

# North Salt Spring Waterworks District Strategic Plan 2018 - 2023



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## THE NSSWD

The North Salt Spring Waterworks District (NSSWD) has existed in one form or another and been supplying water to parts of Salt Spring Island for more than 100 years.

In their current form, its letters patent date to 1948 which state, “The objects of the said improvement district shall be the provision of water-supply and the acquisition, maintenance, and operation of works for the said purposes and all matters incidental thereto.”

At present the NSSWD serves an area of approximately 7,260 acres extending from Southey Point in the north to near Cusheon Lake in the south including Ganges, Vesuvius, Channel Ridge, and many rural properties. The NSSWD holds infrastructure and other assets that have an estimated current replacement cost of \$50 million including a recently opened \$8.4 million water treatment plant at St. Mary Lake, a \$3 million annual budget, and 1,792 water connections serving approximately 5,500 users.

The NSSWD is governed by a Board of 5 trustees who serve for three-year terms and are elected by its ratepayers on a rotational basis with an election occurring every year.

The District has 13 full time staff and operates the NSSWD as well as six other Island waterworks: the CRD’s Beddis, Fulford and Cedar Lane water systems, and the Erskine, Mt Belcher and Scott Point water systems.

The NSSWD supplies water to residential, commercial, industrial and institutional users.

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

Strategic planning is an essential step for the NSSWD to manage its challenges, set priorities, allocate scarce resources, measure success, guide the work of staff, and communicate to District ratepayers as well as the broader community. It allows the Board to make both short and long-term decisions about the District operations which will lay a foundation for the District’s long-term success. The strategic plan provides direction so that the organization can focus on the most important initiatives and manage its resources to their greatest potential.

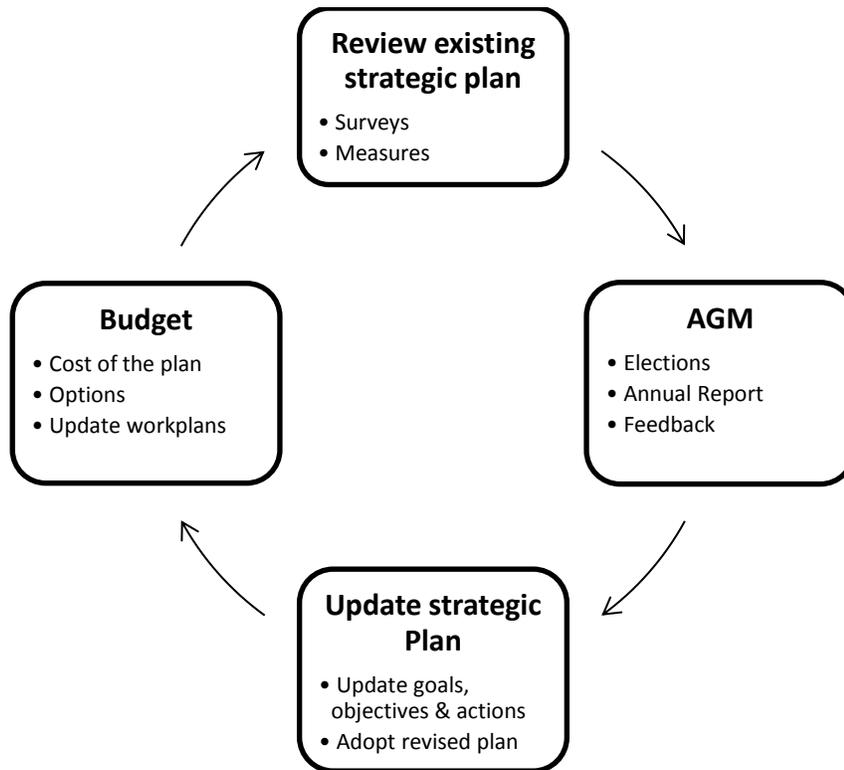
The strategic plan guides the work of the staff who have responsibility to develop work plans aligned with the Board’s priorities, goals, and objectives.

Strategic planning is a long-term ongoing process; it is not just a few days of workshops. It will take time and effort for the Board and staff to continue to develop the organization’s strategic plan to make it a useful living and working document and an essential road map for the organization.

*“Plan the work.....work the plan.”*

## STRATEGIC PLANNING LIFECYCLE

The NSSWD Strategic Plan must be updated from time to time to reflect current priorities of ratepayers, the Board, resources and the legislative framework. An annual process to update the plan will be included in the NSSWD work plan.



## BACKGROUND

There are at least two forces driving the current need for an examination of the NSSWD and the development of a strategic plan:

First, during 2017, Salt Spring Island conducted a referendum on incorporation. The majority of voters were not in favour of incorporation. If the voters had elected to incorporate, the governance model of the NSSWD would be changing. With incorporation not proceeding, the NSSWD governance structure will remain unchanged and governed by its existing Letters Patent.

Second, the District continues to experience unprecedented dry summers and water supply shortages as evidenced by the moratorium on new water system connections, the Level 4 water restrictions imposed during the summer of 2018 and the recommendations and analysis provided in the Wood Leidal Consultants Report 2017.

In response to the ongoing pressures on the Trustees, staff, ratepayers and other stakeholders, NSSWD has developed this five-year strategic plan to guide and focus its future endeavors.

The strategic plan was developed in a multi-step process:

1. **Laying the foundation** (September 5, 2018) - NSSWD challenges/opportunities, Board role in strategic planning, NSSWD strategic plan vision & mission
2. **Setting Priorities** (September 25, 2018) – finalizing the vision, mission, principles & identifying goals and priorities
3. **Planning the work**, (October 11, 2018) resourcing
4. **Refining the Strategic Plan** (December 3, 2018 – finalizing the draft plan)

This draft plan, once reviewed and finalized by the NSSWD Board will be provided to the NSSWD ratepayers and the broader public through a consultation process to seek feedback.

## WHERE ARE WE GOING? - NSSWD VISION STATEMENT

A vision statement describes the organization’s aspirations for the future. It creates a picture of a future state and answers the question, “Where does the organization want to be in 10-20 years?”

***The vision of the NSSWD is:***

*The NSSWD is a leader in providing potable water in an environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable manner.*

## WHAT WE DO – NSSWD MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement describes the fundamental purpose of the organization. It answers the question, “Why does the organization exist?”

***The mission of the NSSWD is:***

*To provide potable water within the NSSWD boundaries in an efficient and sustainable manner.*

## NSSWD PRINCIPLES

Principles describe enduring, collective beliefs that guide the work of the Board and Staff put into action.

**NSSWD principles:**

*The work of the NSSWD is guided by principles of:*

**Integrity:** carrying out our work honestly and demonstrating high ethical principles

**Public trust:** Cultivating public confidence in our work

**Public interest:** working in the best interests of the public and stakeholders, both current and future

**Fair processes:** respecting the laws of natural justice and administrative fairness

**Courage:** having the strength to make difficult decisions.

**Environmental stewardship:** caring for the environment

**Transparency:** conducting our work openly and clearly communicating to our ratepayers, stakeholders and the broader public.

**Accountability:** taking responsibility for our decisions and actions

**Innovation:** seeking informed and creative solutions to difficult problems

## STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS, GOALS, OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS

The NSSWD Strategic Plan identifies six strategic focus areas. These are areas the Board considers as priorities for the near and longer term. Each of the strategic focus areas includes a set of goals, priority objectives, actions and timelines that will serve to guide the work of staff and the allocation of resources, both financial and human.

### Strategic Focus Areas:

- Governance
- Water supply and management
- Communication and engagement
- Asset management
- Organizational strength
- Financial management

**Goals** are overarching principles that guide decision making. They are broad, general, intangible and difficult to measure. **Objectives** are specific, measurable steps taken to achieve a goal.

**Actions** are specific steps or tasks that will be taken to achieve the objectives and goals. Actions for each of the strategic focus areas are described in the following section. The timeframes show desired dates to begin the actions. Outcomes and completion of work will frequently be at later times or part of a recurring annual process. Actions prioritized are indicated as:

- Important and Urgent (IU)
- Not Important but Urgent (NIU)
- Important but not Urgent (INU)
- Not Important and not Urgent (NINU)

## GOVERNANCE

The governance structure of the NSSWD is the foundation of all that the organization does. An effective governance arrangement enables the NSSWD to carry out its works efficiently and effectively. Because of the current (2006) policies of the provincial government of BC the NSSWD as an improvement district is severely limited in its ability to expand and coordinate its work and to access infrastructure and other grant funding. Ensuring the NSSWD, with its significant assets and annual budget, has an effective governance structure is of prime importance to the Board.

### Goals

The goals of NSSWD with respect to governance are to:

- Ensure an efficient, coordinated and enabled governance structure for water supply, treatment, distribution and resource management
- Access funding from external sources

Priority Objectives	Measures
A governance structure that enables coordinated and efficient water service delivery and resource management including the potential for an island-wide governance water authority.	New governance structure
Provincial government approval to access funding through MFA & senior government sources such as grants and gas tax funds	Provincial approval

Actions – what concrete steps does the NSSWD need to take to achieve the above noted objectives	Time Frame Quarter or year	Priority
Continue to explore governance options for the NSSWD.		IU

## WATER SUPPLY AND MANAGEMENT

The District continues to experience unprecedented dry summers and water shortages as evidenced by the imposition of Level 4 water restrictions in the recent past and, the analysis and recommendations provided in the [Water Availability and Demand Climate Change Assessment 2017 Update](#). Managing the provision of water within the boundaries of the NSSWD to maximize its utility and sustainability is an essential role of the NSSWD.

### Goals

The goals of NSSWD with respect to water management are to:

- Ensure the moratorium is an effective tool to manage water demand within District boundaries
- Reduce water consumption through conservation measures
- Manage water sources sustainably – now and in the future
- Meet or exceed drinking water health and safety standards
- Explore alternatives to enhance fire suppression capability
- Explore alternative sources of water

Priority Objectives	Measures
Update and/or inventory available water within District boundaries	Completed inventory
Evaluate the effectiveness of the current moratorium and identify options for and impacts of lifting various components of the moratorium	Analysis complete
Meet health standards for drinking water from Maxwell Lake	Complete construction of water treatment plant

Actions – what concrete steps does the NSSWD need to take to achieve the above noted objectives	Time Frame Quarter or year	Priority
Complete demand projections under moratorium policy	In progress Q4 2018	IU
Complete Maxwell water availability and climate change assessment	Q4 2020	INU
Participate in facilitated workshop to understand the risks of increasing withdrawals from St Mary’s Lake per 2017 KWL report	Q1 2019	IU
Develop and adopt conservation policy	Q1 2019	IU
Develop a conservation plan using a community based social marketing approach to behaviour change	Q2 2019	IU
Engage a consultant to conduct a water supply options study	Q4 2019	IU
Engage consultant for design of WTP for Maxwell Lake source	Q1 2019	IU
Engage consultant to conduct a wildfire fuel assessment for Maxwell water supply area	2019	IU

Work with the BC Ministry of Forests, Land, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development (FLNRO) to address usage issues on St. Mary Lake	2019	INU
Determine availability of water flows for fire suppression in the NSSWD system.	2019	IV

## COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

With the challenges facing the NSSWD communication with ratepayers and the public is an important function to support the provision of accurate information, valuable public input and quality decision making. Good communication and public engagement and the resulting informed ratepayers and general public will greatly enhance the ability of the NSSWD to make sound decisions and, it is hoped, will enable greater acceptance of District decisions.

### Goals

The goals of NSSWD with respect to communication and engagement are to:

- Communicate effectively (accurate, informed, concise)
- Engage ratepayers and general public
- Gain public trust and improve the District’s public image
- Inform stakeholders with respect to water supply and management issues
- Inform stakeholders on cost of service
- Celebrate successes
- Promote of conservation of water

Priority Objectives	Measures
Develop consistent identity for the NSSWD	
Develop and implement a communication plan	Completed plan
Create opportunities for input/feedback from ratepayers and the general public	At least 2 opportunities for public input/feedback per year

Actions – what concrete steps does the NSSWD need to take to achieve the above noted objectives	Time Frame	Priority
	Quarter or year	
Conduct a baseline survey of ratepayer and other stakeholder perceptions and satisfaction	Q1 2019	IU
Develop and adopt a communications and engagement policy	Q1 2019	IU
Complete and implement communications plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a survey to evaluate and measure success of communication plan</li> </ul>	Ongoing beginning in Q2 2019	INU
Post the open Board meeting agenda on the website when the meeting package is sent to the Trustees.	2019-Q1	IU
Post the open Board meeting package on the website when the meeting package is sent to the Trustees.	2019-Q4	IU
Review NSSWD website for stale content and remove.	2019-Q1	INU
Schedule a one-day Trustee workshop to update the Strategic Plan shortly after the AGM.	2019-Q2	INU

## ASSET MANAGEMENT

The NSSWD holds infrastructure and other assets that have an estimated current replacement cost of \$50 million including a recently opened \$8.4 treatment plant, a \$3 million annual budget, and 1,792 water connections. Managing, maintaining, and renewing these assets is a central role of the NSSWD and critical to the sustainability of the organization and its assets.

### Goals

The goals of NSSWD with respect to asset management are to:

- Cost achievable infrastructure that does not defer costs to future ratepayers
- Reduce water loss from infrastructure
- Reduce risk exposure

Priority Objectives	Measures
Inventory and assess the condition of tangible assets	Completed inventory
Develop a plan for asset replacement and renewal	Completed renewal and replacement plan
Implement the plan	Annual progress of replacement and renewal

Actions – <i>what concrete steps does the NSSWD need to take to achieve the above noted objectives</i>	Time Frame Quarter or year	Priority
Engage a consultant to prepare strategy and plan for asset management	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q 2019	IU
Complete inventory of assets and valuation	1 <sup>st</sup> Q 2019	IU
Develop and adopt an asset management policy	2 <sup>nd</sup> Q 2019	IU

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH (BOARD & STAFF)

A strong organization is critical to the long-term success of the NSSWD and its strength lies in its decision makers and staff. Further, the district benefits significantly from a stable Board and an engaged workplace that attracts and retains qualified staff.

### Goals

The goals of NSSWD with respect to organizational strength are to:

- Ensure qualified and dedicated Board members
- Ensure qualified and committed staff

Priority Objectives	Measures
Develop a Board succession plan	Adequate number of qualified Board members prepared to take positions as needed
Develop a desirable workplace and compensation regime	Staff attraction and retention – staff satisfaction rating

<b>Actions</b> – what concrete steps does the NSSWD need to take to achieve the above noted objectives	<b>Time Frame</b> Quarter or year	<b>Priority</b>
The Board will create a succession plan to actively recruit qualified candidates for vacant Trustee positions.	2019 Q1	IU
Annually complete an evaluation of the Board and the CAO	2019 & annually	IU
Engage Human Resource Consultant to assist staff	2019-Q1	IU
All managers create a workplan for the upcoming year that reflects the strategic, financial and capital plans. Workplans to include: link to strategic plan, planning status, timing.	2019-Q2 Annually thereafter in Q4	INU
Initiate a records management project.	2020-Q2 2021-2023	INU

**SOUND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

The District operates with a \$3 million annual budget and holds infrastructure and other assets that have an estimated current replacement cost of \$50 million. Management of the District’s assets enables all that the District does and is key to the long-term sustainability of the organization and its ability to provide potable water within its boundaries.

**Goals**

The goals of NSSWD with respect to Sound Financial Management are to have:

- Long term sustainable finances
- Responsible spending decisions
- Finances and true cost of service understood by stakeholders
- Access to grant funding

<b>Priority Objectives</b>	<b>Measures</b>
Complete an achievable 15-year capital plan	Completed capital plan
Complete an achievable 5-year financial plan	Completed financial plan
Update capital and financial plans annually	Scheduled annual updating

<b>Actions – what concrete steps does the NSSWD need to take to achieve the above noted objectives</b>	<b>Time Frame</b> Quarter or year	<b>Priority</b>
Initial capital plan is created based on version 1 of the strategic plan.	2018-Q4	INU
Develop tools and schedules for operating and project costs to support a 5-year financial plan.	2019-Q1	INU
Draft preliminary document to articulate the 5-year financial plan	2019-Q1	INU
5-year financial plan is updated and improved and reflects the updated strategic plan.	2019-Q3	INU
15-year capital plan is updated annually. Information in the plan is improved through asset management practices.	Annually in Q3	INU
Staff budget reports from Oct and Nov 2018 are shared with ratepayers.	2019-Q4	INU
Plan for 15 minutes of time at AGM to present high level financial and capital planning information.	2019-Q2 Annually in Q2	INU
Schedule, plan and carry out a ratepayer/public meeting to present updated strategic plan and, preliminary financial and capital plans.	2019-Q3 Annually thereafter in Q3	INU
Undertake periodic reviews of NSSWD revenue streams.	2023-Q1	INU