

Regional Parks 2017 Annual Report

CRD
Making a difference...together

Capital Regional District | Parks and Environmental Services



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About CRD Regional Parks

Introduction

The Capital Regional District (CRD) is the regional government for the 13 municipalities and 3 electoral districts that are located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. Since 1966, Regional Parks has been one of the regional services provided by the CRD.

Who We Are

CRD Regional Parks protects and manages more than 13,000 hectares of spectacular and easily accessible natural areas on southern Vancouver Island and the Southern Gulf Islands. It consists of 31 regional parks and reserves and 3 regional trails. The regional parks and trails network is part of a spectrum of parks and protected areas located across the region, which serve a range of recreational, ecological, green space and amenity purposes. The regional trails serve both a transportation and recreation function.

CRD Regional Parks staff prepare plans and manage natural and cultural resources and infrastructure. Staff collaborate and consult with various partners to implement the CRD's strategic priorities, park and trail management plans, and service plans; to oversee land acquisitions; and to undertake scientific and technical work related to environmental management, conservation, and restoration. CRD Regional Parks provides volunteer opportunities and provides free and low-cost information and education services to communities, including school field trips, public programs, and community events.

Value of Regional Parks and Trails

- Contributes to regional sustainability
- Protects our natural world
- Builds healthy communities
- Contributes to regional economy
- Reflects local culture

Acknowledgement

CRD Regional Parks would like to acknowledge that the park system is within the traditional territories of the Nuu-chah-nulth and Coast Salish people.

Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park



Strategic Priorities

The Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012-21 helps set direction for regional parks and trails. It includes a long-term vision and mission as well as short-term strategic priorities and actions.

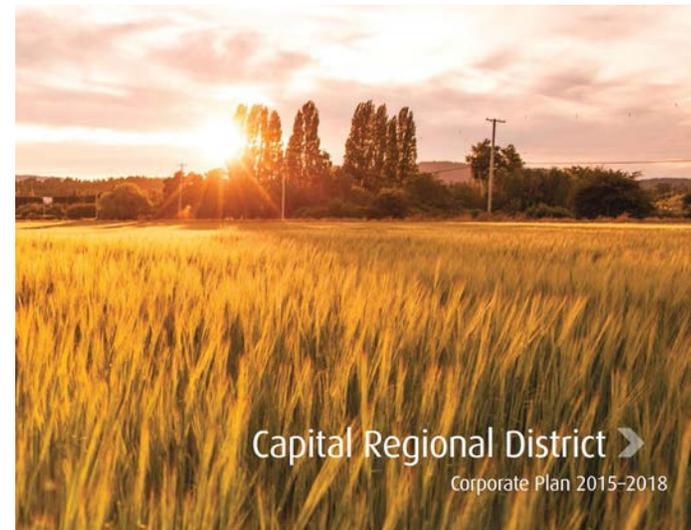
The strategic priorities are:

- Strengthen the management of existing parks and trails.
- Strategically plan for and open existing land-banked parks and trails as resources are approved.
- Strengthen community involvement and partnership.
- Prepare for future land acquisitions.
- Promote the health benefits of regional parks and trails.
- Engage in planning for regional sustainability.



The CRD Corporate Plan is renewed every 4 years and sets direction for achieving strategic priorities set by the CRD Board. These priorities guide the activities of the organization and provide a focus for service delivery. The 2015-18 plan includes 51 strategic priorities, grouped into 12 priority areas and centred on 5 themes. It also includes corporate and core service priorities for each service within CRD. The themes and priority areas that are especially relevant to Regional Parks are:

- Sustainable
 - Climate Change
 - Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health
 - Environmental Protection
- Livable
 - Regional Infrastructure
 - Land Acquisition
- Vibrant
 - Recreational trails in parks
 - New park reserves
- Collaborate
 - First Nations
- Serve
 - Education, Outreach, and Information



Capital Regional District Regional Parks and Trails

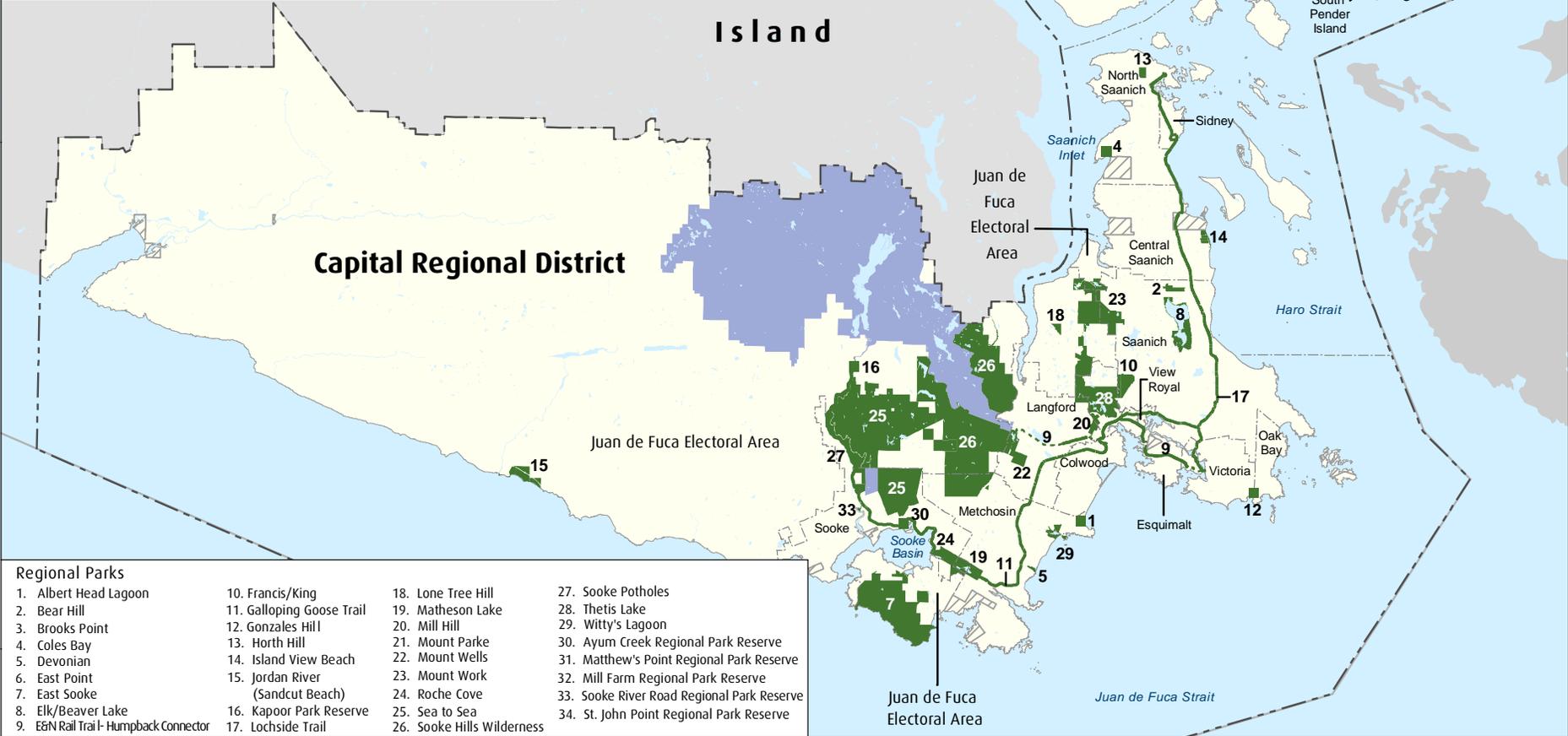


- Regional Park
- Lake / Reservoir
- Greater Victoria Water Supply Area
- First Nation Reserve
- Regional Trail (Complete)
- Regional Trail (Proposed)
- Regional District Boundary
- Municipal Area Boundary

1:425,000
 0 2 4 8 12 Kilometres
 Projection: Universal Transverse Mercator, Zone 10, North, North American Datum.

DISCLAIMER
 This map is for general information purposes only and may contain inaccuracies.
 February 2018 | RP_Parks_Trails_Overview_8.5x11_CLR_AnnualReport.mxd | dataservices@crd.bc.ca

34 Regional Parks & Trails
13,000 Hectares
280 km of Designated Trails in Parks
100 km of Regional Trails
7.3 Million Visits in 2017



- | | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Regional Parks | | | |
| 1. Albert Head Lagoon | 10. Francis/King | 18. Lone Tree Hill | 27. Sooke Potholes |
| 2. Bear Hill | 11. Galloping Goose Trail | 19. Matheson Lake | 28. Thetis Lake |
| 3. Brooks Point | 12. Gonzales Hill | 20. Mill Hill | 29. Witty's Lagoon |
| 4. Coles Bay | 13. Horth Hill | 21. Mount Parke | 30. Ayum Creek Regional Park Reserve |
| 5. Devonian | 14. Island View Beach | 22. Mount Wells | 31. Matthew's Point Regional Park Reserve |
| 6. East Point | 15. Jordan River (Sandcut Beach) | 23. Mount Work | 32. Mill Farm Regional Park Reserve |
| 7. East Sooke | 16. Kapoor Park Reserve | 24. Roche Cove | 33. Sooke River Road Regional Park Reserve |
| 8. Elk/Beaver Lake | 17. Lochside Trail | 25. Sea to Sea | 34. St. John Point Regional Park Reserve |
| 9. E&N Rail Trail - Humpback Connector | | 26. Sooke Hills Wilderness | |

Regional Park Classifications Description

WILDERNESS AREA

A Regional Wilderness Area is characterized by:

- a large land base, generally more than 1,000 hectares;
- the conservation of ecosystems, with minimal human interference;
- opportunities for visitors to experience, firsthand, the park's ecosystems;
- opportunities for backcountry recreation;
- the provision of few, if any, rudimentary services and facilities; and
- the experience of remoteness, solitude and harmony with nature.

Maintaining wilderness areas in the region is an important part of the Regional Parks function. Wilderness is critical to sustain wildlife and plants that rely on sizable natural areas for their survival and to provide wilderness outdoor experiences and activities. They are places where residents can experience wilderness close to their home. East Sooke, Sea to Sea and Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Parks are the sole examples of Regional Wilderness Areas in the capital region.

CONSERVATION AREA

A Regional Conservation Area protects regionally significant natural environments that contain sensitive and threatened ecosystems (e.g., they will have significant Garry oak, old-growth forest, salt marsh, or estuary ecosystems). They contain rare or endangered plant and wildlife species and their supporting ecosystems. The size of a Regional Conservation Area should be sufficient to ensure that natural features can be protected and remain viable over the long-term.

Outdoor activities will be permitted in a Regional Conservation Area, provided they have minimal impact on the natural environment. In most cases, the main activity will be hiking.

These areas will generally have basic facilities, such as trails, parking areas, toilets, and signage.

Examples of a Regional Conservation Area are Witty's Lagoon, Mill Hill, Francis/King, Matthews Point and Island View Beach Regional Parks.

NATURAL AREA

A Regional Natural Area protects the natural environment and provides opportunities for a range of appropriate outdoor experiences and activities. These natural areas are not as ecologically sensitive or diverse as those found in a Regional Conservation Area, although they may contain some sensitive and threatened ecosystems. These ecosystems will be identified in the park management plan, and conservation will be the priority in those areas. Regional Natural Areas also protect key green spaces that are important to the natural character of the region.

These areas will try to accommodate a range of appropriate outdoor experiences and activities. The exact uses will be outlined in the park management plan.

Examples of a Regional Natural Area are Mount Parke, Coles Bay and Horth Hill Regional Parks.

RECREATION AREA

A Regional Recreation Area provides opportunities for many outdoor experiences, activities and events, and will be managed to accommodate a relatively high number of visitors. Facilities will be developed to support this level of use. The area must lend itself to development for a variety of uses that meet recreational needs, and it must be able to withstand intensive public use.

This classification is distinct from other parks classifications in a number of ways:

- The emphasis is on outdoor experiences and activities, although protecting the natural environment will be addressed in all decision making about visitor use and facilities.
- The range of acceptable recreational activities in these areas will be the widest within the regional parks and trails system.
- Recreation activities may include competitive sports.
- Recreation facilities operated by non-profit groups may be permitted.
- Opportunities and facilities may be provided for group celebrations such as festivals and picnics.

Elk/Beaver Lake is the only regional park in this classification.

Planning, Resource Management and Development

In consultation and collaboration with partners and stakeholders, CRD Regional Parks oversees land acquisitions, environmental management, conservation and restoration, planning and managing natural and cultural resources and infrastructure.

Land Acquisition Fund

The lands acquired for regional parks and trails through the Land Acquisition Fund continue to contribute significantly to the environmental, economic and social sustainability of the region. The fund was established in 2000 for a ten-year period at a rate of \$10 per average residential household assessment. In 2010, the fund was extended for another ten years at a rate of \$12 per average residential household assessment, increasing by \$2 per year to a maximum of \$20 in 2014, and then remaining at this rate until 2019. Revenues from the Levy in 2017 were \$3,687,136.

In 2017, CRD Regional Parks acquired two new properties for addition to the regional parks system. The first property is a 15 hectare (37 acre) parcel at the south east boundary of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. The land helps complete the park's boundaries as set out in the Land Acquisition Strategy and conserves the wilderness character of the Sooke Hills by creating a buffer between the core of the park and Highway 14. The property was purchased for \$445,000.

The second property is a 26 hectare (64 acre)

waterfront property known as St. John Point on Mayne Island. This area offers visitors opportunities for low-impact recreation in stands of mature Coastal Douglas fir forest, and along 2 kilometres of coastline, including shoreline bluffs and a small pocket beach. The property will also provide protection for sensitive ecosystems and plant communities.

This acquisition was made possible by a unique bi-national collaboration involving Canadian and American landowners, and charities from both countries. In partnership with the Mayne Island Conservancy Society and American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts, the CRD contributed \$2 million to the purchase. The remainder of the \$4.5 million purchase price was contributed through community fundraising coordinated by the Mayne Island Conservancy Society and a donation by the land owners, facilitated by the American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts. The land owners' commitment to maintaining the natural character of St. John Point and willingness to donate a substantial percentage of the appraised value made this project possible.



Sooke Hills Wilderness

Management Planning

Island View Beach Regional Park Management Plan

An updated management plan for Island View Beach Regional Park was prepared in the spring of 2017 and submitted to the CRD Board in July. At that time, Tsawout First Nation wrote to the Board about the plan. The Board postponed consideration of the management plan to allow time for Board members and CRD staff to engage in further discussions with Tsawout First Nation.

Matthews Point Regional Park Management Plan

In late 2017, the CRD started the development of a management plan for Matthews Point Regional Park. Initial public engagement was held and the plan is now being drafted. A second round of public engagement to review the draft management plan will occur in the summer of 2018.

E&N Rail Trail – Humpback Connector

In 2017, the Capital Regional District continued planning and development of the E&N Rail Trail. This new regional trail is one of the largest construction projects to be undertaken by CRD Regional Parks. Ten of the 17 kilometres are now completed and provide opportunities for community recreation, active transportation, green tourism, and promotion of an active and healthy lifestyle. The CRD is working cooperatively with the Town of View Royal, the Songhees Nation, the Esquimalt Nation, and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to complete the Maplebank Road to Hallowell Road section of the trail. A small segment (140 m) was completed in 2017 and work on the rest of this section will continue in 2018.

Gulf Islands Regional Trails Plan

In early 2017, the Capital Regional District initiated the development of a plan for a future regional trail on each of Galiano, Mayne, North and South Pender, Salt Spring and Saturna Islands. The planning process included two rounds of public engagement, one to seek information and input before drafting the plan and a second to gather comments on a draft regional trails plan. The final plan was approved by the CRD Board in March 2018.

Facility and Amenities Planning

Facility planning evaluates park infrastructure and assets and coordinates park facility upgrades. In 2017, a review was done of the condition of bridges and trestles along the Galloping Goose and Lochside Regional Trails. The results of the review will be used to set

priorities and update the 10-year plan for large-scale capital projects.

Geographical Information Systems

The Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Program provides data collection, mapping, and analysis services to all Regional Park service areas. GIS is used in the operation of the regional parks and trails system, is an integral component of planning and resource management projects, and supports a range of public mapping products.

In 2017, GIS analysis and mapping support was provided for park management planning processes and the land acquisition program. Significant gains were made in compiling and cataloguing landscape level ecological data to help identify high-value conservation lands as part of the land acquisition program.

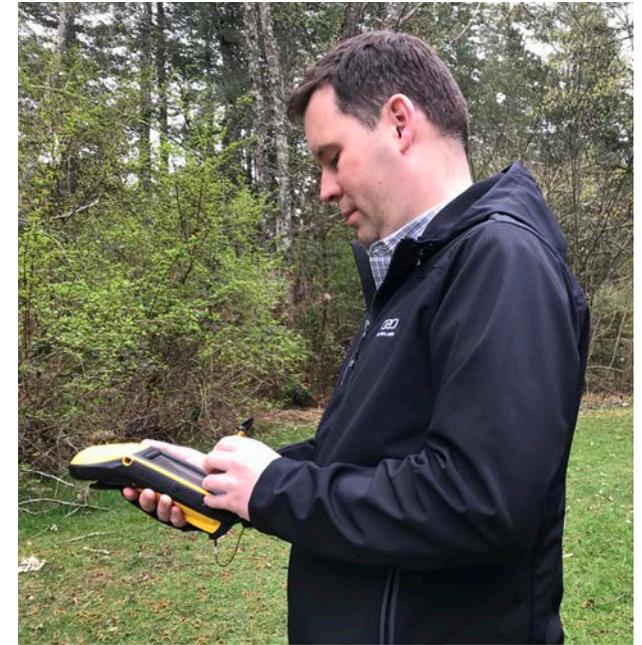
The GIS group also focused on improving trail and facilities data and public mapping products for 5 regional parks (Sooke Potholes, Kapoor, Bear Hill, Lone Tree Hill, and the Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail – The Great Trail).

Additionally, a regional trails infrastructure database was developed to assist with regional trail infrastructure maintenance activities.

Asset Management

Regional Parks continues to undertake the proactive and responsible management of park assets and infrastructure, both natural and engineered. To meet regulatory and service requirements while ensuring resources are available for investment in current and future infrastructure, asset management processes necessary for sustainable service delivery in the

regional parks system are being developed and improved.



Resource Conservation Program

The Regional Park Conservation Program supports a wide range of conservation projects and initiatives. Regional Parks staff collaborate with Integrated Water Services toward the American Bullfrog control program with the objective of keeping bullfrogs out of the Sooke Hills Wilderness and Sea to Sea Regional Parks and the adjacent water supply area. Regional Parks staff work with the Capital Region Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP) toward the management of high priority invasive plants with a focus on control of knotweed. In 2017, Regional Parks staff worked with 171 restoration volunteers, including individuals and community group members, who contributed a total of 1,449 hours of effort.

Staff work with various organizations toward better conservation and stewardship in the region. Regional parks act as natural laboratories and in support of that, 24 research permits were reviewed and issued in 2017. Researchers represent government agencies, academics and non-government organizations. Over the five year period from 2013-2017, research permits are mostly distributed between the three major sponsor groups (Table 1) with over half (60) of the permits allocated to research on general ecosystems, species at risk, mammals and avifauna (birds). Miscellaneous permits include research in archaeology, fungi and microbiology. Community residents and students are involved in conservation. A conservation and restoration partnership with the Mayne Island Conservancy at Mt. Parke Regional Park exists. A restoration workshop was held in collaboration with Environmental Protection (CRD) to begin restoration work on Haliburton Creek in Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park. Conceptual designs for this work were developed in collaboration with a group of senior civil engineering students at the University of Victoria.

Table 1: Number of research permits by sponsor group for the 5 year period 2013-2017.

| Group | Number of Permits |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Government | 30 |
| Environmental Group. | 35 |
| University | 34 |
| Corporate | 3 |
| TOTAL | 102 |

Table 2: Number of research permits by discipline for the 5-year period 2013-2017.

| Discipline | Number of Permits |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Aquatics | 7 |
| Avifauna | 13 |
| Biodiversity | 6 |
| Ecosystems | 19 |
| Geology | 3 |
| Herpetiles | 10 |
| Invasive Species | 3 |
| Invertebrates. | 10 |
| Species at Risk | 18 |
| Mammals | 10 |
| Miscellaneous | 3 |
| TOTAL | 102 |

Regional Parks staff are compiling and updating landscape data to better understand and evaluate ecological function and conservation values across the region. This growing data collection will help identify high value conservation lands to both assess existing park values and support the park land acquisition program.

In support of the dam and water control program, detailed bathymetric (water depth) surveys were conducted at Durrance, Thetis and Killarney Lakes. This information will be applied to improve management of these lakes in the future.



Parks Operations

Parks Operations staff are responsible for the daily operations and maintenance of the CRD's regional parks and trails. They attend to nature centres, facilities and amenities, campgrounds, trails, beaches, picnic areas, parking lots, bridges, kiosks and signs. They support restoration projects, and park safety and security, including bylaw enforcement and fire management. Annual operating plans guide the maintenance of all regional parks and trails.

A capital project can be a complex engineering one like the E&N Rail Trail – Humpback Connector that involves expertise from many CRD departments and various contractors. It can also be a simple, yet crucial, one such as replacing the boardwalk on a park trail that is completed by staff over a few days. In 2017, almost \$3 million was spent on major capital projects. This included \$1.4 million on the E&N Rail Trail – Humpback Connector, \$570,000 on the Great Trail, and \$411,000 on the sewer line installation at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park.

Regional Trails

Regional trails connect people and communities throughout the region. These nearly 100 km of multi-use trails are easily accessible and act as important recreational and transportation links for residents and visitors to the region. They consist of the E & N Rail Trail Humpback Connector, and the Galloping Goose and Lochside Regional Trails. 2017 saw approximately 3.6 million visits from users accessing and enjoying the CRD's regional trails.



2017 Project Highlights – Regional Trails

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---|----------|
| Galloping Goose Regional Trail | Gravel resurfacing and water management - Wale Rd. to Marwood Ave. | \$10,000 |
| Galloping Goose Regional Trail | Asphalt repair - near the Selkirk Trestle and between Kelvin Rd. and Ardersier Rd. | \$18,000 |
| Galloping Goose Regional Trail | Sign replacement and improvements between the Selkirk Trestle and Tillicum Rd. | \$30,000 |
| Galloping Goose Regional Trail | Trestle/bridge board replacement on the Selkirk Trestle, Interurban Bridge and Charters Trestle | \$9,000 |
| Lochside Regional Trail | Asphalt repair - Switch Bridge to Darwin Ave. and near the Cordova Bay Golf Course | \$18,000 |
| Lochside Regional Trail | Sign replacement along all of the off road sections of the trail | \$10,000 |
| Lochside Regional Trail | Trestle board replacement on the Swan Trestle | \$5,000 |

Regional Parks

North Area Regional Parks

Regional Parks North Area consists of the parks located within the boundaries of the District of Central Saanich, Township of Esquimalt, the District of Highlands, District of North Saanich, District of Oak Bay, District of Saanich, Town of Sidney, City of Victoria, and Town of View Royal.

In 2017, North Area Operations staff supported several large scale projects, including the installation of a new sewer line at Beaver Lake, the replacement of the Francis/King Marsh Trail and Elsie King boardwalks, and the renovation of the exterior of the 60 year old Beaver Lake Nature House.

West Area Regional Parks

This area includes regional parks that lie within the boundaries of the City of Colwood, City of Langford, District of Metchosin, District of Sooke and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area.

In 2017, in addition to the routine maintenance of 14 regional parks, staff completed and opened Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail, which is part of The Great Trail. This was a major project for Regional Parks and was opened on time and within budget.

In partnership with the T'Sou-ke Nation, the Spring Salmon Place (KWL-UCHUN) Campground located in Sooke Potholes Regional Park had a successful camping season. The Jordan River Campground was also very busy.

2017 Project Highlights - North

| Park or Trail | Project | Project Costs |
|-------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park | Sewer Line Installation | \$411,000 |
| Francis/King Regional Park | Replacement of the Marsh Trail and Elsie King Boardwalks | \$33,000 |

2017 Project Highlights - West

| Park or Trail | Project | Project Costs |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------|
| Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park | Trans Canada Trail Construction (completed June 2017) | \$1,400,000 |

Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail / The Great Trail

A major accomplishment of 2017 was the completion and opening of the new 13 km Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail in June. This trail provides part of the 24,000 km long route of The Great Trail – a national trail that connects sea to sea and many communities in between. The Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail offers outstanding hiking and cycling, and in some sections, horse-back riding. It is a challenging, unpaved wilderness route (not an all ages and abilities trail) with a suspension bridge across the Goldstream River, views of Waugh Creek waterfalls, and hilltop vistas.



Elsie King boardwalk replacement

Southern Gulf Islands Area

The Southern Gulf Islands Area consists of the following regional parks and reserves: Mount Parke (Mayne Island), Mill Farm (Salt Spring Island), Brooks Point (Pender Island), Matthews Point (Galiano Island), and East Point (Saturna Island). Regional Parks works in concert with the Parks and Recreation Commissions and conservation groups to support and achieve shared goals and objectives.



Staff planning at Matthews Point Regional Park



photo Toby Snelgrove

St. John Point

2017 Project Highlights - Southern Gulf Islands

| Park or Trail | Project | Project Costs |
|--|--|---------------|
| Brooks Point Regional Park (Pender Island) | Installation of non-slip mesh on boardwalks | \$2,000 |
| Mount Parke Regional Park (Mayne Island) | Replacement of older wooden toilet building with new plastic wood and metal building | \$8,000 |
| Matthew's Point Regional Park Reserve (Galiano Island) | Installation of park reserve regulatory and information signs throughout | \$1,000 |

2017 Sign Project

New signs were installed at Galloping Goose Regional Trail (Selkirk Trestle to Tillicum Road), Kapoor Regional Park, Lochside Regional Trail, Lone Tree Hill Regional Park, Sooke Potholes Regional Park, and Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park (Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail). The sign crew installed 230 new signposts and 120 existing posts were updated to house nearly 700 new signs. In addition, GIS trail data was updated and eleven "You are Here Maps" were produced and installed.



2017 Fire on Mt. Manuel Quimper



Sign crew at work on the Galloping Goose Regional Trail

Regional Parks Fire Suppression Program

Regional Parks fire crews liaise with local fire departments, BC Ministry of Forests Wildfire Management Branch, CRD Protective Services and Integrated Water Services for fire suppression. Regional Parks staff responded to two fire events in 2017, one in Sea to Sea Regional Park and one in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

Regional Parks has 25 staff trained to BC Forest Service standards ready to suppress wildfires in regional parks. Regular training and fitness testing is carried out in coordination with CRD Integrated Water Services fire crews.



Updating signage in regional parks

Bylaw Enforcement Program

The Regional Parks Bylaw Enforcement Program provides regulation enforcement to ensure safe and enjoyable visits to regional parks.

In 2017, CRD Bylaw Enforcement Services provided 760 Bylaw Officer patrol hours. During the summer months, patrols were focused at popular beach and swimming areas to reduce the presence of alcohol, enforce seasonal dog prohibitions from designated areas, and address other non-complaint activities. In addition, Bylaw Officers patrolled during the spring and fall season to provide an enforcement presence on the regional trails, and ensure that visitors complied with animal control regulations in regional parks. CRD Bylaw Officers issued 327 written warnings, 18 fines, and 141 evictions. Regional Parks staff continued to work closely with the region's RCMP detachments to coordinate joint CRD-RCMP park patrols and to increase the overall enforcement presence in regional parks. Staff also worked with Saanich Police to host trail safety events on the regional trails.

In 2017, CRD Regional Parks re-initiated a Park Officer Program to patrol and monitor the more remote areas of the regional park system. Two Park Officers were hired to work full-time from May 1 to September 30 and completed 1,100 km of foot patrols in Sooke Hills Wilderness and Sea to Sea Regional Parks. A significant focus of the program was to help facilitate the opening of the Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail and included public relations and education, regulation enforcement, trail maintenance, and data collection.

Visitation Statistics

Visits to regional parks and regional trails continue to increase. Over the past 5 years, there has been an increase of over 1 million, or 18%.

| Regional Park/Trail..... | 2013 Visits | 2016 Visits..... | 2017 Visits |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Albert Head Lagoon..... | 57,977 | 89,028 | 81,382 |
| Brooks Point | 5,822 | 7,659 | 8,288 |
| Coles Bay | 27,922 | 31,147 | 35,141 |
| Devonian | 50,301 | 59,013 | 61,091 |
| East Sooke | 135,878 | 184,176 | 195,046 |
| Elk/Beaver Lake | 1,484,164..... | 1,462,933..... | 1,521,270 |
| E&N Rail Trail..... | N/A..... | 303,621..... | 328,910 |
| Francis/King..... | 93,807 | 80,207 | 79,366 |
| Galloping Goose | 1,825,947..... | 1,909,389..... | 2,064,859 |
| Gonzales Hill..... | 40,515 | 49,060 | 49,747 |
| Horth Hill..... | 63,906 | 74,069 | 80,777 |
| Island View Beach | 335,160..... | 406,928..... | 399,048 |
| Jordan River (Sandcut Beach)..... | 11,767 | 22,398 | 37,138 |
| Lochside | 1,099,396..... | 1,182,548..... | 1,202,476 |
| Lone Tree Hill | 5,729 | 12,389 | 12,584 |
| Matheson Lake..... | 49,784 | 66,486 | 68,809 |
| Mill Hill..... | 34,727 | 41,500 | 43,231 |
| Mount Parke..... | 5,430 | 12,107 | 12,187 |
| Mount Wells | 30,837 | 42,532 | 41,071 |
| Mount Work..... | 154,036..... | 185,419..... | 196,012 |
| Sea to Sea (Harbourview)..... | 31,106 | 36,672 | 42,680 |
| Sooke Potholes | 104,178..... | 160,694..... | 177,756 |
| Thetis Lake..... | 429,934..... | 441,740..... | 453,852 |
| Witty's Lagoon | 85,123 | 88,421 | 96,431 |
| Total..... | 6,163,446..... | 6,950,136..... | 7,289,090 |

Visitor Services

Connecting people with the natural environment, providing volunteer opportunities for residents and cultivating community partnerships are the cornerstones of Visitor Services. Staff provide opportunities for park visitors of all ages to learn more about their natural and cultural heritage through guided hikes, walks, school programs and special events throughout the year. Staff also provide information and publications to the public about regional parks and trails, issue park use permits for group picnic shelters and special events and provide administrative and financial management support.

Beaver Lake Nature Centre Refresh



The Beaver Lake Nature Centre continues to be an opportunity for volunteer engagement in our regional parks as well as an opportunity for environmental education and public awareness around CRD initiatives. It is a well-situated hub for experiential place-based learning. In the

interest of maintaining our infrastructure and creating a welcoming space for students and visitors, the nature centre was given an exterior refresh. The Elk/Beaver Lake Nature Centre is open on weekend afternoons during the peak summer season and is staffed by volunteers. It sees around 1,400 visitors a summer.

Environmental Interpretation Services

Environmental Interpretation offers a wide variety of free and low-cost information and education services to communities, including school field trips, public programs, and community events.

These programs include guided nature walks, adult hikes, guided canoe programs, registered workshops, roving interpreters and special events. These activities provide opportunities for outdoor experiences in the region’s park system while learning more about the natural and cultural heritage. In 2017, a total of 501 programs were offered.

Program Statistics: 2017

| Nature Centres: | # of Visitors |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Elk/Beaver Lake | 1,468 |
| Francis/King | 3,579 |
| Witty’s Lagoon | 3,111 |
| Programs: | # of Participants |
| School Programs | 3,149 |
| Community Outreach Events | 2,218 |
| Nature Outings and Events | 5,631 |

Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail Opening

In collaboration with other services from the Parks and Environmental Services Department, CRD Regional Parks held a Sooke Hills Wilderness Trail opening event for the public. The regional parks interpretation team set up a station at the Waugh Creek viewing platform about carnivore awareness. 150 people stopped by to talk with the team about the new trail and ask questions about carnivores in our wilderness parks.



Ribbon cutting ceremony

photo Cowichan Valley Regional District

Volunteers in Parks Program

For 35 years, volunteers have helped protect and manage over 13,000 hectares of regional parkland that add to the region's quality of life and the long-term health of the people who live here. Volunteers strengthen connections with visitors and encourage community stewardship of regional parks and trails. Volunteers are educators, ambassadors, and hands-on stewards, supporting and complementing the work of Regional Parks.

Regional Parks volunteers also support several annual events and initiatives including the Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up, Earth Day activities, Mill Hill Broom Sweep and Bike to Work Week Victoria. Volunteer Naturalists support programs and events at the three nature centres located in Witty's Lagoon, Francis/King, and Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Parks.

Summary of Progress

In 2017, 434 volunteers contributed over 5,100 hours of time pursuing their passion for parks.



2017 UVic Project Serve

Regional Parks Senior Manager Mike Walton, Regional Parks Committee Chair Mike Hicks, 35 year volunteer Brian Peddleston, Board Chair Barbara Desjardins, Director David Screech



35th Anniversary of Volunteers in CRD Regional Parks

2017 marked the 35th anniversary of volunteers at CRD Regional Parks, so this year's Volunteer Recognition Event was particularly special. The event took place on October 28 at the Olympic View Golf Club in Colwood. Both the CRD Board Chair and the CRD Regional Parks Committee Chair addressed the volunteers. The keynote speaker for the event, Bob McDonald, of CBC fame, delivered his "Perspectives of a Planet."

The awards ceremony following Bob McDonald's presentation recognized 18 volunteers for their years of service, ranging from one to 35 years. Ten volunteers were recognized for completing their first year of volunteering with Regional Parks and there were two award winners in each of the 5th, 10th and 15th years of service categories.

Of special note, two volunteers received awards for 20+ years of volunteer service. Rich Mably, Park Steward in Sea to Sea and Sooke Hill Wilderness Regional Parks, received his 20th year award. Brian Peddlesden, Park Steward at Roche Cove, East Sooke and Sea to Sea Regional Parks, celebrated 35 years of volunteer service with Regional Parks. When the formal volunteer program first began at Regional Parks in 1982, Brian was one of the original volunteers.

At CRD Regional Parks, we are very proud of the relationship we have built between staff and volunteers. We are working together to protect and restore the region's biodiversity and provide residents of the region with safe and enjoyable recreational experiences.

Headquarters and Administrative Services

In 2017, Regional Parks issued 271 permits for events in the parks and generated \$13,277 in revenue.

Park use permits issued in 2017 are summarized below:

- 136 Group Picnic Shelter permits issued to groups, businesses and the public for use of shelters at East Sooke, Elk/Beaver Lake and Island View Beach Regional Parks.
- 70 Special Event permits issued for events such as the Saanich Strawberry Festival, Bike to Work Week, Triathlons, school cross-country meets, walkathons, running events and orienteering competitions.
- 18 Commercial Service permits issued to companies providing guided hiking, cycling, kayaking and fitness training at Coles Bay, East Sooke, Elk/Beaver Lake, Francis/King, Horth Hill, Sooke Potholes, and Thetis Lake Regional Parks and the Galloping Goose Regional Trail.
- 7 Commercial Filming permits issued for filming at Elk/Beaver Lake and Francis/King Regional Parks.

In addition, Administrative Services staff issued 182 seasonal parking passes for the parking lots at Sooke Potholes and Thetis Lake Regional Parks.

Online Registration Software

In line with the CRD Corporate directive to “increase access to recreation, arts and culture opportunities”, in 2017 CRD Regional Parks began implementation of PerfectMind, an online registration system for nature program bookings, school program bookings, park use permits, campground reservations, and donations.

The system was adopted to make booking processes more streamlined and efficient, and to provide an enhanced service to park users, by enabling them to book services offered by Regional Parks online whenever convenient, rather than restricting users to make bookings only during office hours.

Implementation has been undertaken in a phased approach, with nature program and school program modules successfully launched in 2017. In 2018, the campground reservation system for Island View Beach Regional Park and picnic shelter bookings will be released, with park use permits and legacy donation management scheduled for 2019.

Communications and Creative Services

Communications and Creative Services help residents understand and be aware of Regional Parks programs and services through marketing, media relations, social media and reception/general inquiries.

Staff promote regional parks and trails and environmental interpretation programs, provide up-to-date park information to enhance the visitor experience and raise awareness of the CRD Regional Parks mandate and strategic priorities.

Regional Parks Sign and Display Shop

The multi-purpose sign and display shop is located at the Regional Parks headquarters. The shop provides creative services and products to support programs and projects.

Areas of support include the Regional Parks' sign replacement program, volunteer and partnership programs, nature centres, interpretive nature programs, community/special events, and parks management programs.

Links

CRD Regional Parks Home Page

crd.bc.ca/parks

Regional Parks Strategic Plan

<https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/parks-pdf/regional-parks-strategic-plan-2012-21.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

CRD Corporate Plan

<https://www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/corporate-communications-pdf/crd-corporateplan2015-2018.pdf?sfvrsn=6>



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