



NORTH OKANAGAN

Water Recovery Project

Frequently Asked Questions

This page answers common questions about the North Okanagan Water Recovery Project. If your question isn't answered here, email us at nowrp@spallumcheentwp.bc.ca.

Last updated July 6, 2026

About the project

What is the North Okanagan Water Recovery Project?

This transformative project will replace failing septic systems in the Swan Lake corridor, protect Swan Lake from contamination, and support local agriculture by recovering and reclaiming wastewater for irrigation. It also opens up new development opportunities for the Township of Spallumcheen.

It is a partnership between the Regional District of North Okanagan, the Township of Spallumcheen, and the Okanagan Indian Band, working together since 2015 on one of the most significant infrastructure investments in the Township's history.

Construction started July 6, 2026, with the facility expected to be commissioned in fall 2027 and fully operating in early 2028. After more than a decade of planning, this is now an active construction project, and it stands as one of the most significant infrastructure investments in the Township's history.

Where will the treatment facility be located?

The treatment ponds will be located at T9290 Highway 97, accessed off L&A Cross Road. A separate Township-owned lot at 85 L&A Cross Road will hold a lift station, and potentially a future treatment plant if the project expands in later phases.

Why is this happening now?

After more than a decade of planning, funding and design work, the project received its required provincial environmental permit, and construction started July 6, 2026. The plant is expected to be commissioned in fall 2027 and fully operating in early 2028.

Why this matters

If everyone has a septic system why do we need this?

Swan Lake: A 2017 land use and water quality assessment of Swan Lake found that on-site wastewater systems were contributing to nutrient pressure on the lake and recommended sewer service for surrounding properties. Our lake is not healthy and one of the biggest contributors to the problem is failing septic systems.

This project will not change Swan Lake overnight, but it is a major long-term investment in the lake's health, helping protect water quality and improve conditions for the surrounding wetland ecosystem over time.

Agriculture: Once complete, the project will also give local farmers a reliable source of irrigation water which is especially important during dry summers and periods of drought. Reclaimed water also contains nutrients for crop growth.



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Community: This will increase property values for current residents, eliminate the need for hauling wastewater, and allow for future growth in our community.

Cost and funding

How much will the project cost?

The current (June 2026) confirmed cost is \$49,680,000. This figure reflects design changes and construction market conditions since the project was first costed in 2018, and it may still change before the Regional District's portion of the work goes to tender this fall.

How is the project being funded?

The \$49,680,000 total breaks down as

- \$24.3 million from the federal and provincial governments through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, \$9.5 million from the Province of B.C.,
- \$7.5 million from the Okanagan Basin Water Board,
- \$1.5 million from Township reserve funds,
- and \$5.2 million from RDNO.

The remaining amount will come from interest gained on the funds.

Will my property taxes increase because of this project?

No final decision has been made at this time. Council will consider having the service funded by the properties that access it through a local area service charge. If a service area is created, properties inside it may be required to help pay for the system even if they aren't connected, because they have the ability to connect.

How will any construction cost overruns be paid for?

A healthy contingency is built into all capital projects and overruns are not anticipated. However, the Township and its partners continue to review other funding opportunities throughout the project.

What is the Regional District of North Okanagan's Alternative Approval Process?

This is a separate, provincially regulated process the Regional District used to get elector approval for its share of project borrowing, up to \$4.8 million. It applies only to the Regional District's portion of the project, not the project's overall cost or funding. AAPs are a provincially regulated mechanism local governments can use to get elector support to borrow funds for a project.

This process failed to get approval as more than 50 electors opposed it. As such, the RDNO may hold a referendum on the issue. That decision is pending.

For details, see the [Province of British Columbia's explanation of the alternative approval process](#) and the [Regional District's project page](#). This borrowing covers the portion of financing supported by the Okanagan Basin Water Board's Sewerage Facilities Assistance grant, which is set at 16 per cent of total project cost. That grant doesn't provide funds up front; instead, it repays the debt-servicing costs of the borrowing, which is why the Regional District needs to borrow the funds first.

If the Regional District is not able to borrow these funds, it cannot access this portion of the grant either, since there is no debt for the grant to repay. The Regional District would then need another way to fund its share of the project, most likely from local taxpayers.



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Building the system

Who is building the project, and when will it be finished?

Centerfire is building the Township of Spallumcheen's portion of the project, which includes piping, lift stations, the treatment ponds and the collection system. The Regional District's portion is being tendered separately later this year. Construction started July 6, 2026, and the plant is expected to be commissioned in fall 2027, with full operation in early 2028.

Will construction disrupt my neighbourhood?

Nearby residents and businesses can expect some temporary noise, dust and traffic during construction. The construction team follows standard practices to limit these impacts. If you have a concern, email nowrp@spallumcheentwp.bc.ca.

How the treatment system works

How does the treatment process work?

The system uses partial mix aerated lagoons, a well-established water treatment method, followed by chlorine disinfection. The process is designed to meet the standards set out in British Columbia's [Municipal Water Regulation](#).

Why is the treatment process different from what residents were told in 2019?

The original 2019 design called for tertiary treatment, a more advanced process that targets removal of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, in addition to pathogens. Tertiary treatment costs more to build and operate, and it needs a steady minimum flow of water to work properly. In 2021, a value engineering review, a standard process used to find ways to reduce a project's cost without lowering its performance, recommended switching to secondary treatment: aerated lagoons followed by disinfection. This option costs less to build and operate, and it doesn't need a minimum flow. It still meets all of the pathogen-removal standards set out in British Columbia's Municipal Water Regulation, and it's a better match for the project's reclaimed water use, since irrigation benefits from the nitrogen and phosphorus that tertiary treatment would otherwise remove.

What will the treated water be used for?

The reclaimed water will be used to irrigate forage crops, such as silage corn and alfalfa. It will not be used on food crops or as drinking water. Similar water reuse systems already operate in Vernon, Kamloops, Armstrong and Cranbrook. Expanding reclaimed water use beyond what's currently planned would require a non-farm use application through the Province's Agricultural Land Commission. [Agricultural Land Commission](#)

Could using reclaimed water for irrigation affect Swan Lake or groundwater quality?

No. Reclaimed water is only applied to fields during the growing season, when crops can take up the water and its nutrients. It is not applied during the winter; outside the growing season, it is held in the project's storage ponds instead. This approach, together with the water reuse permits issued by the Province, is designed to protect groundwater and Swan Lake. It is also consistent with the Okanagan Basin Water Board's long-standing mandate, more than 40 years, to reduce the nutrients reaching Okanagan lakes and streams, which is why the OBWB provides funding for this kind of project.

Will the storage ponds need to be cleaned out, and how often?

Yes. The ponds will be de-sludged approximately every 15 years, in accordance with British Columbia's [Municipal Water Regulation](#) and [Organic Matter Recycling Regulation](#).



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Will the project accept manure or other animal waste?

No. An animal waste or manure drop-off facility is not part of this project's design or operation.

Odour

Will the facility cause odour problems?

The design includes several features meant to limit odour. A proprietary chemical product is added to the sewage at the pump and lift stations to reduce odour and corrosion. Hydrogen sulphide sensors at the lift station and the pond site monitor conditions so the chemical treatment can be adjusted. The lift station pump is enclosed within the wet well, and vents are fitted with carbon filters to capture odour.

Where will the biosolids go once the water is all removed?

Biosolids will be processed by Curtis Farms who is currently a licensed operator to accept these material located within the Township of Spallumcheen.

Connecting your property

Do I have to connect my property to the new system?

At this time, connecting is voluntary for residential properties. It's mandatory for commercial and industrial properties within the service area. A bylaw for connection fees and user fees has not been considered by Council.

How much will it cost to connect, and will there be a fee for connecting later (a "latecomer fee")?

No bylaw has been adopted yet. Council will consider voluntary connection for residential properties and mandatory for commercial and industrial properties. Connection costs and ongoing user fees haven't been confirmed yet; that information will be shared as soon as it's available.

Project governance

Who oversees the project?

A Partnership Committee made up of the three partners (North Okanagan Regional District, Township of Spallumcheen, and the Okanagan Indian Band) oversees the project. The Township of Spallumcheen leads day-to-day delivery, since most of the works are within Township boundaries.

What about Splat's involvement in the project?

The Okanagan Indian Band is a full partner in the project and a signatory to its memorandum of understanding. Splat's traditional territory borders the project's service area. The Township engages with Splat through the formal referral process on technical matters related to the project, and responds directly to any questions or concerns Splat raises.

Questions or concerns

Who do I contact with questions or concerns?

Email nowrp@spallumcheentwp.bc.ca.