

CRD Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy 2020 to 2021



May 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2000, the Capital Regional District has acquired land through the [Regional Parks Land Acquisition Fund](#). The Regional Parks Land Acquisition Fund was established in 2000 for a 10-year period (2000 to 2009) at a rate of \$10 per average residential household assessment. In 2010, the Fund was extended for 10 years (2010 to 2019), starting at a rate of \$12 per average residential household assessment and increasing by \$2 per year to a maximum of \$20 in 2014, through to 2019. In 2019, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board renewed the Land Acquisition Fund for a 10-year period (2020-2029) at the rate of \$20 per average residential household assessment. The Fund now generates approximately \$3.7 million per year.

The acquisition of land has been directed by Board-approved land acquisition strategies in 2000, 2006, 2015, and [2018](#). The land acquisition strategies provides the Board with a guideline for acquiring land for regional parks and trails. The strategies define the principles that guide land acquisition, the process for acquiring land and set the acquisition priorities.

An updated land acquisition strategy is now required as the previous strategy approved by the Board expired at the end of 2019. The CRD Regional Parks 2020 to 2021 Land Acquisition Strategy provides the Regional Parks Committee and the CRD Board with a roadmap for acquiring land for regional parks and trails.

The 2018 to 2019 version of the Land Acquisition Strategy also directed that in 2019, the strategy should be updated to reflect the acquisition of land in 2018 and 2019 and new information about areas of regional park potential. This 2020 to 2021 version of the strategy provides that update. This version of the strategy continues the broad direction contained in previous versions of the Land Acquisition Strategy, and is guided by the Board approved [2012-2021 Regional Parks Strategic Plan](#).

The purpose of the proposed regional parks and trail system as defined in the Regional Parks Strategic Plan is to meet the needs of the region's residents now and in the future, respond to expected population growth, connect, protect and restore the region's significant natural areas, and provide areas for residents to connect with nature. An overriding concept is that bigger natural areas are better and connected natural areas are best.

The 2020 to 2021 Land Acquisition Strategy provides the principles that will guide land acquisition, and the process for acquiring land. Acquisition priorities are identified to the CRD Board annually in a closed session. In accordance with Section 90(1) of the *Community Charter*, the specific land acquisition priorities are confidential and therefore are not identified in this document.

To be effective, the land acquisition strategy needs to account for opportunistic acquisition of important lands. Therefore, land acquisition priorities may be amended from time to time as new information or opportunities arise. Such opportunities will be assessed against existing priorities and could result in the Board approving changes in land acquisition priorities.

1.0 BACKGROUND

The 2020 to 2021 Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy (LAS) is guided by the CRD Board-approved *2012-2021 Regional Parks Strategic Plan* and builds on the Board approved 2000 Regional Parks Master Plan and land acquisition strategies from 2000, 2006, 2015 and 2018. The CRD 2019-2022 Board Priorities also guide the LAS, through the priority area of Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship.

2.0 PURPOSE

The LAS provides the Regional Parks Committee and the Board with a roadmap for acquiring land for regional parks and trails in 2020 and 2021. The LAS guides the acquisition of land so that the available land acquisition funds are expended effectively and the most important parcels of land are acquired to achieve the proposed regional parks system. The LAS defines the principles that will guide land acquisition, the process for acquiring land and sets the acquisition priorities.

3.0 REGIONAL PARKS LAND ACQUISITION FUND

The Regional Parks Land Acquisition Fund was established in 2000 for a 10-year period (2000 to 2009) at a rate of \$10 per average residential household assessment. At this time the CRD Board decided to acquire land by using money in the Fund rather than through borrowing. In 2010, the Fund was extended for 10 years (2010 to 2019), starting at a rate of \$12 per average residential household assessment and increasing by \$2 per year to a maximum of \$20 in 2014, through to 2019. An exception was made in 2010 to make a \$15 .6 million acquisition of land from Western Forest Products Ltd. at Jordan River and in the Sooke Hills.



Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park

Since the establishment of the Fund, the regional parks system has grown by almost 4,800 hectares through a number of land acquisitions valued at \$62.6 million. CRD partners in land acquisition have contributed almost \$16.8 million, which is 27% of the overall cost of purchases.

The Fund now generates approximately \$3.7 million per year. The financial situation of the Land Acquisition Fund between 2015 and 2019 are presented in Table 1. The Fund benefitted from a significant one-time increase in 2016 due to the sale of land at Jordan River to BC Hydro.

In February 2017, the Regional Parks Committee directed staff to undertake public consultation in 2018 to “explore and confirm the public’s views on the land acquisition fund and sources of funding for the development and renewal of park infrastructure and enhancement of parks and trails.” In November 2019, the CRD Board renewed the land acquisition fund for a 10-year period (2020-2029) at the rate of \$20 per average residential household assessment.

The acquisition of new land will also require funds for management and development. This cost is not currently included in the Land Acquisition Fund. The management and development cost for each acquisition will be identified in a report to the Board when it considers acquisition of a specific parcel.

Table 1

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Revenue					
Prior Year Carryover	46,801	848,955	5,978,190	7,243,540	9,405,857
Sale of land at Jordan River		3,130,000			
Annual Requisition	3,720,659	3,739,980	3,687,136	3,684,268	3,751,181
Interest Earnings	7,802	43,347	97,957	183,845	104,874
Total Revenue	3,775,262	7,762,282	9,763,283	11,111,653	13,261,912
Expenditures					
Land Acquisition Expenses - Others	80,498	84,118	74,743	155,796	35,315
Short Term Borrowing Costs (see Note 1)	2,845,808				
Ayum Creek Addition to Sea to Sea		482,212			
Sooke River Road		1,217,761			
Mary Lake Connector				500,000	
Saint John Point			2,000,000		
Sooke Hills Wilderness SE Boundary Addition			445,000		
Kinghorn Addition to Mount Work				1,050,000	
Pike Lake Addition to Thetis Lake					5,500,000
Kapoor Addition to Sea to Sea					1,000,000
Total Expenditures	2,926,306	1,784,092	2,519,743	1,705,796	6,535,314

Note 1: The CRD borrowed \$5.2 million to acquire land from Western Forest Products for regional park purposes at Jordan River and in the Sooke Hills. The outstanding balance was \$2,824,460 and the interest payment for borrowing the funds was \$21,348. This borrowing was paid out in 2015.

4.0 2012-2021 REGIONAL PARKS STRATEGIC PLAN AND PARK MANAGEMENT PLANS

The Board-approved 2012-2021 Regional Parks Strategic Plan guides the future acquisition of land for regional parks and trails. Strategic Priority 4 of the Strategic Plan is to “Prepare for Future Land Acquisitions.” Under this priority it states, “Prepare a land acquisition strategy and examine acquisition options to achieve the future regional park and trail system.” Management plans for individual regional parks and trails also identify areas of interest for regional parks land acquisition.

5.0 THE PROPOSED REGIONAL PARKS SYSTEM

The proposed regional park and trail system is presented in the 2012-2021 Regional Parks Strategic Plan and shown on Map 1. This is a graphic long-term vision of a proposed regional system that recognizes the importance of interconnected protected areas. This proposed system builds on planning for regional parks done over 50 years. The concept shown on the map identifies areas in orange that are of general interest for future regional parks. This map is not intended to indicate specific parcels. Designation of such areas does not ensure acquisition; rather, it illustrates the CRD’s desired direction. The areas identified on this map provide the direction for listing the priority land acquisition areas in the LAS.

The purpose of the proposed regional parks and trail system is to meet the needs of the region’s residents now and in the future, respond to expected population growth, protect, connect and restore the region’s significant natural areas, and provide areas for residents to connect with nature. An overriding concept is that bigger natural areas are better and connected natural areas are best.

The system of regional parks and trails proposed in the Regional Parks Strategic Plan is guided by the following ideas:

- A vision for this century that sets out what the regional parks and trails system could be in 2100.
- Opportunities to acquire natural areas in the region will diminish or be lost entirely as the population grows, and as demand grows along with it, to change the land use of existing natural areas.
- The population of the region will grow, potentially increasing to near 750,000 by the end of this century. This will have serious implications for sustaining both the ecological health of the region and the health of its residents.
- Conservation science emphasizes the importance of maintaining a network of natural areas in growing urban environments so that ecosystem services such as flood and erosion control, water filtration, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity are maintained as the population density increases.
- Establishing larger interconnected natural areas is an overriding goal for a system of protected land in the region. Interconnected protected areas are increasingly recognized as a key component of climate change adaptation.
- Decisions made now about land use will affect the future of the proposed regional parks system, therefore the interests of CRD Regional Parks need to be considered in land-use planning and decision-making.

5.1 First Nation Interests

The land and water in many regional parks is important to the First Nations in whose traditional territory these parks are located. First Nations have a close connection to these natural areas, which have valued resources, both tangible and intangible, that help define and support First Nations culture. In regional parks, there is an opportunity to work with First Nations in a manner that supports maintenance and enhancement of their cultural well-being and continued connection to places they have valued for thousands of years.

Some of the land identified in the *Regional Parks Strategic Plan* as an area of interest for a future regional park is subject to First Nations treaty rights, land claims, as well as asserted Aboriginal rights and title. The CRD acknowledges that as a result of treaty negotiation or other reconciliation processes some of these lands may not be available for acquisition by the CRD as a regional park.

5.2 Regional Park System Objectives

The proposed regional parks system shown in Map 1 and the establishment of the system is based on achieving the following objectives.

Establish the Entire Regional Parks System

1. Present a very long-term vision for the regional park system.
2. Assemble a regional parks system that recognizes and builds on the existing system of national, provincial, regional and local parks and other types of protected areas in the Capital Region.
3. Meet the evolving conservation and outdoor recreation needs of residents in the region and the anticipated needs of future generations.
4. Establish regional parks throughout the CRD, which are accessible to residents.
5. Respond to expected population growth in the Capital Region.
6. Increase the regional parkland west of the Sooke River.
7. Integrate the regional parks system into economic development plans for the region.

Protect the Natural Environment

1. Conserve the biodiversity of the region.
2. Protect areas that contain rare and critically endangered viable ecosystems and species.
3. Connect existing regional parks and other protected areas by natural-area corridors to protect species and their movement.
4. Contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Connect People with Nature

1. Assemble a regional parks system that will provide a range of opportunities for people to connect with nature.

Protect Cultural Heritage

1. Consider partnerships with other levels of government, First Nations, and non-profit groups to conserve cultural features and historic sites where land is acquired for the primary purpose of establishing a regional park (i.e., conserving regionally significant natural areas and providing opportunities for people to connect with nature).

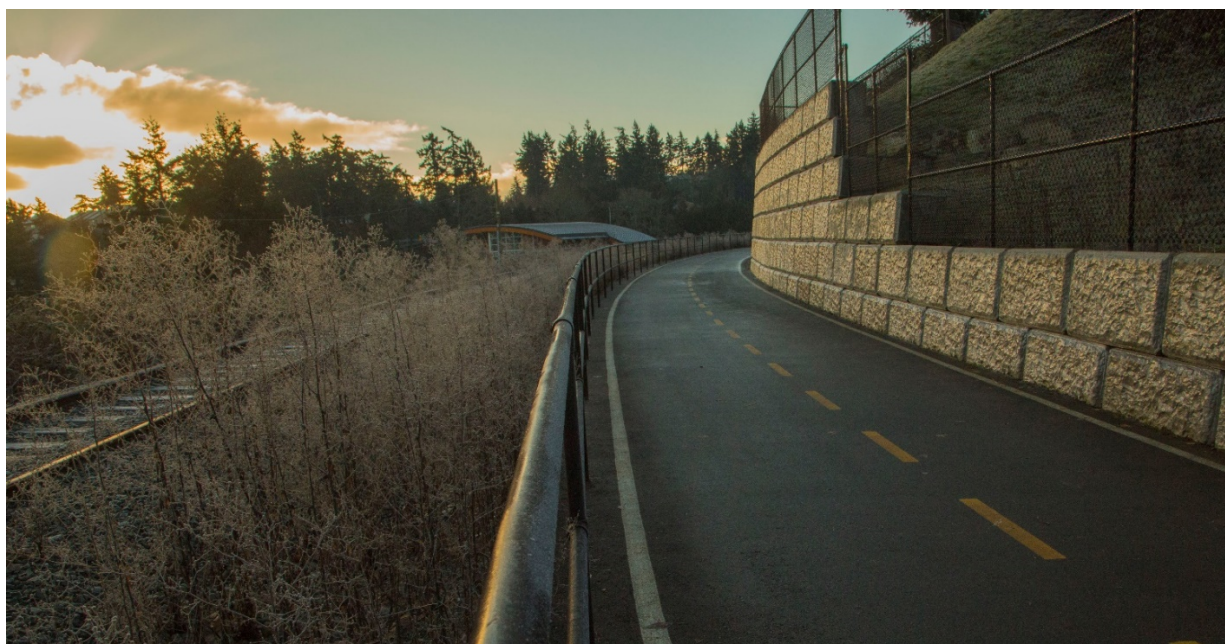
Complete the Boundaries of Existing Regional Parks

1. Protect and maintain the natural environments in existing regional parks.
2. Define park boundaries to reflect ecological systems or watersheds.
3. Provide adequate buffers from activities on adjacent lands.

5.3 Regional Trail System Objectives

The Strategic Plan proposes a regional trails system, as shown on Map 1, based on the following objectives.

1. Connect regional parks and trails to other national, provincial and major municipal parks and trails, key points of interest, major community facilities, transportation facilities and commercial centres.
2. Link with regional trails plans in Metro Vancouver and the Cowichan Valley Regional District.
3. Plan and manage regional trails as transportation corridors (based on the Board's Strategic Priorities 2015-2018).
4. Encourage alternative modes of non-motorized transportation, thereby helping to reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
5. Connect the urban, suburban and rural parts of the region with strategic consideration given to locating trails as connecting links between communities to enable their use as a viable transportation route for personal and work-related trips.
6. Manage the regional trails routes wherever possible as greenways.
7. Connect the regional trails system with the regional cycle and pedestrian network.
8. Encourage green tourism related to economic development.
9. Promote the health benefits of regional trails and value as alternative transportation routes.

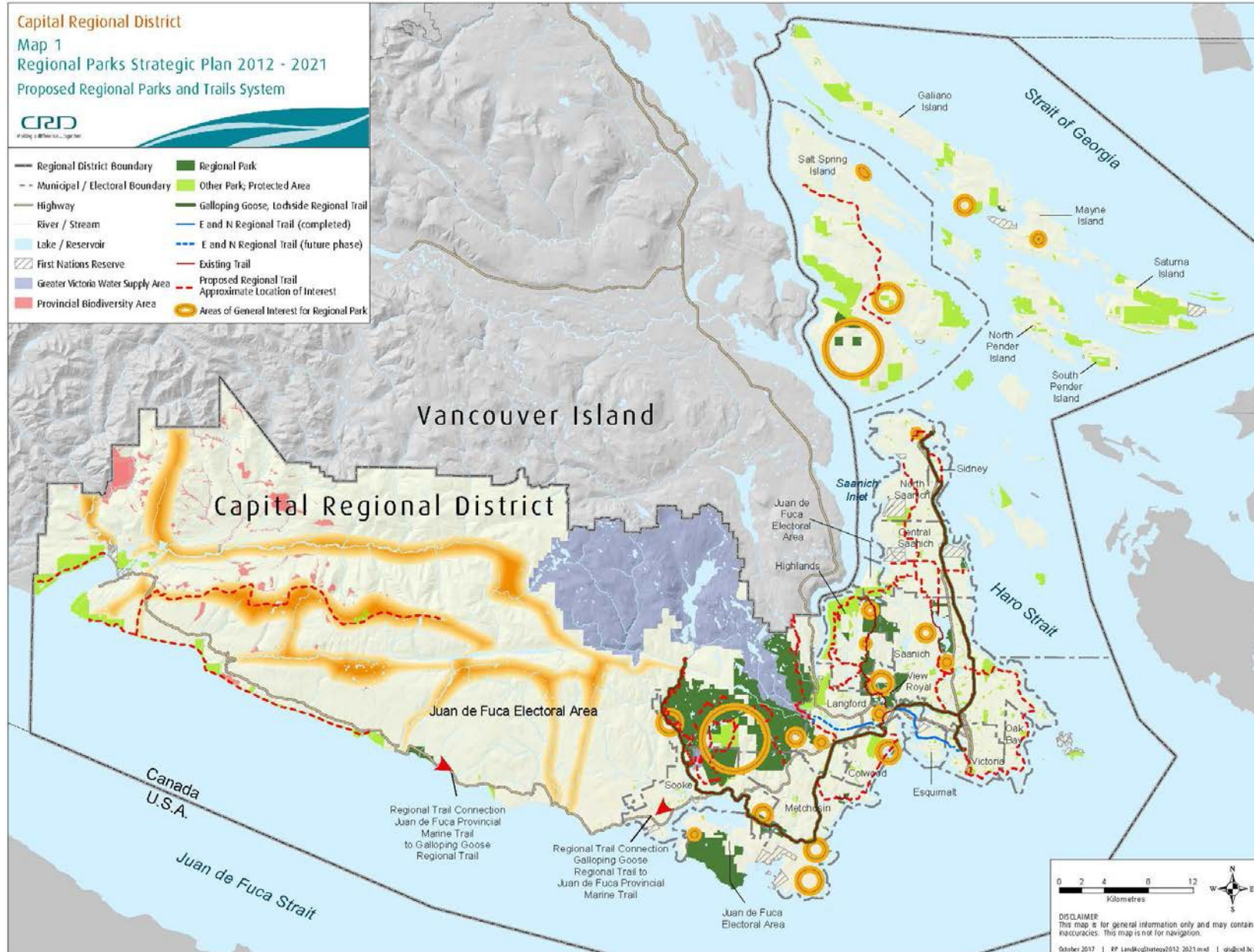


E&N – Humpback Connector Rail Trail

Capital Regional District
 Map 1
 Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012 - 2021
 Proposed Regional Parks and Trails System



- Regional District Boundary
- - Municipal / Electoral Boundary
- Highway
- River / Stream
- Lake / Reservoir
- ▨ First Nations Reserve
- ▨ Greater Victoria Water Supply Area
- ▨ Provincial Biodiversity Area
- Regional Park
- Other Park; Protected Area
- Galloping Goose, Lochside Regional Trail
- E and N Regional Trail (completed)
- E and N Regional Trail (future phase)
- Existing Trail
- Proposed Regional Trail
- Approximate Location of Interest
- Areas of General Interest for Regional Park



6.0 LAND ACQUISITION PRINCIPLES

The principles that guide land acquisition are:

1. Acquire land based on fair market value and a willing buyer and seller.
2. Acquire property in accordance with the Regional Parks Strategic Plan and available park and trail management plans, giving careful consideration to operating and program needs, Regional Parks' financial position, and timing factors that affect the sale of a property.
3. Focus land acquisition efforts on the portions of a legal parcel that are required for regional park purposes. When the entire land parcel must be acquired, portions not needed by Regional Parks will, where possible, be divided from the main parcel and sold at fair market value.
4. The priority for acquiring lands with regional park potential will be influenced by factors such as the desired lands being listed for sale or plans for development or resource extraction.
5. Actual timing and sequence of an acquisition will be affected by several factors such as funding from partners, willingness of an owner to sell, municipal land use planning initiatives, and protected areas initiatives of other levels of government.
6. Land acquisition priorities may need to be amended from time to time as new information or opportunities arise. This information will be assessed against the existing list of priorities and could result in a possible change in land acquisition priorities.
7. In addition to purchasing land, Regional Parks will try and acquire land and protect Regional Parks' interests on land by using methods such as a conservation covenant, lease, and transfer of land from other levels of government and non-government organizations, gifts and bequests, or dedication through the subdivision process.
8. Consider land banking new acquisitions. These areas will not be open for public use until funds are provided for management. Land that is banked will be designated a Regional Park Reserve.
9. Encourage municipalities and other government agencies to consider Regional Parks' acquisition interests when considering land use regulations, development proposals or the sale of land for an area that has been identified as having regional parks potential.
10. Inform First Nations of land acquisition plans in their traditional territory and inform them when the acquisition is complete.
11. Approach landowners regarding donation or bequest of land for regional parks and trail purposes and work with the landowner to explore the tax benefits of land donation or bequest.
12. Funds in the Land Acquisition Fund can be used for costs associated with the purchase of land for regional parks and trails. These costs include purchase price, purchase negotiation, appraisals, legal fees and land surveys.
13. Strive to achieve a 20% contribution of land acquisition funds from partners.

7.0 LAND ACQUISITION PROCESS

The land acquisition process is outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Land Acquisition Process

Step	Action	Approval
Step 1	<p>Regional Parks Strategic Plan Identifies areas of general interest for a regional park or trail and sets basis for selecting land acquisition priorities.</p> <p>Park Management Plans Provide information about areas with regional park potential.</p>	Board 2012
Step 2	<p>Land Acquisition Strategy The Regional Parks LAS provides the Regional Parks Committee and CRD Board with a roadmap for acquiring land for regional parks from 2020 to 2021.</p>	Board
Step 3	<p>Annual List of Proposed Acquisitions Submit to the Board annually a staff report that identifies the legally described land parcels that are proposed to be acquired in a year and the estimated value. This will provide staff with a mandate to negotiate an acquisition. Once the list is approved staff would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carry out a financial appraisal of the property • prepare a detailed evaluation of the parcel based on the land acquisition criteria provided in Appendix A to define the exact portion of a legally described parcel that would be retained for a regional park • inform the municipality in which the proposed acquisition is located about CRD’s intent • clarify the interest and participation of potential funding partners • begin the negotiation with the land owner and sign an option to purchase, and • complete due diligence that includes review of land title information and environmental documents. 	Board
Step 4	<p>Acquisition Approval Report to Regional Parks Committee and CRD Board on the outcome of the negotiation, the option to purchase, the financial implications of acquiring a specific parcel and seek Board direction.</p>	Board
Step 5	<p>Complete Acquisition The conveyance of the land(s) will be completed and CRD will retain title.</p>	After Board Approval in Step 4
Step 6	<p>Announce Acquisition The CRD and funding partners announce the acquisition, any time after the documents have been executed by both parties.</p>	Board Chair
Step 7	<p>Report to Regional Parks Committee, CRD Board, Municipalities and Citizens Regional Parks will distribute a report on the annual results of land acquisition.</p>	Not required
Step 8	<p>Dedicate land for regional park or regional trail Submit bylaw to Board.</p>	Board

8.1 LAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA

The land acquisition criteria guides and assists staff in making recommendations to the Regional Parks Committee and CRD Board about selecting the specific area within a legally described land parcel for acquisition . The criteria are provided in Appendix A.

APPENDIX A

REGIONAL PARKS LAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Appendix is to provide criteria¹ that will:

- guide and assist Regional Parks in assessing the acquisition of individual parcels based on the acquisition priorities identified in Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy; and
- be the basis for making recommendations to the CRD Board about the exact area of a legally described parcel that should be acquired.

Regional Park Significance

The concept of regional park significance plays a fundamental role in acquiring land for Regional Parks and identifying an area as having regional park potential. Regionally significant areas for regional park purposes are natural areas that represent examples of the diverse geography and environments in the context of the entire region. These areas also provide opportunities for residents to connect with nature and they will attract people from throughout the region.

Regional Trail Significance

These are areas that are required to provide the land base to establish the regional trail route shown on Map 1.

LAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA

Regional Parks

The regional park land acquisition criteria are organized around three categories: (1) environmental; (2) outdoor experiences and activities; and (3) management and planning.

For an area to be recommended for acquisition it must be considered to have regional park significance in the environmental category. An exception to this may be made where an acquisition serves important operational or land management needs. For example, an acquisition may provide a logical and more manageable park boundary, link properties or eliminate an operational problem such as poor access, thus reducing costs.

The criteria will be rated on a five-point scale: 1=Very Low, 2=Low, 3=Moderate, 4=High, 5=Very High. Regional Parks recognizes that the allocation of scores will be subjective but will be based on the best available information. A composite score will be produced for each category. These three scores will be added to provide an overall score for the area. A descriptive narrative will be substituted for numerical scores when assessing the criteria in the category of management and planning.

¹ Criteria means a measure that will be used to judge what portion of a specific legal parcel of land will be acquired for a regional park or trail.

Environmental Criteria

1. Representativeness. How well does the proposed area represent the natural environment of the region and specific ecosystems elements as defined in the *Regional Parks Strategic Plan*?
2. Uniqueness. Is the natural environment of the area distinctive or unique compared with other areas in the Capital Region? Does the area contain features not already protected within other similar sites?
3. Connectivity. Does the area play an important role in connecting with natural environments and protected areas? Does the area serve to complete an established park? Is the area adjacent to existing protected lands?
4. Environmental Function. Does the area play an important role and function in the broader ecosystem (e.g. wildlife corridors, critical habitat, migration, watershed management, ground water recharge, and flood control and storm water prevention)?
5. Level of Fragmentation. Has disturbance caused this area to become fragmented from adjacent ecosystems?
6. Naturalness. Is there a low relative amount of human-caused disturbance to the natural environment? What type of natural disturbance has occurred and how long ago? How many introduced species are present? Are the introduced species dominating, out competing and/or displacing the native species? Is there potential for the ecosystem to recover through active or passive management?
7. Viability. Are there good long-term prospects for the continued existence of the area's natural features? Can the area be managed in such a way as to maintain ecosystem processes?
8. Habitat Value. Are there important habitat values for native plants and animals?
9. Distinct Environmental Features. Does the area contain significant environmental features that illustrate specific land evolution processes or landforms?
10. Biological Diversity. Is there high biological diversity of the proposed area? Is there a high diversity of natural communities?
11. Species Conservation Value. Does the area contain rare, threatened or endangered plants, animals and ecosystems? Are there global, national, provincial, regional and local conservation values?
12. Climate Change. What role could the property have to address climate change mitigation and adaptation?

Connecting People with Nature - Outdoor Experiences and Activities Criteria

The regional park significance of an area for outdoor experiences and activities will be assessed by:

1. examining the attributes of an area that will attract residents of the region; and
2. the opportunities an area offers for outdoor activities.

The assessment of an area will also identify environmental features that could limit outdoor activities. These limitations will be discussed as part of the assessment of outdoor activities for an area.

Area Attributes

1. Environmental Features. Do the natural features of the landscape provide regionally significant opportunities for outdoor experiences and activities? Do the features provide an opportunity for people to be close to nature?
2. Cultural/Historic Features. Are there regionally significant cultural and historic features?
3. Uniqueness. Are there opportunities for distinctive outdoor experiences and activities?
4. Connectivity. Can the area connect with other outdoor recreational features, opportunities on adjacent lands or the regional trail system?
5. Viewing Opportunities. What are the opportunities for people to view the surrounding landscape, natural features and wildlife?

Outdoor Activity and Experience Opportunities

1. Visitor Experience. What outdoor activities and visitor experiences could be provided?
2. Accessibility. How accessible is the area in terms of distance from people in the Capital Region?
3. Accessibility. What are the activity and experience opportunities for people with disabilities?
4. Environmental Interpretation. What are the opportunities for environmental interpretation?

Management and Planning Criteria

1. Municipal Planning. What are the Official Community Plan, Local Area Plan, Zoning and Park and Recreation Plan designations for the area? How do these municipal land use planning tools relate to natural environment protection and park establishment?
2. Development Proposals. What kind of development is proposed for the area? How would it affect regional park values? Are any parts of the area proposed to be protected or designated as a park?
3. Regional Growth Strategy/Draft Regional Sustainability Strategy. How does the area relate to the Regional Growth Strategy and draft Regional Sustainability Strategy?
4. Federal, Provincial, Islands Trust and Municipal Park Planning and Conservation Initiatives. How does the area relate to park planning initiatives by federal, provincial, Islands Trust and municipal park planning and conservation initiatives? Are there any partnership opportunities?
5. Conservation Initiatives by National, Provincial and Local Conservation Groups. How does the area relate to conservation initiatives by national, provincial and local conservation groups? Are there any partnership opportunities?



East Sooke Regional Park

LAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA

Regional Trails

An area under consideration for acquisition for a regional trail will be assessed on the following criteria:

1. Connectivity. Does the proposed area connect regional parks and other parks and public lands?
2. Visitor experience. What type of visitor trail experiences does the land provide?
3. Active transportation. How does the acquisition contribute to active transportation and regional trails as transportation corridors?
4. Linking with other trails. What are the trail links that this acquisition will address and provide?
5. Natural area corridors. How does this acquisition contribute to protecting and establishing a natural area corridor?
6. Connect natural areas. How does this acquisition contribute to connecting natural areas? What ecosystems and species would be protected by this acquisition?
7. Municipal Planning. What are the Official Community Plan, Local Area Plan, Zoning and Park and Recreation Plan designations for the area?
8. Regional Growth Strategy/Draft Regional Sustainability Strategy. How does the area relate to the Regional Growth Strategy and draft Regional Sustainability Strategy?
9. Partnerships. Federal, Provincial, Islands Trust and Municipal Park Planning and Conservation Initiatives. How does the area relate to trail planning initiatives by federal, provincial, Islands Trust, and municipal park planning and conservation initiatives? Are there any partnership opportunities?



Francis King Regional Park



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