to reduce the interface fire risk by following some simple FireSmart principles. You can get FireSmart advice from the ACRD FireSmart Program. **ACRD FireSmart Coordinator** - 250-720-2700 or **firesmart@acrd.bc.ca**

FireSmart rebates help homeowners in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District reduce wildfire risk around their homes. These cost-shared incentives support eligible mitigation activities such as clearing hazardous vegetation, improving landscape safety, and creating defensible space. The first step is to book a free FireSmart Home Assessment, which identifies wildfire risks on your property and helps determine what work may be eligible for rebates. If you have questions or need help getting started, homeowners are encouraged to contact their local FireSmart Coordinator for guidance and support.

CURBSIDE

The FireSmart Residential Curbside Pickup Program helps residents reduce wildfire risk by removing flammable woody debris from their properties at no cost. This program supports FireSmart clean-up efforts by safely collecting eligible vegetation and reducing fuel buildup around homes and neighbourhoods.

SPROAT LAKE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT has been busy this year responding to 122 calls including one chimney fire, four Motor Vehicle MV fires, 15 Motor Vehicle Incidents MVI's, 25 Automatic Mutual Aid AMA's, 52 First Responder FR calls, and 23 Duty Investigations.

This fall the ACRD Board approved the contract for Riptide Marine to build the new Fire Boat for the Sproat Lake Fire Department with an expected delivery date in April of 2027. This new addition to our response team will have a large volume pump on board that can be used as a first attack response by water and will help with filling trucks for fires on or near the lake, and it will also have a trailer so we can provide additional support to other bodies of water where needed.

The spring of 2027 the Sproat Lake Fire Department will be taking delivery of our second water tender truck to help upgrade or fleet to keep our water shuttle accreditation going providing all our residential properties an insurance premium at a great low rate.

This winter the SLVFD asks that you be sure to keep your address visible and driveway clear for first responders. If we can't find you, we can't help you!

The Sproat Lake Volunteer Fire Department is looking for new volunteers to join their team and learn some exciting new skills with a great bunch of fire fighters. For more information call the ACRD office 250-720-2700 or Chief Mike Cann 250-731-0936.

SPROAT LAKE PARKS COMMISSION has prepared for the winter season by taking down the court nets at Cougar Smith Park and removing washroom facilities at Dickson Park. As the leaves turn colour and fall, the Sproat Lake Trails and Parks continue to be a well-used resource to the community providing lifestyle opportunities all year. If you are interested in joining the Sproat Lake Parks Commission, we are always looking for new interested volunteers. For more information, call the ACRD office at 250-720-2700.

SPROAT LAKE MARINE PATROL has been a beloved part of the lake community for decades, helping promote safety, stewardship, and enjoyment of the lake for residents and visitors alike.

While its role on the water is well known, its impact extends far beyond boating safety.

This summer weekend, while visiting with a friend on their dock at Sproat Lake, I was introduced to another guest visiting from Pemberton. Her name was Brittenay. During our conversation, she mentioned

that she had worked for the Sproat Lake Marine Patrol many years ago. We chatted briefly about the program, shared a few memories, and then went on with our day.

On Monday morning, back at the office, organizing some Marine Patrol files that Director Cote had dropped off. To my surprise, one of the first documents I came across was the 2007 Sproat Lake Marine Patrol Year-End Report. Even more surprising, the report had been authored by Brittenay.

I sent a photo of the report cover to my friend and asked, “Is this the same Brittenay I met on the weekend?” It was.

When Brittenay saw it, she was thrilled. Nearly 20 years after writing the report, she was reunited with a piece of her own history and asked if she could have a copy. It was a remarkable coincidence, and a reminder of how deeply connected people remain to the experiences they had on the lake.

What makes this story special is that it highlights something many of us already know about the Sproat Lake Marine Patrol. While the program helps protect and steward the lake, it has also served as a launching point for generations of young people. Over the years, countless students and summer staff have gained valuable work experience, developed leadership and communication skills, and built lasting connections to Sproat Lake and the Alberni Valley.

Many former patrol members have gone on to successful careers and become active contributors to their communities, yet they still carry fond memories of their time on the lake. The fact, that a chance conversation on a dock could lead to reconnecting someone with a report they wrote almost 20 years ago speaks to the enduring impact of the program.

The Sproat Lake Marine Patrol's legacy is not only measured in safer waterways and environmental stewardship, but also in the people it has helped shape along the way. Stories like Brittenay's remind us that the program's influence continues long after a summer season ends, creating lifelong connections between people, the lake, and the community they call home.

Many thanks to ACRD Staff for sharing this communication. Always great to see the positive action in the community.

The Wood Stove Exchange Program offers two options for households upgrading woodstoves.
1. The exchange of any wood stove manufactured **prior** to 2014 switching to an alternative heat source The rebate amount depends on what you are switching to. For wood stove to natural gas, propane or pellet stove the savings are $1,050, ($750 rebate issued by the ACRD plus a $300 participating retailer discount) while if you switch to a heat pump it is a savings of $1,300. ($1,000 rebate issued by the ACRD plus a $300 participating retailer discount).
2. The exchange of an uncertified wood stove (pre-1994) to an EPA or CSA certified wood stove the savings are $450 ($300 rebate issued by the ACRD plus a $150 retailer discount). This offer applies to residents of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District and rebates are available on a first-come, first-served basis. For further information and how to qualify and find a participating retailer, check out the link on the ACRD website at www.acrd.bc.ca/wsreduction or phone 250-720-2700. Help your health and your pocketbook. Acceptable air quality is everyone’s right. Protecting air quality is everyone’s responsibility.

Sort’nGo “Green Haul” Waste Program offers an accessible and affordable way for individuals to participate in reducing landfill waste and supports composting efforts in the Region. It offers residents who do not have access to curbside organics collection a convenient way to drop off food waste. Residents can register with the ACRD and receive a punch pass for $25 for 15 organics self-haul drop-offs.
For more information about this program or to register to participate, go to www.acrd.bc.ca/sortngo.

Stay informed with the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District by registering to “**Let’s Connect ACRD”** The site offers information on a range of projects and engagement opportunities, including discussion forums, polls, surveys, and so much more. As a community member, this platform is your portal to useful input tools all in one convenient location that is available 24/7.