



Central Coast Regional District

2014 Communications and Engagement Plan

Introduction

Located in the heart of the coastal rainforest, British Columbia's Central Coast is a marvel of natural beauty, seclusion and culture. The Central Coast encompasses more than 24,000 square kilometres of misty glacial fjords, ancient cedar forests and soaring alpine peaks that jut from the Pacific Ocean like battlements that guard castle British Columbia.

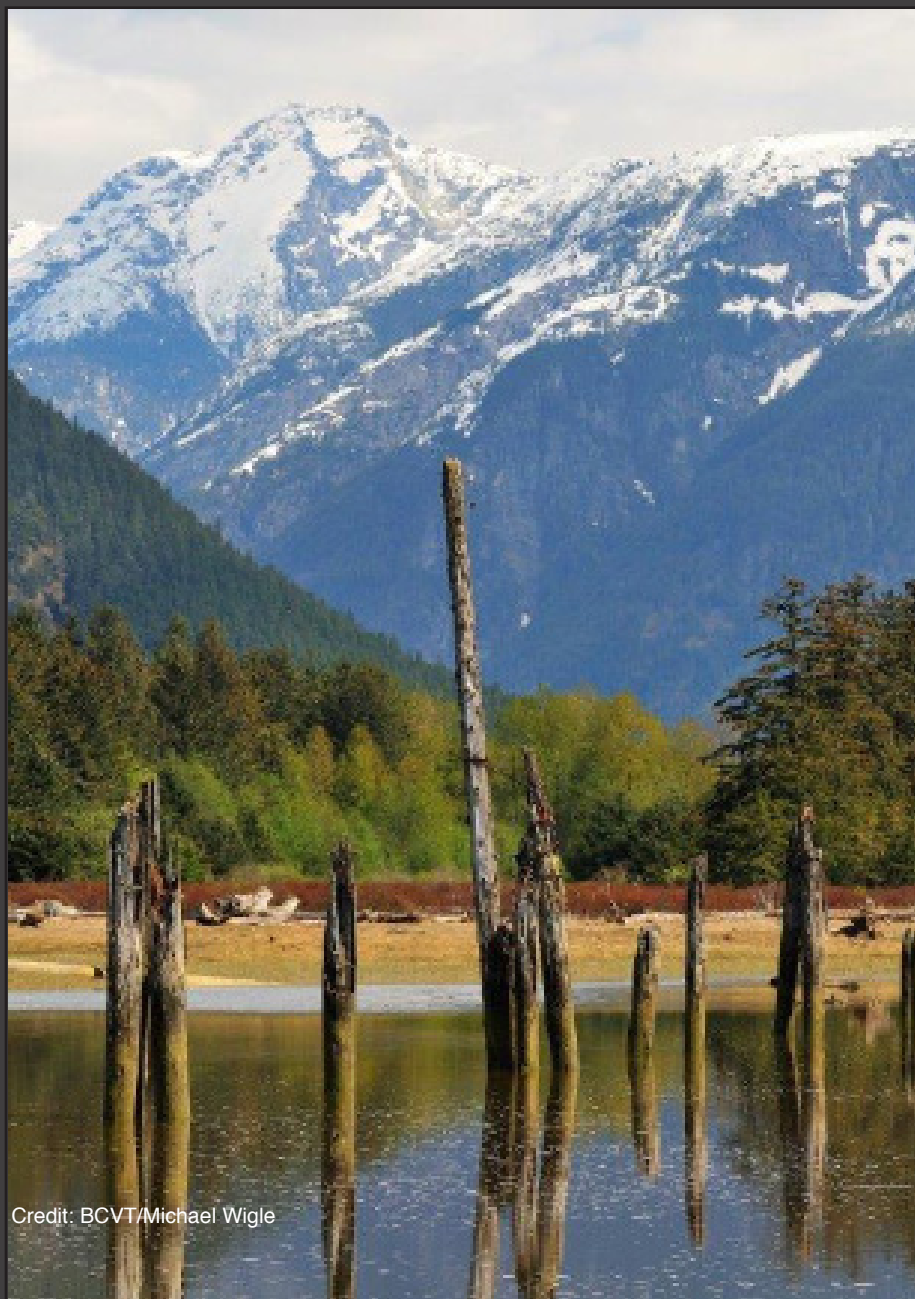
The Central Coast is home to three First Nations who have lived in the region since time immemorial – the Nuxalk, the Heiltsuk and the Wuikinuxv. The Bella Coola Valley is also home to a settler population, largely of Norwegian descent. The Central Coast is also the only regional district in British Columbia without any incorporated municipalities. The region's boundaries are divided into five electoral areas.

Electoral Area A, referred to as the Outer Coast, includes the communities of Ocean Falls, Denny Island, Oweekeno and all points in between. Electoral Area B is located on Campbell Island and is also known as Bella Bella, a community primarily comprised of First Nations residents. Electoral Area C encompasses the eastern portion of the regional district at the upper end of the Bella Coola Valley. Electoral Area D includes the community of Hagensborg in the Bella Coola Valley. Electoral Area E centres on the oceanside town of Bella Coola and contains the majority of commercial activity in the valley.

Some 3,200 people call the Central Coast home. Logging, fishing, tourism and retail drive much of the local economy. Travellers from all over the world visit the Central Coast to experience its unparalleled sportfishing and heli skiing resorts, as well as pristine natural environment and wildlife viewing that includes grizzly bears, bald eagles, whales and other species common to the area.



Aerial of the Bella Coola estuary
Credit: BCVT/Michael Wigle



Credit: BCVT/Michael Wigle

Overview

The Board and staff of the Central Coast Regional District have identified the development of a communications and engagement plan as a strategic priority in 2014. The goal of the plan is to more effectively engage with the residents and stakeholders the Regional District serves. As the key service delivery agent for an area that encompasses more than 24,000 square kilometres and approximately 3,200 residents, the Regional District believes that proactive stakeholder engagement is one of the most effective ways to communicate regional initiatives to residents and key stakeholder groups, foster an atmosphere of community collaboration and ensure an open and transparent democratic process.

This plan is designed to provide Board and staff members with a basic framework that outlines the Regional District's approach to communications. The plan also includes objectives, protocols and tools to undertake and evaluate the Regional District's communications initiatives. This is a living document and will be reviewed from time to time, as required.

It is understood that the Regional District has capacity issues that will limit its ability to implement and maintain a rigorous communications plan to increase engagement with residents and key stakeholders in the long term. As a result, this plan has been designed to jump-start communications initiatives in the Regional District, and contains basic strategies, protocols and tools that Board and staff members can utilize on an as-needed basis when capacity is available.

The development of this plan represents a partnership between the Regional District's Board and staff members and Northern Development Initiative Trust. Northern Development's Director of Communications is available to provide ongoing capacity to support the Regional District's communications and engagement needs.

Approach to Communications and Public Participation

This page outlines the Regional District’s approach to communications and public participation with the residents and key stakeholders it serves. The RACE (Research, Action/Analysis, Communications, Evaluation) approach to communications and engagement (right) fosters an environment of proactive communications, whereby the Regional District is able to examine its key audiences and initiatives, garner information to inform its communications initiatives and processes, implement those initiatives and processes and then evaluate the effectiveness of them.



The International Association for Public Participation table (below) outlines a robust step-by-step process that Regional District Board and staff members can use to consult and empower residents to increase civic engagement. The RACE approach and IAP2 Table can be used in tandem.

IAP2 Public Participation Table

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Define decision to be made	To provide the public with information on the decision statement and how it was made	To obtain public feedback on the decision to be made	To work directly with the public to ensure the decision statement meets their needs and concerns, and that they are considered	To partner with the public to develop the decision statement	To let the public define the decision to be made
Gather information	To inform the public of what information was collected and how it was gathered	To gather feedback from the public on the information gathered and how we gathered it	To work with the public to decide what info to gather, how to gather it and who will gather it	Reach common goals with key community representatives about how and what information is to be gathered and how it is used and disseminated	To allow the public to decide what info to gather, how it will be gathered and who will gather it
Establish decision criteria	To inform the public about what criteria will be used	To seek feedback on the proposed decision criteria	To work with the public in establishing decision criteria that reflect the public’s needs and aspirations	To jointly develop the decision criteria with the community stakeholders	Tell us what criteria the decision should be judged against
Develop alternatives	To inform the public of the alternatives and how they were developed	To give the public the opportunity to provide feedback on the alternatives developed	To directly involve the public in the development of alternatives and report how their input was incorporated	To partner with the public in the development of alternatives and incorporate their advice to the maximum extent possible	Facilitate the public in the development of alternatives
Evaluate alternatives	FYI, here is our evaluation of the alternatives	This is our evaluation of the alternatives. We seek your feedback and will let you know the outcome	To directly involve the public in the evaluation of alternatives and report how their input was used	To partner with the public to evaluate the alternatives	Here are the alternatives – you evaluate them
Make Decision	Inform the public on what decision was reached and why	Inform the public what the decision is and how their feedback has influenced the decision	Inform the public what the decision is and how their feedback has influenced the final decision	To formulate a recommendation in partnership with stakeholders	To place the public in charge of making the final decision



Odegaard Falls, Bella Coola
Credit: BCVT

Central Coast Regional District Objectives

Everything the Regional District does fits into three areas of core responsibility. The first responsibility is to provide services such as fire protection, water systems and street lighting to residents in rural areas. These services are generally confined to small geographic areas.

The second is to provide services to a larger geographic area where it doesn't make sense to duplicate that service for each area. Some examples are land use planning, economic development and regional library services. Finally, the Regional District acts as the local government for the Central Coast and liases with Provincial and Federal governments for the benefit of the region.

Regional District areas of focus:

1. Providing region-wide and sub-regional services to residents within the Regional District's boundaries
2. Acting as the general local government for the electoral areas and providing local services to unincorporated communities within the electoral areas
3. Working collaboratively with residents, First Nations and key stakeholder groups to address and advocate for areas of common concern

Strategic Priorities 2014

1. Strategic Plan 2015-2019
2. Solid Waste Management Plan
3. Communications and Engagement Plan
4. Denny Island Water Service (design and local service area referendum stage)

Communications Objectives

In December 2013, Regional District Board and staff met with Northern Development for a communications planning session that identified a number of communications objectives to pursue in 2014. The objectives identified were based on the Regional District's strategic priorities and Board and staff observations.

The following objectives have been positioned with three guiding outcomes that the Regional District would like to achieve. Each objective is designed to help the Regional District achieve the outcomes it would like to achieve. This aligns with the Regional District's goal to more proactively engage with residents, foster an atmosphere of community collaboration and ensure an open and transparent democratic process. The RACE and IAP2 approaches to communication and public participation (page four) can be followed to achieve each of these objectives.

Guiding Outcomes to be achieved:

1. Increase local knowledge of the Regional District and its mandated objectives among residents
2. Increase resident engagement with the Regional District and its initiatives to improve trust between the Regional District and the residents it serves
3. Strengthen communication and information sharing between the Regional District and the Nuxalk, Heiltsuk and Wuikinuxv First Nations

Communications Objectives:

1. Build and implement protocols for public announcements
2. Build and implement protocols for internal communications
3. Write and implement a tactical communications and engagement strategy for the Solid Waste Management plan
4. Write and implement a tactical communications and engagement strategy for the Denny Island Water plan
5. Write and implement a tactical communications and engagement strategy for the Economic Development plan

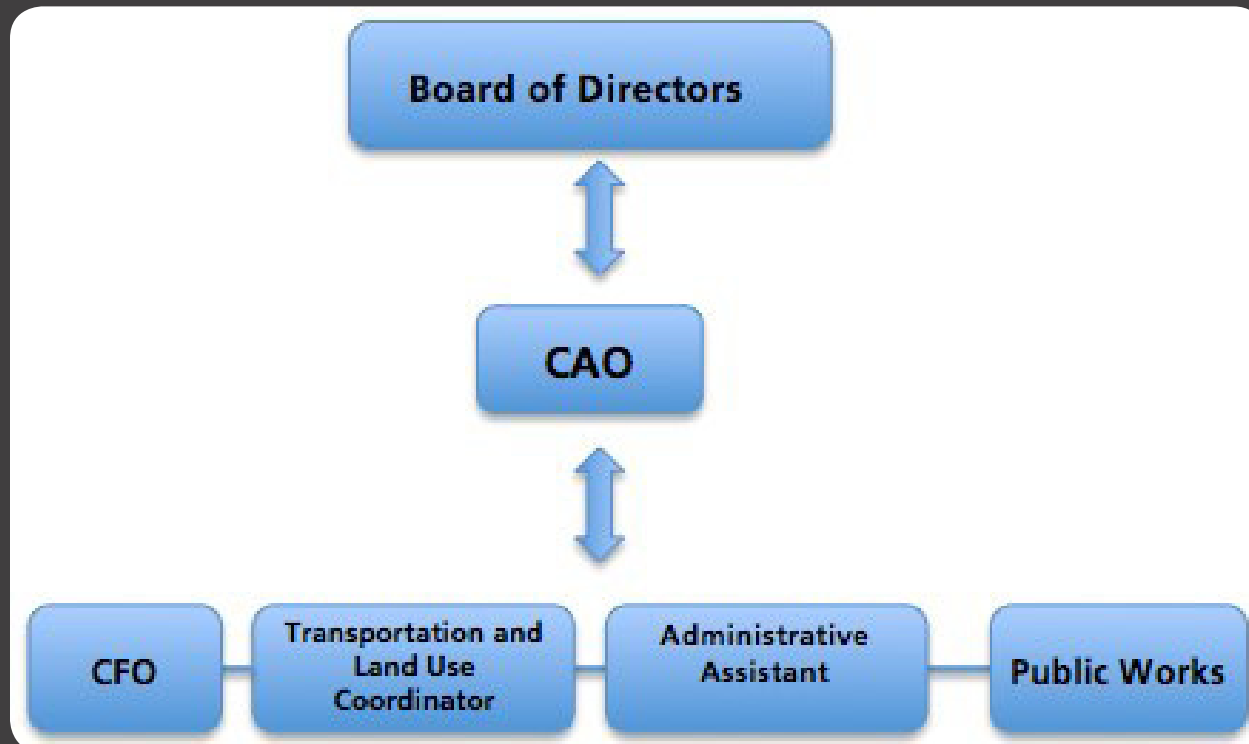
6. Write and distribute a basic annual report (1-2 pages with infographics, stats, charts, photos, etc.)
7. Audit and re-design the Regional District website to improve presentation, navigability, use and overall traffic
8. Build a regional brand to improve marketability of the Central Coast
9. Host Community-to-Community (UBCM funding available for this) meetings between the Regional District and the Nuxalk, Heiltsuk and Wuikinuxv First Nations to strengthen intergovernmental information sharing, consultation and planning
10. Ensure the existing Bella Coola Emergency Plan - Communication Plan is up to date (last updated 2005)



Internal Communications Protocols

The following protocol outlines the basic flow of information between Regional District Board, CAO and staff members. The goal of the protocol is to maximize information sharing between the Board, the CAO and then on to staff members. A few basic protocols have been outlined below to maintain or improve internal information sharing. An organizational chart has also been included to provide a visual representation of how information flows between the Board, the CAO and staff members.

1. All written communication from the Board or staff members will flow through the Chief Administrative Officer
2. Staff will attend Board meetings when presenting reports; otherwise by invitation of the CAO or Board Chair
3. All-staff meetings should be held regularly (preferably every two weeks)
4. Following attendance at any conference, meeting, workshop or training that the CCRD pays for, or where a staff member acts as a delegate or representative of the CCRD, the staff or Board member who attends the event will be required to submit a written report to the CAO for possible inclusion on the Board agenda, as appropriate. The report will outline key highlights, decision points and or outcomes.



Public Announcement Protocols

A public announcement protocol outlines the general flow of information to external audiences, namely residents and key stakeholders, within the Regional District. A comprehensive list of these stakeholders is outlined below.

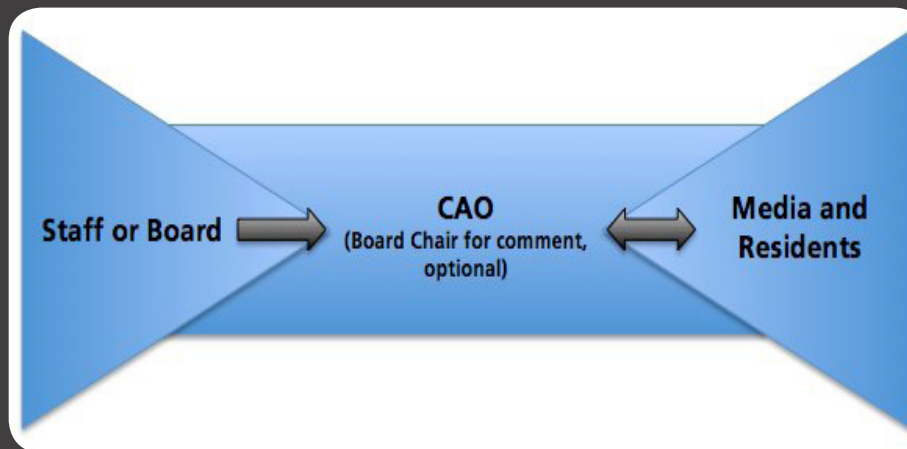
Depicted at the bottom of the page is a graphic that outlines the flow of information to external audiences from the Regional District. Similar to the internal flow of information, all information flows through the CAO's office and the Board before being disseminated publicly. This is especially important for public consumption of information. Accuracy, consistency and repetition are keys to success in communications, and this protocol ensures that all information that is publicly disclosed to residents and media is first vetted by the CAO's office and then subject to the purview of the Board Chair before it is made public.

The 'Is it News?' checklist (right and page nine) should be used as a general guideline to help the Board Chair and staff determine the type of response needed to disclose information to the media and public.

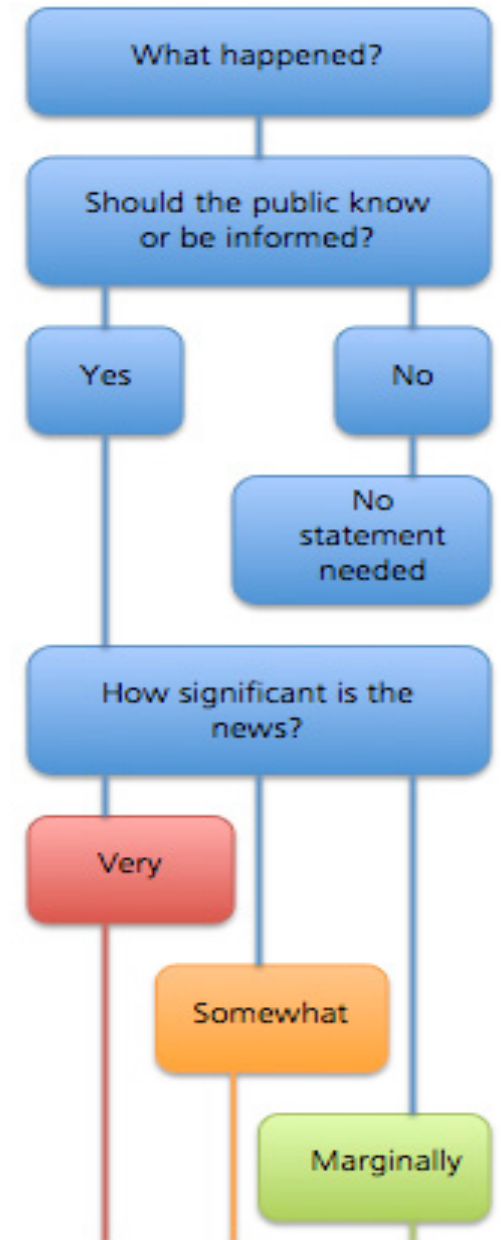
However, prior to any public disclosure, the Regional District should use the RACE approach and/or the...

(continued on page 9)

External Audiences
Regional District residents
Businesses located within the Regional District, including tourism operators in each community
Electoral Areas A, B, C, D and E
Nuxalk, Heiltsuk and Wuikinuxv First Nations
Media/Coast Mountain News
Provincial Government Ministries and Agencies
Federal Government Ministries and Agencies



Is it News?



Continued on next page...

Public Announcement Protocols

IAP2 Public Participation table (page four) to determine the most effective and transparent approach to public disclosure of information. A few basic protocols have been laid out below to support the Regional District as it determines what should be announced and how.

1. Information the public should know about constitutes significant service changes and financial, electoral or personnel changes or decisions at the Regional District
2. Significant will be defined as a change or decision that affects more than 20% of the Regional District's residential population or affects residents in multiple electoral areas
3. A basic medium of information distribution that the majority of residents have access to will be used to distribute the information
 - Website updates, email distribution to key contacts and social media (Facebook and Twitter) is the fastest form of communication to reach the most number of people in the Regional District. These mediums should be used in tandem with one another.
 - For significant issues with a major regional or provincial impact, including public safety matters such as natural disasters the Regional District should strongly consider directly communicating its announcements to major media outlets including CBC Radio, CBC News Vancouver, Global BC, CTV BC, *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Province*
 - Public announcements should always be sent directly to local media such as the *Coast Mountain News*
 - For significant issues or to announce open houses or town hall meetings, the Regional District should strongly consider posting public notices at high traffic areas in affected communities (Regional District office, grocery stores, gas stations, library, pool, airports, ferry terminals, pub)
4. For significant issues, a staff member should monitor website traffic, comments, media coverage and reaction to announcements, and be prepared to recommend to the CAO a change in communications strategy to help the Regional District better achieve its objectives

Is it News?



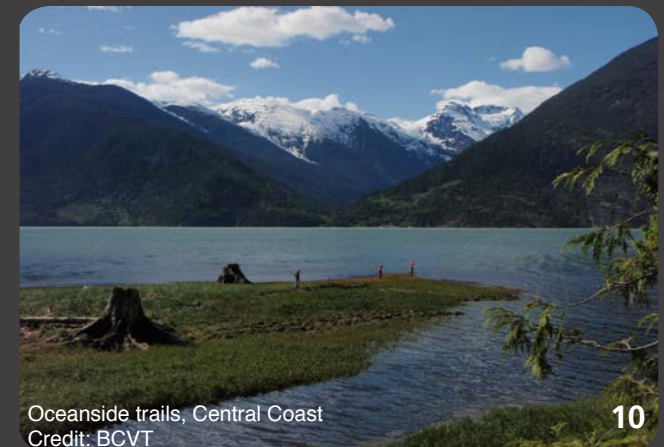
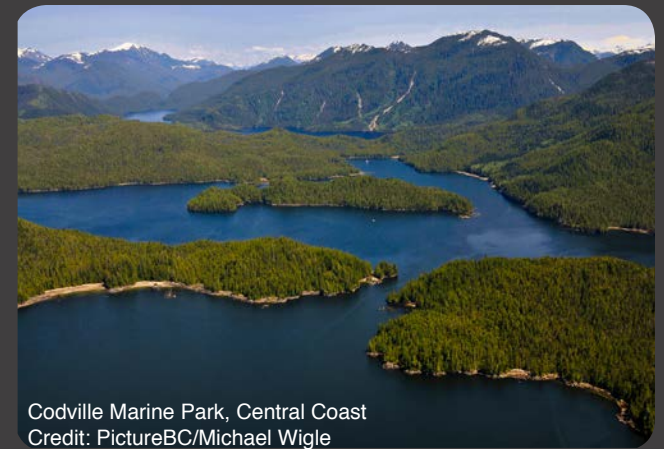
Tip: An item is newsworthy if it affects a large body of people, represents a significant policy change or shift, involves a significant amount of money or is unique or novel.

Media Relations Protocol

Similar to the public announcement protocols, all media engagement on behalf of the Regional District will be directed through the CAO's office to ensure consistency of messaging and reduce the risk of misinformation entering the public realm.

A few basic protocols have been laid out below to support the Regional District's partnerships with local, regional and national media outlets.

1. The Regional District will make every attempt to establish a strong, transparent and trust-based relationship with local, regional and national media outlets
2. The Regional District will build and maintain a strong and positive information sharing relationship with local media (*Coast Mountain News*)
3. All potentially reputationally damaging, defamatory or libelous news coverage of the Regional District will be forwarded to the CAO for review
4. Public comments and spokesperson duties will be determined in consultation between the Board Chair and the CAO
5. The Board Chair will be the primary spokesperson on behalf of the Regional District
6. In the event that the Board Chair is unable to speak on behalf of the Regional District, the CAO will become the primary spokesperson
7. The CAO will also be the primary spokesperson on behalf of Regional District processes and staff, except when delegated to specific staff members in the absence of the CAO or because a staff member has specific knowledge of an issue in the media (e.g. economic development, public works, finance, land use, etc.)
8. A staff member should be selected to coordinate all media engagement, including information and interview requests, the method, time and location of interviews and the subject matter of the interview request
9. A staff member should be responsible for maintaining and updating a contact list for select local, regional and national media outlets. The list should include the outlet's name, reporter's name, phone number, email address, business address and area of focus



Communications Evaluation

Evaluation is a crucial part of the communications process. It is recommended that an evaluation phase be included in Regional District communications initiatives, and that the results be analyzed. Evaluation tactics include surveys, comments, attendance numbers at open houses and town halls, media coverage, website and social media analytics and election results.

How to Create Messages that Work

The following timeline explains how to craft key messages that can be used in written and spoken materials to support the Regional District's public announcement and media engagement initiatives.



Communications Tactics Timeline

The following table outlines how the Regional District can assign a timeline and specific tactics to effectively achieve an outcome-oriented communications objective. The table follows the basic RACE approach to communications. This table should be used in tandem the Regional District's objectives, protocols, target audiences, toolbox and evaluation methods.

Objective	Research	Action/Analysis	Communications	Evaluation	Outcome
Write and implement a tactical communications and engagement strategy for the Solid Waste Management plan	March/2014: Inform the public and solicit feedback regarding a potential Solid Waste Management Plan	March/2014: Analyse the feedback and determine a communications strategy and tactics to consult, involve and collaborate with the public on the development of the plan	April/2014: Carry out the strategy	May/2014: Evaluate the results of the strategy, and determine if it needs to be altered and re-launched or if it has helped achieve the desired objective	Did the strategy help the Regional District increase civic engagement and build Trust among key stakeholders?
Specific Objective	Timeline - Tactic	Timeline - Tactic	Timeline - Tactic	Timeline - Tactic	Desired Outcome
Specific Objective	Timeline - Tactic	Timeline - Tactic	Timeline - Tactic	Timeline - Tactic	Desired Outcome

The glacier-fed Bella Coola River flows west into North Bentinck Arm, Bella Coola Valley
Credit: PictureBC/Michael Wigle

