

What each report said about the Official Community Plan, 2021 to 2026

For each staff report on the 620 Laura Road cidery, 2021 to 2026: the OCP policies the report cited, whether any concerned water, groundwater, aquifers or light industry, the report's own statement of environmental concern, and whether a water or septic assessment was required. All quotations are from the reports themselves. The middle column reads "None" down its full length, ie no policies on water, groundwater, aquifer or light industry were considered or addressed.

Report (date)	OCP policies the report cited	Any policy on water, groundwater, aquifer or light industry?	The report's own statement of environmental concern	Water / septic assessment required?
Temporary Use Permit (introduced 22 Feb 2021; issued 22 Mar 2021)	Objectives 80, 83, 86; Policy 209; Policy 235; the Rural R1 designation. All agriculture-support or TUP-issuance policies. (The Feb report itself notes "Winery" is a defined term (but is not permitted in any zone)" and "the building constructed has an area for manufacturing cidery.")	None	The 22 March decision report, in full: "No direct ecological/climate impacts are expected."	None
TUP renewal (11 Dec 2023)	Policy 235; Objectives 80, 83, 86. All agriculture-support or TUP-issuance policies.	None	The Watershed, Aquifer, Streamside Protection area named only to be set aside: "No work within the DPA is proposed as part of this TUP." (Also records three 2021 bylaw complaints re work near Murray Creek, "resolved by July 2, 2021.")	None
Rezoning report (13 Apr 2026)	Objectives 80, 82, 86, 88; the Conservation Development Policy. All agriculture-support.	None	"This property includes a portion of Murray Creek along the eastern border... portions of the riparian area be protected through a restrictive covenant."	Required, on Vancouver Coastal Health's recommendation, not the planner's own analysis. VCH's comments led staff to recommend requiring a "professional hydrogeologist" assessment of water demand and quality, and a ROWP "Letter of Assurance" that the use "will not have a negative impact on the onsite wastewater system." Staff also "recommend not waiving the Public Hearing."
Revised rezoning (25 May 2026)	No OCP policy applied to the proposal. The Conservation Development Policy is cited once, for the covenant.	None	The same Murray Creek riparian-covenant sentence. (Places Murray Creek "along the eastern border"; the Municipality's own mapping shows it running through the site.)	Removed. Neither the hydrogeologist assessment nor the septic assurance survives. This is the report that introduces the no-public-hearing route.

Second-column numbers are as each report cited them at the time; some have since been renumbered in the current OCP.

What follows are some considerations regarding what this tabulated information reveals.

Two things the table shows.

First, across five years and four reports, not one cites a single OCP policy on water, groundwater, aquifers or industrial use. Every policy cited is an agriculture-support or TUP-issuance policy. Second, the one time a water and septic assessment was required, in the 13 April 2026 report, it came not from the planner's reading of the OCP but from Vancouver Coastal Health, the body Policy 68 names to control effluent so it does not pollute fresh water, and it was removed six weeks later, in the same revised report that introduced the route removing the public hearing.

Where the reports came near the water, they narrowed it to the stream

Twice the reports engage an instrument that protects water, and each time they reduce it to one feature, the Murray Creek riparian strip. Both instruments reach a good deal further than that.

The Watershed, Aquifer and Stream Protection Development Permit Area is, as its title says, a three-part protection: watershed, aquifer, and stream. Under Bylaw No. 301 (2011) it carries two distinct assessment regimes. One is the stream and riparian piece, which follows the Riparian Areas Regulation and concerns fish habitat and streamside setbacks. The other is the Water Resources piece, the aquifer half, which calls for the location of all wells and water intakes, an assessment of groundwater recharge areas, and an impact statement on the maintenance of water supplies, and provides that disturbance to the recharge areas of wells be avoided and that the protection area extend to a 30-metre radius around an existing well. In the 2023 renewal the area is named only to be set aside, on the ground that "No work within the DPA is proposed." Only the stream and riparian half is taken up at all, and even Murray Creek itself is not accurately shown: the site maps do not depict the creek, and the reports place it "along the eastern border" when the Municipality's own mapping shows it running through the site. The aquifer half, the half named in the bylaw's own title, and the half that would have examined the groundwater the neighbours draw from, is never engaged. The bylaw's agricultural exemption is what removes it: an "orchard regardless of size" is exempt, but only "provided that water resources are not adversely affected," which is the very thing never assessed.

The Conservation Development Policy is narrowed the same way. The 13 April 2026 report sets out its breadth in the Policy's own words: it "seeks to protect biodiversity, farmland, ecosystem services, ecological corridors, scenic landscapes," by "identifying and permanently protecting Environmentally Sensitive Areas and other Green Space," with a goal that "a minimum of 50 percent of the total land ... is protected" and priority "given to protection of any identified Environmentally Sensitive Areas." The report then operationalises all of it as one thing: "portions of the riparian area [of Murray Creek] be protected through a restrictive covenant." The aquifer, the recharge areas and the groundwater, which are "ecosystem services" and "environmentally sensitive" on any ordinary reading, are not identified, and so are not protected.

So on each occasion a report reaches for a water-protective instrument, the aquifer is left out: the aquifer half of the WASP area is set aside, and the aquifer is absent from the Conservation Development covenant. Each broad protection is reduced to a single feature, the stream, and even the stream is not shown as it is.

Some of the OCP policies that should have applied, quoted in full, none of them cited, referenced or considered

Each is quoted verbatim from the consolidated OCP, Schedule A (April 2023), at the number given currently (some policies have been renumbered in the period from 2021 to present due to other OCP amendments). These are among the relevant policies, not a complete list.

- **The keystone: the light-industrial water test**

Policy 205. “Industrial and light industrial uses will prove adequate water supply and waste disposal capability to ensure that there is no deleterious effect on surface and ground-water supplies, or to the long term sustainability of these resources.”

- **The permit test, and the information it presumes**

Policy 238 (appears as Policy 235 in the 2023 record). “The Municipality may consider issuing temporary land use permits provided the use will not create an unacceptable negative impact upon the natural environment or the character of the neighbourhood...”

- **The mechanisms that would have generated the information**

Policy 13. “The Municipality may require an applicant for any activity or development to undertake an impact assessment where potential environmental impacts are anticipated. The effects of the proposed activity or development on the island’s water resources and the environment in general will form a primary basis for assessment.”

Policy 60. “The Municipality will contribute to the protection of surface water and ground water supplies by examining all development proposals in relation to surface water supplies... and require, where necessary, the completion of a surface water supply impact study by a Qualified Professional to be retained by the proponent and approved by the Municipality.”

Policy 294. “For a proposed land use requiring a water supply in excess of that required for a single detached home that is not proposed to be served by a community water system, the owner will be required to obtain a report by a Qualified Professional with experience in the field of ground-water supply... The report will indicate whether the proposed water supply is capable of providing a sustaining supply of potable water without detrimental effects upon adjacent water systems.”

Policy 303. “Industrial and/or large scale agricultural or recreational use of water will not be permitted unless a water management study (as part of an environmental impact assessment process) has been completed to the satisfaction of Bowen Island Municipality.”

Policy 68. “The Municipality will request the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority to ensure that any indirect flow of effluent under its authority is controlled so it does not directly or indirectly pollute fresh or salt water.”

- **The waste-authorisation bar, and the effluent-capacity objective**

Policy 207. “All industrial waste management discharge to land and water must be authorized under the Waste Management Act.”

Objective 127. “To ensure that the density and type of land use does not exceed the natural capacity of the land to absorb liquid waste effluent generated by that use where on-site sewage disposal is used.”

- **The designation the property already carries**

Watershed, Aquifer and Stream Protection Development Permit Area. Designated “for the purpose of the protection of the natural environment, and to ensure that development and land use takes place in a manner that protects, sustains or enhances... the quality and quantity of surface and ground water sources for drinking, irrigation, other approved uses and ecosystem health.” Its Water Resources Protection Areas include “water intakes... used to supply individual residences or community water systems.”

A note on scope. These are among the OCP’s most direct water and light-industry policies, not the whole of it: the OCP also carries wetland, natural-environment and biodiversity policies which, on Bowen, are inseparable from these, since the same water sustains the wells, the wetland and the life in them, and the people who draw on it are part of that biodiversity, not apart from it. Those are not elaborated here but are flagged as markers to where else in the OCP this application also sits. For example, Objective 2 (biodiversity), Objective 3 (a “no net impact” strategy for significant plant, wildlife and fish habitats), and Policy 3 (protecting the island’s natural landscapes and ecosystems, including at the time of rezoning).

And underlying all of them is a fact no policy changes: water follows physical law, not lot lines or planning schedules. It keeps no boundaries and makes no judgement about what enters it: it takes in whatever reaches it and carries it on. And it does not wait. Under climate change, the droughts that stress this island’s aquifers will not hold off until the Municipality’s plan is settled; the water is on its own clock, not the paperwork’s.

What the policies, read together, establish

The structure is exact. Policy 238 permitted the Temporary Use Permit only on a finding that the use would not create an unacceptable negative impact on the natural environment. That finding required information. Policies 13, 60, 294, 303 and 68 are the mechanisms by which that information would have been generated, and Policy 205 is the burden of proof that a light-industrial use must discharge before it can rest on such a finding. None of them was engaged. So the finding that permitted the Temporary Use Permit rested on nothing. And the rezoning now before the Commission relies on that permit.

Note on sources. Each policy is quoted verbatim from the consolidated OCP, Schedule A (April 2023). The report rows are quoted from the four staff reports as filed; the 22 March 2021 decision report supplies its environmental sentence and Rural R1 / Policy 235 citation.