

## Environment Commission wants to know "How green is your Cowichan?"

The CVRD's Environment Commission is asking Cowichan residents to provide input into their Sustainable Cowichan Plan. The Commission has come up with 12 big ideas to build a stronger, more resilient community, and is now taking their ideas 'to the street' to get public input. So look for people with clip boards wanting to talk with you about our community's environmental and economic health.

"We've spent the past year thinking about how our region can best adapt to climate change and other pressures that have the potential to seriously impact our economy and ecosystem," says Environment Commission member Clare Frater. "We have put together a list of big ideas that we think can make a real, positive difference, and now we want to know what you think."

The Commission's list is made up of small, medium and large actions they feel we – as individuals and as a community – need to take to increase our region's ability to respond to the realities of climate change, including droughts, fires, failed crops, and severe water restrictions in the summers, and flooding, power outages, violent winds and colder, wetter weather in the winters.

The main order of business, according to the Commission, is to adopt a new way of thinking about the environment: one that recognizes our regional environment as the backbone of our community, as the source of support and stability that will allow us to weather any kind of natural or economic storm.

"The good news is that our environmental backbone is in fairly decent shape, so there is still hope," says Environment Commission member Peter Keber. "We just need to do things differently, starting today. Now is the time to come together as a region and decide whether we value our natural assets – forests, rivers, plants, animals, land, air and water – enough to invest in them over the long term."

Investing doesn't mean raising taxes, it means changing how we think, plan, act and live today and into the future in order to balance both biodiversity and growth.

"Doing things differently on a personal level might look like committing to new habits that recognize and value the environment as the backbone of our work and home lives – like carpooling, and reducing water and energy use," explains Frater. "And at the community level it might look like supporting our local government to put in place policies and regulations that create greater regional self-sufficiency and manage our natural assets in a sustainable way."

But the first thing you need to do is to visit the Environment Commission's website ([www.12things.ca](http://www.12things.ca)) to take their survey, rank their ideas, and share your thoughts.

"Here is our punchline," explains Environment Commission member Roger Wiles. "We believe we must start right away to strengthen our environment and community by growing in smart ways, repair the damage we have done to our natural assets and preserve them for future generations. And that local government must lead the way in this effort."

"Do you agree with our ideas?" continues Wiles. "Do you think we are on the right track?"

Add your voice and thoughts to this important community discussion about regional sustainability by going to [www.12things.ca](http://www.12things.ca).

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# sustainablecowichan

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You can also attend the Environment Commission's "Community Conversation" event on Wednesday November 5, 2008 at 7pm at 930 Trunk Road (Duncan Christian Reform Church). This event will begin with a short presentation of the Commission's 12 big ideas, and will feature a lively discussion about the relationship between environment and economy. The Commission has invited some local big thinkers to help with this conversation, including Donna Morton, Chris Corp, Brandy Gallagher, Chris Wood and others.

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