

Strait Talk, March 2010

Volunteers are the backbone of a community or, some say, the heart. The SCRD Board and staff value the input of our citizens and have created numerous opportunities for people to get involved. In addition to public open houses designed to gauge public opinion on specific topics or projects, every department at the SCRD uses a network of volunteer advisory committees to inform and guide its work. Some of these groups include members with expertise in a particular related field. Others consist of community members with a more general interest. Some committees are ongoing, usually with members' terms lasting 2 years; others have a limited time frame to tackle a particular project. While final decisions remain the responsibility of elected officials, the advice received from our citizens is respected and taken very seriously.

Each rural area has its own Area Planning Commission which meets monthly to consider land use planning issues such as subdivisions, rezonings, variances and changes to OCPs. The Planning and Development Committee of the SCRD also receives regular input from a Natural Resources Advisory Committee and an Agricultural Advisory Committee. The members of these 2 groups have special expertise that assists the Board's decision making around resource issues such as forestry, mining and IPPs in the case of NRAC, and on agricultural and food security issues in the case of the AAC. Committees with a shorter time frame are the OCP review committees which meet for about 2 years to undertake a detailed review of an area's OCP. Area E has a special committee dedicated to the protection of Ocean Beach Esplanade. Area D has the OCP Committee, a locally elected body which is arms length to the SCRD but which considers questions from the SCRD regarding land use planning issues.

In Parks and Recreation, there are a number of different advisory committees to assist staff and the Board with decisions about our recreation facilities, Dakota Ridge, and our many parks and trails. There are trail hosts at Dakota, volunteers who have adopted trails and beach accesses, and groups created for specific projects like trails network and park management planning.

The Infrastructure Department uses advisory committees to assist with solid waste management, water, energy/emissions planning and docks. The current Regional Transportation Plan has been using stakeholder groups and other public engagement processes to guide its work.

Add numerous emergency services groups like volunteer fire departments, search and rescue and coast guards, and our volunteer ranks soar into the hundreds, offering thousands of hours of volunteer service! This represents an enormous contribution which is applauded and appreciated even though it is not included in the SCRD's budget calculations. If you have an interest or a skill to offer, please consider getting involved in this way. Requests for volunteers appear regularly in our local advertising and on the SCRD website: www.scrd.ca

You can also contact me at donna_shugar@hotmail.com.