

CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT PARKS



Annual Report

2001





uring 2001, the International Year of Volunteers and the 35th anniversary of CRD Parks, I have taken time to reflect on our wonderful regional parks and trails system. Since 1966, we have succeeded in preserving more than 10,000 hectares of spectacular and accessible natural areas for regional residents to experience and enjoy.



I am pleased and grateful for the incredible contribution of our volunteers, who are so committed to caring for our parks. This year, more than 15 groups and countless individuals volunteered their time, doing everything from removing invasive plants at Thetis Lake to cleaning up the shoreline at Island View Beach to greeting visitors in the Francis/King Nature House.

This past summer, I had the pleasure of seeing our parks from a new perspective, on a kayak trip at Thetis Lake led by a CRD Parks Naturalist. I also explored our network of regional trails, from the Galloping Goose to the new Lochside Trail. The range of experiences available in our parks never ceases to amaze me.

I invite all regional residents and park visitors to visit the 35th anniversary directional cairn at the summit of Mill Hill, and explore the diversity of our regional parks and trails system in the coming year.

Karen Watson, Chair, CRD Parks Committee



CRD Parks Committee

CRD Parks is a department of the Capital Regional District. Members of the 2001 CRD Parks Committee are:

Chair: Karen Watson
(District of Metchosin)

Vice Chair: Leif Wergeland
(District of Saanich)

Members: Kellie Booth
(Salt Spring Island Electoral Area)

Judy Brownoff
(District of Saanich)

Richard Dalon
(Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area)

Jane Lunt
(City of Victoria)

Ray Rice
(Township of Esquimalt)

Christopher Causton, Chair – CRD Board
(District of Oak Bay)



2001 CRD Parks Highlights

35th Anniversary

In July, CRD Parks hosted a special event to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the regional parks and trails system. Held at CRD Parks Headquarters at Mill Hill Regional Park, the event featured displays and demonstrations, interpretive walks, and the unveiling of the 35th anniversary directional cairn on the summit of Mill Hill. Parks visitors, volunteers, staff, and representatives of the CRD Parks Committee and Board attended the celebration.

Parkland Acquisition

Parkland acquisition continues to be a high priority for CRD Parks. In 2000, the Capital Regional District Board established the CRD Parks Acquisition Fund. The ten-year Fund generates approximately \$1,600,000 per year. The cost to property owners in the CRD for the Fund in 2001 was \$4.43 per \$100,000 assessed residential property value.

The purpose of the Fund is to purchase land for regional parks and trails identified by the public and documented in the CRD Parks Master Plan. The Master Plan is a vision for the future of the regional parks and trails system.

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 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.

In 2001, the following four properties were added to the regional parks and trails system:

Sea-to-Sea Green/Blue Belt (southwest area)



In February, CRD Parks, the federal Department of Environment, the provincial Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks and The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC) joined together to purchase 1,380 hectares of land in the Sooke Hills. The purchase

price was \$5,300,000, with CRD Parks contributing \$3,000,000 over five years, the Department of Environment \$2,000,000, Ministry of Environment, Land and Parks \$200,000, and TLC \$100,000, plus borrowing costs for CRD Parks' contribution. The area is a key parcel in the proposed Sea-to-Sea Green/Blue Belt, which will establish an area of contiguous parkland from Saanich Inlet to Sooke Basin and Sooke River. These lands will play an important role in establishing a large protected wilderness area that will sustain plant and animal habitats, and provide opportunities for outdoor experiences not found elsewhere in the Capital Region.



Mill Hill Regional Park

In June, CRD Parks and Environment Canada, through the Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative, purchased 5.8 hectares of land on the southeast slope of Mill Hill Regional Park. In addition, property owners Gordon and Marion Cuckovich donated a parcel of 2.09 hectares, bringing the total acquisition to 7.89 hectares. The purchase price was \$1,780,000, with CRD Parks contributing \$1,625,000 over three years, and Environment Canada \$155,000. The

area features upland meadows, Garry oak, arbutus, and older Douglas-fir forests, and has significant value as a buffer between the existing regional park and an area of residential development.

Southwest Salt Spring Island

In November, CRD Parks, The Land Conservancy, with the Salt Spring Appeal Group, and the federal Department of Environment, through the Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative, purchased 215 hectares of land on southwest

Salt Spring Island, along the north slope of Mount Sullivan and Mount Bruce. The purchase price was \$2,500,000, with CRD Parks contributing \$1,500,000 over six years, TLC with the Salt Spring Appeal Group providing \$850,000, and Environment Canada \$150,000. This purchase is part of a larger acquisition with BC Parks of 770 hectares of land on the south and north shore of Burgoyne Bay. The acquisition is an important component of a plan, developed by the Salt Spring Island Conservation Partnership, for a regional park connecting Musgrave Landing, Hope Hill, Mount Bruce, Mount Sullivan, and Burgoyne Bay. The area is primarily second growth Douglas-fir forest.



Horth Hill Regional Park

In November, CRD Parks and TLC purchased 5.37 hectares of land along the southern boundary of Horth Hill Regional Park in the District of North Saanich. The land is the remainder of a parcel from which CRD Parks acquired a 2.32-hectare portion in 1991. The purchase price was \$382,650, with CRD Parks contributing \$322,650 over three years, and TLC providing \$60,000. The area features western red cedar, a skunk cabbage swamp, and second growth conifer forest.



Visitor Use

2.34 million visitors enjoyed regional parks and trails in 2001.

Visitor Services

Providing opportunities to learn about, volunteer in, and protect regional parks and trails

Visitor Services staff connect visitors with parks, park values, and stewardship opportunities. Staff encourage community involvement, provide information, and create opportunities for visitors to learn more about their natural and cultural heritage. Visitor Services activities include information initiatives and publications, environmental interpretation programs, volunteer opportunities, and lifeguard services.

2001 Highlights

Environmental Interpretation

- 19,783 people attended 617 education programs and events, an 8% increase in visitor participation. Events included guided walks, children's programs, outings for adults, drop-in programs, special events, and nature centre visits.
- More than 3300 students from 158 school programs during the spring and fall learned about the region's natural and cultural history through curriculum-based programs.
- 9156 visitors explored the nature centres at Francis/King and Witty's Lagoon regional parks during 144 open days.
- 2089 visitors attended six special events: Slug Fest, Marine Day, CRD Parks 35th Anniversary, Snake Day, Hawk Watch, and Wreath Making. Record numbers of visitors attended Snake Day at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park (834), and Hawk Watch at East Sooke Regional Park (390).
- Interpreters hosted 16 short nature programs on Shaw TV.
- 2132 visitors browsed through travelling nature displays and other interpretive programs at five community events: Oceans Day (500), Sidney Day (312), Saanich Strawberry Festival (563), Metchosin Day (570), and Operation Birdfeeder (187).
- For the first time, visitors enjoyed interpretive kayak programs at Elk/Beaver Lake and Thetis Lake regional parks. In response to the growing interest in this activity, these programs provide participants with both basic kayaking and ethical wildlife viewing instruction.

Volunteer Opportunities

- The International Year of Volunteers in 2001 provided valuable opportunities for staff to strengthen the Volunteer Services program, develop professionally, plan for the future, and celebrate accomplishments.
- 287 volunteers contributed 8,075 hours and participated in a range of training events.
- 97 volunteers and their guests attended the annual Recognition event, sponsored in part by Sooke Harbour House.
- Staff participation in the GAIA Mentorship Project. CRD Parks, along with three other organizations, was selected to mentor an environmental agency in rural BC. The Coordinator of Volunteers from the Regional District of Central Okanagan Parks spent a week at CRD Parks receiving an orientation to the work of Volunteer Services, an enriching experience for both organizations.
- Establishment of a Trailside Treasures program, to provide opportunities for volunteers to network and share experiences, and to strengthen bonds between volunteers and staff.

A great program! I was really impressed by the variety of activities. The kids were spellbound.
K.M., Victoria



Information Services

- Revision and reprinting of the popular East Sooke Regional Park brochure. The reprint includes an updated park map including GPS-based trail location.
- Publication of four family-oriented articles in *Island Parent Magazine*, and placement of numerous CRD Parks photographs in magazines such as *Where* and *Boulevard* magazine.
- Contribution to design of new CRD web site to be implemented in 2002.
- Preparation of the CRD Parks Public Communications Plan. As recommended by CRD Park's Master Plan, a strategy on how to design and implement public communications over the next five years was developed.



*Thank you for these services and staff to educate the public and the protection and rehabilitation of natural spaces.
L.L., Victoria*

Operations Services

Maintaining parks and facilities for visitor safety and enjoyment

Operations Services staff develop, maintain, and improve park facilities, including trails, nature houses, washrooms, picnic and beach areas, parking lots, vehicle and foot bridges, information kiosks, and trail and road 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 is safe and enjoyable.

2001 Highlights

- Completion of an upgrade of the Mill Hill Summit Trail from the parking lot to the summit. Staff also installed the 35th Anniversary Cairn (peak finder) at the summit, and replaced the toilet building.
- Construction of a new toilet building at Matheson Lake Regional Park, and landscaping and drainage improvements to the beach area.
- New, larger and improved toilet building at the main parking lot at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park.
- Replacement of the deck and roof at Barnes Station, along the Galloping Goose Regional Trail.
- Trail restoration work along the lakeside trail around upper and lower Thetis Lake in Thetis Lake Regional Park.
- Installation of odour reduction equipment at Beaver Lake and Hamsterly Beach washrooms in Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park.
- Service road improvements at Coppermine (Fish Trap), Park Heights, and Cabin Point Road in East Sooke Regional Park.

Operations Services Staff Hours

| | |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 25% | infrastructure upgrading |
| 21% | grounds maintenance |
| 20% | bylaw enforcement/ fire suppression/ fleet maintenance |
| 19% | trail maintenance |
| 15% | facility maintenance |

- Participation in the Park Watch Program, a community initiative spearheaded by the Sooke Bed and Breakfast Association and the Juan de Fuca Community Futures Development Corporation. This highly successful program monitored suspicious activity at parking lots in several regional parks including East Sooke, Roche Cove, and Matheson Lake. As a direct result of this program, auto crime in these and several provincial parks was significantly reduced.



My children and I love going on the nature walks to all the different parks in the CRD. This is the highlight of our week.
M.H., Victoria

Administrative Services

Providing financial, human resources, and administrative support to the department

Administrative Services staff provide information to the public about regional parks and trails, register participants in environmental interpretation programs, issue park use permits, compile visitor use statistics, 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.

2001 Highlights

- 175 park use permits issued for group picnic shelters, special events, commercial filming, and commercial services involving more than 27,000 participants.
- Coordination of donations to CRD Parks from the public. Donations in 2001 included:
 - 5 memorial benches - Galloping Goose Regional Trail (rural sections)
 - 1 memorial bench - Witty's Lagoon Regional Park
 - 1 memorial bench - Island View Beach Regional Park

Value of Donations: \$8,750



Planning and Conservation Services

Working with partners to protect and maintain environments

Using parkland wisely is critical to protecting and maintaining our natural heritage. Planning and Conservation Services staff provide guidance and advice on the management of regional parkland.

Working with partners and through public consultation, staff develop plans and recommend actions for the protection of the natural environment and the acquisition of additional parkland. They also prepare plans for developing and upgrading regional park and trail facilities, and ensure all projects meet provincial, federal, and CRD Parks environmental guidelines.

2001 Highlights

- Completion of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Parks Master Plan. In September, the CRD Board approved the Master Plan, following consultation with the municipalities of Langford, Metchosin, and Sooke, relevant agencies, advisory groups, and the public. The Plan, which provides a vision and overall management framework for the parks, will be implemented beginning in 2002.
- Completion of Lochside Regional Trail Management Plan. The CRD Board approved the Management Plan after consultation with Saanich Peninsula municipal councils, stakeholder groups, and the public. The Plan provides a vision for the development, management, and operation of the Trail.
- Preparation of Management Plan and Ecological Inventory for Mill Hill, Thetis Lake, and Francis/King Regional Parks. Staff began work on a management plan and established an Advisory Group for these interconnected regional parks. Staff also completed an environmental inventory of the parks, which will provide important information during the plan's preparation.

- Establishment of Off-Road Vehicle Use Working Group. The Off-Road Vehicle Use Working Group met several times during 2001. The goals of the Group are to identify and acquire an appropriate area for the activities of off-highway vehicle users, and to develop management guidelines for the area. The final report will be presented to the CRD Parks Board in early 2002.
- Establishment of Thetis Lake Pistol Range Advisory Group. The purpose of the working group is to provide advice to the CRD Board about the future use of the Thetis Lake Pistol Range, a former training facility located along the eastern boundary of Thetis Lake Regional Park.
- Environmental Inventory of Galloping Goose Regional Trail. Staff coordinated an inventory of wildflowers along the Galloping Goose Trail, from Langford to Sooke. This inventory provides key information to protect flora during the installation of the proposed natural gas pipeline by Centra Gas.
- Plan for Lochside Trail Upgrading. In cooperation with the District of Central Saanich, staff examined options for trail upgrading between Island View Beach Road and Martindale Road.
- Design Drawings for Galloping Goose Regional Trail. Staff coordinated the preparation of detailed design drawings for the Millstream Creek and Matheson Creek bridge crossings.
- Assessment for Management of English Ivy in Regional Parks. Staff completed an assessment that provides management options for controlling English Ivy, an invasive plant species.



CRD Parks 2001 Annual Budget

(Board approved)

Expenditure Budget

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| CRD Parks Operations | \$3,778,300 |
| Debt Services on Acquisitions | 815,680 |
| Capital (Projects & Equipment) | 298,860 |
| Capital (Land Acquisition) | 1,625,610 |
| Total | \$6,518,450 |

Expenditures per Dollar

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| CRD Parks Operations | 0.58 |
| Debt Services on Acquisitions | 0.12 |
| Capital (Projects & Equipment) | 0.05 |
| Capital (Land Acquisition) | 0.25 |
| Total | \$1.00 |

**Cost of CRD Parks
per Average Household Assessment** **\$35.86**

Donors to CRD Parks

Many thanks to the following individuals and organizations, whose generous donations enabled CRD Parks to continue its parkland acquisition program in 2001:

- **Gordon and Marion Cuckovich**

The Cuckovich family generously donated their 2.09-hectare property on the southeast slope of Mill Hill Regional Park. CRD Parks purchased an adjacent 5.8 hectares of land, bringing the total acquisition to 7.89 hectares.

- **The Department of Environment (Government of Canada), through the Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative**

The Department contributed \$2,000,000 to the purchase of 1380 hectares of land in the Sea-to-Sea Green/Blue Belt, \$155,000 to the purchase of 7.89 hectares of land adjacent to Mill Hill Regional Park, and \$150,000 to the purchase of 215 hectares of land on southwest Salt Spring Island.

- **The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC)**

TLC contributed \$100,000 to the purchase of 1380 hectares of land in the Sea-to-Sea Green/Blue Belt, and \$60,000 to the purchase of 5.37 hectares of land adjacent to Horth Hill Regional Park. TLC will also pay the borrowing costs for CRD Parks' land acquisitions in the Sooke Hills and on southwest Salt Spring Island.

- **The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC) with the Salt Spring Appeal Group**

TLC and the Salt Spring Appeal Group contributed \$850,000 to the purchase of 215 hectares of land on southwest Salt Spring Island.

- **The Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks (Province of British Columbia)**

The Ministry contributed \$200,000 to the purchase of 1380 hectares of land in the Sea-to-Sea Green/Blue Belt.

Special Thanks

CRD Parks gratefully acknowledges the following community groups and individuals who completed volunteer projects:

Invasive Plant Removal

- Starbucks (Blanshard & Fort employees) at Thetis Lake
- BC Hydro Power Smart Youth Team at Thetis Lake
- Teenage Outdoor Adventure Development at Thetis Lake
- First Colquitz Guides at Thetis Lake
- Ministry for Children and Families at Thetis Lake
- Juan de Fuca Scouts on the Galloping Goose Trail
- Metchosin residents at Matheson Lake
- Pearson College Summer Seminar on Youth Leadership at Witty's Lagoon
- Ontario Cubs at Witty's Lagoon

Habitat Restoration

- Habitat Acquisition Trust at Mount Work – Durrance Lake
- Victoria Natural History Society at Witty's Lagoon

Clean Ups

- Durrance Elementary School students at Island View Beach
- Juan de Fuca Cubs, Beavers and Scouts on the Galloping Goose Trail
- King's Kids on the Galloping Goose Trail

Work Experience

- Youth Community Action Program
- Camosun College

Partners In Parks

CRD Parks has a long history of working in partnerships with individuals, non-government organisations, and all levels of government to undertake projects and provide services that, without outside support, would not have been possible.

CRD Parks would like to thank our 2001 partners listed below.

The Elk/Beaver Lake Equestrian Society (EBLES). The EBLES has operated the equestrian centre in Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park for over ten years. The Society ensures the equestrian centre is open to the public and equestrian groups, 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 approximately 35 years ago. The Kiwanis also provides concession services at Thetis Lake Regional Park, weather permitting, from May to September each year.

South Island Mountain Bike Society (SIMBS). SIMBS has assisted with the development, maintenance, and management of the mountain bike area at Hartland – 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). The VIRC has been using the Beaver Lake ponds in Elk/Beaver Lake for approximately 30 years for retriever training and trialing events. Club members ensure the area is open to the public, retriever groups, and trainers, and carries out maintenance in consultation with CRD Parks.

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



Capital Regional District
PARKS

490 Atkins Avenue, Victoria BC V9B 2Z8
tel(250) 478-3344 ■ fax (250) 478-5416

e: CRDPARKS@crd.bc.ca | www.crd.bc.ca