

2023 Regional Parks & Trails Strategic Plan Progress Report



TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The CRD conducts its business within the traditional territories of many First Nations, including but not limited to BOKÉĆEN (Pauquachin), MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat), P'a:chi:da?ahť (Pacheedaht), Pune'laxutth' (Penelekut), Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), Songhees, SĪÁUTW (Tsawout), T'Sou-ke, WJOŁEŁP (Tsartlip), WSIKEM (Tseycum), and x^wsepsəm (Esquimalt), all of whom have a long-standing relationship with the land and waters from time immemorial that continues to this day.



Dancing Dragonflies by Chris Paul

The CRD commissioned WSÁNEĆ artist Chris Paul to create an image based on the idea of First Nation and Settler communities living side by side and our governments making a difference together.

Dragonfly is a symbol of change, transformation and swiftness. He represents a symbol of change in the view of self-understanding and the kind of change that has its source in maturity and insight into the deeper meaning of life.

It is our hope today that our work to change and transform will be swift, that as we mature we will develop insight that allows us to be poised for reconciliation and that we continue to build strong and meaningful relationships with local First Nations.

Cover photos:

Front: Sea to Sea Regional Park

Back: Island View Beach Regional Park

Organizational Overview

The Capital Regional District (CRD) delivers regional, sub-regional and local services to 13 municipalities and three electoral areas on southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Governed by a 24-member Board of Directors, the CRD works collaboratively with First Nations and all levels of government to enable sustainable growth, foster community well-being, and develop cost-effective infrastructure, while continuing to provide core services to residents throughout the region.

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Regional Parks & Trails Overview

The CRD has committed to annually reporting on regional park and regional trail-related activities. This report summarizes 2023 activities and annual indicators identified in the CRD’s Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022–2032, approved by the CRD Board on July 12, 2023.

History & Governance

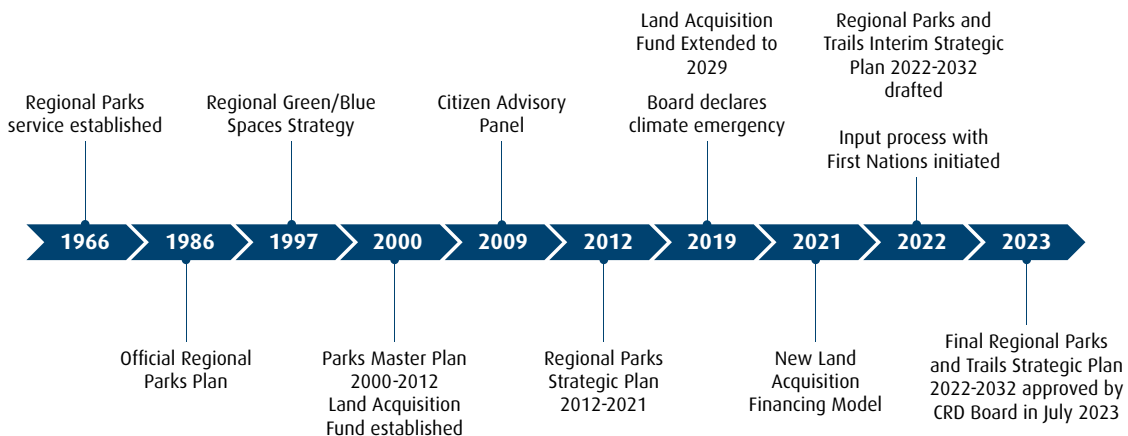
The CRD’s regional parks system was established in 1966 (Figure 1). Since then, the CRD has provided a service for the provision and maintenance of regional parks and regional trails to all municipalities and electoral areas in the CRD, as per the “Regional Parks Extended Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1, 1989,” CRD Bylaw No. 1749. The authority to provide a regional parks and regional trails service is granted by the Province of British Columbia (BC) to the regional district primarily through provisions outlined in the *Local Government Act*.

The CRD Board is the decision-making authority for the regional parks and trails service. The CRD Regional Parks Committee provides input to the Board on matters pertaining to regional parks and regional trails.

Since 2022, the CRD Transportation Committee has also been providing input to the CRD Board on regional trail matters, such as mobility and recreation, trail management and operations.

The timeline below reflects both historical and current policy documents, processes and decisions that have helped to shape the present day form of the CRD Regional Parks Division.

FIGURE 1. REGIONAL PARKS TIMELINE





Funding & Service Delivery

The regional parks and regional trails service is funded primarily through a regional property tax requisition. In 2023, the annual operating budget for regional parks and regional trails was \$17.5 million.

Non-tax revenue also provides a portion of the funding stream for regional parks and trails. Non-tax revenue is generated through the fees and permit provisions, such as camping and pay parking, in CRD Bylaw No. 3675, "Capital Regional District Regional Parks Services and Facilities Fees and Charges Bylaw No. 1, 2010." Other sources of non-tax revenue may include donations, facility rentals or lease agreements. Additionally, grant funding enhances the overall budget but is dependent on available opportunities and successful applications.

The CRD actively expands the regional parks system through use of the Land Acquisition Fund (LAF). Through the LAF and with the support of partners, the CRD has acquired nearly 5,000 hectares (ha) of regional park land since 2000.

The management of regional parks and trails is divided into three service areas:

CRD Regional
Parks & Trails

Planning & Development:

- First Nations, Stakeholder and Government Engagement
- Park Management Policies & Planning
- GIS Mapping
- Land Acquisition
- Capital Planning & Asset Management
- Stakeholder & Government Relations

Operations:

- Operating & Maintaining Regional Parks & Trails
- Sign Development, Installation & Management
- Asset Monitoring, Repair & Replacement
- Fleet Services
- Safety Programs

Visitor Experience & Stewardship:

- Conservation & Recreation Partnerships
- Interpretive Education
- Compliance & Enforcement
- Volunteer Management
- Visitor Information
- Data Collection & Monitoring

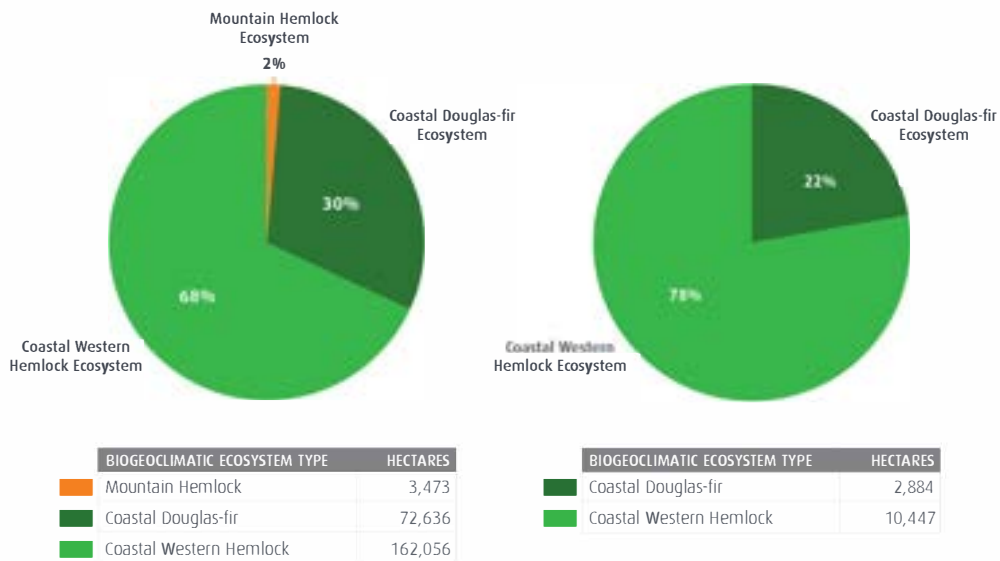
System Information

As of December 31, 2023, there were 33 regional parks and four regional trails in the CRD’s system, comprising over 13,350 ha of land. The regional parks system grew in 2023 with the addition of 10.31 ha of land added to East Sooke Regional Park, and 10.97 ha of newly-acquired land adjacent to Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park. The regional trails system also grew in 2023, with construction continuing on the Mayne Island Regional Trail and the extension of the E&N Rail Trail Regional Trail to connect with the City of Victoria’s Kimta E&N Connector.

CRD regional parks protect land and ecosystems in two of the three biogeoclimatic zones that occur within the CRD (Figure 2). The Coastal Douglas-fir (CDF) zone is home to the highest number of species and ecosystems at risk in BC, of which many are ranked globally as imperiled or critically imperiled. Only 0.3% of BC consists of CDF zone and it is the least protected zone in BC, with many of the protected areas being small, isolated parcels surrounded by development.

As of December 31, 2023, the CRD protects 4% (2,884 ha) of the CDF occurring within the region, which comprises approximately 22% of the regional parks system as a whole.

FIGURE 2. BIOGEOCLIMATIC ECOSYSTEMS IN THE CRD & IN REGIONAL PARKS IN 2023



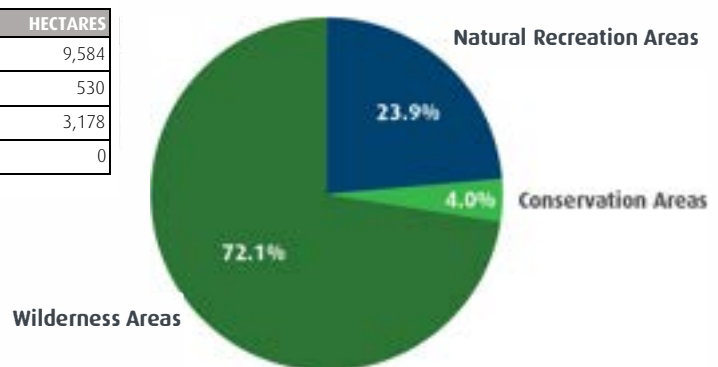


East Sooke Regional Park

With the new additions, the regional parks system by park classification as of December 31, 2023 was as follows:

FIGURE 3. PARK CLASSIFICATIONS BY HECTARE IN 2023

PARK CLASSIFICATION	NUMBER OF PARKS	HECTARES
Regional Wilderness Areas	3	9,584
Regional Conservation Areas	12	530
Regional Natural Recreation Areas	18	3,178
Regional Conservancy Areas	0	0



As part of the CRD’s commitment to climate action, tracking began in 2022 to determine the levels of energy consumption by regional parks and associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Going forward, the CRD has committed to annually tracking GHG emissions with the end goal of reducing GHGs across the organization, including regional parks’ operational GHGs.

In 2023, regional park and trail operations consumed 4,909 gigajoules of energy and the total emissions were about 288 tonnes (t) of carbon dioxide (CO₂) equivalent (e) (tCO₂e) - both slight increases over 2022. This was primarily due to the growing number of staff and fleet vehicles within the Regional Parks Division, and it is expected these numbers will decrease as internal combustion engine fleet vehicles are replaced with electric models. Emission sources were predominantly generated from gasoline-powered vehicles in the regional parks fleet (71%), followed by diesel-powered fleet vehicles (25%), propane-heated buildings (3%) and electrically-heated buildings (1%).

In the CRD, regional parks and regional trails serve to protect biodiversity and cultural heritage and to offer quality visitor experiences. Figure 4 highlights some of the 2023 visitor use and conservation statistics in regional parks and on regional trails.

FIGURE 4. 2023 CONSERVATION AND VISITOR USE DATA



CRD Regional Parks & Trails Strategic Plan 2022–2032

History and Overview

The management of regional parks and regional trails has been guided by various plans and strategies over the years. In 2019, the CRD Board made it a priority to update the former Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012–2021. Through engagement with First Nations, the public and stakeholders, the CRD developed the Interim Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022–2032 between December 2021 and June 2022.

On July 13, 2022, the CRD Board adopted the Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan on an interim basis for one year while engagement with First Nations continued.

Much of the focus for the remainder of 2022 was on continuing to engage First Nations on the Interim Strategic Plan. Feedback received was incorporated into the final Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022–2032, which was approved by the Board in July 2023.

The 2022–2032 plan updates the former strategy with a lens on First Nations reconciliation to reflect current challenges and opportunities affecting the region, as well as to incorporate recent CRD initiatives and priorities. The success of the Plan relies on relationships with First Nations, a commitment to superior service delivery, and cooperation with partners.



*KWL-UCHUN Spring Salmon Place Campground
Sooke Potholes Regional Park*

Plan Vision, Mission & Values

The Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022–2032 vision statement identifies the desired future state of regional parks and regional trails in 2032:

We have an expanded and connected system of regional parks and regional trails that are rich in biodiversity, respect Indigenous cultural heritage and use, inspire stewardship, are resilient to change, and provide enjoyable outdoor recreation experiences.

Reaching the desired vision will be successful if the CRD works closely with First Nations communities, other levels of government, organizations, institutions and residents in the region. A focus on equity and accessibility in the Plan is aimed at encouraging broader and safer participation in regional parks and trails.

The mission defines the fundamental purpose of the regional parks and regional trails system, describing why it exists, what it does, and the level of performance to be met or surpassed. The mission for regional parks and regional trails is to:

- **Operate and manage a connected system of regional parks for public enjoyment.**
- **Foster stewardship of biodiversity by learning from and working with science and long-term land stewards and by connecting people to nature.**
- **Operate and manage a regional trail network for active transportation and recreation.**
- **Foster reconciliation by collaborating with First Nations in the operation and management of regional parks and regional trails through the establishment of traditional use agreements.**
- **Be fiscally responsible and accountable in decision-making.**



Mount Work Regional Park



Lone Tree Hill Regional Park

The following values and guiding principles were also identified during the development of the 2022–2032 Strategic Plan. Values and principles define what is important to the CRD and help guide the implementation of the Plan:

Access: Regional parks and regional trails can be accessed by transit, micromobility, cycling and walking.

Accountability: Decision-making processes and financial management are transparent and based on the best available information.

Connectivity: Biodiversity depends on connected natural area corridors and complete communities depend on connected trail corridors and active transportation networks.

Conservation: Regional parks protect, restore and enhance the region’s cultural heritage, biodiversity, and rare and unique ecosystems.

Education: Promoting literacy of the region’s natural and cultural heritage increases awareness of the interconnectedness between humans and the nature and impacts of climate change.

Equity: Regional parks and regional trails are inclusive, culturally safe, and accessible to visitors of all ages, abilities and income levels.

Outdoor Recreation: Outdoor recreation benefits our health and well-being, connects us to each other and immerses us in nature.

Partnership: A commitment to developing meaningful partnerships with First Nations that respect Indigenous knowledge, First Nations governance and cultural use, as well as collaborating with other government partners and organizations in the region.

Reconciliation: A commitment to take action towards Indigenous reconciliation by respecting Indigenous laws, creating opportunities to collaborate in the operation of parks and trails, and strengthening relationships with First Nations communities by applying the principles of respect, reciprocity and responsibility.

Resiliency: Regional parks and regional trails adapt to change by incorporating solutions that take action on climate change, recognize the value of Indigenous cultural knowledge, ensure sustainable service delivery and aim to benefit future generations.

Stewardship: A commitment to learning from and implementing approaches from First Nations, who are the long-term land stewards, and inspiring residents and visitors to be stewards of the region’s natural and cultural heritage by leading by example and showcasing best practices.

Goals & Priorities

The CRD’s Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan was developed to guide the CRD towards its desired vision for regional parks and regional trails. The Strategic Plan establishes five goal areas where the CRD focuses its efforts.

Each of these goals includes strategic priorities with supporting actions and timelines for implementation. Overall, there are 13 strategic priorities and 57 supporting sub-actions.

GOAL	PRIORITIES
Reconciliation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate First Nation worldviews and knowledge in the ongoing management and operation of regional parks and regional trails. • Work with First Nations Governments in service delivery initiatives.
Conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take action to increase protection of biodiversity, ecological integrity and natural assets in the region through improved knowledge, proactive stewardship and land acquisition. • Respect and protect cultural heritage sites and traditional cultural use practices. • Work with partners in taking care of the region’s species, habitats and natural areas.
Visitor Experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer compatible outdoor recreation experiences that are enjoyable, healthy, safe and immersed in nature. • Foster stewardship through program delivery, knowledge sharing and collaboration.
Climate Action & Resiliency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance regional active transportation opportunities that contribute to greenhouse gas reduction. • Support the development of complete and connected communities by improving access to regional parks by transit, electric vehicles, micromobility, walking or cycling. • Align service delivery and infrastructure improvements in regional parks and regional trails with climate action. • Ensure the long-term and consistent management of regional parks and protected natural areas. • Strategically acquire and manage natural areas to address climate mitigation, urban containment and access to green space for a growing population.
Access & Equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance health and well-being by providing equitable access to regional parks and regional trails.



Francis/King Regional Park

Tracking Our Progress

Over the 10-year term of the CRD's Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan, the actions contained within form the basis of service plans and work plans that are approved by the Board annually as part of the financial planning process. Collaboration with First Nations Governments, municipalities, other park agencies, CRD divisions and stakeholders are integral to this process.

As progress is made in the implementation of this Plan, knowledge and understanding of impacts to regional parks and regional trails will continue to develop. To remain flexible and adaptable, and to support consistent implementation over time, CRD staff will:

- Continue on a journey of reconciliation with First Nations
- Prepare funding strategies to accompany implementation
- Continue to identify opportunities for external grant funding and partnerships
- Share knowledge and best practices with others
- Participate in professional development to improve service delivery
- Continue to monitor data to track progress over time
- Evaluate progress and adjust actions, as needed
- Continue to improve on current practices

Annual Reporting

Progress on the implementation of the Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan is reported annually. Reporting indicators have been identified for each strategic priority area. For each goal area, an action status reflects general progress made towards all actions supporting that goal. This helps to summarize at-a-glance progress made on actions that may not be easily measurable or reflected in another indicator, such as actions that are ongoing or taking place over a long period. For other measures, an icon is provided to indicate the desired direction of the indicator over time (increasing or decreasing), if applicable.

The following section is intended to provide a high-level, easy-to-understand overview of the CRD's performance and progress related to regional parks and regional trails, and summarize progress made in the 2023 year for each goal area.

Detailed information on each goal, its related action items and progress on those action items is contained in Appendix A: Report Card.



Devonian Regional Park



2023 Overall Strategic Plan Progress

On Track

Goal Area



Reconciliation: Strong, collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations through working in partnership.



Visitor Experience: Visitors to regional parks are involved in stewardship and have enjoyable outdoor recreation experiences.



Conservation: Protect the region's natural assets and cultural heritage for future generations.



Climate Action & Resiliency: Regional parks and regional trails are resilient and take action on climate change.



Access & Equity: Regional parks and regional trails are inclusive and accessible.

Legend: Action Status



On Track: 75% or greater of yearly target progress



Opportunity for Improvement: 50% - 75% of yearly target progress



Attention Required: less than 50% of yearly target progress



Future Action

Legend: Indicators



Direction of arrow indicates **current trend direction**



Indicator is trending in the **desired direction**



Indicator is trending in the **wrong direction**



Indicator is intended to provide **contextual information**



Reconciliation



Goal 1: Strong, collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations through working in partnership.

Overall Action Status
On Track

CRD Roles

First Nations Engagement

Park Management & Planning

Cultural Heritage Protection

Interpretive Education

The Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022–2032 focuses on strengthening government-to-government relationships and understanding between the CRD and First Nations in the region.

The CRD is committed to maintaining an open dialogue with First Nations to confirm that Indigenous cultural values and cultural uses are respected and that the priorities and actions remain relevant and meaningful.

The Plan supports ongoing engagement with First Nations in the management and operation of regional parks and regional trails in years to come and ensures that parks and trails remain culturally safe and inclusive.

This goal contains

6

sub-actions

Goal Progress Snapshot

- Engagement with First Nations was undertaken on the Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022–2032 and initiated on a process to create a new Land Acquisition Strategy.
- Island View Beach Working Group formed with CRD staff, District of Central Saanich and Tsawout First Nation.
- Initial discussions were completed in 2023 with First Nations on reconciliation work plans and traditional use agreements for Mount Work Regional Park.
- An increased number of cultural monitors from local First Nations were involved with CRD Regional Parks projects.
- The CRD’s Exploring Indigenous Perspectives cultural programming was offered to a growing number of park visitors throughout 2023, including participants from special request, public and school groups.



Indigenous Perspectives Cultural Programming

Indicators



Reconciliation workplans are developed with each First Nation

- Initial discussions took place with WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council related to developing reconciliation work plans for Mount Work Regional Park.



Traditional use agreements are initiated with all First Nations in the region

- Initial discussions took place with WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council related to developing traditional use agreements for Mount Work Regional Park.



Increased participation in Indigenous perspectives programs and presentation

- The CRD's *Exploring Indigenous Perspectives* programming was offered to over 2,000 park visitors, including special request, school and public program attendees - an increase of nearly 100% over 2022's numbers. Participants learn about the cultural history of the region and the time-honoured traditions of Indigenous Peoples.



Increased number of conservation and restoration projects in partnership with First Nations

- Staff worked with members of T'Sou-ke Nation and Sc'ianew First Nations on a restoration project at Aylard Farm in East Sooke Regional Park in an area of high cultural sensitivity.



Increased number of economic opportunities made available to First Nations

- An operating agreement continued with T'Sou-ke Nation for KWL-UCHUN Spring Salmon Place Campground and remuneration was provided to WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council for consultation on the draft Mount Work Management Plan.



*KWL-UCHUN Spring Salmon Place Campground
Sooke Potholes Regional Park*



Conservation

Goal 2: Regional parks protect the region’s natural assets and cultural heritage for future generations.



Overall Action Status
On Track

CRD Roles

Conservation Partnerships

Volunteer Program Management

Interpretive Education

Land Acquisition, Management & Planning

This goal contains

13

sub-actions

Regional parks contribute to a large, complex system of connected and protected natural areas. This system is vital to ensuring long-term viability of natural areas, conserving biodiversity and building resilience to the changing climate.

Protected natural areas help maintain ecological health, function and integrity, and provide important space for a diversity of species, from the small and endangered sharp-tailed snake, to large carnivores like wolves, bears and cougars.

Additionally, regional parks help contribute to the protection of the region’s cultural heritage and archaeological sites protected under the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

Goal Progress Snapshot

- In 2023, nearly 21 hectares of new regional park land was acquired.
- As part of the Elk/Beaver Lake Initiative, and with funding support from the Government of British Columbia, an oxygenator system was purchased and installed in Elk Lake to help address high nutrient levels.
- Work took place to inventory, monitor, restore and enhance habitat for species at risk. Efforts were undertaken to mitigate threats to species at risk through the installation of fencing, enhanced signage and public education.
- Staff facilitated and issued permits for 21 academic, government or eNGO biodiversity and ecology research projects in regional parks.



Yellow Sand Verbena

Indicators



Increased area of regional park land protected

- The CRD acquired nearly 21 hectares of new regional park land in 2023: almost 11 hectares of land near Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park and an additional 10 hectares added to East Sooke Regional Park.



Increased area of regional park land restored

- In 2023, CRD restoration volunteers and staff spent a total of 3,696 hours (47% increase over 2022) restoring and enhancing 11.75 hectares of land in regional parks.



Increased protection of at risk species and ecosystems in regional parks

- An Environmental Impact Assessment Process was officially adopted and implemented. Additionally, significant work took place to inventory, monitor, restore and enhance habitat for species at risk. Efforts to mitigate threats to species at risk through the installation of fencing, enhanced signage and public education.



Increased percentage of First Nations collaborating with CRD on cultural heritage protection projects

- Members of T'Sou-ke Nation and Sc'ianew First Nations collaborated with Regional Parks staff on a restoration project at Aylard Farm in East Sooke Regional Park in an area of high cultural sensitivity.
- Cultural monitors from eight First Nations were involved in regional parks and trails projects.



All staff receive cultural awareness training

- In 2023, all new CRD staff in the Regional Parks Division received cultural awareness training and a special training session was delivered to staff at Regional Parks headquarters on the Protection and Conservation of Heritage Sites.



Increased conservation and research partnerships

- In 2023, two official conservation partnerships remained in place between CRD Regional Parks and local groups and 21 research permits were issued for academic, government or eNGO biodiversity and ecology research projects in regional parks.
- The CRD became the first local government to have all 33 regional parks included in the federal government's Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database.



*Invasive Species Removal and Site Restoration Project
Galloping Goose Regional Trail*



Visitor Experience



Goal 3: Visitors to regional parks are involved in stewardship and have enjoyable outdoor recreation experiences.

Overall Action Status
On Track

CRD Roles

Recreation Partnerships

Interpretive Education

Compliance & Enforcement

Volunteer Program
Management

Visitor Information

This goal contains

9

sub-actions



Restoration Volunteers

Accessing natural spaces and compatible recreational opportunities benefit not only mental and physical health, but also promote social and community connectivity while being a relatively low barrier activity to enjoy for people from all walks of life.

Additionally, outdoor recreation opportunities and educational nature programming both play an important role in the quality of life that attracts people to this region.

Goal Progress Snapshot

- A State of Recreation Values report was initiated in 2023. The results will be incorporated into the Stewardship Plan that will be developed in 2024.
- A Volunteer Survey was conducted in 2023 to gather information on volunteer satisfaction and experience. This information will guide the development of a Volunteer Plan.
- Park Naturalists continue to work closely with the Cultural Programmer to include a cultural lens in interpretive programs and events, as well as messaging related to visitor compliance and importance of parks as related to mental health and climate change.
- The volunteer program continued to support diverse opportunities for participation and contribution to regional parks, as well as ongoing partnership development with community organizations.
- Trail standards were developed to guide trail development, as well as trail maintenance within CRD regional parks, and a trail repair prioritization plan was implemented.

Indicators



Maintain high rates of visitor satisfaction

- A Resident Survey was developed and approved in 2023 to launch in early 2024.
- Trail standards were developed to guide trail operations and maintenance within CRD regional parks.



Increased area available for compatible outdoor recreation

- After a pilot extension in 2023, the camping season at Island View Beach Regional Park was officially extended from Labour Day (traditional closing day) to the Thanksgiving weekend.
- License agreements with two outdoor recreation groups enabled the repair, maintenance and improvement of mountain bike trails in both Mount Work and Sea to Sea regional parks.



Review and update interpretive program content every four years

- Repeated programs are evaluated for relevancy and are refreshed each year and new programs are created. Two new cultural programs were created in 2023.



Increased number of volunteer hours

- A total of 665 (+44 over 2022) volunteer naturalists, restoration volunteers, park stewards and trail ambassadors contributed 5,760 (+96 over 2022) hours to regional parks.
- The CRD Regional Parks volunteer program collaborated with eight corporate groups, four community groups, three schools and a youth group to host a total of 27 ecological restoration events.



Nature Programming in CRD Regional Parks



Climate Action & Resiliency



Overall Action Status
On Track

Goal 4: Regional parks and regional trails are resilient and take action on climate change.

CRD Roles

Regional Trail Management & Planning

Regional Park Management & Planning

Land Acquisitions

Interpretive Education

Conservation

This goal contains

24

sub-actions

The CRD Board declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has since committed to take action to address climate change within operations at the regional level and to take a leadership role to pursue carbon neutrality.

The CRD can contribute to regional greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions in regional parks and trails by integrating the corporate climate lens framework, making operational choices that reduce GHG emissions, and through the planning, design and operation of the regional trails system, which serves as the anchor of the region’s active transportation network. Additionally, the CRD can ensure the long-term and consistent management and acquisition of regional park land and protected natural areas to help address climate mitigation, urban containment and access to green space for a growing population.

Goal Progress Snapshot

- The 100 kilometres of regional trails continued to be well used for walking, rolling and riding throughout the CRD in 2023.
- Construction of E&N Rail Trail Phase 4 was completed in partnership with the City of Victoria.
- The construction of Mayne Island Regional Trail continued through 2023. This expansion to the regional trail network into the Gulf Islands increases multi-modal access across the region.
- A CRD Regional Trails Closure Policy was developed with input from the Regional Transportation Working Group to ensure a consistent approach to trail closures in the region and minimized impacts to trail users.
- A Board resolution was approved to fund the full 6.6 kilometres Regional Trestle Renewal, Trail Widening and Lighting Project between 2024-2028 by way of debt servicing.



Indicators



Increased use of regional trails

- There were 3.9 million visits to regional trails in 2023 compared to 3.3 in 2022.
- The 10-year visitation trend shows an increase of 30% from January 2014 to the end of 2023.



Completed regional trail priority projects

- Completed a 0.3 kilometre section (Phase 4) of the E&N Rail Trail and worked in partnership with the City of Victoria to complete a 1.0 kilometre of adjacent trail (Kimta E&N Connector) and construction of Mayne Island Regional Trail continued.
- A Regional Trail Asset Renewal Plan was completed, providing better prioritization of renewal activity.



Minimized regional trail service disruptions

- A CRD Regional Trails Closure Policy was developed with input from the Regional Transportation Working Group to ensure a consistent approach to trail closures in the region and minimized impacts to trail users.



Increase Electric Vehicle charging stations at park accesses

- A feasibility study was completed related to installing Electrical Vehicle Charging Stations in regional parks.



Reduced operational greenhouse gas emissions

- Regional parks CO2 emissions increased in 2023.
- Electrical Vehicle Charging Stations were added to CRD Regional Parks service yards and EVs continue to be added to the Parks fleet, replacing internal combustion engine vehicles.



Maintain critical infrastructure in good condition

- Ongoing asset renewal and capital project work through 2023, including paving, condition assessments on two bridge structures, pre-construction repairs to Selkirk Trestle, and the annual inspection of Humpback Dam. Additionally, a Regional Trail Asset Renewal Plan was developed to prioritize improvements on trails.



Increase the percentage of parks with management plans less than 15 years old

- In 2023, 27% of regional parks had management plans less than 15 years old.
- A draft updated planning process was developed in 2023 for Board consideration in 2024 and an Interim Management Guideline process was established to ensure basic securement and maintenance in new park land acquisitions prior to a full management planning process.



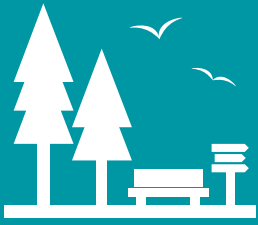
Increased area of regional park land

- In 2023, 21 hectares of regional park land was acquired.



Increased representation of all regional park classifications

- Land acquisitions added area to East Sooke Regional Park, a Wilderness Area, and land was acquired adjacent to Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park, a Natural Recreation Area. No land was added to the Conservancy or Conservation Area classifications in 2023.



Access & Equity

Goal 5: Regional parks and regional trails are inclusive and accessible.



Overall Action Status
On Track

CRD Roles

Recreation Partnerships

Data Collection & Monitoring

Interpretive Education

Visitor Information

The benefits of experiencing and interacting with nature for physical and mental well-being are felt by many, and regional parks and trails are a public good that belong to everyone. Medical professionals from the World Health Organization to Doctors of BC regularly advocate for equitable access to nature to safeguard the physical and psychological well-being of residents. Factors such as lack of access to transportation and distance to parks can be barriers preventing members of society from enjoying the benefits of regional parks and regional trails.

Increased benefits of accessing nature and public spaces can be realized when they adapt to the needs of diverse populations, such as people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, mobility levels and income brackets.

Goal Progress Snapshot

- In 2023, an accessibility audit was completed and over 50% of the recommended improvements identified were made.
- An Accessible Parking Standard was also developed and implemented in 2023, and accessible parking stalls at four regional parks were improved or added.
- The CRD’s Exploring Indigenous Perspectives programming was delivered to over 2,000 park visitors.
- Accessible washrooms were added at Hamsterly Beach in Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park.
- A partnership with Power To Be was established.
- Detailed accessibility information was added to online and print nature program materials.

This goal contains

5

sub-actions



*New Accessible Washrooms
Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park*

Indicators



Improved accessibility to regional parks and regional trails

- Accessibility improvements were undertaken in 11 regional parks, including upgrades to access paths and park facilities, as well as 15 new or improved accessible parking stalls based on updated design standards.
- Construction was completed on an accessible washroom facility and a mobi-mat was installed at Hamsterly Beach in Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park.
- Detailed trail and facility descriptions were added to online and print nature program materials.
- Staff offered 48 accessible programs and events throughout regional parks, including six partnered programs with Power To Be to provide outdoor access to participants living with disabilities.



Cultural awareness information is incorporated into new park kiosks

- A traditional territory acknowledgement was developed with First Nations Relations and Corporate Communications and is being added as park kiosk panels are installed or renewed.
- Kiosk panels with the traditional territory acknowledgement and additional cultural information were added to the Galloping Goose Regional Trail (Kapoor/Marwood/Roche Cove), Sooke Hills Wilderness and Matheson Lake Regional Parks in 2023.



*TrailRider Mobility Device
Nature Program Partnership with Power To Be*



*Hamsterly Beach Mobi Mat
Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park*

Looking Ahead – 2024

In 2024, the CRD will continue to work with First Nations to better understand and respect Indigenous cultural heritage and use, focus on the protection of biodiversity, further inspire stewardship in parks, offer desirable outdoor recreation experiences, develop an expanded, improved and connected system of regional parks and regional trails and prepare for and adapt to climate change.

Some initiatives planned for 2024 include:

First Nations Engagement: The CRD will continue to invite and work with First Nations to identify, develop and implement priority initiatives in regional parks and regional trails, as well as engage with First Nations on major projects like park management plans and land acquisitions.

Equitable Access: Develop an Indigenous Cultural Use and Safety Policy for regional parks and regional trails. Continue to develop accessibility guidelines that will provide specifications for built infrastructure within regional parks and regional trails and standardizing what visitor use information is provided. Work will also take place to find ways to connect underrepresented communities with regional parks.

Regional Trail Enhancement Projects & Active Transportation Initiatives: Complete construction of the Mayne Island Regional Trail and initiate the first phase of the Regional Trestles Renewal, Trail Widening and Lighting Project. Support efforts towards establishing a new Transportation Service.

Biodiversity Protection: Draft a Stewardship Plan to provide an integrated park management approach that is informed by current data and balances the provision of a diverse range of outdoor recreation opportunities with conserving the unique natural and cultural heritage values of the region.

Outdoor Recreation Advancement: The CRD will begin to apply the Regional Park Trail Maintenance and Design Guidelines that were developed in 2023. Staff will also continue to work to advance Rock Climbing Guidelines and liaise with local recreation groups to ensure good relationships are maintained.

Electric Vehicle Charging Improvements: Implement electric vehicle charging stations at identified regional parks accesses.

Management Planning: Continue First Nations engagement on the Mount Work Management Plan, launch an updated planning process, and develop interim management guidelines for newer regional parks and acquisitions, including the former Royal Oak Golf Course lands, and Wrigglesworth Lake and Mountain Forest regional parks.

Land Acquisition: Engage with First Nations, stakeholders and the public on a new land acquisition strategy, criteria and process that reflects the direction in the Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022–2032.



Appendix A: Regional Parks & Trails – 2023 Report Card

The Regional Parks and Trails Report Card is intended to provide a high-level, easy to understand overview of the CRD’s progress and performance towards achieving the five goals in the Strategic Plan.

Methodology

The Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022–2032 identifies specific actions to guide the CRD’s efforts over the lifespan of the Plan. These include 13 strategic priorities with 57 sub-actions and associated timelines. Section five of the Plan establishes a monitoring and reporting system and a set of performance indicators.

For each goal area, an action status will reflect general progress made towards all actions supporting that goal. This helps to summarize at-a-glance progress made on actions that may not be easily measurable or reflected in another indicator, such as actions that are ongoing or taking place over a long time period. Icons are used to indicate the desired direction of the indicator over time (increasing or decreasing), where applicable.

The Regional Parks and Trails Report Card compiles the reporting indicator performance relative to the baseline year. It is important to note that changes in year-to-year performance do not always equate to a long-term trend, and that while performance in any given year may be positive or negative, it may take years to complete the actions and achieve the desired results.

For 2023, indicators are reported from the beginning of January to the end of December.



2023 Overall Strategic Plan Progress

On Track

Goal Area



Reconciliation: Strong, collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations through working in partnership.



Visitor Experience: Visitors to regional parks are involved in stewardship and have enjoyable outdoor recreation experiences.



Conservation: Protect the region's natural assets and cultural heritage for future generations.



Climate Action & Resiliency: Regional parks and regional trails are resilient and take action on climate change.



Access & Equity: Regional parks and regional trails are inclusive and accessible.

Legend: Action Status



On Track: 75% or greater of yearly target progress



Opportunity for Improvement: 50% - 75% of yearly target progress



Attention Required: less than 50% of yearly target progress



Future Action

Legend: Indicators



Direction of arrow indicates **current trend direction**



Indicator is trending in the **desired direction**



Indicator is trending in the **wrong direction**



Indicator is intended to provide **contextual information**



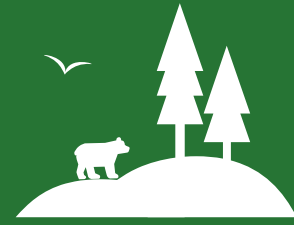
Reconciliation

Goal 1: Strong, collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations through working in partnership.



Overall Action Status
On Track

Status	Action	Update
Progress on Actions		
	1-1 Incorporate First Nation worldviews and knowledge in the ongoing management and operation of regional parks and regional trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding was increased for First Nations initiatives and capacity building. The CRD regularly met with WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council for two-way information sharing. These regular sessions ensure that future projects are brought to the table to share awareness and gather input on cultural sensitivity and preferred approaches that can be taken. Cultural Monitors for regional parks and regional trails projects have been engaged through these sessions and through archeological contracts to oversee project excavations. CRD staff also regularly participate in the Island View Beach Working Group, which also includes representation from Tsawout First Nation and the District of Central Saanich, to discuss areas with overlapping interests, to identify and discuss issues, share information, generate recommendations and to seek support for activities related to the area of interest. In 2023, staff engaged with Sc'ianew and T'Sou-ke First Nations to gather feedback on a proposed new bathroom facility, as well as a restoration project in an area of high cultural sensitivity in East Sooke Regional Park. Ongoing engagement processes with First Nations were continued related to the strategic plan, an updated planning process, a new land acquisition strategy, the Mount Work Management Plan and land acquisitions.
	1-2 Work with First Nations Governments in service delivery initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2023, a memorandum of understanding was developed between the CRD and Pacheedaht First Nation to help directly support new processes for respectful and reciprocal government-to-government decision making. The Sooke Potholes Regional Park Spring Salmon Place KWL-UCHUN campground operating agreement was continued with T'Sou-ke First Nation. CRD Regional Parks staff began investigating the logistics of collaborative training and patrol opportunities between CRD Regional Parks Rangers and local Indigenous Guardians.



Conservation

Goal 2: Regional parks protect the region's natural assets and cultural heritage for future generations



Overall Action Status

On Track

Status	Action	Update
Progress on Actions		
	2-1 Take action to increase protection of biodiversity, ecological integrity and natural assets in the region through improved knowledge, proactive stewardship and land acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A State of Natural Values Report was initiated through staff and contractors. • Significant work took place to inventory, monitor restore and enhance habitat for species at risk. Efforts to mitigate threats to species at risk were taken through the installation of fencing, enhanced signage and public education. • An Environmental Impact Assessment Process was officially adopted and implemented in 2023. • The CRD acquired nearly 21 hectares of regional park land in 2023. • The CRD became the first local government to have all 33 regional parks officially included in the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database - a federal database that contains the most up-to-date spatial and attribute data on marine and terrestrial protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures in Canada. • In 2023, CRD restoration volunteers and staff spent a total of 3,696 hours (47% increase over 2022) restoring and enhancing 11.75 hectares of land in regional parks. • The CRD supported the monitoring and management of invasive American Bullfrogs in the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area, which in turn reduces the likelihood of frog migration into western regional parks.
	2-2 Respect and protect cultural heritage sites and traditional cultural use practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2023, all new CRD staff in the Regional Parks Division received cultural competency training. • A training session was delivered to staff and volunteers at Regional Parks Headquarters in 2023 on the Protection and Conservation of Heritage Sites. • Cultural monitors were engaged from eight local First Nations on multiple projects involving land altering works. • Several site visits took place with First Nations to review and document culturally sensitive areas. • Existing restoration practices were reviewed and adjusted to ensure the ongoing protection of cultural values in regional parks.
	2-3 Work with partners in taking care of the region's species, habitats and natural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRD Regional Parks staff members participated regularly in the Coexisting with Carnivores Working Group, the Coastal Douglas-fir Partnership, the Capital Region Invasive Species Partnership and the provincial Biodiversity Forum for Local Governments Working Group. Staff also attended events, including Indigenous Cultural Safety and Humility for Conservation Professionals trainings and a follow-up Biodiversity Mapping workshop. • In 2023, staff facilitated and issued permits for 21 academic, government or eNGO biodiversity and ecology research projects in regional parks. • Two long-term partnerships and covenant monitoring remained in place between CRD Regional Parks and local conservation partners: Habitat Acquisition Trust and The Land Conservancy of British Columbia. Additionally, the CRD Regional Parks volunteer program collaborated with eight corporate groups, four community groups, three schools and a youth group to host a total of 27 ecological restoration events. • As part of the Elk/Beaver Lake Initiative, and with funding support from the Government of British Columbia, an oxygenator system was purchased and installed in Elk Lake to help address high nutrient levels. CRD staff also continued partner and stakeholder engagement related to the Elk/Beaver Lake Initiative and participated in the Haliburton Watershed Working Group. • The CRD collaborated with the District of Central Saanich and Tsawout First Nation on drainage management at Island View Beach. • The Sooke Hills Wilderness Project continued through 2023 – a collaboration between the CRD, the University of Victoria and the Coexisting with Carnivores Alliance to track the movement of both park users and wildlife like cougars, bears, deer and wolves.



Visitor Experience

Goal 3: Visitors to regional parks are involved in stewardship and have enjoyable outdoor recreation experiences



Overall Action Status

On Track

Status	Action	Update
Progress on Actions		
	3-1 Offer compatible outdoor recreation experiences that are enjoyable, healthy, safe and immersed in nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A State of Recreation Values report was initiated in 2023. The results will be incorporated into the Stewardship Plan, which will be developed over 2024. • Regional Parks Trail Maintenance and Design Guidelines were developed in 2023. • An assessment and visitor use monitoring of all known rock climbing areas was undertaken. • After a pilot extension in 2023, the camping season at Island View Beach Regional Park was officially extended from Labour Day (traditional closing day) to Thanksgiving weekend. • License agreements with two recreation groups enabled the repair, maintenance and improvement of mountain bike trails in both Mount Work and Sea to Sea regional parks.
	3-2 Foster stewardship through program delivery, knowledge sharing and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2023, two new cultural programs were created and Park Naturalists continued to work closely with the Cultural Programmer to include a cultural lens on interpretive programs and events. • New nature programming included messaging that supports visitor compliance and importance of parks for mental health and climate change. • Staff continued to monitor and review the placement of geocaches in regional parks to ensure culturally and ecologically sensitive areas were being protected. • Rock Climbing Guidelines were initiated in 2023 and are slated for completion in 2024. • Interpretation staff partnered with several organizations for the delivery of community events and education programs. • There was increased visitor engagement in regional parks and on regional trails related to CRD Regional Parks public awareness and safety campaigns. Rangers and bylaw officers spent a combined 5,080 hours patrolling, enforcing the parks bylaw, sharing information and educating the public in regional parks and regional trails in 2023. • Ongoing volunteer program development supports diverse opportunities for participation and contribution to regional parks and regional trails, as well as ongoing partnership development with community organizations. In addition, a volunteer survey was conducted in 2023 to gather information on volunteer satisfaction and experience.



Climate Action & Resiliency

Goal 4: Regional parks and regional trails are resilient and take action on climate change



Overall Action Status

On Track

Status	Action	Update
Progress on Actions		
	4-1 Advance regional active transportation opportunities that contribute to greenhouse gas reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Board resolution was approved to fund the full 6.6 kilometre Regional Trestle Renewal, Trail Widening and Lighting Project between 2024-2028 by way of debt servicing. A grant of \$1.9 million was also secured from the Growing Communities Fund to support planning for the Regional Trestle Renewal, Trail Widening and Lighting Project between 2024 and 2025. Staff participated in the Regional Transportation Working Group and the renewal of regional trails tenure agreements continued. A CRD Regional Trails Closure Policy was approved in May 2023. CRD staff met regularly with provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure staff to discuss the future of the regional trail network.
	4-2 Support the development of complete and connected communities by improving access to regional parks by transit, electric vehicles, micromobility, walking or cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects to improve connectivity of and access to the regional trails network continued, including Mayne Island Regional Trail and phase four of the E&N Rail Trail Regional Trail. Several paving and surfacing improvement projects on regional trails took place in 2023. A Regional Trail Accessibility Audit was completed, which included an accessibility assessment of all regional trail access points. The CRD Board confirmed that tax requisition was the appropriate primary revenue source for the Regional Parks Division and that parking in all but two regional parks should remain free of charge. A feasibility study, including an engineering evaluation of nine parks, was completed in 2023 to ultimately identify six specific locations within five parks to design and install two SmartTWO Flo Electrical Vehicle Charging Stations.
	4-3 Align service delivery and infrastructure improvements in regional parks and regional trails with climate action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Regional Trail Asset Renewal Plan was completed, providing better prioritization of renewal activity to be completed and to help inform a five-year Capital Plan. In 2023, the installation of CRD fleet electric vehicle chargers at park headquarters and satellite yard locations enhanced service delivery in alignment with climate action goals. In 2023, regional park and trail operations consumed 4,909 gigajoules of energy (compared to 4,869 in 2022) and the total emissions were about 288 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (compared to 252 in 2022). Increases were primarily due to the growing number of staff and fleet vehicles within the Regional Parks Division. It is expected that with increased fleet electrification these numbers will begin to decrease in coming years.
	4-4 Ensure the long-term and consistent management of regional parks and protected natural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2023, CRD staff and WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council committed to collaborating on the review/revision of the Mount Work Management Plan and a Traditional Use Agreement in 2024. Monitoring of natural features was significantly enhanced in 2023 through the hiring of two Conservation Technician staff who primarily focused on monitoring and research of rare species. Restoration and Stewardship partnerships were continued or initiated. An inventory of invasive plant species at one newly-acquired property was initiated. Ongoing asset renewal and capital project work on critical infrastructure, including condition assessments on two bridge structures and the annual inspection of Humpback Dam.
	4-5 Strategically acquire and manage natural areas to address climate mitigation, urban containment and access to green space for a growing population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two land acquisitions were made in 2023, adding to the long-term protection of the region's natural assets. Progress was made on creating a new Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy (LAS) in 2023, including getting initial input into an updated land acquisition process, principles and criteria from 17 First Nations and local governments. Work will continue on a new LAS in 2024, including updated land cover analysis and scenario planning.



Access & Equity

Goal 6: Regional parks and regional trails are inclusive and accessible



Overall Action Status
On Track

Status	Action	Update
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Progress on Actions



5-1 Enhance health and well-being by providing equitable access to regional parks and regional trails

- Inclusive washroom facility sign standards launched and implemented in regional park and trail facilities. Staff also reviewed and updated pit-toilet facility design to meet current accessibility requirements.
- A Regional Trails and Regional Parks Accessibility Audit was completed in 2023 and 52% of all the recommended upgrades from that audit were completed.
- Staff also developed and implemented an updated Accessible Parking Standard and upgraded or added 15 accessible parking stalls at four regional parks.
- In 2023, Indigenous Perspectives interpretive cultural programs were offered 41 times to the public through various events and programming, and 57 times to local schools.
- New user-friendly and accessible assets added to Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park, including a mobi-mat and new washrooms at Hamsterly Beach.
- Other accessibility improvements were undertaken in 11 regional parks, including access path upgrades to facilities and infrastructure like picnic tables and shelters.
- Detailed trail and facility accessibility descriptions were added to online and print nature program and event listings, as well as four Regional Parks website pages.
- Staff participated in an Accessibility Training workshop.
- Interpretive staff offered 48 accessible programs and events throughout regional parks. Interpretive staff also worked closely with partner organization, Power To Be, to deliver six partnered programs and events to provide outdoor access to participants living with disabilities.
- A land acknowledgement and additional cultural information is being added as kiosk panels in parks are renewed. In 2023, new kiosk panels were added to the Galloping Goose Regional Trail (Kapoor/Marwood/Roche Cove), and to Sooke Hills Wilderness and Matheson Lake regional parks.
- A CRD Regional Parks Resident Survey was developed in 2023 and launched in early 2024. The survey will provide staff with a better understanding of accessibility and equity-related barriers to using regional parks and regional trails.
- In 2023, park naturalists collaborated with the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria to offer nature programming to nearly 100 new Canadians (refugees and new immigrants). Programs focused on helping new Canadians feel welcome in regional parks and equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to return on their own for subsequent visits.



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