

Parks & Natural Resource Protection

Strategy

Target Outcome

We envision additional land acquisitions and increased access to parks and recreational trails.

Strategic Context

Strategies

- [CRD Climate Action Strategy](#)
- [Regional Parks Strategic Plan](#)
- [Land Acquisition Strategy](#)
- [Special Task Force on First Nations Relations](#)
- [Statement of Reconciliation](#)
- [Regional Growth Strategy](#)

Trends, risks and issues

- **Changes to Regional Development** – The region is experiencing growth in multi-family developments, development sites and intensity of development. This is leading to more pressure for recreational space on nearby regional parks.
- **Changes to Recreational Use Patterns** – There is increased pressure for a diversity of recreational uses and greater advocacy from stakeholder groups. Overcrowding in key areas, such as fresh water swimming locations, results in limited resources diverted to high-use areas for increased services, compliance and enforcement. Increased use in the backcountry, including unauthorized uses, such as off-trail hiking and mountain biking, is creating a need for more education, communication, monitoring, compliance, and decommissioning of unauthorized trails. Although this use may decrease slightly post pandemic, it signals what increased use will look like in the regional parks system as the population and pressures grow.
- **Sustainable Service Delivery** – Major infrastructure in regional parks is nearing the end of its lifespan and needs improvements to support demands they were not built for. In recent years, the increased cost of materials and the complexity of projects has led to high costs for these major capital projects. Anticipate increased costs associated with the need for improved and safer active transportation infrastructure.
- **First Nation Reconciliation** – Projects, management plans and initiatives are increasingly complex, as it is important to provide for meaningful engagement, plan for land altering works, celebrate indigenous perspective through education and communication, and protect cultural values in regional parks.
- **Demographic Changes** – The population is aging overall but is also trending to a high proportion of young people in some parts of the region. The ethnic composition of the population is becoming more

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diverse. This trend is anticipated to continue and will create demands for different forms of recreation and new ways of using open space. It also raises the need to help new migrants to learn about the regional parks and trails, to fully enjoy the park experiences, and to understand and respect the environment of the regional parks and trails system. These demographic changes will give rise to different recreation demands for people with differing needs and abilities.

- **Events** – The regional parks provide locations for recreation activity, events, tourism and filming, all of which are major contributors to the regional economy. However, there is also growing demand for economic activity in the parks, arising from activities such as commercial filming, and numerous group events. The number of permits continues to increase to allow these type of events to occur within the system.
- **Volunteers** – There is an increased interest in volunteering in regional parks and trails. Volunteer input is a valued and essential contribution to the regional park system; however, it requires investment to manage and facilitate volunteer programs.
- **Ecological Integrity** – Over a number of years, there has been increased interest in understanding the region’s culture and biodiversity. There is a worldwide trend toward maintaining the viability of ecosystems rather than species management. The regional parks play an important role in managing entire and relatively intact ecosystems, and allowing people to experience the sights and sounds of nature and to participate in the management of the parks. Meeting these expectations places pressures on providing the funding, supervision and expertise to support conservation programs that maintain and monitor ecological integrity.
- **Human disturbance** – Conflict can occur between the need to protect ecological, geological and cultural features and visitor access or recreational activities. While some park features, such as streams, coastal dunes and similar natural ecosystems, may be considered attractive for some recreation pursuits, they may not be suitable for many activities because of their vulnerability to irreversible change.
- **Listed Species** – Effective management of threatened plant and animal species can be complex and requires specialist expertise. Threatened species recovery is a long-term process and success may take time and be financially costly.
- **Climate Change** – Weather events associated with climate change are unpredictable and at times create a significant pressure on the regional parks system.
- **Monitoring and research** – Ongoing monitoring and research is required to evaluate the success of conservation programs, the impact of activities on parks and to determine where additional efforts may be required.

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Services

Core Services Levels	
Service	Levels
<p>Planning, Resource Management & Development</p> <p>Contribute to effective and efficient decision making through plan and policy development, natural and cultural resource management, capital development planning, project management and geographic mapping; development of the Strategic Plan and park management plans. Provide oversight of the land acquisition program. Guide the implementation of scientific and technical work related to environmental management.</p> <p>→ Service level adjusted, see initiative 6h-1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage two Management Plan processes per year, with at least one approval annually; direct and conduct engagement with, on average, three First Nations per plan. • Evaluate 20 candidate properties for land acquisition and complete two acquisition per year. Annual budget of \$4m. Develop activity reports and strategy documents. • Support planning and provide project management, where needed, for capital facility projects, annual expenditures to \$3m. • Manage two contracts per year for technical planning studies or services. • Undertake five conservation projects per year. • Manage asset inventory data and coordinate renewal forecasting asset management and capital project planning. • Provide spatial and GIS data analysis and collection for a range of purposes, including existing and new digital data sharing agreements and up to 200 public and internal cartography products for 34 parks and 100s of sign posts, park facilities, trails, etc. • Maintain and develop asset management data. • Respond to around 70 development referrals per year.
<p>Regional Park Operations</p> <p>Regional Park Operations is responsible for the operations and maintenance of all regional parks and regional trails. Park Operations staff operate and maintain all regional park facilities and critical infrastructure, including, bridges, dams, roads and trails. The operation of regional parks occurs 365 days per year with facilities being visited once or twice daily on average. The regional park system geographically spans from the Southern Gulf</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage and maintain 400 km of park trails, 55 washrooms and 132 garbage containers (most serviced daily). • Capital project management and implementation; undertake 20+ infrastructure and facility replacement and repair projects annually. • Every year, prepare or update a Facilities Plan and 33 Operating Plans. • Manage three regional campgrounds; meet target of 65% weekend occupancy rate at Sooke

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Core Services Levels	
Service	Levels
Islands to Jordan River and requires staff to travel large distances to visit facilities daily, weekly and monthly.	<p>Potholes and Island View Beach (from May to September).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct 5,000 compliance and enforcement patrol hours annually (CRD bylaw enforcement officers and CRD park rangers). Over 10,000 hours of vehicle travel is logged annually by operations staff.
<p>Visitor Services & Community Development</p> <p>Contribute to quality visitor experience in regional parks through education, communication products, and planning for recreational activities. Create opportunities for volunteer engagement. Serve the public by answering public inquiries in a timely manner. Issue permits for events, commercial use, and other. Monitor trends in visitor use through park use and resident surveys. Manage online registration for regional parks camping.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 580 volunteers delivering 5,700 hours of engagement, parks and trails condition checks and invasive species removal. Deliver 120 educational programs, 130 nature outings and 10 outreach events annually. Process 240 special events permits annually. Conduct up to eight Visitor Use Surveys annually. <p>(subject to COVID-19 health protocols)</p>
<p>Regional Trails</p> <p>Manage Regional Trails system to protect and operate three regional trails that provide a transportation and recreation function and that provide non-motorized trails for active transportation and recreation to connect municipalities, electoral areas and the region with adjacent jurisdictions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operate, manage and maintain 95 km of multi-use regional trails. Conduct 250 km of boom flail vegetation removal annually.
<p>Support Services</p> <p>The core services listed rely on the support of several corporate and support divisions to effectively operate on a daily basis. These services are reported on in the Accountability Community Need Summary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services include Asset Management, Facility Management, Financial Services, Information Technology & GIS, Information Services, Human Resources & Corporate Safety, Corporate Communications, Legislative Services, Legal Services, Risk & Insurance and Real Estate Services.

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Initiatives					
Ref	Initiative	Description	Year(s)	2023 impacts ¹	
6h-1	Goose Management Service Establishment	Regional coordination of Canada Goose population through a new service	2023 – 2026	+0.5 FTE Term	\$237K Requisition

Initiatives highlighted in blue are contingent on further electoral approval.

Business Model

Funding
<p>Who contributes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 13 Municipalities and 3 Electoral Areas Support Services: varies per service <p>Funding Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requisitions, grants, donations and non-tax revenue

Reporting Structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Parks Committee

¹ Budget impacts reflect full program costs, including cost of staffing

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Performance			
Definition and Source	2021 Actual	2022 Forecast	2023 Target
<p>Metric 1: 100% of critical infrastructure in the Regional Parks and Trails system in good or better condition</p> <p>Percentage of critical infrastructure in the Regional Parks and Trails system that is in good or very good condition; data from asset management sustainable report cards.</p>	80%	85%	100%
<p>Metric 2: Maintain a visitor experience satisfaction rate of 85% or better for Regional Parks and Trails</p> <p>Percentage of visitors that described their overall experience with Regional Parks and Trails as 'quite satisfactory' or 'very satisfactory'; data from CRD Regional Parks Resident Survey 2017 (collected every 5 years).</p>	85%	85%	85%
<p>Metric 3: A 25% contribution of land acquisition funding from community partners</p> <p>Percentage of the Land Acquisition Fund contributions annually that comes from community partners; data from Land Acquisition Updates.</p>	26%	25%	25%
<p>Metric 4: Maintain a volunteer base of greater than 500 people</p> <p>Number of active volunteers in Regional Parks and Trails; data from volunteer registry.</p>	320	500	500

Discussion

Link to Target Outcome

- The Land Acquisition Fund provides funding for the purchase of land for regional parks and trails. Tracking community contributions helps demonstrate the sufficient availability of funding and community support for the strategy that has been put in place.
- Measuring the level of asset renewal investment and condition of parks and recreation trail infrastructure is a good indicator of how well-maintained, and therefore accessible and inclusive, the infrastructure is. This is supplemented by information about visitor satisfaction to ensure that expectations are met and that CRD actions and initiatives are facilitating a good experience for visitors.

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Discussion

- Metric 1: Asset Management Sustainable Report Cards to be updated in 2023 and an asset management plan completed. Criticality defined as 4 or 5
- Metric 2: Resident Survey to be completed in 2023
- Metric 3: CRD continues to seek partnerships for land acquisition
- Metric 4: Lower volunteer numbers during COVID-19 pandemic but numbers are creeping back up to pre-pandemic levels

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Initiative Progress Report

Parks & Natural Resource Protection

Initiatives approved in 2020, 2021 & 2022			
Ref	Initiative	% complete	Progress to date
6a-1	Regional Parks Strategy Update	100%	Lead: Regional Parks (2022) Completed – Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan Board approved on an interim basis for 1 year.
6a-8	Dams, Bridges and Trestles Capital Reserve	100%	Lead: Regional Parks (2020) Completed
6b-1	Invasive Species Management	100%	Lead: Regional Parks (2020) Part of core services.
6b-2	Environmental Stewardship Programs	100%	Lead: Regional Parks (2020) Part of core services.
6b-3	Environmental Stewardship Volunteers	100%	Lead: Regional Parks (2020) Part of core services – program continues to evolve.
6b-4	Park Operations	100%	Lead: Regional Parks (2020) Completed
6b-5	Mountain Bike Policy	100%	Lead: Regional Parks (2020) Completed – CRD Mountain Biking Guidelines approved by CRD Board on May 12, 2021.
6d-1	Engage with First Nations	100%	Lead: Regional Parks (2020) Completed – vacancy repurposed for First Nations Cultural Interpreter.
6e-1	Land Acquisition Fund Renewal	100%	Lead: Regional Parks (2020) Completed
6f-1	Dog Management Policy Framework	100%	Lead: Regional Parks (2020) Completed
6g-1	Regional Parks Service	100%	Lead: Regional Parks (2022) Completed – 26 new FTE's approved in 2022 budget (10 for 2023).

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Capital Plan Update

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Planning for 2023 and beyond

The Capital Regional District (CRD) is responsible for 33 regional parks and four regional trails, comprising over 13,300 hectares of land, 300km of park trails and 100km of paved and gravel regional trails. Since 2012, visits to regional parks have increased by 64% and usage of regional trails has increased by 42%.

Over the last four years, staff have taken steps to address operational and maintenance pressures and challenges. Despite these steps, a significant number of critical park assets are nearing end-of-life and staff continue to see an increasing need to improve regional trails, which are primarily off-street greenway corridors, to support recreation and active transportation. There is also a growing demand to renew and enhance the assets within regional parks and to protect natural and cultural values

With the goal of increasing regional trails as active transportation corridors there is a need for a comprehensive long term financial plan to sustainably fund regional trails operations and capital.

Background

The CRD's 2019 Regional Parks Sustainable Service Delivery Plan Report Card provides a summary of the condition of assets in regional parks and trails. There were an estimated 273 major engineered assets in regional parks and trails at that time (43.5% are regional trails assets). A number of these assets, such as dams, bridges, and buildings have high replacement costs, need to meet public safety standards and are critical for continued public use of the system.

The total 2019 replacement value (as identified in the Report Cards) for all built infrastructure over the current lifespan was estimated at \$105 million. Regional trails infrastructure costs make up approximately 40% of the asset replacement value (around \$40 million). These estimates were based on an estimated condition assessment and valuation of existing assets as of 2019. It did not include enhanced or expanded assets. Taking into consideration inflation, cost and availability of materials, the estimated 2022 built assets replacement value is \$140 million. Staff will be updating the Sustainable Report Cards and completing an asset management plan for regional parks and trails. More information is available in the Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2022-2032.

At the April 20th Transportation Committee staff were directed to develop a funding strategy for regional trails to support the Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan, which also includes the widening and lighting plan. Further direction was provided to prepare a funding strategy that does not rely on grants.

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Capital Plan Update

Five Year Capital Plan

The Regional Parks Five Year Capital Plan lays out the overall funding strategy for the capital investment priorities over the next five years. Currently, the Regional Parks Five Year Capital Plan only considers replacement/removal of existing assets.

Regional trails lighting and widening grants are considered in the capital plan and if all, or some, of the grant money is not obtained for the project, the funding of that project from capital reserves will reduce the availability of funds for other critical park projects and the widening and lighting project could be stretched out over a decade or more in order to manage the impact that funding that project will have on the overall park system.

The regional parks Five Year Capital Budget is fully subscribed on asset renewals to address critical infrastructure, public safety and to meet regulatory requirements around dams.

Next steps

Pending the outcome of the grant approval process a revised Five Year Capital Plan may be required.