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REPORT TO CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT BOARD MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2020

SUBJECT **Regional Parks – Management Planning Priorities**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To establish consistent evaluation criteria and process to prioritize regional parks and regional trails for management plan development, as well as provide recommendations for new management planning processes.

BACKGROUND

The Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012-2021 states that “management plans provide strategies to protect the environment, and they define appropriate levels of activities.” Through management planning, the goals, objectives and policies for a park are set to guide ongoing development and management actions. Management planning processes are designed to engage First Nations and include public outreach and consultation.

The development of a park or trail management plan takes between one and three years, depending on the complexity of issues, degree of collaboration with First Nations and level of public engagement. In rare cases, planning processes may extend five to ten years due to complexity or unforeseen issues. Typically, after 15 years, or if significant changes are required, management plans should be updated. Currently, 13 regional parks do not have management plans or interim management guidelines and, in three cases, the management plans are more than 20 years old.

Given the finite resources Regional Parks has to conduct management planning, each new management planning process must be focused on a regional park or regional trail that is seen as a priority. In 2018-2019, Regional Park’s staff completed a project to establish evaluation criteria and a process for determining priorities for developing new or updated management plans for regional parks and trails and develop a priority list for consideration by the Regional Parks Management Team (RPMT) prior to initiating new management planning processes.

The project team collaboratively analyzed each park using the evaluation criteria and scoring method (Appendix A) to come up with a list provided as a recommendation to the RPMT of priority parks and trails for future management planning, based on total scores (Appendix B). Included in Appendix B is the year of approval of a management plan (if one exists) for that regional park or trail. Several regional parks do not appear on the list because in 2019 management planning processes were either recently completed (Mt. Parke or St. John Point) or Interim Management Guidelines were developed and approved (Mill Farm). In addition, one management plan remains in-progress (Island View Beach), pending the progress of ongoing work and discussions with the Tsawout First Nation.

Subsequently, the Regional Parks Management Team, after consideration of additional factors, established the top three management plan projects for 2020 as i) Mount Work, ii) East Sooke, and iii) combining Matheson Lake and Roche Cove into one planning process (as they are adjacent to each other). Additional influencing factors included staff capacity and existing work commitments, potential efficiencies and project balance across the region, First Nations interest and capacity for involvement, and timeframe required for plan development. Emphasis was

placed on undertaking work on regional parks that have never had a management plan completed, which meant that Mount Work, East Sooke and Matheson Lake/Roche Cove regional parks were placed ahead of several regional parks that do have management plans in place, such as Thetis Lake, Elk/Beaver Lake and Witty's Lagoon. Two other regional parks without management plans (Horth Hill and Jordan River) and near the top of the list will be considered as candidates for Interim Management Guidelines rather than full management plans.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That staff proceed with management plans for Mount Work, East Sooke and Matheson Lake/Roche Cove regional parks.

Alternative 2

That staff proceed with plans for those parks that have the highest priority ranking.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

This prioritization work helps Regional Parks meet the strategic action “to complete or update park and trail management plans for priority parks and trails” from the Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2012-2021.

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

Management plan processes include opportunities for First Nation involvement, and can lead to reconciliation of interests of First Nations with respect to parks management plans. This helps meet the CRD 2019-2022 Corporate Plan Community Need 6d.

Service Delivery Implications

This process should be undertaken every five years to reevaluate priorities, including giving consideration to new parkland acquired within that timeframe.

CONCLUSION

As Regional Parks has finite resources to conduct management planning, and many regional parks do not have management plans in place yet, staff have developed a process and evaluation criteria for prioritizing management plan projects and have ranked regional parks and trails accordingly. After additional consideration was given to factors such as whether a park has a management plan in place or not, degree of existing work plan commitments, First Nation and staff capacity, and potential efficiencies and project balance across the region, Mount Work, East Sooke and Matheson Lake/Roche Cove regional parks are identified as the next three potential management planning projects.

RECOMMENDATION

That staff proceed with management plans for Mount Work, East Sooke and Matheson Lake/Roche Cove regional parks.

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Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P. Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Evaluation Criteria

Appendix B: Priority List of Regional Parks and Trails for Management Planning

REGIONAL PARKS – MANAGEMENT PLANNING PRIORITIES

EVALUATION CRITERIA

#	Criteria Description	Scoring
1	<p>Legal obligation or formal agreement</p> <p>A legal obligation or some other type of formal agreement or strategic plan exists that dictates the need for a management plan. A legal obligation might be a purchase agreement, contribution agreement, or section 219 covenant that requires a plan to be developed within a specific timeframe. A formal agreement or strategic plan may be a Species at Risk Recovery Plan or Park Restoration Plan that identifies critical habitat in a park that requires urgent or special consideration.</p>	<p>0: no obligation</p> <p>5: noted in agreement or strategic document or a legal obligation exists that has been met</p> <p>10: legal obligation exists/remains outstanding</p>
2	<p>Risk to natural values</p> <p>One or more significant values face a threat to their integrity or sustainability or visitor use significantly threatens/could significantly threaten natural values. These may include things such as creation of unauthorized trails or increasing use.</p>	<p>0: no significant risk/low risks exist</p> <p>5: moderate risk</p> <p>10: high risk exists</p>
3	<p>Risk to/or decreasing visitor experience</p> <p>Visitor experience is decreasing or may potentially decrease if management direction is not provided. Note, the decrease may be observed by staff and/or noted through social science surveys. Things such as significant jumps in visitor numbers or specific management issues may cause decreasing visitor experience.</p>	<p>0: low risk/visitor experience stable</p> <p>5: medium risk/moderate decreases in visitor experience</p> <p>10: high risk/high visitor experience decreases noted</p>
4	<p>Complexity of issues</p> <p>The presence of multiple issues and/or complicated issues.</p>	<p>0: minor number of issues/simple issues</p> <p>5: moderate number of issues/moderate complexity</p> <p>10: high number of issues/high complexity</p>
5	<p>Pressures from adjacent development</p> <p>Adjacent or nearby area is experiencing development that will put additional pressure on the park.</p>	<p>0: no development/minimal or limited pressure in area</p> <p>5: moderate development pressure</p> <p>10: high development pressure</p>

#	Criteria Description	Scoring
6	<p>Emerging or proposed visitor activity</p> <p>If new visitor activities are emerging or are proposed that are not envisioned in an existing management plan or that could impact the park's values.</p>	<p>0: no activity emerging or anticipated</p> <p>5: minor new activity with limited potential impact emerging</p> <p>10: significant new activities emerging or proposed or activities with significant infrastructure anticipated</p>
7	<p>Operational need</p> <p>Staff need direction to manage existing use, direction on existing infrastructure, direction for operational plans to be implemented, or to ensure operations are not threatening significant park values.</p>	<p>0: low need</p> <p>5: moderate need</p> <p>10: high need</p>
8	<p>Existing Management Plans</p> <p>Does the park/trail have an approved management plan and how up-to-date or out-of-date is it? In some cases, parks with outdated management plans may have as high a need for an updated plan as a park with no management plan.</p>	<p>0: management plan less than 5 years old</p> <p>5: management plan 5-15 years old</p> <p>10: management plan greater than 15 years old or no management plan</p>

PRIORITY LIST OF REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS FOR MANAGEMENT PLANNING

May 2020

Regional Park or Trail	Approved Management Plan?	Evaluation Criteria Score	Priority for Initiation in 2020
Thetis Lake	2004	65	
Mt. Work	-	60	1
Elk Beaver Lake	1995	45	
Witty's Lagoon	1994	40	
East Sooke	-	40	2
Horth Hill ¹	-	40	
Jordan River ¹	-	30	
Matheson Lake ²	-	30	3
Sooke Hills Wilderness	2004	30	
Mt. Wells	2004	30	
Sooke Potholes	2010	30	
Mill Hill	2004	30	
Sea to Sea	2010	30	
Devonian	-	15	
Coles Bay	-	15	
Gonzales	-	15	
Lone Tree	-	15	
Albert Head	-	15	
Ayum Creek	2010	15	
Mary Lake	-	15	
Galloping Goose	2016	15	
Sooke River	-	15	
Roche Cove ²	-	10	
East Point	1999	10	
Francis King	2004	10	
Bear Hill	2010	10	
E&N Rail Trail	2016	10	

Regional Park or Trail	Approved Management Plan?	Evaluation Criteria Score	Priority for Initiation in 2020
Lochside	2016	10	
Kapoor	2010	5	
Brooks Point	2014	5	
Matthews Point	2018	5	

¹ If resources are sufficient, these parks may be considered as candidates for Interim Management Guidelines.

² Recommend combining Matheson Lake and Roche Cove together for management planning efficiencies.