

# Regional Parks Annual Report

Capital Regional District | 2007



CRD

Making a difference...together



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# Message from the Chair

**C**RD Regional Parks protects and manages more than 11,500 hectares of spectacular and easily accessible natural areas in world-class parks and trails. Staff and volunteers have a passion for the stewardship of our natural environment and for providing opportunities for outdoor experiences and activities.

CRD Regional Parks places a high value on protecting our natural areas. In 2007 the Brooks Point Regional Park Management Plan was completed, work progressed on the E&N Rail Trail planning and design, and management planning continued for one regional park and three regional park reserves in the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt.

Over the last eight years Regional Parks has purchased over 2,800 hectares of regionally significant green space through the Land Acquisition Fund. In 2007, we acquired additional land for the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt and Mill Hill Regional Park with the help of The Land Conservancy of British Columbia.

Our many achievements have been made possible by the dedication and commitment of all Regional Parks Committee members and staff, and by our many partners and volunteers. I urge you to get the most out of your regional parks and trails – they are your natural heritage.

Sincerely,



Christopher Causton  
Chair, Regional Parks Committee



**Regional Parks Committee Chair**  
Christopher Causton

## **2007 Regional Parks Committee Members**

**Committee Chair**  
Christopher Causton

**Committee Vice Chair**  
John Ranns

### **Members:**

Mark Cardinal

Vic Derman

Janet Evans

Dean Fortin

Erik Lund

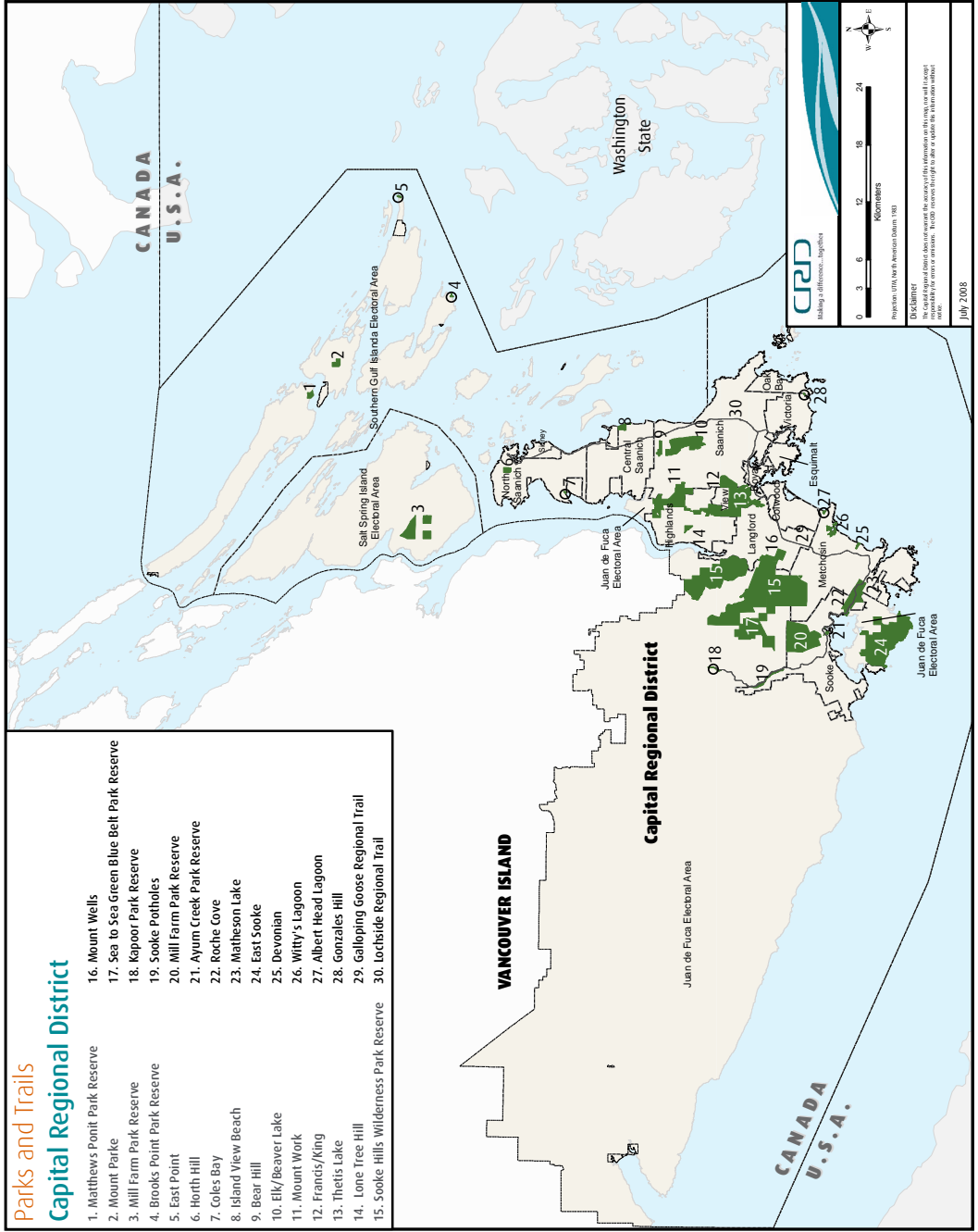
Denise Blackwell  
Board Chair (Ex-Officio)

Regional Parks is a division of the Parks and Community Services Department of the Capital Regional District.

# Parks and Trails

## Capital Regional District

1. Matthews Point Park Reserve
2. Mount Parke
3. Mill Farm Park Reserve
4. Brooks Point Park Reserve
5. East Point
6. Horth Hill
7. Coles Bay
8. Island View Beach
9. Bear Hill
10. Elk/Beaver Lake
11. Mount Work
12. Francis/King
13. Thetis Lake
14. Lone Tree Hill
15. Sooke Hills Wilderness Park Reserve
16. Mount Wells
17. Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt Park Reserve
18. Kapoor Park Reserve
19. Sooke Potholes
20. Mill Farm Park Reserve
21. Ayum Creek Park Reserve
22. Roche Cove
23. Matheson Lake
24. East Sooke
25. Devonian
26. Witty's Lagoon
27. Albert Head Lagoon
28. Gonzales Hill
29. Galloping Goose Regional Trail
30. Lochside Regional Trail



# Regional Parks–Business Plan

## Strategic Priorities

In 2007 Regional Parks prepared its first business plan based on the new model developed for the CRD and the Corporate Strategic Plan. CRD Regional Parks is contributing to three of the six corporate strategic priorities in the Corporate Strategic Plan: Regional Transportation, Environmental Protection and Organization Performance.



Witty's Lagoon Regional Park



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In addition, four strategic priorities have been identified for Regional Parks:

- (1) Achieving the vision in the Master Plan for the proposed regional parks and trail system.
- (2) Protecting and maintaining the natural environment in regional parks and trails.
- (3) Sustaining park and trail infrastructure.
- (4) Developing a healthy, vibrant workplace.

The CRD Regional Parks Master Plan was adopted in 2000. It is a strategic document that is system-wide in scope; it does not examine park-specific issues. Rather, the Plan provides a vision and a purpose for CRD Regional Parks. It also gives direction for achieving the highest standards of public service and stewardship in protecting the natural environment and providing opportunities for outdoor experiences and activities.

# 2007 Highlights

## Parkland Acquisition

The Land Acquisition Fund enables the CRD 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, the CRD has purchased 2,821 hectares of regionally significant green space.

## Land Acquisitions 2000 to 2007

Since the establishment of the Land Acquisition Fund in 2000, the CRD, along with its partners, has purchased \$23,472,264 of land. The CRD has contributed \$16,749,214 (71%) while its partners have contributed 6,723,050 (29%). The target established in the Land Acquisition Strategy for the financial contribution was the CRD 65% and partners 35%. The total area purchased is 2821 hectares.

In 2007, the CRD acquired two areas: (1) land from TimberWest for an addition to the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt located east of Sooke Potholes Regional Park, and (2) an addition to Mill Hill Regional Park.

## Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt Addition

The establishment of a Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt, extending from Saanich Inlet to Sooke Basin and Sooke River, is a major CRD initiative supported in the Strategic Plan, Regional Growth Strategy, Parks Master Plan and Parks Land Acquisition Strategy.



Board Chair Denise Blackwell and TimberWest Forest CEO Paul McElligott

## Year At A Glance

More than 3.6 million people visited the CRD's regional parks and trails in 2007, an increase of approximately 100,000 visitors from the previous year.

- 33,202 people participated in the environmental interpretation programs.
- 306 volunteers contributed 5200 hours to regional parks and trails.
- 207 park use permits were issued for special events and group picnic shelters which attracted approximately 22,400 participants and spectators.
- 206,045 visitors explored the Regional Parks web site. More than 57,00 visitors explored over 264,000 Regional Parks web pages.

“Thank you for a wonderful program! The kids wrote and drew so much about their day. This is always a sign of success.”

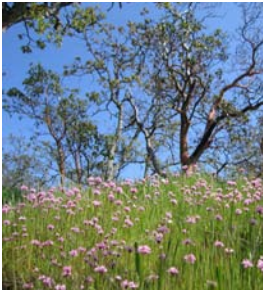
E.H., Hillcrest Elementary School



Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt

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In 2007, the Capital Regional District purchased 932 hectares of land for regional park purposes in the Sooke Hills from TimberWest Forest Corporation. The acquisition of the land is essential to achieve the vision for the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt, to provide a buffer to Sooke Potholes Regional Park and to protect the Galloping Goose Regional Trail from development or forest harvesting. It includes four kilometers of land along the east boundary of Sooke River and three watersheds that flow into the Sooke River.



Mill Hill wildflowers

The acquisition is a partnership with The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC). The purchase price was \$5,842,314. CRD Parks contributed \$5,342,314; TLC’s contribution was \$500,000.

### Mill Hill Regional Park Addition

In 2007, the City of Victoria agreed to transfer 10.38 hectares adjacent to the northwest boundary of Mill Hill Regional Park to the CRD. Regional Parks then agreed to transfer 3.12 hectares to the Town of View Royal for municipal park purposes. The addition of 7.26 hectares to the regional park will protect an older Douglas-fir forest and provide a buffer to the sensitive Garry oak ecosystems in Mill Hill.



Blue Heron

# Planning, Resource Management and Development

CRD Regional Parks staff are responsible for planning, resource management and capital development. Planning staff, working with partners and through consultation, develop the Master Plan, park and trail management plans, the division's business plan and guide the land acquisition program. Resource management staff are responsible for scientific and technical work related to environmental management, conservation and restoration. Capital development staff deliver the Regional Parks facility program.

## Conservation Initiatives

Year six of the restoration of Mill Hill Regional Park included the removal of more than six metric tonnes of invasive species (broom, daphne) with the assistance of volunteers. This was accomplished in partnership with the federal government's Habitat Stewardship Program and the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery team. Since 2002, over 40 tonnes of Scotch broom have been cleared from approximately 16 hectares. Rare plants are now documented at almost 200 locations within the Park.

## Planning Initiatives

Brooks Point Regional Park on Pender Island now has a park management plan. The draft plan was presented at a public open house on South Pender, and the overall consensus was positive. The park will be managed as a Regional Conservation Area with minimal facilities.

Stantec Consultants Ltd. completed the conceptual design work for the Esquimalt to Nanaimo (E&N) Rail Trail project. The first round of public consultation provided planners and engineers with a number of ideas



Brooks Point Regional Park

## What Are Park Reserves?

The CRD 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.

Regional Parks will develop visitor facilities in park reserves after completing natural resource inventories and management plans for each area.

“Everyone looks forward to Thursday – that’s the day we go to Beaver Lake [for a CRD special event] – the crafts, the critters, the funky songs - it’s always a blast.”

## P.J., Saanich Day Camps



**E & N Rail Trail Project**



**Water Lily**



**Thetis Lake Regional Park Project**

*Continued from previous page*

and issues that will be addressed in the trail design. Overall the public was supportive of the trail, and the meetings were well attended. The goal is to have the trail built and operating before the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Park management planning continued throughout 2007 for one regional park and three regional park reserves in the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt. The parks in the management planning process include Sooke Potholes Regional Park, Ayum Creek Regional Park Reserve, Kapoor Regional Park Reserve and Sea to Sea Regional Park Reserve. The park management planning process benefited from advice and recommendations received from a nine-member public advisory group, and from the input received from numerous stakeholder groups, including conservation, hiking, mountain biking and equestrian interests. The goal is to complete the management planning process by the end of 2008.

Implementation of the 2004 Thetis Lake Regional Park management plan continued in 2007 with the completion of the initial phase of the Lakeshore Trail restoration project. At a 2007 cost of \$120,000, this comprehensive restoration project focused on building more sustainable trails, replanting highly impacted areas, removing invasive plant species, installing fencing and closing off informal trails on the east side of Thetis Lake. This work clearly demonstrates how restoration actions can contribute to an improved visitor experience while also helping to achieve vital conservation goals in one of CRD’s most popular regional parks. Lakeshore Trail restoration actions should be complete by 2010.

# Regional Parks Operations Services

Regional Parks Operations Services staff provide day-to-day operations and maintenance for all regional parks and trails. Staff 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 and carry out park conservation and restoration projects. Park signs, safety and security, including bylaw enforcement and fire management, are all services provided by Park Operations staff.

## Fire Suppression

Working in cooperation with local fire departments, CRD Water Services and the Ministry of Forests, Regional Parks fire crews attended to 11 fires during the summer season. The largest fires were in Mill Hill (0.35 hectares) and Sooke Hills Wilderness (0.51 hectares). Fire crews also assisted the Town of View Royal with a fire on provincial land adjacent to Mill Hill Regional Park. Regional Parks, in partnership with the Town of View Royal, undertook a Community Wildfire Assessment Plan for the Town, as well as Mill Hill, Thetis Lake, Francis King and Mount Work Regional Parks.

## Bylaw Enforcement

Working in partnership with CRD Bylaw Enforcement and local police agencies, Regional Parks came into contact with approximately 8,700 visitors regarding unauthorized or inappropriate use in regional parks and trails. Staff focused bylaw enforcement at Thetis Lake Regional Park to curtail issues around alcohol use and inappropriate behaviour.



Galloping Goose Trail

## Park Watch Patrol

Regional Parks contributed funding and in-kind services again this year to the Park Watch Patrol Program which patrolled parking areas at East Sooke, Roche Cove, Matheson Lake and Sooke Potholes regional parks.

Patrollers advise visitors on how to protect their vehicles and valuables while visiting parks, hand out literature and maps, provide tourism information and assist with first response emergency help.

The program is effective in deterring crime and vandalism in local parks.

“I thank you on behalf of my students and several of their parents for a wonderful day!”

T.W., Happy Valley Elementary School



New pavement on Lochside Trail



Parks Operations staff



Harbour Seal

### Regional Parks and Trail Initiatives

The following regional park and trail initiatives were completed in 2007:

- Energy efficient improvements to 3925 Metchosin rental property.
- Heritage orchard restorations at Witty’s Lagoon and East Sooke.
- Beach improvements at Matheson Lake.
- Road and drainage improvements, installation of bear-proof refuse containers at Sooke Potholes.
- Clean up of Millstream storage site.
- Landscape and trails improvements at Devonian.
- Trail upgrades, trestle inspections and repairs on Galloping Goose.
- Kiosk construction at Witty’s Lagoon.
- Dam decommissioning in Sooke Hills Wilderness Park Reserve.
- Trail improvements in East Sooke.
- Invasive species removal in Mill Hill.
- Observatory building improvements at Gonzales Hill.
- Upgrades of main parking lot at Elk/Beaver Lake.
- Trail upgrades from main beach to sunny side cliffs at Thetis Lake.
- Trail construction from Woodridge Estates to Mount Work.
- Pavement repairs on the Lochside Regional Trail.

# Visitor Services and Community Development

Visitor Services and Community Development staff connect visitors with parks and provide volunteer opportunities for residents of the region to be involved in the stewardship of Regional Parks. Staff deliver interpretive programs and provide opportunities for park visitors to learn more about their natural and cultural heritage.

Staff provide information to the public about regional parks and trails and on site visitor information such as signs and information kiosks. They also issue park use permits for group picnic shelters and special events, and provide administrative and financial support to the division.

## Environmental Interpretation

Regional Parks Environmental Interpretation services offer a wide variety of guided hikes, drop in events and other nature programs for children and adults, as well as school programs for children in Kindergarten through Grade 7. All programs are designed for the ages and curriculum requirements of students.

In 2007, 33,202 people participated in the Regional Parks environmental interpretation programs – equaling our record-breaking year of 2006.

As part of Regional Parks' continuing commitment to support the activities of local communities, Environmental Interpretation staff doubled the number of community events they participated in 2007.



Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park

## Best of City Awards

Since 1994 the Victoria News Group has asked their readers to nominate their favorite places, activities and services in Greater Victoria. Every summer a "Best of the City" edition is published and awards event held.

The 2007's Best of the City awards named Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park as the second best place for a picnic and the Galloping Goose Regional Trail as the third best place to walk your dog.

“That was the  
best field trip – EVER!”  
Student, St. Patrick’s School



Summer Special Event Program

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More than 4,300 people visited our interpretive presentations at 11 community events including: Saanich Strawberry Festival, Metchosin Days, Astronomy Day at the Royal British Columbia Museum, Times Colonist 10K Expo, Camp Barnard Beaveree in Sooke, Esquimalt’s Buccaneer Days, Saanich Active Communities Celebration, Hartland Landfill Open House, Pink Salmon Festival, James Bay Christmas Children’s’ Craft Fair and the Salmon Lovers Dinner.



Snake Day Program

Regional Parks hosted 19 different celebrations of the natural world in 2007 – 5,578 participants dropped-in at our special events, which included Marine Day, Snake Day, Going Bug-eyed, The Feathered Dinosaurs of Victoria, Blood and Guts: a celebration of predators, Every Day is Sunday, Hawk Watch, and Wreath-making.

Thanks to the dedication of our volunteer naturalists, Regional Parks nature centres were open for a total of 317 days. 7,928 visitors explored the nature centre exhibits at Francis/King, Witty’s Lagoon and Elk/Beaver Lake regional parks.



Marine Day

In the spring and fall of 2007, 227 school programs were delivered by CRD Regional Parks interpretive staff – an eight percent increase over 2006. In total 7,864 students, parents and teachers joined our staff as we explored the shores and trails of our regional parks.

This year 2,387 people visited on-site, hands-on exhibits, and 1,442 joined guided nature walks.

# Visitor Services and Community Development

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Thetis Lake was added to Beaver and Matheson Lakes as locations for paddling programs and 247 paddlers took part in 22 canoe programs.

For the first time, three adult continuing education courses were offered: Bird Watching, Spring Birds and Stargazing.

## Volunteers in Parks

CRD Regional Parks Volunteer Services program provides opportunities for residents to be involved in the preservation and enjoyment of regional parks and trails. Volunteers welcome, engage and inspire visitors to help protect regional parks and trails. They share knowledge on native plants and landscapes, cultural history and their experience of hiking within regional parks.

Volunteer Wardens contributed more than 3300 hours to patrol trails, report concerns and educate visitors in 2007.

Volunteer Naturalists at Francis/King and Witty's Lagoon contributed 1181 hours to welcome visitors and provide education and information.

Volunteer Gatekeepers contributed 133 hours to keep parks secure after hours.

Community Group volunteers contributed 478 hours to invasive species removal and tree planting projects in regional parks.

Volunteer Beekeepers contributed 20 hours to tend the orchard bee hive at Francis/King and Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park.



Garth Homer Society Wardens

## Park Use Permits

Park use permits issued for:

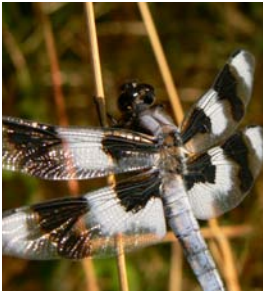
- Group Picnic Shelter
- Special Events and Activities
- Research Activity
- Commercial Service
- Temporary Access
- Commercial Filming

“Only praise for an amazing staff who made us all feel special and welcome. They make learning FUN! Thank you, you’re the BEST!”

P.G., Juan de Fuca Preschool



Bald Eagle



Dragonfly



Regional Parks Headquarters

### Park Use Permits

Regional Parks issued 207 permits which attracted approximately 22,400 participants and spectators to regional parks and trails.

### Parks Communications

- Planning Resource Conservation and Development’s public consultations
- E & N Rail Trail public meetings
- Sea to Sea advisory group meetings
- Land acquisition bulletin and meetings with municipal councils and parks and recreation commissions
- Nature Notes columns published in Island Parent Magazine
- Seasonal nature program brochures produced
- 206,045 visitors explored the CRD Regional Parks web site

# Partners In Parks

CRD Regional 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. Regional Parks would like to thank our 2007 partners.

**Elk/Beaver Lake Equestrian Society (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 Regional Parks staff, issues park use permits for special events.

**Kiwanis Club of Saanich** originally constructed and financed the two concession buildings at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park approximately 35 years ago. The Kiwanis Club provides concession services at Hamsterly Beach in Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park and Thetis Lake Regional Park from May to September each year.

Many thanks to the following organizations, whose generous donations helped Regional Parks acquire additional parkland and carry out important projects in 2007.

**The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC)** has been a donor and partner with the CRD on several land acquisition initiatives. In 2007, TLC contributed \$5,000 toward the acquisition of the final parcel of land completing the boundary of Matthews Point Regional Park Reserve on the south shore of Galiano Island.



Matthews Point Regional Park Reserve

## A Special Thanks

CRD Regional Parks gratefully acknowledges the community groups and individuals that completed volunteer projects in 2007.

### Beach Cleanups:

- Great Canadian Shoreline Clean Up
- Esquimalt Air Cadets

“Volunteering with Regional Parks has to be the very best!! It gives me an opportunity to be in an environment that I am passionate about and a chance to share my enthusiasm, knowledge and good will with those I meet in and out of the parks.” B.J., Warden



Lochside Regional Trail



Beaver Lake Retriever Ponds



Broom removal at Mill Hill

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The **Government of Canada** through the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk contributed \$49,500 to the Garry Oak Ecosystems Restoration Project at Mill Hill Regional Park.

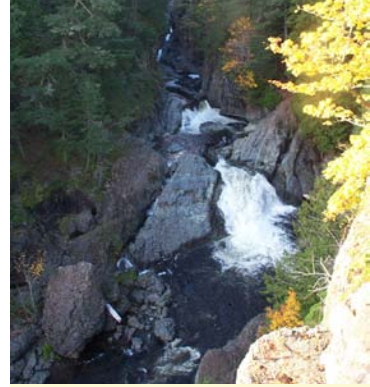
**South Island Mountain Bike Society (SIMBS)** assists with the development, maintenance and management of the Hartland mountain bike area at Mount Work Regional Park. SIMBS also monitors trail conditions, visitor use and safety, coordinates special events, and promotes off-road cycling through education and volunteer activities.

**Vancouver Island Retriever Club (VIRC)** 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 Regional Parks.

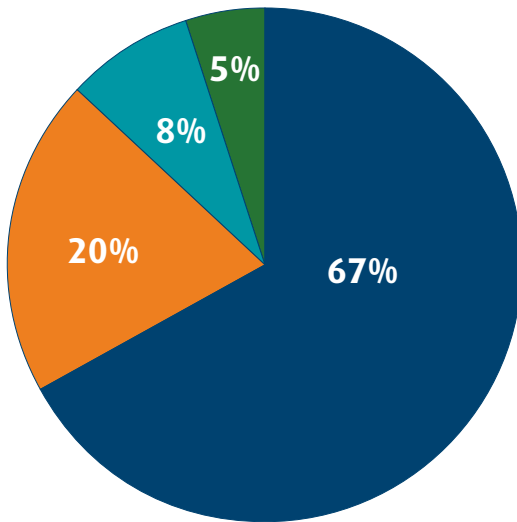
**Victoria Rowing Society (VRS)** has operated the Elk Lake Rowing Centre at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park since its construction in the mid-1980s. VRS works closely with Regional Parks to ensure the smooth operation of the Centre, represent the long-term interests of rowing and resolve conflicts with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

**Volunteers at Mill Hill Regional Park, the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team and the Nature Conservancy of Canada** continue to support the Mill Hill Garry Oak Ecosystems Restoration Project.

# 2007 CRD Regional Parks Budget



Sooke Potholes Regional Park



- CRD Parks Operations - \$5,401,710
- Capital - Land Acquisiton - \$1,617,830
- Debt Services on Acquisitons Prior to 2000 - \$640,150
- Capital - Projects & Equipment - \$375,620

## Expenditure Budget

Total: \$8,035,310

Cost per Average Household Assessment:

\$43.74

Cost per \$100,000 of Converted Assessments:

\$9.20



Making a difference...together

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**Wildflowers at Mill Hill Regional Park**

