

CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT PARKS

Annual Report 2003





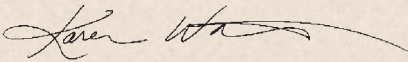
In 2003, visits to your regional parks and trails surpassed the 3 million mark for the first time. I see this milestone as a strong indication of the value of our parks and trails system to residents and tourists alike.

If you explored your regional parks and trails this past year, as I did, your visit may have been enhanced by a trip to one of our nature centres, an interpretive program with a CRD Parks naturalist, a warm greeting from a volunteer, the new boat launch at Elk Lake, or our continuing efforts to make the parks and trails system accessible to all.

This year we launched a new and improved web site, which allows residents and visitors from afar to experience the spectacular natural areas of our region and access up-to-date park information with the click of a mouse.

As our parks system continues to expand and improve, I would like to recognize the invaluable contributions of our dedicated volunteers and staff. They work on your behalf to ensure CRD Parks continues to protect your natural heritage while providing opportunities for quality outdoor experiences.

Sincerely,



Karen Watson
Chair, CRD Parks Committee



Front cover: Mount Work/Thetis Lake regional parks connection

Inside cover: Snake Day, Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park

2003 CRD Parks Committee

CRD Parks is a department of the Capital Regional District.

Chair: Karen Watson
District of Metchosin

Vice Chair: Vic Derman
District of Saanich

Members: Dorothy Hartshorne
District of North Saanich

Darwin Robinson
Township of Esquimalt

Karel Roessingh
District of Highlands

Denise Savoie
City of Victoria

Rich Tamboline
Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area

Ex-officio: Judy Brownoff
Board Chair – Capital Regional District

“The programs are excellent, and so are the facilities. I appreciate the friendly, helpful and knowledgeable volunteers.”

S.C. – Victoria

CRD Parks protects and manages more than 10,000 hectares of spectacular and easily accessible natural areas in 30 regional parks and trails on southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands.

Your regional parks and trails. Your natural heritage.

CRD Parks Master Plan Strategic Directions

1. Protect and maintain the natural environment in existing regional parks.
2. Acquire additional land for regional parks and trails.
3. Complete the regional trail and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation use from Swartz Bay to the Galloping Goose Regional Trail, and from the Galloping Goose Trail to the Cowichan Valley.
4. Repair, upgrade or replace major facilities.
5. Increase volunteer participation.
6. Examine opportunities for generating revenue.
7. Establish partnerships with other park agencies.

Visitor Use

Over **3 million people** visited regional parks and trails in 2003.



Marine Day, Witty's Lagoon Regional Park

2003 Highlights

Parkland Acquisition

The Land Acquisition Fund enables CRD Parks to purchase land identified as having regional park potential. The fund raises approximately \$1.6 million per year from an average annual levy of \$10 per household.

2003 Acquisitions

Mount Work/Thetis Lake Regional Parks Connection

In partnership with The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC), CRD Parks acquired three parcels of land, totalling 67.98 hectares, to complete a connection between Mount Work and Thetis Lake regional parks. The purchase price was \$935,000, with CRD Parks contributing \$607,750 and TLC \$327,250.

Mount Wells Regional Park

The Province of British Columbia transferred 20.21 hectares of land to CRD Parks as an addition to Mount Wells Regional Park. The parcel near Humpback Road completes the core area of the park boundary.

Witty's Lagoon Regional Park

CRD Parks acquired a 4.8-hectare parcel of land adjacent to Witty's Lagoon Regional Park in order to place a covenant protecting CRD Parks' interests on part of the property. The property will be resold in 2004.



Killarney Lake, Mount Work Regional Park

Mount Work Regional Park

CRD Parks received 40 hectares of land adjacent to Mount Work Regional Park, including Killarney Lake. The acquisition includes three parcels (24.87 hectares) of land purchased by CRD Environmental Services, and a 15.18-hectare parcel donated by the District of Saanich. The total value of this new parkland is \$2.92 million.

Interpretive Plan

CRD Parks completed *Visit, Experience, Learn: An Interpretive Plan for CRD Parks*. The plan provides a vision for environmental interpretation in regional parks and trails. It outlines guiding principles, goals and strategic directions for the delivery of interpretive services over the next six years. The CRD Parks Committee endorsed the plan in March.

Universal Access Plan

CRD Parks completed *Everyone's Parks and Trails: A Universal Access Plan for CRD Parks*. The plan provides an integrated approach to planning facilities and services for a wide range of park visitors, including visitors with disabilities. It was developed in consultation with organizations in the Capital Region that advocate for people with disabilities, and was endorsed by the CRD Parks Committee in March. The plan identifies criteria for the universal design of facilities and services in regional parks, and establishes priorities for accessible service delivery.

CRD Parks Web Site

CRD Parks launched a re-designed and expanded web site. The new site provides detailed information about regional parks and trails, plus downloadable maps and brochures, news, program schedules and other features. The site offers a more interactive experience for visitors and an integrated approach to communicating messages about regional parks and trails. The site experienced 484,000 hits in 2003, a 34 per cent increase over 2002.



CRD Parks home page

Installation of a Natural Gas Line on the Galloping Goose Regional Trail

CRD Parks managed the Terasen Gas (formerly Centra Gas) natural gas line installation on the Galloping Goose Regional Trail from Langford to Sooke. The agreement negotiated with the Province and Terasen dedicated \$450,000 to bridge construction and infrastructure upgrades on the trail. The project resulted in 24.5 kilometres of trail resurfacing and the construction of two new bridges at Matheson Creek and Colwood Creek.

Administrative Services

Administrative Services staff provide information to the public about regional parks and trails, register participants in environmental interpretation programs, issue park use permits, coordinate the department's annual budget and carry out long-term strategic and fiscal planning. The Parks Administrator works closely with incorporated and unincorporated areas and elected officials on regional parkland issues, and has overall responsibility for CRD Parks.

2003 Highlights

Park Use Permits

188 permits were issued for group picnic shelters, special events, commercial filming and commercial services involving more than 26,000 participants.

Special Park Districts Forum

In cooperation with Greater Vancouver Regional District Parks, CRD Parks co-hosted the 2003 Special Park Districts Forum. Administrative Services staff coordinated the multi-day conference, which attracted 121 park professionals from across Canada and the United States.



Special Park Districts Forum, Island View Beach Regional Park

Operations Services

Operations Services staff develop, maintain and improve park facilities, including trails, nature centres, washrooms, picnic and beach areas, parking lots, vehicle and foot bridges, information kiosks and signs. In addition, staff inform visitors about park regulations, enforce CRD Parks bylaws and are responsible for fire detection and suppression. They ensure your visit to any regional park or trail is safe and enjoyable.

Operations Services Staff Hours

- 25% grounds maintenance
- 22% facility maintenance
- 20% trail maintenance
- 19% bylaw enforcement/fire suppression/fleet maintenance
- 14% infrastructure upgrading

2003 Highlights

Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park Boat Launch Upgrade

CRD Parks upgraded the Brookleigh Road boat launch at Elk Lake by installing a new concrete boat ramp and 20-metre accessible dock. The new facility meets universal access standards, allowing visitors of all abilities easy and safe access to their boats.

Gonzales Hill Regional Park

Staff completed parking lot improvements and installed security lighting to reduce vandalism.

Mount Work Regional Park – Hartland

Staff managed the construction of a toilet facility at the Hartland parking area. The concrete building, which replaces portable toilets, provides flush toilets as well as an equipment storage area. The Construction Association of Victoria donated \$20,000 in materials and labour toward this new facility, which meets universal design standards.

Witty's Lagoon Regional Park

Staff completed trail improvements and installed a new boardwalk on the Beach Trail.

Universal Access Upgrades

Staff completed access improvements to facilities at Elk/Beaver Lake, Mill Hill, Witty's Lagoon and East Sooke regional parks.

Fire Suppression

Staff worked with the BC Forest Service, municipal fire departments and CRD Water to suppress two significant forest fires at Thetis Lake and Sooke Hills Wilderness regional parks.

Park Watch Program

CRD Parks contributed funding and in-kind services to this community program, which monitors activity in park and trail parking lots to reduce auto crime. Park Watch operated in East Sooke, Roche Cove, Matheson Lake and Witty's Lagoon regional parks and Galloping Goose Regional Trail parking areas.

Bylaw Enforcement

Working in partnership with CRD Bylaw Enforcement and local police agencies, staff informed more than 1,800 park visitors about unauthorized or inappropriate activities in regional parks and trails.



Fire suppression at Thetis Lake Regional Park

Planning and Conservation Services

Planning and Conservation Services staff prepare plans that guide the management of regional parks and development of trails and facilities. They provide scientific information to protect and maintain ecological features, and recommend strategies for managing outdoor activities. Planning and Conservation Services activities include coordinating the preparation and implementation of the CRD Parks Master Plan and park and trail management plans, managing the CRD Parks Land Acquisition Strategy, conducting ecological research and environmental impact assessments, coordinating ecological restoration, carrying out visitor use surveys and consulting with the public.

2003 Highlights

Ecological Assessment of Mount Wells Regional Park Trail Development

Two reports were completed: *Mount Wells Ecological Inventory and Visitor Impact Study* and *Best Management Practices for Marking, Building and Maintaining Trails in Open, Rocky Areas*. The reports will help CRD Parks protect and maintain the natural environment in Mount Wells Regional Park and other hilltop parks.

Trans Canada Trail through Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park

Planning was completed for the Trans Canada Trail through Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park to the border of the Cowichan Valley Regional District. Staff also completed a site plan for future access to Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and Mount Wells Regional Park at Humpback Reservoir.

"I appreciated the emphasis that was placed on respecting the environment and how to do so."

L.D. – Metchosin

Conservation Initiatives

Conservation initiatives help protect, maintain and improve the natural environment in regional parks and trails. CRD Parks undertook three conservation initiatives in 2003.

■ Mill Hill Garry Oak Ecosystems Restoration Project

As part of this long-term restoration project to restore Mill Hill's Garry oak ecosystems, a botanical inventory revealed 12 rare plant species in 130 separate populations. Staff cleared and bundled by hand an estimated seven metric tonnes of Scotch broom and daphne (invasive species) from approximately three hectares. The success of restoration efforts is being monitored through permanent research plots and photo point monitoring. Project funding included a \$33,700 grant from the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk. The Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team and the Nature Conservancy of Canada also provided in-kind support to the project.



Removing invasive species at Mill Hill Regional Park

■ Sharp-tailed Snake Inventory and Habitat

An inventory of the habitat of the endangered sharp-tailed snake near the Galloping Goose Regional Trail in Metchosin was completed. The project was supported by the federal Interdepartmental Recovery Fund and the Sharp-tailed Snake Recovery Team.

■ Wildlife Habitat Mapping of the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt

A consultant team mapped ecosystem types in the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt. Using landscape-level ecosystem mapping, they completed a wildlife habitat assessment, which will help CRD Parks make decisions about areas of interest for regional park purposes.

Visitor Services

Visitor Services staff help visitors to regional parks and trails understand park values and the significance of protecting natural areas. Staff create opportunities for visitors to learn more about their natural and cultural heritage, and become involved in stewardship activities. Visitor Services activities include environmental interpretation programs, volunteer opportunities and communication initiatives.

2003 Highlights

Environmental Interpretation

- 17,800 visitors** attended 617 education programs and events. Events included school programs, group programs, children's programs, guided walks, outings for adults, canoe programs, mini-events, special events, roves and nature centre visits.
- 3600+ students** attended 169 curriculum-based school programs during spring and fall, a 16% increase over 2002. Students learned about the natural and cultural history of the region.
- 144 participants** enjoyed 12 Sunrise Seekers and Early Evening interpretive canoe programs.
- 7823 visitors** explored the nature centres at Witty's Lagoon and Francis/King regional parks over 135 open days.
- 1435 visitors** attended four special events: Marine Day, Snake Day, Hawk Watch and Wreathmaking.
- 609 visitors** participated in six mini-events: Nature's Olympics; Seals, Seals; Beach Day; Forest Foot Rally; Going Buggy; and Art in the Park.
- 28 short nature programs** were hosted by interpreters on SHAW TV.
- 892 visitors** browsed through travelling nature displays and other interpretive programs at two community events: Saanich Strawberry Festival (452) and Metchosin Day (440).

Volunteer Opportunities

- Staff prepared the first CRD Parks Volunteer Services Plan. The plan provides direction for the continued involvement of volunteers in regional parks and trails, and makes recommendations on how CRD Parks can most effectively continue to work with volunteers now and in the future.

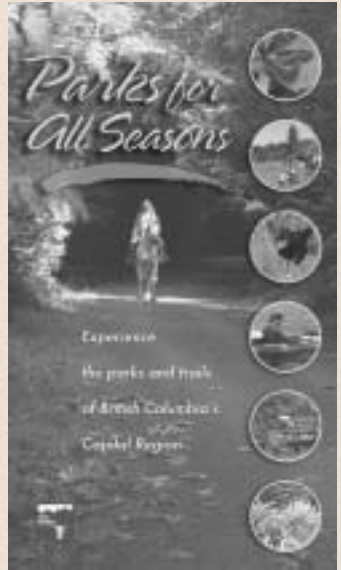


Volunteer facepainter at Snake Day, Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park

- 133 volunteers contributed more than 8,000 hours.
- Volunteer Wardens contributed 6,000 hours to patrol trails, report concerns and educate visitors about caring for regional parks and trails.
- Volunteer Naturalists at Francis/King and Witty's Lagoon regional park nature centres contributed 1,196 hours to welcome visitors, and provide information and education.
- Volunteer Community Groups removed invasive plant species at Devonian Regional Park.
- Volunteer Gatekeepers contributed 140 hours to keep parks secure after hours.
- Volunteer Advisory Group members provided 47 hours of advice on the management plan for Thetis Lake, Mill Hill and Francis/King regional parks.
- Volunteer Beekeepers contributed 21 hours to tend the hive at Francis/King Regional Park.
- An Honorary Volunteer program was established to recognize volunteers who have contributed more than ten years of distinguished service and are no longer able to volunteer.

Communications

- Production of *Parks for All Seasons*, a 14-minute promotional video showcasing the region's parks and trails. The video complements CRD Parks print communications tools.
- Development of the Regional Trails Communication Plan. The plan, developed in consultation with municipal and community partners, provides guidance, strategic advice and standards on communicating messages about regional trails to visitors.
- Design and production of an information kiosk at Mill Hill Regional Park. The kiosk provides an orientation map, information about natural and cultural history and visitor safety tips.
- Design and production of education signs for the Mill Hill Restoration Project.
- Revision and reprints of the *Galloping Goose and Lochside Trails* and *East Sooke Regional Park* brochures.
- Publication of five family-oriented articles in *Island Parent Magazine*.



CRD Parks promotional video

"Truthfully this is the best. The kids love the nature house. The trails are safe and clean and I truly appreciate the water fountain and bathroom facility. The volunteers are great – extremely knowledgeable! Great – worth more than money can buy."

D.A. – Victoria

Special Thanks

CRD Parks gratefully acknowledges the following community groups that completed invasive plant removal volunteer projects in 2003:

- Metchosin Scouts at Devonian Regional Park
- Metchosin residents at Witty's Lagoon and Devonian regional parks
- Men's Group at Devonian Regional Park
- Victoria Youth Custody Centre at Devonian Regional Park
- Scouts Canada at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park

Special thanks to the following volunteer wardens and naturalists, who took on additional invasive plant removal projects in their parks:

- Moralea Milne at Devonian Regional Park
- Joe Percival at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park
- Gil Parker and Larry Talarico at East Sooke Regional Park

"The program was very informative. It makes us appreciate our surroundings and helps us share this enjoyment with our children."

T.R. – Victoria



Volunteer in-service training, Thetis Lake Regional Park

Partners in Parks

CRD Parks has a long history of working in partnership with individuals, non-government organizations and all levels of government to undertake projects and provide services that, without outside support, would not be possible. CRD Parks would like to thank our 2003 partners:

■ Elk/Beaver Lake Equestrian Society (EBLES)

EBLES has operated the equestrian centre at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park for over ten years. The Society ensures the centre is open to equestrian groups and the public, carries out maintenance and, in consultation with CRD Parks staff, issues park use permits for special events.

■ Kiwanis Club of Saanich

The Kiwanis originally constructed and financed the two concession buildings at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park over 35 years ago. The Kiwanis Club also provides concession services at Thetis Lake Regional Park, weather permitting, each year from May to September.

■ South Island Mountain Bike Society (SIMBS)

SIMBS assists with the development, maintenance and management of the Hartland mountain bike area at Mount Work Regional Park. SIMBS carries out trail development and maintenance, monitors trail conditions, visitor use and safety, coordinates special events and promotes off-road cycling through education and volunteer activities.

■ Vancouver Island Retriever Club (VIRC)

VIRC has used the Beaver Lake ponds at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park for retriever training and trialing events for more than 30 years. Club members ensure the area is open to retriever groups, trainers and the public, and carry out maintenance in consultation with CRD Parks.

■ Victoria Rowing Society (VRS)

VRS has operated the Elk Lake Rowing Centre at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park since its construction in the mid-1980s. VRS works closely with CRD Parks to ensure the smooth operation of the Centre, represent the long-term interests of rowing and resolve conflicts with other Elk Lake user groups.

Donors to CRD Parks

Many thanks to the following organizations, whose generous donations helped CRD Parks acquire additional parkland and complete important projects in 2003:

- The **Construction Association of Victoria** contributed approximately \$20,000 in donated labour and materials from member companies to the construction of a new toilet facility at Mount Work Regional Park – Hartland.
- The **District of Saanich** donated a 15.18-hectare parcel of land valued at \$1,220,000 and contributed an additional \$240,000 toward a total 40-hectare addition to Mount Work Regional Park.
- The **Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk** contributed \$33,700 to the Mill Hill Restoration Project at Mill Hill Regional Park.
- **The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC)** contributed \$327,250 toward the purchase of 67.98 hectares of land connecting Mount Work and Thetis Lake regional parks.
- The **Province of British Columbia** transferred to CRD Parks 20.2 hectares of land, valued at \$89,900, as an addition to Mount Wells Regional Park.



*Opening of
the Hartland
toilet facility
at Mount Work
Regional Park*

CRD Parks 2003 Annual Budget

(Board approved)

Expenditure Budget

CRD Parks Operations	\$4,142,280
Debt services on acquisitions	\$805,020
Capital – Projects and Equipment	\$298,860
Capital – Land Acquisition	\$1,633,610
Total	\$6,879,770

Expenditures per Dollar

CRD Parks Operations	0.60
Debt services on acquisitions	0.12
Capital – Projects and Equipment	0.04
Capital – Land Acquisition	0.24
Total	\$1.00

Cost of CRD Parks per Average Household Assessment	\$38.65
Cost per \$100,000 of Converted Assessments	\$15.20



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