

Regional Parks Annual Report

Capital Regional District | 2008



CRD

Making a difference...together

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Message from the Chair

CRD Regional Parks is responsible for one of the best park and trail systems in North America. It offers excellent recreational opportunities, a buffer to urban development, and visionary corridors that protect wilderness.

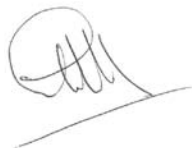
Regional Parks staff manage more than 11,500 hectares of spectacular and easily accessible natural areas in 30 world-class parks and trails. Staff interactions with the public - from operations workers who keep the trails safe, to interpreters who help connect children to nature, to managers who oversee the long term direction - make a difference to the lives of literally millions of park visitors.

Our parks offer significant and sustainable environmental, economic and social benefits to the region. They play a crucial role in conserving important ecosystems, protecting wildlife species, curbing climate change, contributing to the economy, connecting children to nature and neighbourhoods to parks. They improve the overall health and well-being of residents; their value cannot be over estimated.

We are now preparing to set the course for the next ten years in a strategic plan for our regional parks system. This new plan will define the long-term "big picture" framework, focus the energy of the organization and provide flexibility to respond to changing circumstances. There will be opportunities for the public to help shape the plan. I invite you to become involved.

With many thanks for your support of Regional Parks.

Sincerely,



Christopher Causton
Chair, Regional Parks Committee



Parks Committee Chair
Christopher Causton

2008 Parks Committee

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.

Regional Parks Strategic Plan

Preparation of 2010-2019 Strategic Plan

In 2000, the CRD Board adopted a ten-year Regional Parks Master Plan. The Master Plan is a strategic document which sets the direction for the entire Regional Park system. It guided the establishment of the land acquisition fund that led to the acquisition of 2,800 hectares of land worth \$28 million.





Barred Owl


Regional Parks is setting the course for the next ten years and is embarking on a process to prepare what will now be referred to as the Strategic Plan for the period 2010 to 2019. Preparation of the plan will occur over the next two years.

2009 Strategic Priorities

The key business and strategic priorities for 2009 are:

- Begin construction of E&N Rail Trail;
- Complete the management plan for the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt, Ayum Creek, Sooke Potholes and Kapoor regional parks;
- Open the Mount Manuel Quimper section of the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt;
- Implement the Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Mill Hill, Thetis Lake, Francis-King and Mt. Work Regional Park;
- Continue to restore the Garry Ecosystem in Mill Hill Regional Park;
- Complete a conservation strategy; and
- Complete the upgrade and ecological restoration of the lakeshore trail in Thetis Lake Regional Park.



Capital Regional District
Regional Parks Land Acquisitions 2000 - 2008



Acquisitions

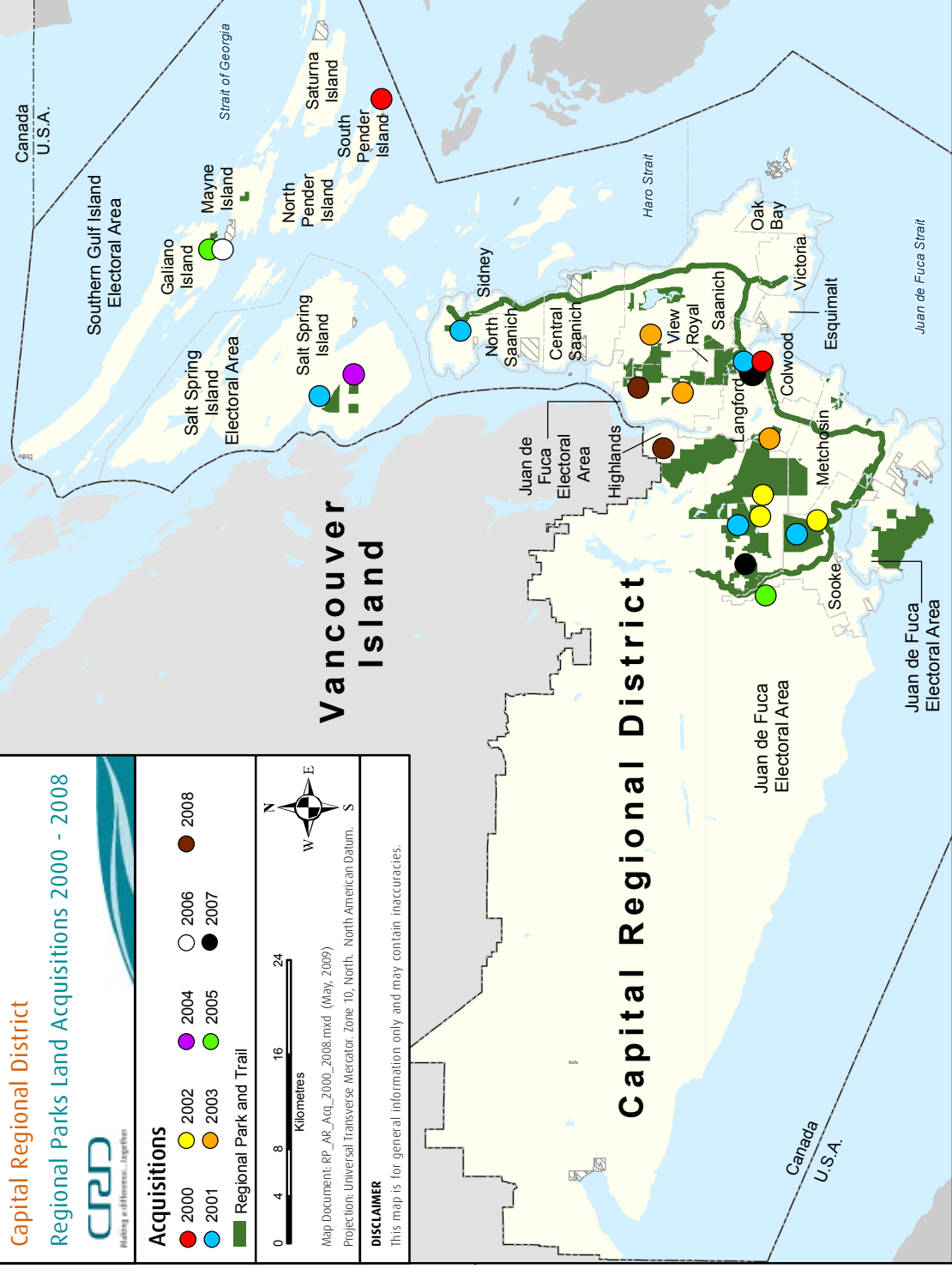
- 2000
- 2001
- 2002
- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
- 2008

■ Regional Park and Trail

Map Document: RP_AR_Acq_2000_2008.mxd (May, 2009)
 Projection: Universal Transverse Mercator, Zone 10, North - North American Datum.

DISCLAIMER
 This map is for general information only and may contain inaccuracies.



2008 Land Acquisitions

Land Acquisitions 2000 to 2008

The Land Acquisition Fund was established in 2000 for a ten-year period. The fund generates approximately \$1.7 million per year to purchase land for regional parks and trails.

CRD made 21 acquisitions between 2000 and 2008. The total amount of land acquired through this period was 2,958 hectares valued at \$27.8 million. The cost to property owners was \$1.92 per \$100,000 assessed residential property value or \$10.00 per average residential household assessment (\$475,644 in 2008).

Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt

The Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt is a proposed corridor of provincial and regional parkland of approximately 10,000 hectares stretching from Saanich Inlet to the Sooke Basin. The idea has been the dream of many people for 50 years and is supported in the Regional Growth Strategy and Regional Parks Master Plan. The Sea to Sea will provide a backdrop of green space and protected areas to urban and suburban development. The park land acquisition is now 83 percent complete.

Mount Work Regional Park

Two parcels of land were added to Mount Work Regional Park in 2008. Both parcels are adjacent to the west boundary of the park. The total area acquired was 130 hectares with a value of \$4.3 million. One parcel, valued at \$2.2 million was donated by The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC) and the second parcel, valued at \$2.1 million, was acquired through a partnership that included the land owner, TLC and Regional Parks. These acquisitions are a major step in helping Regional



Lone Tree Regional Park

Land Acquisitions At A Glance

Total value of land acquired 2000 to 2008:
\$27.8 million

CRD's contribution:
\$17.25 million
(62 percent)

Partners' contributions:
\$10.55 million
(38 percent)

Financial contribution target established by CRD Board:
65 percent CRD
35 percent partners

“Seals, Seals is wonderful, lots of great information,
love all of your programs.”

SJ – Saanich



Red Rock Crab



Nature Program at Witty's Lagoon



Spider web

Parks complete the west boundary of Mount Work. The land protects three types of forests and provides a buffer to the existing parkland. A regional trail link is proposed through the acquired land to connect with the existing trail across the top of the park to provide a circuit route.

Trans Canada Trail

CRD Parks acquired a three-kilometre strip of land north of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park Reserve as a trail corridor to help complete a Trans Canada Trail link to the Cowichan Valley Regional District. This corridor, acquired from a private developer, connects directly with parkland already secured in the Cowichan Valley.

The amount of land required to complete the link is 750 metres. Once acquired, design and engineering for the Trans Canada Trail on Southern Vancouver Island from Langford to Shawnigan Lake will begin. Construction of the trail will follow, subject to budget approval.

Michelle Trommelen

Operations Services

Operations Services provides 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 safety and security, including bylaw enforcement and fire management, are provided by Operations staff.

Fire Suppression

CRD Parks Fire Crews responded to 12 small fires in 2008. Crews were assisted by CRD Water Services, local fire departments and the Ministry of Forests Crews in suppression activities. Regional Parks and CRD Water Services entered into an agreement with the Ministry of Forests to ensure that aircraft priority will be provided for the protection of the water supply and the surrounding parkland.

Staff has begun implementing the recommendations from a Community Wildfire Risk Assessment carried out for Mount Work, Thetis Lake, Francis King and Mill Hill regional parks. The study was done in partnership with the Town of View Royal.

Bylaw Enforcement

2008 saw a sharp increase in bylaw enforcement interactions with 11,837 contacts reported. Most violations were associated with alcohol, resulting in a 900% increase in evictions from the parks.

Violations associated with dog owners and their dogs numbered 1,029 separate infractions. Pet owners are encouraged to respect the park and the right of other users to enjoy their visits.

The Galloping Goose and Lochside regional trails continue to be patrolled in order to deal with issues around public safety and conflicts between cyclists and walkers on these multi-use trails.



John Luton

Lochside Regional Trail

Bylaw Enforcement at a Glance

11,837 violations in total

8,390 alcohol violations with the majority at these parks:

- 6,103 Thetis Lake
- 1,145 Sooke Potholes
- 643 Durrance Lake

900% increase in park evictions:

- 2006 - 106
- 2007 - 483
- 2008 - 930

1,029 dog-related infractions

“Keep having these programs!
Keep helping young and old alike to appreciate nature.”

CM – Ottawa, Ontario



Sign installation



Facility maintenance



Fire suppression

Operations and Maintenance Initiatives

The following regional park and trail initiatives were completed in 2008:

- Crack sealed the Lochside Regional Trail, paved sections in Saanich and re-surfaced sections in Central Saanich.
- Demolished the Hamsterly Beach concession building and undertook remediation of the area.
- Upgraded trail and repaired paving at Thetis Lake Regional Park.
- Paved the access road into Horth Hill Regional Park.
- Paved the boat launch in Mount Work Regional Park.
- Replaced a picnic shelter roof, re-surfaced the trail and upgraded playgrounds in Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park.
- Assisted with invasive species removal at Ayum Creek Regional Park Reserve.
- Conducted maintenance of Heritage Orchards.
- Worked with CRD Water Services on installing the new Sooke water main. Wood from the project was provided to First Nations for ceremonial use.
- Conducted Canadian Goose population controls through egg addling.
- Worked with the Metchosin Farmers Institute to design and construct improvements to Marwood parking lot on the Goose.
- Installed hand rails on Mt. Wells Regional Park to control trail braiding and address public safety.
- Conducted homeless site clean up in Mill Hill Regional Park.

Planning, Resource Management and Development

CRD Regional Parks staff are responsible for preparing plans, managing resources and capital development to ensure good decision making. Planning staff, working with partners and through consultation, develop the Strategic 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.

Planning

Potential Regional Parks West of Sooke River

In 2008 planning staff looked at potential regional park areas in the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area west of Sooke River. A vision for establishing parks in this area was developed and possible future areas identified.

E&N Rail Trail

The Esquimalt and Nanaimo (E&N) Rail Trail project is a planned regional trail within the rail corridor from downtown Victoria to the West Shore. This is a 'rail-with-trail' project, allowing the continuation of rail service with the addition of a paved cycling and walking trail within the corridor.

Over \$11 million was secured through federal gas tax funding to create an alternative transportation option. Detailed design and engineering for the rail trail was in full swing in 2008. The goal is to begin construction in 2009, with completion slated for 2010.



East Sooke Regional Park

Regional Parks & Trails With Highest Visitation

East Sooke

Elk/Beaver Lake

Galloping Goose

Island View Beach

Lochside

Mt. Work

Sooke Potholes

Thetis Lake

Witty's Lagoon

“Thank you for a very interesting program. It was a new one for me and one I’ll definitely do again. I am always pleased with the skill level of the presenters.”

AG – Tillicum Elementary



Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt

John Hasell

Park Management Planning

Park management planning for four regional parks in the Sea to Sea Green Blue Belt continued throughout 2008. The four parks included in the management planning process are Ayum Creek Regional Park Reserve, Kapoor Regional Park Reserve, Sea to Sea Regional Park Reserve and Sooke Potholes Regional Park.

A draft plan and implementation schedule will be ready for public comment in 2009, with the goal of opening a portion of the Sea to Sea Regional Park Reserve to the public in 2009/2010.



E & N Rail Trail Project

Resource Management

Mill Hill Regional Park Ecosystem Restoration

Invasive plants and trampling threaten one of BC’s highest concentrations of rare plants, located in Mill Hill Regional Park. In its seventh year of a multi-year restoration project, trail segments were relocated and better delineated, and 2.8 hectares were cleared of more than 4 metric tonnes of invasive species. In addition to the staff effort, 105 volunteers contributed more than 450 hours to invasive species removal.



Mill Hill Regional Park

Species at Risk Surveys, Monitoring, and Stewardship

Ninety-three different species at risk have been documented in CRD regional parks. In 2008, surveys were conducted for threatened and endangered plants, slugs, turtles and snakes, and recovery activities were identified and implemented.

Planning, Resource Management and Development

continued

Invasive Species Management

Invasive species management is directed at priority species and sites in regional parks. In 2008, management focussed on Black and Spotted Knapweed and Carpet Burweed, as well as Scotch Broom and other invasive species at sites of high ecological value.

Development

Thetis Lake Lakeshore Trail Upgrade

This major multi-year project to restore the lakeshore environment and redesign and reconstruct the main lakeshore trails continued into its second year. At the heart of the project is the desire to ensure conservation of the park's natural areas while supporting high levels of recreational use.

Phase 2 restoration work on the Lower Thetis Lake Trail was completed in April 2009. Completion of the two phases provides a new and improved 1.3 kilometer hiking trail along Thetis Lakes' popular east shore.

CRD Water Services Waterline Project

Regional Parks continued to work in collaboration with CRD Water Services on the installation of the Sooke water supply pipeline on the Galloping Goose Regional Trail adjacent to Sooke River. The project will ensure a secure water supply for Sooke residents. Upon completion of the project in 2009 the Galloping Goose Regional Trail will be restored.



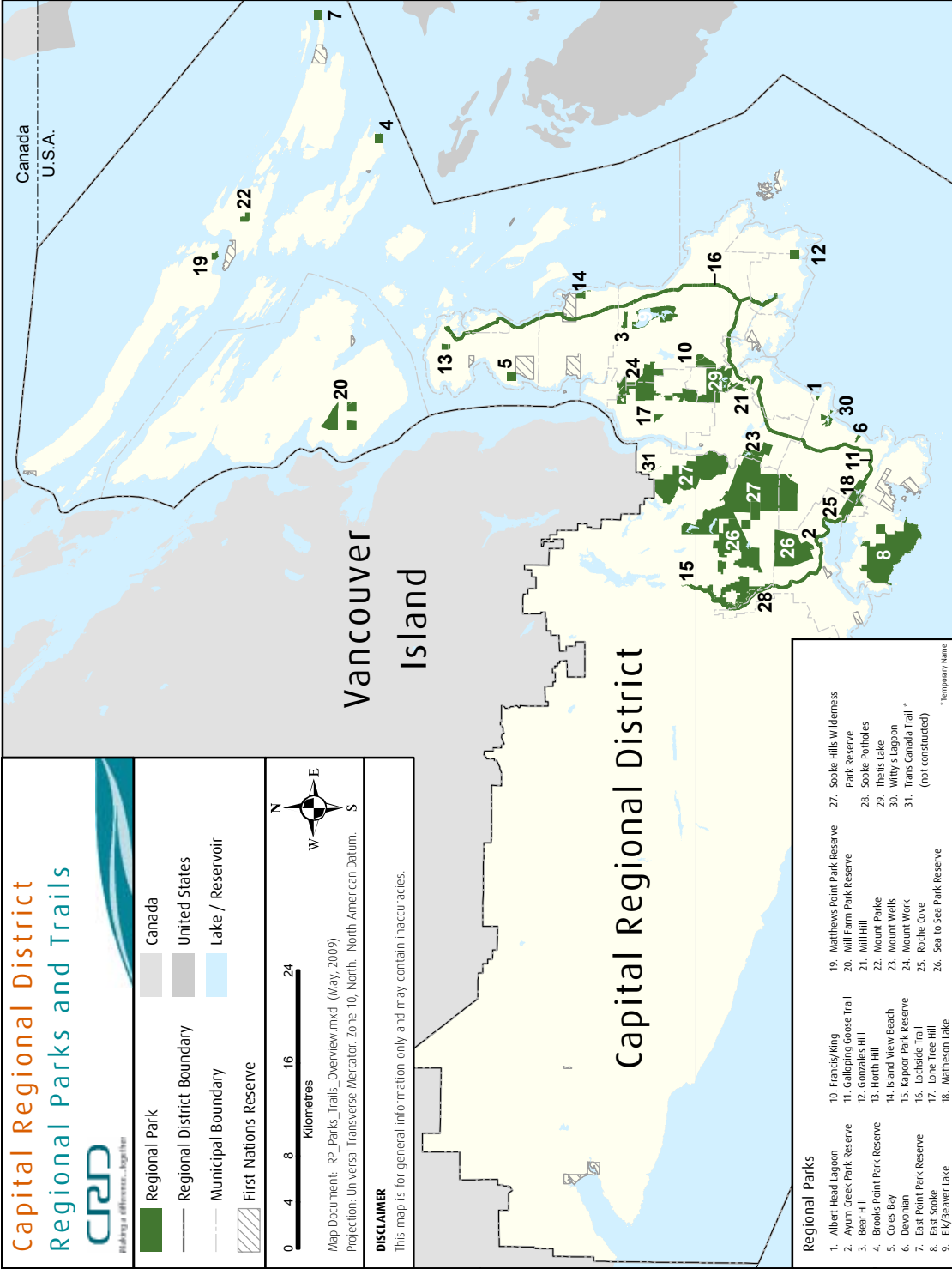
Thetis Lake Regional Park
Trail Restoration

What is a Park Management Plan?

It describes the goals, objectives and actions for protecting the natural environment and cultural features in a regional park or regional trail.

A plan identifies the types of permitted outdoor recreation uses and where they will be allowed, the types and locations of park facilities, and the types of services.

A successful management plan balances the desired and necessary activities of four key park attributes: ecological conservation, visitor experience, cultural heritage management and park operations.



Visitor Services and Community Development

Visitor Services and Community Development staff deliver interpretive programs, provide volunteer opportunities for residents to be involved in park stewardship and cultivate community partnerships. Staff also offer opportunities for park visitors to learn more about their natural and cultural heritage, provide information to the public about regional parks and trails and issue park use permits. The service area provides administrative and financial support to the division.

Environmental Interpretation Nature Programs

In 2008 the Environmental Interpretation program had an exceptional year: 47,617 people participated in 850 Regional Parks programs – a 42 percent increase over 2007.

Environmental Interpretation staff doubled the number of community events in which they participated. More than 12,355 people visited our interpretive presentations at 20 community events.

Special events continue to be an important component of the programming roster. In 2008 more than 6,000 participants took part in 32 different celebrations of the natural world.

Supporting the in-class efforts of teachers and educating future park users continues to be an important programming component. 8,061 students, parents and teachers attended 225 school programs, a 2.5 percent increase over 2007.

For residents unable to make it to a CRD park, staff continue to reach out to the community: 82 off-site programs were provided for 2,800 people at a variety of venues.



Park Interpreter at Snake Days
Nature Program

Nature Programs At A Glance

- 47,617 participants in 850 programs
- 12,355 visitors at 20 community events
- 6,098 participants at 32 nature celebrations
- 1,560 registered for specialty programming
- 1,230 attended guided nature walks
- 8,061 attended 225 school programs

“The interpreters are great!
Wing-span poster! Kids stuff!

EO – Metchosin



Volunteer Bee Keepers



Adult Hike



Owls Nature Program

Volunteers in Parks

The 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 2,370 hours to patrol trails, report concerns and educate visitors.
- Volunteer Naturalists contributed 1,136 hours to welcome visitors, and provide education and information at our nature centres.
- Volunteer Gatekeepers contributed 162.5 hours to keep parks secure after hours.
- Community Group volunteers contributed 1,442.5 hours to invasive species removal in regional parks.
- Volunteer Beekeepers contributed over 30 hours to tend bee hives.

Park Use Permits

Regional Parks staff manage all activities and uses within regional parks and trails, some of which require a park use permit to minimize impacts on the natural environment, park visitors, park operations and facilities.

In 2008 Regional Parks issued 232 permits which attracted over 26,000 participants and spectators to regional parks.

Partners In Parks

CRD Parks has partnered with a number of community-based organizations and other governments in environmental stewardship and leadership, volunteering, education, recreation and tourism activities. We would like to thank our 2008 partners.

Elk/Beaver Lake Equestrian Society (EBLES) operates the equestrian centre at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park. 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.

With funding support from the **Government of Canada** through the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, the **Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team** provided training in invasive plant identification and management for Regional Parks staff.

The Government of Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk contributed \$46,861 to the Garry Oak Ecosystems Restoration Project at Mill Hill Regional Park. Volunteers and the **Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team** also continue to support the project.

Kiwanis Club of Saanich originally constructed and financed three 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 and Thetis Lake regional parks from May to September each year.

Leadership Victoria chose construction of a new teaching shelter at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park as its volunteer project for a lasting contribution to environmental protection and education in the Capital Region.



Matthews Point Regional Park Reserve

A Special Thanks

CRD Parks gratefully acknowledges the following community groups and individuals who participated in volunteer projects in 2008:

- Canada World Youth
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
- Citizen Canine
- Cordova Bay 55+
- Friends of Ecological Reserves
- Great Canadian Shoreline Clean Up
- Jewish Student Association
- Phoenix Human Services
- Power To Be Adventure Therapy Society
- School District 62 – Choices Program
- UVic Environmental Law

“The program was excellent. I would just like to thank the interpreters for providing my class with a terrific field trip to Witty’s Lagoon.”

DF – Braefoot Elementary



Canoe Program

Through a partnership with Regional Parks and the **Victoria Natural History Society**, this open air classroom will facilitate the delivery of environmental educational programs for youth, families and the public when completed in 2009.

The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC) has been a long-time donor and partner with the CRD on many land acquisitions. In 2008, TLC purchased 65 hectares of land valued at \$2.2 million to become part of Mount Work Regional Park. The extension will go a long way toward increasing the region’s ecological and recreational areas, while protecting sensitive habitat.



Matheson Lake Regional Park

TLC also undertook a restoration project at Gonzales Hill Regional Park. Activities included inventory, mapping, invasive plant removal and native plant seed collection, propagation and planting.

TLC collaborated with Regional Parks staff and students from the University of Victoria on various aspects of the project and recruited volunteers to participate in the restoration work.



Volunteers at Mill Hill
Broom Sweep

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.

Partners In Parks continued

In collaboration with regional parks staff, the **Society for the Protection of Ayum Creek** undertook invasive plant removal at Ayum Creek Regional Park Reserve.

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.

In 2008, Regional Parks continued to collaborate with the **Tsawout First Nation, Environment Canada, the District of Central Saanich, the University of Victoria and BC Ministry of Environment** towards the development of a conservation strategy for the Cordova Shore. This area includes Island View Beach Regional Park and other ecologically significant sand dune, sand beach, salt marsh and other ecosystems, populations of plant and animal species at risk and a critical site for migratory birds.

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.



Kristina Ovaska

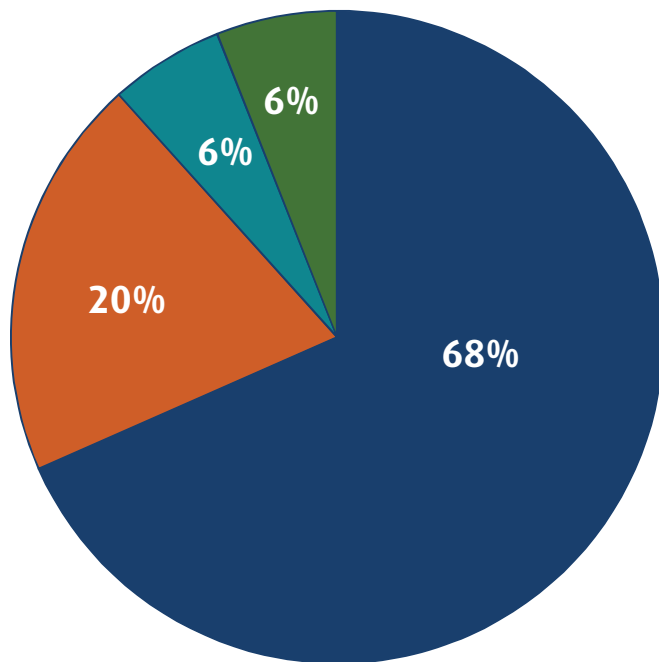
Nationally endangered Blue-grey Taildropper Slug

Year At A Glance

More than 3.6 million people visit the CRD's regional parks and trails annually.

- 47,617 people participated in 850 environmental interpretation programs.
- 725 park volunteers contributed more than 5,000 hours to regional parks and trails.
- 232 park use permits were issued for special events and activities which attracted 26,000 participants and spectators.
- 29,245 visitors explored the Regional Parks web site. More than 500 web pages were viewed each day, with the total page viewing count over 193,000.

2008 CRD Regional Parks Budget



Expenditure Budget 2008 (Board approved)

Total:
\$8,333,920

Cost per Average
Household Assessment:
\$43.88

Cost per \$100,000 of
Converted Assessments:
\$8.39

CRD Parks Operations	\$5,698,430
Capital - Land Acquisition	\$1,663,530
Capital - Projects and Equipment	\$499,820
Debt Services on Acquisitions Prior to 2000	\$472,140

Capital Regional District | 2008



Saltn Flowers at Mill Hill Regional Park - photo Gordon Tolman

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CRD
Making a difference...together