



Annual Report 2004



CAPITAL
REGIONAL
DISTRICT

Regional Parks

2004 CRD Parks Committee

CRD Parks is a department of the Capital Regional District.

Chair: Karen Watson
District of Metchosin

Vice Chair: Leif Wergeland
District of Saanich

Members: Marie Brotherston
District of Highlands
Chris Coleman (for Alan Lowe)
City of Victoria
Ted Daly
District of North Saanich
Marcus Farmer (for Janet Evans)
District of Sooke
Gary Holman
Salt Spring Island Electoral Area
Peter Wainwright (for Don Amos)
Town of Sidney

Ex-officio: Don Amos
Board Chair – Capital Regional District



"I had more fun than I had, ever!"
Grade 3 student, John Stubbs Elementary

In 2004 the number of people enjoying our regional parks and trails system continued to increase. More than 3.3 million visits were recorded as hikers, cyclists, canoeists, birdwatchers, dog walkers and many others pursued their outdoor interests and activities. I find it most heartening that current and future generations will benefit from the wonderful park experiences available in our region.



I am particularly encouraged to note that during 2004 we saw a significant increase in school students participating in our excellent environmental interpretation programs. These programs are an investment in the future made possible by the support of the Capital Regional District Board and through the hard work and dedication of our volunteers and staff.

On behalf of the Capital Regional District, I encourage residents and visitors alike to get out and explore the more than 10,000 hectares protected within our regional parks and trails system. Visit our user-friendly web site or contact our knowledgeable and welcoming staff to learn more about the outdoor experiences available just beyond your doorstep in your parks for all seasons.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Watson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karen Watson
Chair, CRD Parks Committee

"I appreciate the efforts you all go to to provide such an outstanding learning experience for my students. I always know my class will have a quality experience."

Teacher, Sir James Douglas Elementary

Front cover: Shooting stars in Garry oak woodland at Mill Hill Regional Park

Inside cover: Park naturalist leads school program at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park

CRD Parks Master Plan Strategic Directions

CRD Parks protects and manages more than 10,000 hectares of spectacular and easily accessible natural areas in 29 regional parks and trails on southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands.

Your regional parks and trails. Your natural heritage.

*your
natural
heritage*

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.

"The interpreters were very knowledgeable, enthusiastic and kid-friendly. We enjoyed their historical stories of the lake. My daughter loved it! This is excellent and affordable. Thanks!"

R.P., Oak Bay

*Visitors enjoy the view
from Beechey Head,
East Sooke Regional Park*



2004 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. Since the establishment of the fund in 2000, CRD Parks has purchased 1944 hectares of regionally significant green space.

What Are Park Reserves?

CRD Parks is building a world-class parks and trails system by acquiring parkland for future generations.

Our primary goal for these regionally significant areas is the protection of natural and cultural resources.

Although park reserves currently have no facilities, most are open to visitors. CRD Parks will develop visitor facilities in park reserves after completing natural resource inventories and management plans for each area.

2004 Acquisitions

- **Land Exchange – South West Salt Spring Island**
As part of a contribution agreement with the Province of British Columbia, CRD Parks exchanged lands owned by the CRD at Burgoyne Bay for lands near Mount Sullivan. This parcel is an important addition to Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve.
- **Bilston Farm Sale**
As directed by the CRD Board, the former Bilston Farm property adjacent to Witty's Lagoon Regional Park in Metchosin was sold in December 2004. CRD Parks acquired the property in 2003 in order to place a conservation covenant over environmentally sensitive areas of the property, and secure a right-of-way for access to the regional park for operations and maintenance purposes.

Did You Know?

- Over **3.3 million people** visited regional parks and trails in 2004.
- More than **19,000 visitors** attended **648 nature programs and events**.
- Over **350 volunteers** contributed more than **8,000 hours** to regional parks and trails.
- The CRD Parks web site received **1.5 million hits**, a 137% increase over 2003.

Thetis Lake, Francis/King and Mill Hill Regional Parks Management Plan

The CRD Board approved the Thetis Lake, Francis/King and Mill Hill Regional Parks Management Plan in October. The plan is the culmination of many years of hard work and dedication. A public advisory group worked with Parks staff to produce a comprehensive plan that provides a vision for the future of these interconnected parks.

Lochside Regional Trail Municipal Partnership

The CRD entered into agreements with the municipalities of Saanich, Central Saanich, Sidney and North Saanich to manage the Lochside Regional Trail in partnership. Under the agreements, CRD Parks will assume responsibility for all off-road portions of the trail, and implement consistent standards for trail maintenance and public communications.

Lochside Regional Trail Improvements

CRD Parks contributed funding to the District of Central Saanich to develop a two-kilometre bicycle/pedestrian trail along a municipal roadway section of the Lochside Trail between Mount Newton Cross Road and Lochside Drive. The goal of the project was to upgrade trail safety using accepted standards for bicycle use. The total project budget of \$263,000 was jointly funded by Central Saanich (\$50,000), the Provincial Capital Commission (\$50,000) and CRD Parks (\$163,000).



Lochside Trail bike lane

Web Site

The site earned a five-star Excellent rating from the 2004 Canadian Web Awards, an independent review system for web sites.

Visitor Surveys

Visitor use surveys were conducted from July to September at Elk/Beaver Lake and Thetis Lake regional parks and on the Galloping Goose Regional Trail. The information collected in the 1100 surveys will be used to update the CRD Parks Master Plan and improve management of regional parks and trails.

Central Services staff provide advice and guidance on the management of regional parkland and appropriate outdoor opportunities. Working with partners and through consultation with the public, staff develop long-term plans and recommend actions for acquisition of additional parkland. On a day-to-day basis, they ensure all projects meet provincial and federal environmental guidelines, conduct environmental inventories, and prepare park management and restoration plans.

Central Services staff plan and develop park facilities such as bridges, buildings and trails, and carry out infrastructure upgrading. They also oversee park safety and security, including bylaw enforcement and fire management.

Conservation Initiatives

Conservation initiatives help protect, maintain and improve the natural environment in regional parks and trails. CRD Parks undertook two major conservation initiatives in 2004.

- **Mill Hill Garry Oak Ecosystems Restoration Project**

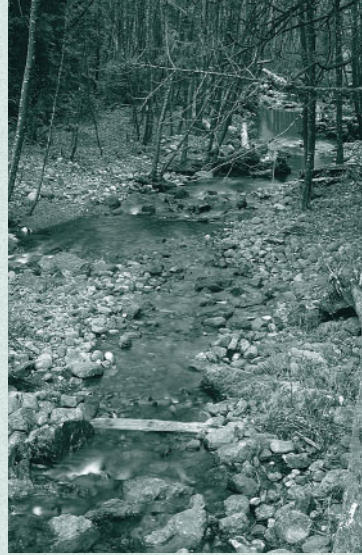
As part of a long-term project to restore the Garry oak ecosystems of Mill Hill Regional Park, staff removed an estimated 8.2 metric tonnes of Scotch broom and daphne (invasive species) from approximately 2.6 hectares. For the first time, a group of trained volunteers assisted this project. A 2004 inventory of vegetation on Mill Hill revealed 166 occurrences of 13 rare plant species, the largest known number of rare plants in any regional park. Project funding included a \$53,753 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 continued to support the project.



Staff bundle Scotch broom plants for removal from Mill Hill

- **Ayum Creek Regional Park Reserve Salmon Habitat Improvement**

CRD Parks, the Society for the Protection of Ayum Creek, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada jointly funded the improvement of salmon habitat in Ayum Creek. The focus of the project was the construction of a backwater channel off Ayum Creek to provide salmon habitat during high water flows in winter and low water levels in summer. The area around the new channel is being restored with native vegetation. The Land Conservancy of BC and Habitat Acquisition Trust also supported the project.



Ayum Creek

Thetis Lake Regional Park Emergency Access Lane

An emergency access lane was constructed to connect Davies Road to the existing fire access lane in the Stewart Mountain area of the park. The lane was constructed at the request of the District of Highlands as a condition of the recent parkland acquisition connecting Thetis Lake and Mount Work regional parks. The project followed guidelines for lane construction based on an assessment of the wildland and urban interface fire hazard for the area.

Fire Suppression

Staff worked with the BC Forest Service, municipal fire departments and CRD Water to suppress 10 minor fires in regional parks and trails.



Trilliums at Mill Hill Regional Park

Park Services – North and West

Park Services staff provide day-to-day operations and maintenance for all regional parks and trails. Staff deliver interpretive programs, coordinate volunteer participation and develop and maintain park facilities such as trails, nature centres, washrooms, beach and picnic areas, parking areas, vehicle and foot bridges, information kiosks, and trail and road signs.

Staff educate park visitors about their natural and cultural heritage, enforce CRD Parks bylaws and assist with fire prevention. They ensure visitors to regional parks and trails have safe and enjoyable experiences.

Environmental Interpretation

- **8,052 visitors** explored the nature centre exhibits at Witty's Lagoon and Francis/King regional parks. Thanks to dedicated volunteer naturalists, the nature centres were open 141 days in 2003.
- A record-breaking **4,714 participants** attended 180 curriculum-based school programs during the spring and fall, a 9% increase over 2003. Students learned about bats, slugs, squirrels and the seashore at Elk/Beaver, Francis/King and Witty's Lagoon regional parks.
- **1,757 hardy hikers** took part in 123 guided walks, a 16% increase over 2003.
- **1,350 visitors** attended three special events: Snake Day, Hawk Watch and Wreathmaking.
- **1,342 visitors** browsed through travelling nature displays and other interpretive programs at two community events: Saanich Strawberry Festival (950) and Metchosin Day (392).
- **127 intrepid voyageurs** paddled the waters of Elk/Beaver and Thetis lakes in 17 Sunrise Seekers and Early Evening interpretive canoe programs.
- **19 short nature programs** were hosted by interpreters on SHAW TV.



"What a great hike. CRD Parks rock!"

B.J., Oak Bay

*Visitors explore displays at Snake Day,
Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park*

Volunteers in Parks

- Volunteer Wardens contributed more than **6,600 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 parks contributed **623 hours** to welcome visitors, and provide education and information.
- Volunteer Gatekeepers contributed **116 hours** to keep parks secure after hours.
- Volunteer Beekeepers contributed **32 hours** to tend the orchard bee hive at Francis/King Regional Park.
- The Mill Hill Garry Oak Restoration Project volunteer team was initiated at Mill Hill Regional Park.

Regional Park and Trail Initiatives

- **Mount Wells Regional Park**

As part of an initiative to provide outdoor opportunities for visitors at Mount Wells Regional Park, staff constructed a 12-car parking area at the site of the Humpback Reservoir, and a hiking trail to the summit of Mount Wells. Signs were also installed. In the future, public access to Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and the Trans Canada Trail will be provided from the Humpback Reservoir site.

- **Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park**

Improvements were completed to the Pipeline Trail pedestrian/equestrian bridge. The Beaver Beach exit road was repaved.

- **Galloping Goose Regional Trail**

The trail was resurfaced from Dixon Road to Charters Creek, and the Atkins Road parking lot was landscaped. 26 wooden braces on the Todd Creek Trestle were replaced as part of the annual maintenance program.

Staff repair the Todd Creek Trestle on the Galloping Goose Regional Trail



- **Horth Hill Regional Park**

The boardwalk was replaced.

- **Matheson Lake Regional Park**

Old toilet buildings were removed and the area revegetated.

- **Witty's Lagoon Regional Park**

Improvements were completed to the orchard parking area. Security upgrades took place at the nature centre, and renovations were completed at the caretaker's residence.



Family explores the Elsie King Trail at Francis/King Regional Park

- **Universal Access**

Following the completion of the CRD Parks Universal Access Plan in 2003, staff created a priority list of projects to improve the accessibility of facilities in regional parks and trails. Projects will be completed as resources permit.

- **Park Watch Program**

CRD Parks contributed funding and in-kind services to this community program, which monitors activity in park and trail parking lots in Sooke and East Sooke to reduce auto crime. As a result of this successful program, no thefts from vehicles in patrolled parking lots were reported during 2004.

- **Bylaw Enforcement**

Working in partnership with CRD Bylaw Enforcement and local police agencies, staff informed more than 2,300 park visitors about unauthorized or inappropriate activities in regional parks and trails.

"I am handicapped and the boardwalk is the nicest trail in Victoria. Thank you very much."

P.H., Colwood

Administrative and Visitor Services

Administrative and Visitor Services staff connect visitors with parks, park values and opportunities to be involved in the stewardship of regional parks and trails. They provide information, register participants for interpretive programs, issue park use permits for group picnic shelters and special events, and provide administrative, communications and financial support to department staff.

The General Manager works closely with incorporated and unincorporated areas and elected officials on regional parkland issues, and has overall responsibility for the CRD Parks department.

Park Use Permits

207 permits for events involving more than 26,000 participants and spectators

Communications Planning

Development of:

- department communications design and production guidelines
- kiosk replacement plan
- communications plan for Mount Wells Regional Park

Publications

- Development and publication of Mount Wells Regional Park and Lochside Regional Trail information sheets
- Revision and reprints of *Galloping Goose and Lochside Regional Trails, East Sooke, Mount Work and Witty's Lagoon* brochures
- Publication of four family-oriented articles in *Island Parent Magazine*



Web Site

- Development of new *Pets in Parks* and *Cycling* pages
- Improvements to site navigation

"I am an avid user of CRD Parks, and as far as this web site goes, great job! I think it is excellent!"

S.R., Victoria

Special Thanks

CRD Parks gratefully acknowledges the following community groups that completed volunteer projects in 2004.

Special thanks to volunteers Moralea Milne at Devonian Regional Park and Larry Talarico at East Sooke Regional Park, who took on additional invasive plant removal projects.

- **Good Neighbours: Mill Hill Stewardship Project**
Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) coordinated a successful neighbourhood outreach project to increase awareness and stewardship of the endangered ecosystems of Mill Hill Regional Park.
- **Invasive Plant Removal**
 - Metchosin Scouts, Metchosin residents and the Men's Group at Devonian Regional Park
 - Saanich Community Church and the Mill Hill Garry Oak Ecosystems Restoration Project volunteer team at Mill Hill Regional Park
- **Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup**
West-Mont School, Starbucks, Happy Valley School, HSBC Bank and Royal Oak Middle School

Donors to CRD Parks

Many thanks to the following organizations, whose generous donations helped CRD Parks acquire additional parkland and carry out important projects in 2004.

- The **Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk** contributed \$53,753 to the Garry Oak Ecosystems Restoration Project at Mill Hill Regional Park.
- **The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC)** has been a donor and partner with CRD Parks on several land acquisition initiatives. The TLC's *Ours Forever* fundraising campaign targets substantial funding to assist the CRD in achieving its vision for the regional parks and trails system.
- The **Province of British Columbia** transferred to CRD Parks 61 hectares of land, valued at \$850,000, as an addition to Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve, in exchange for lands owned by the CRD at Burgoyne Bay.

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 2004 partners:

- **Elk/Beaver Lake Equestrian Society (EBLES)**

EBLES has operated the equestrian centre at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park for over a decade. 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 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 park visitors, 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.

CRD Parks 2004 Budget

(Board approved)

Expenditure Budget

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|
| CRD Parks Operations | \$4,372,420 |
| Debt Services on Acquisitions | \$764,100 |
| Capital – Projects and Equipment | \$355,620 |
| Capital – Land Acquisition | \$1,620,810 |

Total **\$7,112,950**

Expenditures per Dollar

| | |
|----------------------------------|------|
| CRD Parks Operations | 0.61 |
| Debt Services on Acquisitions | 0.11 |
| Capital – Projects and Equipment | 0.05 |
| Capital – Land Acquisition | 0.23 |

Total **\$1.00**

Cost per Average Household Assessment **\$40.32**

Cost per \$100,000 of Converted Assessments **\$13.89**



Left: Mill Hill Garry Oak Restoration Project volunteer removes broom seedlings from Mill Hill Regional Park

Back cover: Park naturalist leads school program at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park



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