

## VISION

Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks are destined to play a unique role in the stewardship of public lands in the Capital Region. They act as an important natural area buffer to help protect water quality in the adjacent Greater Victoria Water Supply Area, and provide a high degree of protection for a vast area of maturing Douglas-fir forest, spectacular hilltop meadows, productive wetlands and lakes, and lush stream valleys.

The parks will make an important contribution to sustaining the diversity of native ecosystems and species in the region. Together with the adjacent Water Supply Area and adjacent parkland, they form the largest wildlife refuge on southern Vancouver Island.

Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells will provide opportunities for enriching outdoor experiences appropriate to a relatively large and remote natural setting close to water supply lands. Visitors can contemplate sweeping vistas and experience the challenge of outdoor activity in rugged terrain. Human activities in the parks will be carefully managed to protect the natural environment and the adjacent Water Supply Area.

Both parks will enhance the livability and economy of the region by sustaining and presenting our natural and cultural heritage and helping to protect the quality of our drinking water. Appropriate research in these parks will add to our knowledge of native ecosystems and how they function, the effects of human activities on the natural environment and adjacent water supply lands, and the effectiveness of park management actions.

# Acknowledgements

*CRD Parks gratefully acknowledges the following people for their significant contribution to the Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Park Management Plan. Completion of this plan would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of these and many others in the Capital Region.*

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### Note:

The Capital Region Water Supply and Sooke Hills Protection Act (Bill 17) which created Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park directed the CRD to prepare a management plan for the new park. The Act stipulated that the management plan required the approval of the Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks. In June 2001 the name of that ministry was changed to the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix A**

Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Parks Management Plan:  
Summary of Public and Agency Input

# Part 1 - Background

## Introduction

Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks are located between Saanich Inlet and the Sooke Basin in the western portion of the Capital Regional District (Map 1). Sooke Hills Wilderness consists of two separate land areas located on either side of the Goldstream catchment in the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.

Together, Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells protect about 4200 hectares of older and regenerating coniferous forest, rocky hilltops, stream valleys, wetlands and water bodies. The parks form a major component of the proposed Saanich Inlet to Sooke Basin (Sea to Sea) Green/Blue Belt identified in the Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy. The Green/Blue Belt has been incorporated into the Regional Growth Strategy as a natural area transition between the Greater Victoria Metropolitan Area and the managed forest lands in the western portion of the region.

Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park plays an important role in protecting the security of water supply catchment lands within the adjacent Greater Victoria Water Supply Area. The park provides a natural area buffer between the water supply area and nearby intensive land uses and activities. This buffer reduces the risk of wildfire and disease organisms spreading to water supply catchment lands. Since recreational activities can also increase the risk of wildfire and the introduction of disease organisms, the parks will be managed to minimize these risks.

Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells also play an important role in the conservation of regional ecosystems and species. The large total size of the two parks and their varied terrain and vegetation provide important habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species, including bear, cougar and wolves. The parks contain remnant stands of original, unlogged Douglas-fir forest, some of which provide nesting habitat for marbled murrelets, a threatened seabird. Many of the rocky hilltops contain undisturbed native meadow ecosystems sensitive to damage from recreational activities. Several types of wetlands protected in Sooke Hills Wilderness have disappeared from the rest of the settled portion of the region.

The large combined size of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells, the rugged terrain, hilltop viewpoints, maturing forest, lush stream valleys, and presence of large mammals combine to give these protected areas a feeling of wildness and remoteness. As stated in the park vision, these parks are destined to play a unique role in the stewardship of public lands in the region, and contribute to sustaining the diversity of native ecosystems. The size and character of the parks provide visitors with experiences that can be found in no other CRD park, and Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks will grace the skyline of the Capital Region forever.

## ***Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park Description***

Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park is approximately 4100 hectares in size. The park consists of two separate areas on either side of the Goldstream catchment portion of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area (Map 2). The northern portion of the park also borders private managed forest land and Goldstream Provincial Park. The southern portion of the park borders public and private managed forest land, YMCA Camp Thunderbird, and rural residential properties.

Sooke Hills Wilderness protects substantial portions of three important drainage areas: the Niagara Creek and Waugh Creek drainages in the Goldstream River watershed which flows into Saanich Inlet, and the upper portion of the Veitch Creek watershed, which flows into Sooke Basin. The park also protects most of the area which drains into Humpback Reservoir. Small portions of the park are within the Charters Creek drainage area, which flows into Sooke River, the Ayum Creek watershed, which flows into Sooke Basin, and the Bilston Creek watershed, which flows into the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Much of the Waugh and Niagara drainage areas consist of relatively uniform, gently rolling terrain covered with coniferous forest regenerating after logging. Water bodies and wetlands are dotted around this plateau-like area. Two lakes in the Waugh have been dammed and enlarged. The southeast portion of the Niagara drainage area drops relatively steeply to the Goldstream River. Niagara Creek has carved a rocky canyon through this portion of the park. Some portions of the Niagara contain original, unlogged coniferous forest.

The terrain in the southeast half of the Waugh drainage and the portion of the park in the Veitch and Humpback watersheds is characterized by hummocks, rounded rocky hilltops and ridges above narrow stream valleys. Numerous rock outcroppings and meadow areas are found on the hilltops. The forest in most lowland areas is regenerating after logging, but some of the hilltops contain original Douglas-fir forest.

The area within Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park was previously owned and managed by the Greater Victoria Water District as a buffer area to protect the quality of drinking water on adjacent water supply catchment lands. A considerable network of roadways was constructed and maintained by the Water District to provide access for fire response, security, water supply purposes and logging (Map 3). Many of these roadways connect the park and adjacent water supply catchment lands. Mavis, Jack and Humpback reservoirs and a number of diversion channels were created and maintained to shunt water between the Waugh and Goldstream drainage areas for water supply purposes. A site for communications towers was established on Mount McDonald above Humpback Reservoir. Unauthorized public access to these lands has been restricted for decades. The Park Reserve designation continues the restricted access status.

CRD Parks conducted an assessment of the green space and regional park values of the non-catchment lands, and found that these areas had high parkland values. At about the same time, the Provincial Government's Vancouver Island Land Use Plan (Goal 2 Protected Areas Strategy) identified the Niagara Creek drainage area as a provincial protected area candidate and potential addition to Goldstream Provincial Park.

**Map 1 - Regional Setting**  
 Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells  
 Regional Parks



J u a n D e F u c a S t r a i t

Plot date: February 7, 2001  
 Project: shw\_rpt\_b.apr //V1 L1



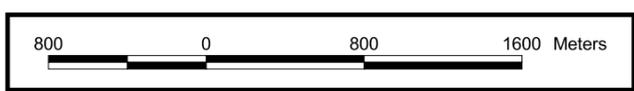
**Legend**

- Coastline
- - - Municipal Boundaries
- Roads
- - - Sea to Sea Green / Blue Belt
-  Greater Victoria Water Supply Area
-  Regional Parks
-  Other Protected Areas

**Map 2 - Drainage Boundaries**  
Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells  
Regional Parks



Plot date: October 20, 2000  
Project: shw\_rpt\_b.apr //V2 L2



**Legend**

- Park Boundary
- - - Drainage Area Boundary
- Greater Victoria Water Supply Area
- ..... 20m Contour



## ***Mount Wells Regional Park Description***

Mount Wells Regional Park is approximately 110 hectares in size and includes the summit of Mount Wells and a smaller hill to the east (Map 2). Mount Wells drops steeply down to Humpback Road to the west and connects to the Mount McDonald and Humpback Reservoir portions of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

Mount Wells Regional Park features moss-covered rock outcroppings, numerous upland meadow areas and some original Douglas-fir forest. Much of the lower slopes has been logged. The park provides a transition between the Garry oak ecosystems typical of hilltops in the settled portion of the Capital Region and the Douglas-fir and arbutus ecosystems in the Sooke Hills to the west.

Mount Wells Regional Park was originally Provincial Crown forest land which had been identified as having park potential. It has been used for recreation for decades, and there are excellent views from the summit of Mount Wells and other points in the park. The province transferred these lands to CRD Parks in return for a financial and land contribution towards the establishment of Gowlland-Tod Provincial Park as part of the 1994 Commonwealth Nature Legacy Program. Mount Wells is currently designated as a Regional Park Reserve. The purpose of this classification is to enable CRD Parks to defer the provision of visitor facilities and services and not encourage public use until the necessary facilities and services are provided.

## **Context of the Management Plan**

### ***Origin of the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park Management Plan***

In the early 1990s, the Greater Victoria Water District non-catchment lands began to be considered surplus to the needs of the Water District. Also in the early 1990s, a number of environmental groups began a campaign for the protection of the proposed a Sea to Sea Greenbelt linking Saanich Inlet and the Sooke Basin. The protection of the Sooke Hills Wilderness was a major focus of the campaign. In a 1995 park land assessment, CRD Parks identified the Sooke Hills as having high value as regional parkland. The provincial government's Vancouver Island Land Use Plan recognized the park values of lands in the Niagara catchment, and recommended that the Niagara Creek be acquired and included within Goldstream Provincial Park.

The mandate to create a management plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park has its origins in three main initiatives as outlined below.

#### ***1. Special Commission on the Greater Victoria Water Supply***

In 1996, the provincial government convened a Special Commission on the Greater Victoria Water Supply (the Perry Commission) to examine and obtain public input on the governance of Victoria's water supply, issues relating to the use of lands held by the Water District, and water conservation. The Commission recommended that the Water District land in the Niagara, Waugh, Veitch and Humpback drainages be managed as a regional park. They also recommended that:

- The non-catchment lands of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Lands be designated as parkland and transferred to the CRD with the primary purpose being protection of water quality.
- A comprehensive land use management plan be developed for the non-catchment lands as quickly as possible following transfer of ownership to CRD.
- The highest priority in management of what is now Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park Reserve be the protection of adjacent water supply lands; the primary purpose of the park is to serve as a buffer against unauthorized public access and fire.
- Any uses in the park that will increase the likelihood of human impacts on water supply catchment lands be avoided.
- Environmental protection be given second highest priority in the management of the park; ecological values, (for example, the vegetation on hilltops in the Veitch drainage which are sensitive to damage from recreation) are best protected by minimizing public access.
- A third priority for the plan is to provide as much as possible for outdoor recreation activities that do not interfere with maintaining water quality and ecological values.

2. *Bill 17- Capital Region Water Supply and Sooke Hills Protection Act (May 1997)*

- Established Sooke Hills Wilderness as a Regional Park.
- Directed CRD to amend its Master Plan to include the Park in the CRD Parks System.
- Directed CRD to adopt a bylaw setting out a park management plan for the park.
- Directed the CRD to have the management plan approved by the Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection.

3. *Agreement Between the Province of British Columbia and the Capital Regional District Regarding the Park Management Plan for the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park (May 1977)*

- Directed CRD Parks to designate the park as a park reserve until the management plan is completed.
- Directed CRD Parks to lead the management planning process, including public and First Nations consultation.
- Directed CRD to submit the plan to the Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection for approval prior to adoption by the CRD Board.

The agreement also recommended that the management plan address the following issues:

- Protect water quality and supply, and the needs of water supply operations.
- Manage public access to the catchment lands and their buffer areas.
- Protect significant ecological, cultural and historic areas.
- Explore education and research opportunities.
- Develop appropriate public access and use compatible with maintaining the security of the water supply catchment lands.
- Protect significant ecological areas.
- Identify how Sooke Hills Wilderness can contribute to the extension of the Sea to Sea greenbelt and how this extension best relates to linkages outside the park.

- Identify an alternate Galloping Goose Regional Trail right-of-way through the park that will enable a continuous corridor link to the CNR right-of-way south of Shawnigan Lake.
- Refine the boundaries of Sooke Hills Wilderness.
- Ensure that any proposed non-park uses that may impact Sooke Hills Wilderness do not result in a net loss of park land or park values.
- Involve the public and First Nations in developing the park management plan.
- Develop and implement a strategy for managing public access while the management plan is being prepared, approved, and implemented.

A subsequent agreement between the Province and the CRD (the Railway Right-of-way Agreement) required the CRD to relocate a portion of the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) through the park to the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD). To support the closed watershed policy of the CRD, the Province relinquished ownership of the former CNR right-of-way along the eastern shore of Sooke Lake. This right-of-way originally linked the CRD's Galloping Goose Regional Trail with the CVRD. As compensation for the closure of the former right-of-way, the District agreed to provide an alternative trail through the park, to reconnect with the TCT sections in the Shawnigan Lake area of the CVRD.

Mount Wells Regional Park was originally Provincial Crown forest land that had been used informally for recreation for many years. The province agreed to transfer these lands to CRD Parks in return for a financial and land contribution towards establishment of Gowlland Tod Provincial Park as part of the 1994 Commonwealth Legacy Program. Because Mount Wells is immediately adjacent to Sooke Hills Wilderness, it was decided to include it within the larger management planning process.

### ***The Management Plan in Relation to the CRD Parks Master Plan***

The purposes of regional parks and trails and the overall policies and guidelines for their management are set out in the CRD Parks Master Plan (CRD Parks 2000). The CRD Parks Master Plan sets out the purposes of the regional parks system, which are:

- To establish and protect a network of regional parks in perpetuity that represents and helps maintain the diverse range of natural environments in the Capital Regional District.
- To provide opportunities for outdoor experiences and activities that foster enjoyment of and appreciation and respect for the region's natural environments.

Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park is classified as a *Regional Wilderness Area* in the CRD Parks Master Plan. This class of park is characterized by:

- A large land base, generally more than 1,000 hectares
- An emphasis on the conservation of ecosystems, with minimal human interference
- Provision of opportunities for visitors to experience, firsthand, the park's ecosystems
- Provision of few, if any, services and facilities
- The experience of remoteness, solitude and harmony with nature

This type of park is considered “critical to sustain wildlife and plants that rely on sizable natural areas for their survival and to provide wilderness outdoor experiences and activities.” East Sooke Regional Park and Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park Reserve are the only current examples of a *Regional Wilderness Area* in the regional parks and trails system.

Mount Wells Regional Park is classified as a *Regional Natural Area* in the CRD Parks Master Plan. This type of park protects the natural environment and provides opportunities for a range of appropriate outdoor experiences and activities. The range of activities in parks with this designation is governed by the terrain and park ecosystem protection needs.

*Regional Natural Areas* are not as ecologically sensitive or diverse as *Regional Conservation Areas*, although they may contain sensitive and threatened ecosystems. Parks classified as *Regional Natural Areas* are generally not of sufficient size to ensure that their natural features can be protected and remain viable over the long term.

### ***Park Management Goals***

The CRD Parks Master Plan sets out a number of goals for the management of regional parks. Key goal statements include:

- Maintain healthy, viable ecosystems.
- Minimize negative effects of human activities on the natural environment and protect cultural resources.
- Provide opportunities for a range of experiences and outdoor recreation activities appropriate to each park which best serve visitor needs.
- Provide essential services and facilities that address public safety and foster enjoyment and appreciation of regional parks and trails.

### ***Park Management Plans***

Planning is an integral part of the management of regional parks and trails. The CRD Parks Master Plan sets out goals, policies and guidelines for the management of all regional parks. Within the context of the Master Plan, management plans are prepared for individual regional parks. Park management plans determine:

- How the natural environment and cultural features in the park or on trails will be protected and managed.
- The types of outdoor recreational uses that will be permitted and where they will be allowed.
- The types and locations of park and trail facilities.
- The proposed park boundary and areas that have regional park potential.
- A mechanism for addressing specific management issues.
- The types and levels of services that CRD Parks will provide.
- Priority management actions, and a schedule and estimated cost for implementation.

Public involvement is an important part of the planning process. This involvement is encouraged and supported through advisory groups, public meetings, open houses and workshops, local media, and information sessions for regional park neighbors, interest groups, municipal councils and other levels of government.

### ***Process to Review and Amend the Management Plan***

Once the management plan has been adopted, CRD Board and Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection approval will be required for major changes to the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park portion of the management plan. Major changes include:

- X Changes to the boundaries of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.
- X Changes to the boundaries of the Drinking Water Protection Zone.
- X Changes to basic park management policies as stated in the management plan.

CRD Board approval will be required for:

- X Removing the Park Reserve status of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.
- X Funding major park developments.

Minor amendments to the plan that are consistent with the management priorities, goals and directions, and adjustments to the process or timing of implementing the plan, will not require Board approval. The management plan will be reviewed after the park has been opened to the public for a few years, and the plan adjusted as required. Relevant provincial and federal government agencies and departments, local governments, park user groups and First Nations will be consulted in the review process.

### ***First Nations***

Federal and provincial Crown lands in the CRD are subject to the provisions of the Douglas Treaty with local First Nations, where these apply, and may be subject to other non-treaty Aboriginal title interests. Federal and provincial Crown lands are also subject to land claims and may be acquired by First Nations as a result of treaty negotiations. No reserve lands are included in Sooke Hills Wilderness or Mount Wells Regional Parks.

Within this context, CRD Parks seeks to understand the past use and interests of First Nations in lands within regional parks so that sites of cultural significance can be identified and given appropriate protection in park planning and management.

### ***The CRD Water Strategic Plan for Water Management***

In September 1999, CRD Water (formerly the Greater Victoria Water District) released a Strategic Plan for Water Management which set the direction for protecting, maintaining and enhancing water quality in the watersheds of the Water Supply Area. The plan is centered on a risk management framework, which incorporates a multi-barrier approach to protecting the drinking water supply from threats to water quality. This multiple barrier approach includes consolidating ownership of the watershed lands, effective watershed management, appropriate staff training, monitoring and reporting, and disinfection to maintain water quality through the distribution system and routine maintenance of the water system.

The Strategic Plan for Water Management identifies a number of threats to the quality of the drinking water supply, which can be influenced by the management of adjacent lands:

- X The introduction of disease organisms that affect humans (people, domestic animals and certain wildlife species can carry and introduce these diseases into the water supply).
- X Wildfire (which introduces nutrients and sediments into the water supply).
- X The introduction of forest insects and diseases which can lead to the death and fall of trees causing sediment to enter the water supply.
- X Chemical contamination (from vehicles and equipment traversing water supply catchment lands).

The strategic plan contains a number of recommendations for working with adjacent landowners to minimize the potential for the activities of adjacent lands to affect the water supply. These recommendations must be considered in the management plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

### ***Land Exchange Agreement Between the Province, CRD and Kapoor Lumber Company***

In September 1999, the Province of BC, the CRD and Kapoor Lumber Company signed a land exchange agreement to provide CRD Water with ownership of the majority of lands within the Sooke Lake and Council Lake watersheds. This included a closure of Highway 117 and the CNR railway right-of-way corridor along the eastern shore of Sooke Lake.

A number of the terms in this legal, binding agreement affect Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park Reserve:

- X An alternate trail right-of-way must be provided across the Humpback and Niagara drainages within the park as a route for the Trans Canada Trail linking the Capital Region with the Cowichan Valley Regional District.
- X Kapoor Lumber Company has been granted an easement over Kapoor Main in the Waugh Humpback drainages for vehicle access to their lands to the north and west of Mavis and Jack reservoirs. The CRD continues to be responsible for the maintenance of the roadway.
- X If the company seeks and is granted permission to subdivide these properties in the future, the agreement allows the dedication of Kapoor Main as a public road to the extent necessary to provide the new property owners access to their lands.
- X Kapoor Lumber Company has been granted an easement over a portion of Jack Main, and a roadway connecting Jack Main and Kapoor Main in the Waugh drainage, for vehicle access to their lands to the north and west of Mavis and Jack reservoirs. Because of the need for access to their properties, the public trail through the park must not include these portions of the road system.

### ***The Regional Green/Blue Spaces and Regional Growth Strategy***

The lands within Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional park reserves form a major component of the proposed Saanich Inlet to Strait of Juan de Fuca Green/Blue Belt identified in the *Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy* (CRD and Provincial Capital Commission 1997) (Map 1 on page 3). The Green/Blue Belt consists of lands within the Goldstream River, Veitch, Charters and Ayum creek watersheds. Most of these lands contain areas identified in the federal/provincial Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory, as well as important regional watercourses.

The Green/Blue Belt consists of existing protected areas, unprotected Green Space Core Areas on CRD Water lands, undesignated Crown lands, large undeveloped private holdings and public and private managed forest lands.

The Green/Blue Belt is an important natural area buffer between urban and suburban areas in the eastern portion of the region and the large area of commercial forest lands in the west. The protection of a Saanich Inlet to Strait of Juan de Fuca Green/Blue Belt is a key element of the Regional Growth Strategy, and has been incorporated into all of the growth strategy alternatives for the Capital Region (CRD 1999).

### ***The Parks in Relation to Other Park Agencies***

#### *Provincial Parks*

There are important linkages between Goldstream Provincial Park and Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. The Niagara drainage portion of Sooke Hills Wilderness shares a common boundary with Goldstream Provincial Park. Both the Niagara and the Waugh drainages within the park, and the Goldstream catchment portion of the CRD Water lands, are parts of the larger Goldstream River watershed. These lands play a major role in maintaining the integrity of the Goldstream River and estuary, the yearly salmon run, and the older Douglas-fir forest in the provincial park. There is an existing but unauthorized trail connection between Sooke Hills Wilderness and Goldstream Provincial Park along Niagara Creek.

Gowlland-Tod Provincial Park is located north of Goldstream Provincial Park. Both these provincial parks are within the Saanich Inlet to Strait of Juan de Fuca Green/Blue Belt. There is the potential to link trails in Gowlland-Tod through Goldstream Provincial Park to Sooke Hills Wilderness, and continuing westward to Sooke Mountain Provincial Park.

#### *District of Langford Park and Trail Plans*

The 1996 Parks Master Plan for the District of Langford identifies Humpback Reservoir as a desirable community park with the guiding objective of the preservation, enhancement and interpretation of the natural environment. The plan identifies a number of potential uses such as cycling, walking and hiking trails, a boardwalk, bird watching facilities and picnic areas. The *Opportunities Plan Map* shows a trail around the reservoir linked to a trail along Humpback Road and a trail connecting to the Galloping Goose Regional Trail.

Trail linkages between Humpback Reservoir and Mount Wells, and between Humpback Reservoir, the Galloping Goose Regional Trail and local neighborhoods, are shown in the 1998 draft Langford Trail Master Plan.

The Langford Official Community Plan (District of Langford Bylaw 150, 1996) identifies Humpback Reservoir as a potential park and Humpback Road as a priority bicycle/pedestrian route. The plan encourages the protection, enhancement and development of this route to support these uses.

The eastern portion of Mount Wells Regional Park, including the hill to the east of Mount Wells, is identified as a desirable area for neighborhood residential development in the Official Community Plan.

### *New Park Lands West of the Park*

A number of properties immediately west of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park have been designated to become future regional parklands under the management of the CRD. The lands include two parcels of land (121 hectares) gifted by TimberWest in December 2000 to the Nature Conservancy of Canada for future dedication as CRD regional parkland. In March 2001, The Land Conservancy of British Columbia, through financial contributions from the CRD, the Federal Government, the Province and individual donors acquired 1380 hectares of land west of the park (the Seraphim Lands) for future park purposes. The transfer of these will be completed over a five-year period. It is expected that following a comprehensive planning process these lands and the existing protected provincial park and crown lands will be assembled into a larger multi-agency park complex linked with Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

The assembly of these parklands may affect the future recreational use of the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park, as there are now more options for trail linkages, and more land is available for a variety of recreational pursuits. Planning for the larger Sooke Hills area will take place through a new and separate planning process that has yet to begin. Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park will be an important component of the larger Sea to Sea Green/Blue Belt traversing the Sooke Hills from Saanich Inlet to Sooke Harbour. Because of its designation as a regional wilderness area, future development of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks will continue to emphasize the conservation role of the park lands, accommodating recreation where appropriate.

## Part 2 - The Management Plan

### Purpose of the Management Plan

The purpose of this management plan is to:

- X Give direction for providing security to the adjacent water supply lands, protecting the natural environment and cultural features of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional park reserves.
- X Determine ways to provide opportunities for people to learn about, appreciate, and enjoy these important natural areas.

### *Park Management Plan Requirements*

The 1997 agreement between the Province and the CRD identified a number of issues to be addressed in the management plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. These were:

- X Protecting the security of adjacent water supply lands, protecting the natural environment, and coordinating the park management plan with the management plan for lands in the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.
- X Defining the role of the park within the system of provincial, regional and municipal parks and provincial ecological reserves in the Capital Region and determining the appropriate types and locations of public access and recreational activities.
- X Defining how the park can help achieve the Sea to Sea Green/Blue Belt concept by defining its boundary as it relates to linkages in the proposed Sea to Sea Green/Blue Belt, and to nearby provincial parks.
- X Determining the future of the dams on Jack and Mavis reservoirs.
- X Identifying an alternate trail right-of-way to link the Galloping Goose Regional Trail to the former CNR right-of-way south of Shawnigan Lake (the proposed route of the Trans Canada Trail).
- X Identifying the type, location and extent of appropriate recreational use of the park and associated park management strategies.

During the management planning process, a number of additional requirements affecting Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional park reserves were identified:

- X Addressing public safety and park operation and maintenance relating to roads in the park, the E and N Railway right-of-way, and energy transmission corridors.
- X Orienting park trails and facilities away from adjacent private lands and addressing unregulated access into the park.
- X Developing agreements and a schedule for transferring the management of roads, water diversion channels, dams, and other infrastructure from CRD Water to CRD Parks.

A key strategy to fulfil these requirements was to utilize a phased approach to opening the parks to public use. This would ensure adequate preparation within existing budget and staff constraints prior to opening the park and to provide a process for the effects of recreational

activities to be assessed and management policies adjusted.

### ***Features and Areas Requiring Special Management***

There are a number of special features and areas within the parks that will require particular management. These include:

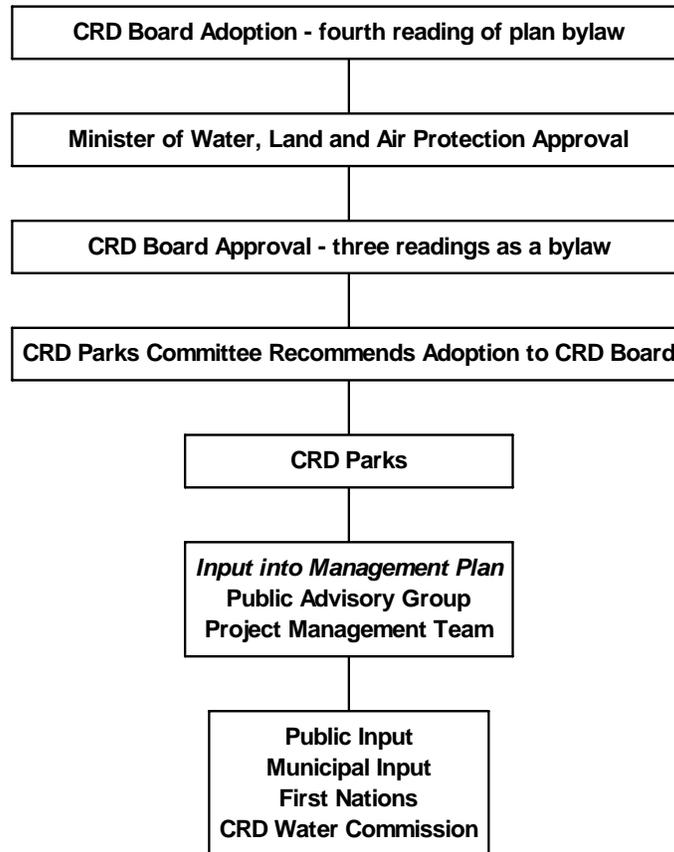
- X Portions of Sooke Hills Wilderness adjacent to the water supply catchment lands.
- X Environmentally sensitive hilltop and valley bottom areas in the Veitch and Humpback drainages.
- X Marbled murrelet nesting habitat and the steep slopes in the Niagara Creek Canyon.
- X Forest plantation areas in the Niagara and Waugh catchments (young forest stands and areas of Scotch broom pose a fire risk to the park and adjacent water supply catchment lands).
- X Extensive infrastructure of roads and water diversion channels.
- X Shorelines of Jack and Mavis lakes/reservoirs when water levels are stabilized.
- X Areas attractive to non-migratory Canada geese, which pose a risk to water quality in the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.
- X Cliff areas used, or with the potential to be used, by rock climbers.
- X Non-park facilities on Mount McDonald.

## **Management Planning Process**

### ***Advisory Groups***

The management plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks has been prepared with the assistance of a Project Management Team and a nine member public advisory group. The project team is represented by CRD Parks, CRD Water, the Capital Health Region, the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. The CRD Parks Committee and Board have had an opportunity to review the Draft Management Plan, and will need to approve the plan before sending it on to the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection for approval. The CRD Board will then adopt the management plan by bylaw, as outlined in the following Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Parks**



**Consultation and Approval Process**

***Public Consultation***

Public consultation is an important element of any CRD Parks management planning process. In the Provincial *Capital Region Water Supply and Sooke Hills Protection Regulation* (Order in Council Number 971) the Province directed the CRD to “provide for early, on-going and continuous involvement of the public in the development of the park management plan.” A complete outline of the public planning process is shown in Table 2.

The public was given several opportunities to review the plan as it was being prepared. Three newsletters were circulated, and the public invited to review the park proposals as they were being formed. The first newsletter, prepared in June of 1999, outlined the challenge of managing large areas of parkland adjacent to the drinking water supply. The second (November 1999),

focused on getting public input on the park vision. The third (November 2000) outlined the proposed park management policies and requested input on specific park management proposals.

CRD Parks staff presented the draft plan at an open house and workshop held in November 2000. From this review it was clear there was general support for the proposals outlined in the draft plan, although there was a wide variety of opinions on a number of key issues including timing of the park opening, and proposed policies on camping, rock climbing and cycling. The public was also asked for their views on 14 key subject areas, and given the opportunity to make written comments. A total of 137 response forms were received, again indicating overall support for the draft plan, particularly proposed environmental management policies such as:

- X Establishment of the Drinking Water Protection Zone and associated restrictions.
- X Protection of adjacent lands in the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.
- X Locations and requirements of the Sensitive Environment and Environmental Protection zones.
- X Protection of the natural environment.
- X Recreation activities for the Humpback Reservoir.

There were wide ranging views on the timing of the park opening, and on policies regarding camping, rock climbing and cycling. A summary of the public input on the draft management plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park is provided as Appendix 1.

**Table 2 - Overview of the Public Consultation Process for the Preparation of the Management Plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park**

Terms of Reference for the management plan approved by the CRD Parks Committee	July 1998
Public advisory group established	November 1998
Newsletter 1 released, introducing plan and requesting ideas for management	July 1999
Newsletter 2 released, presenting proposed vision, goals and strategic directions	November 1999
Public meeting	November 1999
Input reviewed and draft management plan prepared	January to October 2000
<b>Draft plan to CRD Parks Committee</b>	November 2000
Newsletter 3 released, summarizing the draft management plan	November 2000
Public meeting	November 2000
Input reviewed and final management plan prepared	December 2000 to May 2001
<b>Final plan to the CRD Parks Committee</b>	proposed June 2001
Final plan to the CRD Board for three bylaw readings	proposed June 2001
Final plan to the Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection for approval	July 2001

## Management Priorities

There are two overall priorities for the management of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks:

1. Protection of the security of the adjacent lands within the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.
2. Protection of the natural environment.

Where there are unavoidable conflicts between these two priorities, protection of the water supply will take precedence.

These management priorities have their origin in the recommendations of the Special Commission on the Greater Victoria Water Supply and were reaffirmed in the 1997 agreement between the Province and the CRD on the management of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. These priorities form the basis of the vision, goals, strategic directions and management policies for the parks.

### *Park Management Goals*

The management goals for Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks set out CRD Parks' intentions to achieve the vision for the parks. The goal statements are divided into categories that relate to the management priorities and different aspects of the vision for the park.

1. Protect the Security of Adjacent Water Supply Lands by:
  - X Preventing unauthorized access to the water supply lands by people and domestic animals travelling through Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.
  - X Minimizing threats to the drinking water supply from forest fires and problem animal species originating from the parks in ways that are consistent with the purpose, goals and policies of CRD Parks.
2. Protect the Natural Environment by:
  - X Sustaining and enhancing the viability of native ecosystems and species within the parks.
  - X Adjusting the boundaries of the parks to more closely follow the natural boundaries of watersheds, significant vegetation communities, and important areas of wildlife habitat in ways that ensure there is no net loss of parkland.
  - X Working with park neighbors to minimize impacts to ecosystems and species in the parks from activities on adjacent lands.
  - X Minimizing environmental impacts from recreational activities, facility development and park management activities.
  - X Enhancing the ecological significance of the parks, and the habitat for species dependent

- upon older coniferous forest, enabling forest ecosystems to experience their full life cycle.
- X Ensuring that recreational activities in the parks are consistent, in both type and location, with the protection of the security of the adjacent water supply lands, the protection of the natural environment, and the size and character of the parks.
  - X Providing appropriately designed, located, and well-maintained trails and facilities.
  - X Working to minimize conflicts between wildlife and people.
  - X Linking the two portions of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.
  - X Establishing trail corridors to link Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells with other parks and natural and recreational features in the area.
  - X Facilitating long distance trail connections through the parks.
  - X Contributing to the scenic natural character of the region, attracting tourists and businesses.
  - X Allowing commercial personal guiding services to take clients into the parks where consistent with CRD Parks policies and regulations.
  - X Making residents of the Capital Region aware of the important role the parks play in protecting the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area and informing them on how they can help minimize these risks.
  - X Making park visitors aware of the human history of the area and how human activities have shaped the park lands.
  - X Providing opportunities for post-secondary institutions and government agencies to conduct research in the parks provided such research is consistent with the management priorities and goals.

### ***Park Management Strategic Directions***

Strategic directions set out the overall approaches to be taken to achieve the vision and management goals. They are grouped in two categories: how the parks will be managed and how CRD Parks will work with others to protect the parks and adjacent Water Supply Area lands. In order to manage the parks to protect adjacent water supply lands and the natural environment, CRD Parks will:

- X Work with CRD Water to incorporate a risk-management approach into park management to help protect water quality in adjacent water supply catchment lands, and address issues of common concern. A risk management approach identifies, characterizes, and assesses risks to drinking water quality; develops options for addressing these risks; and carries out actions to continually improve understanding and effectiveness.
- X Manage the parks using an ecosystem-based approach, treating the parks as one large natural area and recognizing ecological connections with adjacent lands. An ecosystem-based approach to management is focussed on sustaining and enhancing the integrity and viability of ecosystems and species within the parks rather than concentrating management on goals relating to individual species.
- X Protect native ecosystems and species at risk from undesirable changes in and outside the parks.
- X Explore the full range of options (including no-access areas) for managing visitor use in the parks to prevent domestic animals and unauthorized people from accessing adjacent water supply catchment lands, minimize damage to native ecosystems and species, and avoid conflicts with wildlife.

- X Establish management zones that set out the types of recreational activities and park facilities that will be allowed in specific areas. These zones will be based on the characteristics and sensitivities of ecosystem and terrain features, the need to protect adjacent water supply lands, and the location of areas that are attractive for appropriate outdoor pursuits.
- X Adopt a phased approach to opening the parks to recreational use. Implementing the management plan will depend on overall CRD Parks priorities, the need to ensure that adequate facilities are in place, and the importance of assessing the effects of recreation on adjacent catchment lands and the natural environment prior to opening new areas or expanding the range of permitted activities in the parks.
- X Limit areas of intensive use, such as parking lots, to the margins of the parks and keep intensive use areas away from water supply lands, ecologically sensitive areas, and areas where low intensity recreational activities are focussed.
- X Pursue opportunities for coordinating ecosystem protection and management with the owners and managers of adjacent lands, government conservation agencies and stewardship groups.
- X Consult with local First Nations to identify sites of cultural significance and manage the parks in ways that respect these sites.
- X Work with BC Parks to address issues of common management concern.
- X Work with adjacent private landowners, local governments, and regulatory agencies to minimize impacts from surrounding lands on the natural environment in the parks and the experiences of park visitors.
- X Actively seek partnerships and cooperative relationships with educational institutions, government agencies, stewardship groups and others to achieve the goals for the parks.
- X Provide opportunities for volunteers to assist CRD Parks manage the parks and communicate key park messages.

### ***Role of the Parks***

Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and Mount Wells regional parks play a number of unique roles in the system of parks and protected areas in the Capital Region:

- X Sooke Hills Wilderness is the largest natural area park in the region, the largest regional park and the largest *Regional Wilderness Area*.
- X The two parks are an integral part of the Sea to Sea Green/Blue Belt, identified as an important urban transition and containment area in the Regional Growth Strategy.
- X The parks act as an important natural area buffer to the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area to reduce the risk of wildfire, introduction of disease organisms, chemical contamination, and the spread of forest insects and diseases that could negatively affect the quality of our drinking water.
- X Sooke Hills Wilderness protects large portions of the Goldstream River and Veitch Creek watersheds and a large representative example of the Sooke Hills landscape.
- X Together with Sooke Mountain Provincial Park, and East Sooke ,Matheson Lake and Roche Cove regional parks, Sooke Hills Wilderness protects ecosystems within the Coastal Western Hemlock very dry maritime biogeoclimatic subzone, which is under-represented in protected areas on Vancouver Island.
- X The size, location, and varied habitats of Sooke Hills Wilderness are able to support large mammals such as black bear, wolf, cougar and elk and species of conservation concern, such as the marbled murrelet.

- X The two parks protect relatively undisturbed upland meadow and rock outcrop vegetation communities very similar to those proposed for an ecological reserve on nearby provincial Crown land.
- X The parks provide an opportunity for wilderness experiences in areas of rugged terrain.

### ***Park Management Zones***

Areas within Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park need to be managed in different ways based on their proximity to water supply catchment lands, sensitivity to damage from recreational activities, and role in providing access to the park. Regional park management zones have been designated to set out the overall management direction for areas within the parks. The boundaries of these zones will be reviewed in the future and may be changed to reflect new information or the experience of managing the park in the initial phases of public access. A major adjustment to a boundary of the management zone in Sooke Hills Wilderness, created to protect the security of adjacent water supply lands will require CRD Board approval.

Four park management zones have been designated in Sooke Hills Wilderness:

- X Drinking Water Protection Zone
- X Sensitive Environment Zone
- X Environmental Protection Zone
- X Park Facilities Zone

Mount Wells Regional Park has *Sensitive Environment* and *Environmental Protection* zones. The boundaries of these zones are shown on Map 4. Any proposed adjustments to the boundary of a management zone will be assessed from the perspective of environmental and water supply protection. The criteria and management directions for each zone are summarized below.

#### *Drinking Water Protection Zone*

The Drinking Water Protection Zone includes areas adjacent to Greater Victoria Water Supply Area lands. The purpose of this zone is to provide a physical and biological buffer between areas where recreation is allowed and lands within the Water Supply Area. To minimize the risks of wildfire and introducing disease organisms to adjacent water supply lands, public access will be prohibited in this zone. This zone has been specifically created to help manage the risks to adjacent water supply lands, and is unique to Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

These wilderness areas support wildlife species that pose a threat to dogs, or could be at risk from dogs and other domestic animals that can carry human disease into the Water Supply Area. For these reasons, dogs will not be allowed in the Drinking Water Protection Zone. Dogs must be on a leash in all other park zones.

#### *Sensitive Environment Zone*

The Sensitive Environment Zone contains ecosystems and species that are sensitive to human activities. Included in this zone are the Niagara Canyon, the upper slopes of Mount Wells, the larger rocky hilltops in the Veitch, Waugh and Humpback drainages, and the floodplains along Veitch Creek. This designation is intended to provide the highest degree of protection for the natural environment, while offering limited opportunities for hiking.

### *Environmental Protection Zone*

The Environmental Protection Zone makes up the largest portion of the park. This zone is designed to provide a high level of environmental and habitat protection while allowing appropriate low-intensity recreational activities. Small rock outcrop and upland meadow areas, floodplains and wetlands within this zone will be managed as environmentally sensitive areas. Cycling and equestrian use will be allowed on designated trails within this zone.

### *Park Facilities Zone*

The Park Facilities Zone, located on the park perimeter, includes proposed entrances at Humpback Reservoir and off Sooke Road. Primary park facilities (parking lots, information kiosks, picnic areas and toilet buildings) will be located in this zone. This zone also includes Humpback Reservoir which will be developed for water-based recreation.

## **Protection of the Adjacent Water Supply Lands**

The protection of adjacent drinking water supply catchment lands in the Goldstream drainage is the first priority in the management of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. The CRD Water Strategic Plan for Water Management has identified a number of risks to the drinking water quality:

- X Human disease organisms, which are carried and can be spread by humans, domestic animals and wildlife.
- X Wildfire, which can be caused by illegal or unregulated campfires, careless smoking, railway and forest industry operations, and lightning, and can result in the introduction of nutrients and sediments into the water supply.
- X Chemical contaminants, which can be introduced to water supply lands as a result of trespass or spills from maintenance vehicles.
- X Forest insects and diseases, which can increase the risk of wildfire and kill trees, leading to erosion and the introduction of sediments into the water supply.

If drinking water quality in the source reservoirs is compromised, CRD Water may be forced to build a water filtration facility that could cost over \$100 million to construct and millions of dollars a year to operate and maintain. This possibility provides a powerful incentive to protect the water quality in the Water Supply Area. (Other factors such as new water supply protection legislation or changing water quality requirements brought forward by the Medical Health Officer may also influence the need for such a facility).

A wide range of policies and actions to protect the drinking water supply is set out in the Strategic Plan for Water Management. CRD Water has adopted a closed watershed policy to reduce the risk of people and domestic animals introducing disease organisms and starting wildfires that could impact the drinking water supply. Strict policies now govern work in water supply catchment lands to reduce the risk of erosion and sedimentation of water bodies and chemical contamination. CRD Water has identified forest diseases and insects, which pose a risk to water supply lands. These organisms will be monitored to reduce the risk of outbreaks.

The agreement between the Province of BC and the CRD requires the management plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park to be consistent with the Strategic Plan for Water Management. Measures to protect adjacent water supply lands must also be consistent with the CRD Parks Master Plan. Most of the management policies and actions for the protection of adjacent water supply catchment lands are based on the information, policies and recommendations presented in the Strategic Plan for Water Management.

To help protect the security of the adjacent water supply catchment land, the CRD Board decided that the existing policy of no unauthorized public access to Sooke Hills Wilderness be retained until the management plan for the park was completed and basic park facilities put in place. The park reserve status of Mount Wells may be lifted earlier if funding is approved for trails and basic facilities.



### *Management Policies*

Manage the parks to minimize risks to water quality in the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.

Develop a logical, and enforceable, buffer area to prevent unauthorized public access to water supply catchment lands.

Work closely with CRD Water in a cooperative and coordinated team approach to develop strategies to prevent unauthorized public access to water supply catchment lands and address other management issues of common concern.

Participate in CRD Water risk assessment, risk management, and monitoring programs designed to protect the quality of drinking water in the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.

### *Management Actions*

- X Ensure appropriate CRD Parks staff and volunteers are aware of the risks to drinking water quality and management plan policies and actions for minimizing these risks.
- X Work with CRD Water to assess and manage risks to the water supply relating to the management of the park.
- X Coordinate staff and volunteer training relating to minimizing risks to water quality with CRD Water.

### ***Reducing the Risk of Unauthorized Public Access***

To help manage the risk of unauthorized public access into the drinking water supply area, the following actions are proposed:

- X Designate regional parkland immediately adjacent to the water supply catchment lands as a *Drinking Water Protection Zone*.
- X Orient park trails and facilities away from the *Drinking Water Protection Zone* and water supply catchment lands whenever possible.
- X Work with CRD Water to develop and implement a communication plan, education programs, signs and strategies to enforce the provisions of the *Drinking Water Protection Zone*.
- X Amend the CRD Parks bylaw to allow fines to be issued for unauthorized access to the *Drinking Water Protection Zone*.
- X Expand the scope of the CRD Parks Volunteer Services to include volunteers in patrol activities within the *Drinking Water Protection Zone*.
- X Provide self-contained toilet facilities in appropriate locations where recreation is allowed.
- X Place restrictions on domestic animals in the parks (e.g. no domestic animals in the *Drinking Water Protection Zone*; dogs on leash in the remainder of the parks; horses, lamas and other exotic pack animals be restricted to designated trails; no domestic animals at large).
- X Work with CRD Water and other agencies to manage non-migratory Canada geese in the parks and minimize the potential for geese to spread into water supply catchment lands.
- X Work with CRD Water and other agencies to monitor and manage other wildlife species that may pose a risk to water quality in adjacent water supply lands.
- X Work with CRD Water to monitor human disease pathogens in wildlife on lands adjacent to

the water supply catchment.

- X Work with CRD Water and animal control agencies to develop strategies and programs to prevent the release of domestic animals and problem wildlife species in the parks.
- X Work with energy transmission companies to reduce the risk of unauthorized vehicles accessing the *Drinking Water Protection Zone* from their lands.
- X Work with CRD Water to include the proposed *Trespasser Watch Program* to be carried out on private lands adjacent to the *Drinking Water Protection Zone*.
- X Work with CRD Water to record, track and map fire and security incidents occurring in or near the parks.

### ***Reducing the Risk of Wildfire***

To help reduce the risk of wildfires getting out of control and affecting both the park and the water supply, the following actions are proposed:

- X Develop a detailed agreement on the roles and responsibilities of CRD Parks and CRD Water in wildfire prevention, detection and suppression.
- X Work with CRD Water to identify areas of high fire risk within the parks and appropriate strategies for minimizing these risks.
- X Work with CRD Water, BC Parks and other adjacent landowners to minimize the risk of human-caused wildfire in the parks.
- X Consider restrictions on public access to the park during times of extreme fire risk.
- X Develop information/education and detection strategies to prevent human-caused wildfires in the park and adjacent private lands.
- X Develop site remediation/restoration strategies for areas damaged by wildfire or fire suppression activities.
- X Control invasive introduced shrubs such as gorse and Scotch broom in areas where they pose a high risk to adjacent water supply catchment lands the natural environment.

### ***Reducing the Risk of Contaminants***

There is potential for introduced contaminants getting into the water supply. To prevent this, the following actions are proposed:

- X Develop strategies to prevent unauthorized vehicles from accessing water supply catchment lands through the parks.
- X Ensure CRD Parks staff are aware of spill prevention and clean up protocols if traversing water supply catchment lands.
- X Do not use foams or other fire suppression agents containing nutrients, other than those approved by CRD Water, when responding to fires on water supply catchment lands.

### ***Reducing the Risk of Forest Insects and Diseases***

To reduce the risk of forest damage due to forest insects or disease, the following actions are proposed:

- X Participate in other agency programs that identify areas susceptible to forest insects and diseases within the parks and monitor the presence and spread of organisms of concern.

- X Participate in programs and strategies designed to prevent the introduction of non-native forest insects to the parks and adjacent water supply catchment lands.
- X Ensure an ecologically appropriate, integrated pest management approach, in consultation with appropriate agencies and recognized experts, is followed in any control of insects or diseases of concern within the parks.

## Protecting the Natural Environment

The CRD Parks Master Plan provides the context for the protection of the natural environment in regional parks. A fundamental aspect of the purpose of the regional parks system is to "protect a network of regional parks in perpetuity that represent and help maintain the diverse range of natural environments in the Capital Regional District." A primary goal is "to maintain healthy, viable ecosystems in regional parks." To achieve this, "protection of the natural environment needs to be incorporated into all planning and management decisions and actions" in regional parks. Protection of the natural environment is one of the two overall priorities for the management of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks, consistent with the Master Plan.

There are many factors that affect the protection of the natural environment in Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks:

- X The boundaries of Sooke Hills Wilderness generally follow drainage area boundaries; almost the entire Waugh Creek, Niagara Creek and Humpback Reservoir drainage areas and most of the upper portion of the Veitch Creek drainage area are within the park.
- X Lands surrounding the parks are mostly undeveloped and are likely to remain so in the foreseeable future.
- X Wildfire, which is an essential ecological process in sustaining Douglas-fir forest, is actively prevented and suppressed to protect drinking water quality and property on adjacent lands.
- X The range of large mammals and many birds is larger than the area within the parks.
- X Relatively little is known about wildlife species in the parks and their sensitivity to disturbance.
- X There is very little undisturbed original forest in the park.
- X Some regenerating forest stands were planted and have artificially high tree densities, which reduces their habitat value and increases the risk of wildfire.
- X There is an extensive system of roads through most of Sooke Hills Wilderness which has altered drainage patterns and fragmented forest stands; most of this road system will be needed for fire response.
- X A number of non-native plant species have invaded the parks; left unchecked, these invasive species could alter native vegetation associations, reduce wildlife habitat values and displace native species.
- X Activities such as resource extraction and residential development on adjacent lands can affect the ecosystems and species in the parks.
- X Some people who visit the parks may leave areas designated for their recreational activity.
- X Illegal activities such as hunting, motorized vehicle use, camping, and the harvest of salal, mushrooms and moss are known to occur the parks. The size of Sooke Hills Wilderness will make monitoring and enforcement a challenge, and will need to be addressed in all aspects of

park management.

## Ecological Perspective of the Parks

Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park is part of a larger ecological context. The park is located within a mostly undeveloped, forested landscape that is slowly regenerating after logging activities in the last century. There are few, if any, barriers to the movement of wildlife between the park and private and public lands to the west, north and south. Much of the park is within the Goldstream River watershed, which supports provincially significant runs of salmon. The Goldstream River also flows into Saanich Inlet, which has been nominated as a candidate marine protected area. Lands to the west and south in the Charters Creek, Ayum Creek and Veitch Creek drainages complement the proposed Saanich Inlet to Sooke Basin green and blue space corridor.

The adjacent 10,893 hectare Greater Victoria Water Supply Area is closed to hunting and will be managed to protect native ecosystems and biodiversity where compatible with water quality objectives. Together the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area, Sooke Hills Wilderness, Goldstream and Sooke Mountain Provincial Parks form a contiguous wildlife reserve of over 15,000 ha (15 km<sup>2</sup>) which will ultimately be dominated by mature and older coniferous forest.

Many wildlife species have territories and habitat requirements that extend outside protected areas. Cooperative approaches among conservation agencies and owners and managers of adjacent lands are often required to effectively protect or manage wildlife species of concern.

### *Management Policies*

Acquire, or work with landowners and managers to protect, lands within the Niagara, Waugh, upper Veitch, and Humpback drainage areas but outside the parks (Map 6).

Identify and discuss landscape level conservation issues with conservation agencies and owners and managers of adjacent lands.

Participate in land use planning processes affecting the park and surrounding lands to further the protection and conservation of native ecosystems and species.

Participate in recovery strategies for red and blue listed wildlife species found in the parks.

### *Management Actions*

- X Work with CRD Water, BC Environment, BC Parks and local governments to develop a forum for discussing landscape level conservation issues affecting provincial and CRD lands in the Goldstream River watershed and the Sooke Hills.
- X Contact government fisheries agencies and local stewardship groups to identify how water courses and water bodies in the parks contribute to fisheries values in the Goldstream River watershed.

## *Sustaining Native Ecosystems and Species*

A primary purpose of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park is to protect and sustain native ecosystems and species within its boundaries. Now that the area is a regional park, there is no longer hunting, forest harvest or quarrying, or any further fragmentation of natural areas from energy transmission corridors or roadways. The *Regional Wilderness Area* classification and strategic directions for the park ensure that entrance areas and most park facilities will be limited to the margins of the park.

There is a long-term vision for the natural environment within the park. It proposes that:

- X Coniferous forest throughout the park be dominated by mature and older Douglas-fir forest, interspersed with stands dominated by western redcedar and western hemlock.
- X These forests will contain relatively large diameter standing dead trees (snags) and fallen trees important for nutrient cycling and wildlife habitat.
- X Patches of red alder and broadleaf maple will appear on sites of natural disturbance.
- X Forest diseases and insects that contribute to the production of snags and large woody debris will be contained by the diversity of tree species and natural predators.
- X Forest stands will be free of invasive woody shrubs such as holly and daphne.
- X Hilltops will be dominated by native plant species and free of invasive shrubs such as Scotch broom and gorse.
- X Damage from recreational activities be confined to designated trails, viewpoints and areas of more intensive use.
- X Natural drainage patterns, water flows and water quality continue to contribute to healthy functioning streams, wetlands and water bodies.
- X Native ecosystems in the park continue to play an important role in sustaining wildlife.
- X Wetlands and water bodies in the park are free of the American bullfrog, providing safe breeding and rearing areas for native amphibians.
- X Streams, wetlands, and water bodies continue to provide productive habitat for native fish species.
- X Native vegetation along road margins has grown back and reduced the width of these disturbed corridors through the park.

Some aspects of this vision can be accomplished by simply allowing forest stands to regenerate. Other aspects require human intervention, such as controlling invasive species.

A missing ingredient in the vision is fire, which has had an historical disturbance influence in maintaining Douglas-fir dominated forests. In the absence of fire, forested ecosystems on some sites will eventually be dominated by western hemlock. However, given the relatively recent disturbance of most of the forest in the park from logging, and the life span of Douglas-fir which can be hundreds of years, the current policy of fire suppression is not an impediment to achieving the vision for the park. Indeed, fire suppression is required over the foreseeable future if the regenerating forests in the park are to mature.

### *Management Policies*

Incorporate the vision for the natural environment in the parks into all park management decisions.

Encourage research to improve understanding of the dynamics of ecosystems and the characteristics and requirements of ecosystems and species in the parks.

Prevent further fragmentation of natural areas in the parks from roadways or energy transmission corridors.

Allow vegetation on the margins of roadways to regenerate while maintaining the road surface to required widths for park vehicles.

Do not allow new non-park facilities, such as communication towers or water reservoirs to be located within the parks.

Facilitate research on populations and habitats of wildlife species of conservation concern.

Maintain habitats and populations of native fish species in water bodies and watercourses within the parks in ways that complement fisheries enhancement activities in the region.

Work with the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection to prepare habitat protection and enhancement plans for wildlife and fish species of conservation concern in the parks.

#### *Management Actions*

- X Incorporate the regeneration of road margins into road classifications and maintenance standards.
- X Request that the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection assist with researching and monitoring red and blue-listed ecosystems and species in the parks.
- X Request that the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection assist with monitoring wildlife populations of concern in the parks.
- X Maintain the integrity of active research sites and study plots in the parks.
- X Request that fisheries stewardship groups and the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection assist with assessing native fish habitat and populations in the parks.
- X Restrict stocking of fish in water bodies and water courses within the parks to native species.

#### ***Managing Invasive Non-Native Plant Species***

Invasive non-native woody plant species are a serious problem in Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks. Scotch broom is invading on rocky outcrop and meadow areas on Mount Wells and Mount Braden. Scotch broom has also extensively invaded roadways in the Niagara catchment. Gorse has become established on lower slopes of Mount Wells and along a roadway on the north slope of Mount Braden.

Holly was recorded in many of the forest stands sampled during fieldwork for the Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping of the park. It is very likely that laurel-leaved daphne will also begin to invade the parks. These plants are dispersed by birds and therefore can become established throughout the parks.

Left unchecked, these invasive woody plant species spread rapidly and dominate sites. Once they are well established they are difficult, if not impossible, to effectively control. There should be a major management focus on preventing the invasion of new areas by these plants, and removing them from areas of high conservation significance. (CRD Parks' guidelines for the control of invasive non-native species can provide useful direction for establishing management priorities and strategies).

#### *Management Policy*

Control invasive plant species in the parks that have the potential to seriously degrade native plant communities and displace native plant species.

#### *Management Actions*

- X Develop an overall strategy for the control of invasive woody plants in the parks; this strategy should identify priority sites for control, focus on the need to minimize further spread of these species and address the management of Scotch broom along roadways in Sooke Hills Wilderness.
- X Initiate discussions with BC Hydro, Centra Gas, E & N Railway and Pacific Wilderness Railway about coordinating the management of invasive woody species along energy transmission and railway rights-of-way.

### ***Managing Invasive Non-Native Animal Species***

Some non-native animal species such as gray squirrels, eastern cottontail rabbits, American bullfrog and licorice slug have proved invasive and detrimental to native ecosystems in the region.

Given the large area of coniferous forest in the parks which is relatively isolated from suburban areas, the most likely of these species to invade the park is the American bullfrog, which has spread west from Elk/Beaver Lake to Thetis Lake and is currently invading waterbodies in the Highlands. Bullfrogs are predators on all native amphibians and most other species of suitable size in aquatic environments. It is likely that American bullfrogs would first appear in Humpback Reservoir, given the proximity of this water body to Langford Lake and other watercourses in Langford.

#### *Management Policy*

Prevent the establishment of American bullfrogs and other non-native species in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

#### *Management Action*

- X Monitor Humpback Reservoir as well as Mavis and Jack reservoirs yearly for the presence of American bullfrogs and develop a strategy for preventing establishment if this species is detected.

## ***Managing Recreational Use and Minimizing Human Impact from Activities on Adjacent Lands***

Recreation in Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks will be carefully managed to minimize negative effects on the natural environment. Only a few trail routes will be designated and developed in the first phases of opening the park to visitors. The parks will be monitored after opening to identify any significant negative effects, and the plan adjusted to minimize further damage. If effects are minimal, consider opening additional areas to public use.

### *Management Policies*

Ensure that potential for negative effects on the natural environment and water quality is a primary criterion for assessing potential recreational activities in the parks.

Do not open the areas north of the Niagara Canyon, west of the Veitch Creek valley or around Mount McDonald to public use in the first stages of opening the parks to the public.

Focus activities on existing roadways and trails in areas of the parks to be opened to recreation.

Minimize the number of trails to rocky hilltops in the areas open to recreation and provide loop trails to minimize two-way traffic over sensitive areas.

Survey potential trail routes in different seasons to determine drainage patterns and identify plant species that may be negatively affected by trails.

Encourage people to stay to designated trails and viewpoints on rocky hilltops and slopes and monitor use patterns to determine if signage is effective.

Minimize potential negative effects on marbled murrelets from recreational access and activities in the Niagara Canyon area.

Close areas to recreation if unacceptable levels of damage occur.

Minimize the spread of unauthorized recreational activities into the southern portion of the park from lands to the west.

### *Management Actions*

- X Examine existing trail routes on Mount Wells and Mount Braden and designate routes with the least possible impact to the natural environment.
- X Close off undesirable informal side trails in the park wherever possible.
- X Close any unauthorized trails that lead to environmentally sensitive areas such as the Veitch Creek floodplain and the floor of the Niagara Canyon.
- X Continue the established photo point monitoring program on Mount Braden to assess effects of recreation on sites along the southern trail to the summit.

- X Document damage to vegetation and creation of unauthorized trails on hilltops where recreation is allowed.
- X Ensure there are proper garbage disposal facilities in the Niagara Canyon and Trans Canada Trail to prevent attracting potential predators of marbled murrelets.
- X Identify and monitor unauthorized access points along the western boundary of the park.

The management goals and strategic directions provide clear direction for working with landowners, agencies, regulatory authorities and local governments to minimize negative effects on the natural environment in the park from activities on surrounding lands.

#### *Management Actions*

- X Request input into forest harvest plans for public and private forest lands within drainages that flow into the park.
- X Work with local governments to minimize negative effects from urban development on lands adjacent to the park.
- X Work with the local governments and provincial regulatory agencies to minimize effects from rock quarry operations or other resource extraction and industrial activities near the park.

### ***Managing Dogs Within the Parks***

Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park supports wildlife species that pose a threat to dogs, or are potentially at risk from dogs. Dogs can carry human disease organisms and pose a risk to the drinking water supply in adjacent catchment lands.

#### *Management Policies*

Dogs will not be permitted in the *Drinking Water Protection Zone*.

Dogs must be on a leash in all other portions of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

Dogs in Mount Wells Regional Park must be under control as defined in CRD Park regulations.

Dog handlers are required to pick up dog waste and dispose of it in designated containers or pack it out of the parks.

#### *Management Actions*

- X Ensure park visitors are informed of policies on dogs in the parks.
- X Provide garbage containers for dog waste at all toilet facilities in Sooke Hills Wilderness.

## **Protecting Cultural and Historic Sites**

There has likely been a long history of human use of the area of what are now Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks. Local First Nations have been contacted for information on their sites of cultural significance so that they can be respected in the park

planning process. The Archaeology Branch and Heritage Branch of the Ministry of Tourism, Small Business and Culture have been asked for information on known archaeological and heritage sites in the parks. According to these agencies, there are no known archaeological sites within Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks.

A number of old hunting cabins and homesteads have been found in Sooke Hills Wilderness. Others are rumored to be there. Cabin Pond, on the border of the Waugh and Goldstream drainage basins within the park, contains an old building in poor condition that was once a road house for the horse-drawn coach service between Victoria and communities to the north. Existing dams and water diversion channels in the park are evidence of the role of the area in the provision of the drinking water supply.

### *Management Policies*

Identify and protect sites of cultural significance to First Nations in the parks.

Identify and protect sites of significance to post-European settlement history in the parks.

### *Management Actions*

- X Continue attempts to work with First Nations to identify and map sites of cultural significance in the parks.
- X Compile a cultural history of the parks and map sites of historic significance.
- X Ask the responsible provincial agency to have unrecorded cultural and historic sites visited and catalogued.
- X Determine, through the interpretive planning process, which historic sites will be included in environmental interpretation programs in the parks.
- X Orient trails and facilities away from known sites of cultural significance and any historic sites requiring special protection.
- X Monitor the condition of cultural and historic sites and intervene with appropriate protection measures if required.

## **Park Boundaries**

### ***Linking the Two Portions of Sooke Hills Wilderness***

The two portions of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park are divided by water supply catchment lands in the Goldstream River drainage and by non-catchment lands downstream of Japan Gulch Reservoir. The catchment and non-catchment lands separating the two portions of the park are forested and relatively undisturbed (Map 5). Other than the steep terrain in the Japan Gulch canyon, there are no barriers to the movement of wildlife between the two portions of the park.

These non-catchment lands under the jurisdiction of CRD Water consist of Sections 5 and 8 Goldstream District (Map 5). Section 5 (8) of the *Capital Region Water Supply and Sooke Hills Protection Act* (Bill 17-1997) provides the future option of adding the majority of these non-catchment lands to Sooke Hills Wilderness Park.



The Trans Canada Trail will require a link between the two portions of Sooke Hills Wilderness. Portions of Sections 5 and 8 may be needed to create a physical connection under the jurisdiction of CRD Parks. If the proposed study on accessing the park shows that these lands provide the needed access through the Japan Gulch area, they should be added to the park.

### *Management Policy*

Work with CRD Water to maintain and enhance the green space connection between the two portions of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

Add non-catchment portions of Sections 5 and 8 to Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park if studies show they are needed to create a connection between the two portions of the park.

### ***Potential Additions to the Parks***

The CRD Parks Master Plan identifies a number of areas adjacent to Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells as potential additions to the parks:

- X The slopes of the Mount Wells ridge outside the regional park.
- X Crown and private lands adjacent to the Veitch and Humpback drainages to the west of Humpback Road.
- X The Sea to Sea Green/Blue Belt area west and south of the park in the Veitch, Charters and Ayum Creek drainages.
- X The Goldstream Catchment portion of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area if this drainage area is not needed for water supply purposes in the future.

### ***Improving Park Boundaries***

Park boundaries are often based upon blocks of land with legal lot lines that do not reflect the natural contours of the land. One of the goals for regional parks is to have park boundaries follow natural contours or watershed boundaries wherever possible. Both Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks have irregular boundaries that do not follow natural contours. The current boundaries of Mount Wells Regional Park in particular leave a large portion of the mountain's natural ridges outside of the park.

Because of this, and the desire to keep ecosystems intact, there are some areas that CRD Parks has identified as potential additions to Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks. These 'areas of interest' are not part of a specific land acquisition program, but CRD Parks would consider including them in the parks should they become available from willing sellers at market value, or as part of a land gift or exchange. An 'area of interest' designation represents a general area where an extension to a regional park is desirable, but does not commit the CRD to acquire these or any other lands. The designation merely establishes a desired planning direction for CRD Parks.

Acquiring strategic lands outside the present boundary of Mount Wells Regional Park was identified as part of Strategic Direction 2 (Acquiring additional land for regional parks and trails) in the CRD Parks Master Plan. The guidelines and criteria as stated in the CRD Parks Master Plan must still be applied to all potential regional parks and trail acquisitions.

The identification of private lands with potential for regional park designation in this plan does not indicate that the property owner consents to public use of such lands. No entry to any lands should be made without the owner's consent.

A total of nine general areas adjoining the park have been identified as areas of interest for CRD Parks (Map 6):

1. Part of the northern ridge of Mount Wells lies outside the current park boundary. The ridge contains regenerating forest, with rock outcroppings that are natural extensions of the ecosystems and terrain of the park, providing both environmental and scenic values.
2. Private lands to the east of Mount Wells and the lower peak to the east of it contain significant regenerating forest and rock outcroppings. These lands are natural extensions of the existing ecosystems and terrain in the park.
3. Large portions of the southern slopes of Mount Wells are outside the current park boundary. These lands possess natural rock and forest features with scenic value and are privately owned.
4. The southern slope of Mount McDonald, containing a portion of the headwaters of Bilston Creek and the access road to the communications facilities on Mount McDonald, are privately owned. The land includes regenerating forest with significant rock bluffs.
5. There are Crown lands east of the Veitch Creek drainage that include some of the southern slopes of Mount McDonald. These lands contain upland meadow ecosystems of considerable natural significance. The lands complete the ridge on the southern slope of Mount McDonald, and contain regenerating forest that provides an important natural connection between areas of interest to the east and south. The lands are also part of the Bilston Creek headwaters.
6. There is private land on the southeast boundary of Sooke Hills Wilderness that contains regenerating forests, rock outcroppings, and several small ponds. It is the site of an old quarry that could be developed as a parking area and has the potential to become a primary southern entrance to the park.
7. Former private forest lands located within the Veitch watershed, surrounded on three sides by the park, are a natural extension of the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park ecosystems. In December 2000, TimberWest Forest Corporation announced that TimberWest would gift two parcels of land, totaling 121 hectares, to the Nature Conservancy of Canada. These parcels will ultimately be dedicated to the CRD as part of the Sea to Sea Green/Blue belt. When these lands are transferred to CRD Parks, virtually the entire upper Veitch watershed will be protected.
8. There are private forest lands within the Waugh Creek drainage to the south of Jack Lake that are a natural extension of the ecosystems within Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. If this area were added to the park, virtually the entire Waugh Creek drainage area would be protected within the park.



9. A portion of private managed forest land within the Niagara Creek drainage is a natural extension of the ecosystems within Sooke Hills Wilderness and contains the headwaters of a tributary of Niagara Creek. If this area were added to the park, virtually the entire Niagara Creek drainage would be protected within the park.

As stated earlier, identifying these lands as areas of interest to regional parks does not commit the CRD to acquire these or any other lands. The guidelines and criteria for the acquisition of regional parks and trails as stated in the CRD Parks Master Plan still apply to all potential acquisitions.

A process should be developed to discuss the future of the Crown lands identified as potential additions to these regional parks. This process should involve the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, BC Assets and Lands Corporation, other relevant provincial agencies and local First Nations.

### *Management Actions*

- X Incorporate the lands identified as potential additions to Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks into the overall CRD Parks land acquisition priorities.
- X Investigate the current ownership of these lands and monitor their market status.
- X Discuss the status of the Crown lands of interest to CRD Parks with the BC Assets and Lands Corporation, other provincial agencies, and local First Nations to ascertain the feasibility of adding all or part of these lands to Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.
- X Discuss the boundary of Mount Wells Regional Park with the District of Langford in relation to residential subdivision applications on adjacent lands.

In the long term, CRD Parks should consider incorporating Mount Wells into Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park, to create a single management unit.

## **Recreational Activities**

The CRD Parks Master Plan states that, in addition to the protection of the natural environments in the Capital Region, regional parks should provide opportunities for outdoor experiences and activities that foster enjoyment of, and appreciation and respect for, the region's natural environments. Recreational activities in regional parks are to have minimal impact on the natural environment, be appropriate to the purpose of each park, and best serve visitor needs. CRD Parks will try to accommodate a range of appropriate activities in these regional parks.

The Master Plan defines an appropriate recreational activity for regional parks as one which:

- X Is dependent upon the natural environment.
- X Has a minimal impact on the natural environment.
- X Encourages an appreciation for, and understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment.
- X Is compatible with other park uses

Recreational activities in Sooke Hills Wilderness must be consistent with the two priorities of protecting the security of adjacent water supply lands and protecting the natural environment in the park. Adequate management strategies to address these priorities, and appropriate facilities and information, must be in place prior to opening Sooke Hills Wilderness to recreation.

The CRD Parks Master Plan states that hiking, nature study and access to scenic viewpoints will be the major focus of recreation in parks with a *Regional Wilderness Area* classification such as Sooke Hills Wilderness. However, in the first phase of public consultation, cyclists and equestrians indicated that these activities should be able to be accommodated in a park of 4100 hectares. Cyclists and equestrians also expressed an interest in long-distance trail connections through the park.

One of the stated characteristics of the *Regional Wilderness Area* classification is the experience of remoteness, solitude and harmony with nature. Given that a limited area of Sooke Hills Wilderness will be available for recreational activities in the first phases of opening the park to the public, CRD Parks may need to manage the numbers of visitors to these areas at any one time.

The CRD Parks Master Plan states that a *Regional Natural Area* such as Mount Wells will provide opportunities for a range of appropriate outdoor experiences and activities. However, the terrain and sensitivity of meadow areas to damage from recreational use limit the range of activities in Mount Wells. Rock climbers are currently using defined areas on cliffs in the park, on the east slope of Mount McDonald and the west slope of Mount Wells.

The District of Langford Official Community Plan identifies Humpback Reservoir as a desirable recreation area. It is likely there will be considerable use of this water body from residents of adjacent neighborhoods.

### *Management Policies*

Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park will not be opened to recreation until management strategies to protect water supply lands and the natural environment are in place and adequate park facilities have been provided.

Recreational activities in Sooke Hills Wilderness will be consistent with the management priorities, *Regional Wilderness Area* classification, the vision and management goals, and the park management zones.

Recreational activities in Mount Wells Regional Park will be consistent with the vision and management goals for the parks, and the park management zones.

Recreational opportunities on long-distance trails through Sooke Hills Wilderness will be focussed on hiking, cycling, and horse riding.

Visitors to the parks will be required to stay to designated trails and sites in defined areas within the parks.

Humpback Reservoir will be the main focus in Sooke Hills Wilderness where freshwater recreational opportunities will be available in the initial phases of opening the park to visitors.

CRD Parks will work with recreation groups and others to identify recreational opportunities and resolve management concerns in the parks.

The parks will be managed to prevent overcrowding in areas open to visitors.

The suitability of recreational activities not addressed in the management plan will be judged using the park classifications, vision for the parks, management goals and management plan policies.

### *Management Actions*

- X Develop a strategy for minimizing conflicts between park visitors and wildlife.
- X Develop a strategy for monitoring the numbers of people participating in recreational activities on designated roadways and trails in the parks.
- X Develop strategies for minimizing the potential for overcrowding in the parks.

### ***Hiking***

Consistent with the *Wilderness Recreation Area* designation, hiking, nature study and accessing scenic viewing opportunities will be the main recreational focus in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. Hiking trails will be developed to two major hilltops in the park in the first phase of opening the park to recreational use. Two major all-purpose trails (Trans Canada Trail and Sea to Sea Trails) will provide long distance hiking opportunities through the park.

### ***Cycling***

The numbers of cyclists seeking experiences in natural areas has grown rapidly in the past decade. The CRD Parks Master Plan states that regional parks will provide a range of cycling opportunities, consider the need for cycling facilities and examine the idea of providing off-road cycling opportunities on single-track trails.

In general, people are seeking cycling opportunities in regional parks and trails that range from relatively easy trails that provide access to attractive natural features, to challenging narrow trails through rugged terrain. The Trans Canada Trail, the proposed Sea to Sea Trail, and existing roadways in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park will provide opportunities for the first type of cycling. However, experience in other regional parks has shown that cyclists seeking more challenge prefer narrower (single track) trails.

Cyclists leaving designated routes can cover large distances within the park and could pose a risk to the security of the adjacent water supply lands. Cycling off designated trails increases the extent and scale of damage to the natural environment.

Given these factors, and the fact that there are opportunities for cycling on private and public lands outside the park to the west, CRD Parks will take a careful and phased approach to providing cycling opportunities in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. Initially, cycling

opportunities in Sooke Hills Wilderness will be limited to the long distance Trans Canada and Sea to Sea Trails.

### *Management Policies*

Permit cycling on the Trans Canada and Sea to Sea trails through Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. Actual route selections and appropriate use of these trails should be resolved through a comprehensive process involving all park users.

Plan and manage cycling trails to minimize environmental impacts, safety concerns, and conflicts with other recreational activities and potential trespass into the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.

Consider cycling loop trails on existing roadways and narrower trails in Sooke Hills Wilderness only after the initial effects of cycling access to the park have been assessed.

### *Management Actions*

- X Open the Trans Canada Trail and the proposed Sea to Sea multi-purpose trails through the park when tasks outlined in Phase 1 and 2 of the implementation process have been completed
- X Establish a park user advisory group to provide input into a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan (including cycling) for the entire Sooke Hills area
- X If cycling loop trails are allowed in Sooke Hills Wilderness in the future, work with the cycling community to identify trail routes and address security concerns relating to cyclists leaving designated trails and areas

### *Equestrian Use*

Horses have been known to carry the parasite *Cryptosporidium* and Strain 0157 of *E. coli* bacteria. Both organisms pose a health risk to the drinking water supply. Therefore, providing opportunities for horse riding in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park needs to be approached with caution.

There are also a number of access problems for horse riders. The connector trail between the Galloping Goose Regional Trail and Sooke Hills Wilderness is not yet in place, and the park entrance at Humpback Road is limited in size and will not likely be large enough to accommodate horse trailers. Access to the parks from the south and west is constrained by having to cross Sooke Road, which has high traffic volumes.

Given concerns about the introduction of disease organisms, access issues, and the fact that there are existing horse riding opportunities on public and private lands outside the park to the west, CRD Parks will take a careful and phased approach to providing horse-riding opportunities in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

### *Management Policies*

Allow horse riding on the Trans-Canada and Sea to Sea long-distance trails running through Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park, subject to the results of an assessment of the risks to the water supply from disease organisms present in horse feces. (Actual route selections and appropriate use of these trails should be resolved through a comprehensive process involving all the users, as more detailed information becomes available).

Plan and manage trails for horse riding to minimize the potential for trespass into the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area, environmental impacts, safety concerns, and conflicts with other recreational activities.

Consider providing opportunities for horse riding on appropriate trails and roadways in the southern portion of Sooke Hills Wilderness in future, subject to the results of the risk assessment and an analysis of the initial effects of opening the park to visitors.

### *Management Actions*

- X Open the Trans Canada Trail and the proposed Sea to Sea multi-purpose trails through the park for equestrian use when tasks outlined in Phase 1 and 2 of the implementation process have been completed. (Horse use will be subject to the results of a risk assessment for disease organisms potentially carried by horses)
- X Work with the equestrian community to identify routes and access points if horse riding is to be allowed in the southern portion of Sooke Hills Wilderness in the future
- X Work with the District of Langford to ensure that the portion of the Trans Canada Trail connecting Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and the Galloping Goose Regional Trail is constructed to accommodate horses
- X Establish a park user advisory group to provide input into a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan (including equestrian use, cycling and overnight camping) for the entire Sooke Hills area

### ***Rock Climbing***

Unauthorized rock climbing has been occurring on cliffs on the eastern slope of Mount McDonald and the western slope of Mount Wells. Impacts such as loss of vegetation have already occurred on these cliff areas. Some cliffs in other areas of the park may also need to be protected.

Some cliffs support sensitive and unique vegetation and provide nesting habitat for falcons and turkey vultures. For these reasons, expansion of rock climbing to other areas of the park will only be considered after a comprehensive assessment of potential climbing sites within the entire Sooke Hills area.

### *Management Policies*

Consider allowing rock climbing on Mount Wells, subject to the provisions of risk and environmental impact assessments.

Clearly indicate the areas where rock climbing is permitted and involve local rock climbers in discussions on how this site is to be managed.

Do not allow the expansion of rock climbing to other areas of Sooke Hills Wilderness or Mount Wells regional parks until a thorough study has been carried out to determine needs of climbers and of CRD Parks to manage this activity.

#### *Management Actions*

- X Conduct a rock climbing risk assessment and an environmental impact assessment for Mount Wells, and set rock climbing policies based upon provisions from those assessments.
- X Do not sanction other rock climbing sites within the parks until a comprehensive plan for outdoor recreation is in place for the entire Sooke Hills area.
- X Work with climbing groups to determine requirements needed for this activity and review potential rock climbing locations throughout the entire Sooke Hills area. If the study identifies appropriate sites within the parks where the risks can be managed and where there is no significant environmental impact, this activity may be allowed.

#### *Camping*

Because camping in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park would likely increase the risk of the introduction of human disease pathogens to adjacent water supply lands and could increase the risk of wildfire, camping within the park will not be permitted. The terrain of Mount Wells Regional Park is not suitable for developing a camping area.

There is a campground at Goldstream Provincial Park located immediately adjacent to Sooke Hills Wilderness that could be used as an alternative as well as other camp sites in Sooke and in the Shawnigan Lake area. These campgrounds could be used to access the regional parks on a day-use basis. There may also be future opportunities for camping in the Cowichan Valley Regional District to the north, along the route of the Trans Canada Trail.

#### *Management Policy*

Camping activities pose an unacceptable level of risk in Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks.

#### *Management Actions*

- X Continue the ban on overnight camping in Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks until a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan for the entire Sooke Hills area is completed. (Given the terrain and risks to the parks and the water supply associated with camping activities it is unlikely that a suitable site will be found within the parks. Suitable backcountry camping sites outside of the park boundaries are more likely to be found.)
- X Establish a park user advisory group to provide input into a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan (including equestrian use, cycling and overnight camping) for the entire Sooke Hills area to determine suitable sites for backcountry camping.

## ***Water Activities***

There is potential to develop freshwater recreational activities at Humpback Reservoir. (All other water bodies in the park are located within the *Drinking Water Protection Zone*). There are no water recreation opportunities on Mount Wells, though the Humpback reservoir site is in close proximity to the park.

Given the *Regional Wilderness Area* classification of the park, the shoreline of the lake will remain mostly undeveloped. Fishing, swimming and the launching of non-motorized small boats could be facilitated from designated areas along the shoreline.

## ***Management Policies***

Maintain the forested southern and western shorelines of the reservoir in an undeveloped state.

Allow freshwater swimming and fishing at Humpback Reservoir from designated areas along the eastern shoreline.

Allow the launching of canoes and kayaks from a suitable point along the shoreline.

Explore opportunities for freshwater recreation at lakes in the Waugh and Niagara drainage areas if the boundaries of the *Drinking Water Protection Zone* are adjusted to exclude these water bodies in the future.

## ***Management Actions***

- X Encourage the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection to stock Humpback Reservoir with native sport fish.
- X Consider providing facilities for fishing, swimming and the launching of non-motorized small boats from designated areas along the shoreline.

## **Park Facilities**

The CRD Parks Master Plan and the management goals and strategic directions for Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells provide clear direction for facilities in the parks. Basic facilities are to be located at the margins of the parks with minimal impact on the natural environment. Basic facilities in regional parks include:

- X Parking areas, information kiosks and toilets at the park entrances. An information kiosk is a free-standing roofed structure which presents a large map of the location of features, trails and facilities, important information about the safe use of the park, and current park notices.
- X Gates and strategically placed posts and boulders to prevent access by unauthorized vehicles.
- X Interpretive signs for information on natural and human history and environmental sensitivities.
- X Regulatory signs to inform park visitors of park regulations, and security and safety concerns.
- X Directional signs to mark designated trails and provide directions to specific locations.

- X Bridges over watercourses.
- X Trails with adequate drainage and erosion controls.

To minimize the threat of introducing human disease organisms, self-contained toilets and containers for dog feces need to be provided in areas open to recreation in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. Garbage containers will only be provided at entrances to the two parks, consistent with the CRD Parks “pack it in, pack it out” policy.

### *Management Policies*

Limit trail development in the initial phases of opening the parks to a few routes in designated areas.

Ensure trails and other park facilities in the park are consistent with the park classification and the management goals and strategic directions for the park.

Ensure adequate facilities, signs and information materials are in place prior to opening areas of the parks to visitors.

Provide self-contained toilets and containers for dog feces in areas open to recreation.

### ***Park Entrances***

There are currently no developed public entrances to Sooke Hills Wilderness or Mount Wells regional parks.

### *Management Policy*

Develop an entrance to both Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks in the Humpback Reservoir area, and a southern entrance to Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park off Sooke Road.

### **Northern Park Entrance at Humpback Reservoir**

The Humpback Reservoir area (Map 7) is a good site for a developed entrance to Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks for a number of reasons:

- X Humpback Reservoir is an attractive recreation feature.
- X The beginning of the preferred trail route up the north slope of Mount Wells originates close to Humpback Reservoir.
- X There is an area that can be developed for parking.
- X Existing roadways connect the Humpback Reservoir area to other parts of Sooke Hills Wilderness.
- X The reservoir is on the proposed route of the Trans Canada Trail.
- X Existing buildings on the site could be used for park management purposes.



However, the Humpback Reservoir area should not be considered in isolation. North of the reservoir is the Goldstream Gate entrance to the lands managed by CRD Water and the entrance to the public campground in Goldstream Provincial Park. A District of Langford park is located to the southeast on Irwin Road. The proposed route of the Trans Canada Trail enters the park from Irwin Road, passes by Humpback Reservoir through lands under the jurisdiction of CRD Water, and enters the Niagara portion of Sooke Hills Wilderness.

Road issues will need to be considered in the concept plan for the area. Humpback Road may be closed as through road to vehicle traffic. There may be concerns about increased traffic on roads in the neighborhoods near Humpback Reservoir. Given these factors, it will be important for the different levels of government to work together to develop a concept plan as soon as possible for access, facility design and links between these publicly-owned lands.

### *Management Actions*

- X Work with CRD Water, BC Parks, Trans Canada Trail proponents, and the District of Langford to develop an overall concept plan for the management of publicly-owned lands and trails in the Sooke Lake Road, Humpback Road and Irwin Road areas.
- X Prepare facility and landscape plans for an entrance to the parks and recreation area at Humpback Reservoir; the landscape plan will need to minimize habitat attractive to Canada geese.
- X Work with District of Langford to address road and trail issues relating to the entrance to the parks.
- X Construct a parking lot in the designated entrance area at the Humpback Reservoir.
- X Develop a picnic area at Humpback Reservoir.
- X Designate an area on the shore of the reservoir for swimming.
- X Designate an area on the shore of reservoir for launching canoes and kayaks.

### **Southern Park Entrance off Sooke Road**

As trail routes are developed in the Veitch drainage portion of the park, a southern entrance to the park will be required off Sooke Road (Map 7).

A small portion of the southeast corner of the park fronts onto Sooke Road. The terrain on this parcel is suitable for the development of a parking lot and other entrance facilities.

However, creating a park entrance on this parcel would require the removal of many trees and considerable disturbance of the site. The existing configuration of traffic lanes on Sooke Road at this location poses a safety concern: two lanes shift to one lane where an access road to the property would need to be located.

An alternate entrance possibility is an uninhabited private property east of the park and north of Sooke Road (Map 7). This property is located where Sooke Road has four traffic lanes, providing an opportunity for a turn into a park entrance area. An existing quarried area on the property could be easily developed into a parking lot. Roadways and trails on the property connect to Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and adjacent Crown lands.

### *Management Actions*

- X Attempt to acquire land adjacent to the southwest corner of the Sooke Hills Wilderness for a southern entrance to the park.
- X Explore the feasibility of accommodating horse trailers in the parking area at the southern entrance of Sooke Hills Wilderness if horse riding is to be allowed in the park.

### ***Trail Routes to Key Viewpoints***

Mount Wells, and a number of hills in the southern portion of Sooke Hills Wilderness, provide opportunities for challenging hiking and spectacular views. Trails will provide access to two spectacular viewpoints when the parks are first opened to visitors: the summits of Mount Wells and Mount Braden (Map 7). Given the environmentally sensitive vegetation on these hilltops, access to other parts of the parks will be considered after the initial effects of recreation are assessed.

Mount Wells provides panoramic views and has been used for recreation for decades. A number of trails lead to the summit from surrounding lands. Several western routes up Mount Wells through the park originate at Humpback Road, but the steep terrain poses a safety concern. A steep trail is also present up the north slope of Mount Wells. The best hiking trail route to the summit is along an existing trail up the south slope. However, this route begins on private land. Southern and eastern accesses to Mount Wells will likely be formalized when adjacent lands are developed for residential use.

A designated route up the north slope of Mount Wells will be the first trail to be developed. The existing trail along this route needs to be carefully assessed, relocated and upgraded as required to minimize safety concerns, environment damage, and erosion potential.

Mount Braden is the highest point in the southern portion of Sooke Hills Wilderness. The views from the summit to the west, south and east are truly spectacular. The views from the summit best characterize the reason for the Regional Wilderness Area designation for the park. An existing trail leads to the summit along the southern slope of Mount Braden. This trail passes through extremely rugged terrain and a number of rock outcropping and meadow areas that contain vegetation sensitive to damage from people leaving the trail.

A new trail route will be developed down the forested north slope of Mount Braden to provide a loop route to reduce environmental impacts from the trail through the environmentally sensitive southern slope. Management policies and actions to reduce environmental impacts of these trails are presented in the section on Environmental Protection.

### *Management Policies*

Designate hiking trails to the summits of Mount Braden and Mount Wells and open these routes when appropriate.

Prohibit access to other hilltop areas in Sooke Hills Wilderness until the first phases of trail designation and facility construction are complete and the effects of recreational activities in the Mount Wells and Mount Braden can be evaluated.

Consult with recreational groups and others on the routing of any new trails in the parks.

As part of subdivision development process with local government, request that developers of adjacent lands contribute to the development of approved trail initiatives from adjacent lands into Mount Wells Regional Park.

#### *Management Actions*

- X Assess the existing hiking trail up the north slope of Mount Wells, and relocate and upgrade as required to minimize safety concerns, environment damage, and erosion potential.
- X Assess the existing trail to the summit of Mount Braden up the southern slopes, and relocate and upgrade as required to minimize safety concerns, environment damage, and erosion potential.
- X Develop a trail to the summit of Mount Braden up the northern slopes from Road 5J.
- X Designate the approach trails to Mount Braden on existing roadways wherever practical.
- X Work with the District of Langford and developers of adjacent lands to ensure any trails from the south and east into Mount Wells Regional Park are provided in locations acceptable to CRD Parks.
- X Develop an agreement with local governments on trail linkages, standards and maintenance for trails linking with the parks.

#### ***Trail Connections to Goldstream Provincial Park***

Trail connections between Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and Goldstream Provincial Park will be formalized once environmental and safety concerns are resolved. Recreational use in the Niagara canyon area needs to be well planned to avoid negative effects on nesting marbled murrelets and vegetation on the steep canyon slopes. Public safety is a concern at rail crossings and the railway trestle over Niagara Creek canyon.

There are opportunities for other trail links between the parks, particularly between the Goldstream Provincial Park campground and the Trans Canada Trail. Safety at railway crossings must be resolved prior to making these trail connections.

#### *Management Policy*

Work with BC Parks to close unauthorized trails linking Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and Goldstream Provincial Park along the Niagara Canyon until environmental and safety concerns have been addressed.

#### *Management Actions*

- X Close the existing unauthorized trails linking Goldstream Provincial Park and Sooke Hills Wilderness along the Niagara Canyon.

- X Encourage further research on the use of Niagara Canyon area for nesting by marbled murrelets and the potential for disturbance of this species from low intensity recreational activities on nearby trails.
- X Work with Canadian Pacific Railway and BC Parks to address public safety issues relating to the crossing of the E and N Railway line by trails linking the two parks.
- X Close off steep and eroding access trails to the floor of the Niagara Creek canyon.
- X Work with BC Parks to investigate the feasibility of other trail connections linking Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and Goldstream Provincial Park.

The agreement between the Province and the CRD on the management plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park requires the plan to address two long distance trails through the park. These are the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) from Humpback Reservoir to the Cowichan Valley Regional District, and the Sea to Sea Trail intended to link Sooke Basin with Gowlland-Tod, Goldstream and Sooke Mountain provincial parks.

### ***The Trans Canada Trail***

To support the closed watershed policy of the CRD, the Province relinquished ownership of the former CNR right-of-way along the eastern shore of Sooke Lake. This right-of-way linked the Galloping Goose Regional Trail with the Cowichan Valley Regional District. As compensation for the closure of the former CNR right-of-way, the District has agreed to provide an alternate right-of-way through its lands adjacent to the drinking water supply areas.

A legal agreement between the Province and the District provides the Province with a blanket easement over the Humpback and Niagara catchment portions of the park and the Japan Gulch/Goldstream gate portion of the CRD Water lands. The purpose is to provide a recreational corridor that will be used as the route for the Trans Canada Trail. In the agreement, the exact route of the alternate right-of-way route (which will be mainly on the roadway known as Niagara Main), and the standards to which the Trans Canada Trail is to be constructed, are to be identified prior to June 30, 2005. The proposed general route of the trail is shown on Map 7, and provides just over 7 km of multi-purpose trail.

Completion of the Trans Canada Trail through Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park is identified as a key strategic direction in the CRD Parks Master Plan, and is a priority for early action in this management plan. The proposed seven-kilometer section of the trail will follow the roadway known as Niagara Main for the most part. Further work will commence this year to determine the precise location of the trail through the Japan Gulch area, as well as determining connections to Goldstream Provincial Park and the Galloping Goose Regional Trail.

### ***Management Policies***

Designate a route for the Trans Canada Trail right-of-way through Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park that connects with the non-catchment Japan Gulch portion of the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.

Develop the Trans Canada Trail to agreed-upon standards in ways that minimize risks to the security of the adjacent water supply lands, damage to the natural environment and negative effects on wildlife.

### *Management Actions*

- X Work with the District of Langford, landowners, and the Provincial Trans Canada Trail office, to route and implement a trail connecting the Galloping Goose Regional Trail with Humpback Reservoir.
- X Work with the Cowichan Valley Regional District, Trans Canada Trail office, and land owners to identify facility needs and management issues along the Trans Canada Trail from Humpback Reservoir to Shawnigan Lake, and develop strategies to address these needs and issues as soon as feasible.
- X Construct and maintain the Trans Canada Trail through the park to the agreed upon standards.
- X Work with CRD Water to identify a route for the Trans Canada Trail across the Japan Gulch non-catchment area linking Humpback Reservoir with Niagara Main, and develop a trail implementation strategy which addresses security, access and public safety concerns.
- X Work with CRD Water to develop a comprehensive strategy for preventing unauthorized public access to the *Drinking Water Protection Zone* areas in the Niagara and Waugh drainages.
- X Ensure there are self-contained toilet facilities at appropriate locations along the route of the Trans Canada Trail through the park to minimize risks to water quality in adjacent water supply catchment lands.

### ***The Proposed Sea to Sea Trail***

The Perry Commission recommended the development of a long distance Sea to Sea Trail through what is now the park to link Goldstream Provincial Park with Sooke Basin. The Commission's report suggested a route skirting the easternmost edge of Sooke Hills Wilderness, so as to have a minimal impact on the security and safety of the catchment lands.

The CRD Parks Master Plan shows three potential regional trail routes through Sooke Hills Wilderness, which connect to Sooke Basin. Two of the routes intersect, and then follow, the CRD flowline (an unused large diameter concrete water pipe) right-of-way south of the park. This right-of-way is largely across private land. However, there are number of logistical difficulties and management concerns with using this water pipeline right-of-way for recreation.

The other route curves around to the south of Mount Braden and then heads north to a point where it heads west through publicly-owned land (Map 7). This route would require building at least one bridge and several new sections of trail.

An alternative is to use Jack Main, heading west from this roadway where it passes close to the park boundary (Map 7). This route is already in place and is the most direct, providing nearly 7 km of multi-purpose trail. However, the use of this route for the Sea to Sea Trail is subject to adequate measures being put in place to protect the security of adjacent water supply lands. If risks to the water supply cannot be adequately addressed, an alternate route will be developed.

The feasibility, route and timing for implementing this regional trail to the west of the park will be determined in planning processes relating to the larger Saanich Inlet to Sooke Basin Green/Blue Belt.

### *Management Actions*

- X Designate a long-distance Sea to Sea Regional Trail route through Sooke Hills Wilderness to provide a recreational link between Saanich Inlet and Sooke Basin.
- X Designate Jack Main roadway as the route for the Sea to Sea Regional Trail, subject to an analysis of the potential risks to adjacent water supply lands and adequate measures to protect the security of these lands being in place.
- X If analysis indicates the Jack Main route for the Sea to Sea Regional Trail poses unacceptable risks to adjacent water supply lands, develop the alternate route shown on Map 7.

### **Roadways**

There is an extensive system of existing roadways in Sooke Hills Wilderness. The existing roadways provide important vehicle access for fire response, security patrols, and park operations. However, roadways that connect Sooke Hills Wilderness to the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area also pose a security risk as potential points of unauthorized public access. Overgrown roadways have potential as future trails or access routes for fire fighting.

### *Management Actions*

- X Work with CRD Water to identify roadways in the parks that are required for vehicle access and secure roads that connect to the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.
- X Conduct an inventory and map overgrown roadways in the parks.

### **Buildings**

Two houses are located in the Humpback Reservoir area. One of the houses is rented out for accommodation. CRD Water is temporarily using the second house as an office and laboratory. A garage and storage shed are located near the second house.

A deteriorating historic cabin is located at Cabin Pond at the drainage area boundary between the Waugh portion of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.

### *Management Actions*

- X Explore opportunities for using existing buildings in the Humpback Reservoir area in the management of the park.
- X Determine the interest of Heritage Branch of the Ministry of Tourism, Small Business and Culture and local historic societies in the historic building at Cabin Pond.

## ***Jack and Mavis Reservoirs***

The agreement between the Province and the CRD requires the management plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park to address the future of the dams on Mavis and Jack reservoirs (see Map 3). Mavis Reservoir was shown on historic maps as Loon Lake. Earthen dams were constructed to create these reservoirs out of two water bodies in the Waugh drainage in 1906. The area of shoreline to be flooded was logged, and the stumps were left in place to minimize erosion. The water stored in these reservoirs was diverted to either the Parkdale Reservoir in Langford or to Humpback Reservoir where it was input into the water distribution system.

The dams on Mavis and Jack reservoirs do not meet seismic safety standards. In 1990, the Water Management Branch of BC Environment issued an order to the Greater Victoria Water District to upgrade or decommission these dams. While the decision was being made, the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection directed that the spillway gates were to be opened and the reservoirs drained to 50 per cent capacity.

The estimated cost of upgrading the dam at Jack Reservoir (in 1996) to meet seismic safety standards and achieve full capacity was \$1,675,000. The estimated cost of upgrading the dam at Mavis Reservoir to provide full reservoir capacity was \$500,000. The Water District did not investigate options for upgrading the dams to allow the reservoirs to be maintained at a lower level.

Given that these reservoirs were no longer required for water supply purposes, and the costs of upgrading the dams, the Greater Victoria Water District decided to decommission the dams. The Water District prepared environmental and engineering studies for the proposed decommissioning and the restoration of the resulting exposed shoreline areas. Key elements of the studies are summarized in the Table 3. Under this plan, both water bodies would revert to their size prior to the construction of the dams.

At the request of CRD Parks, the decommissioning process was postponed until after the issue of the dams had been addressed in the management plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. CRD Water has set aside funds for the decommissioning of the dams and the re-vegetation of the lakeshores that will be exposed.

Although Mavis and Jack reservoirs are located within the *Drinking Water Protection Zone* and relatively close to adjacent water supply lands, concerns have been raised about the loss of future recreation opportunities if the decommissioning proceeds. It is possible that the boundaries of the *Drinking Water Protection Zone* may be adjusted in the future if park management adequately addresses concerns about the security of adjacent water supply lands.

Water from the lakes may also be of use in providing water to the Goldstream River system at periods of low flow to assist with the management of salmon stocks in the river. Further study is needed to determine if this is a practical or desirable course of action, and to determine what impact it would have on the volume of water flowing into the Goldstream catchment.

Given these factors, CRD Parks will explore options other than decommissioning to address concerns about the safety of the dams on Mavis and Jack reservoirs. Any such options will require these water bodies to be limited to 50 per cent of their previous capacity. These levels appear to be

suitable for recreation. If a cost-effective solution acceptable to the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection cannot be found, the proposed decommissioning of the dams should proceed using funds allocated for this purpose. In either case, the area of exposed shoreline will need to be re-vegetated with native plant species. CRD Parks will oversee all work on addressing the safety of the dams at Mavis and Jack reservoirs and restoring the exposed shorelines of these water bodies. CRD Water in conjunction with CRD Parks will manage the technical aspects of the dam safety work.

Ideally there would be a cost-effective way to maintain lake levels that could result in achieving a range of interests, including dam safety, recreation, and water supply to assist in the management of salmon stocks during periods of low flow.

**Table 3 - Key Elements of Decommissioning the Dams at Mavis and Jack Reservoirs in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park**

<b>Key Elements of the Decommissioning</b>	<b>Mavis Reservoir</b>	<b>Jack Reservoir</b>
Proposed method of decommissioning	Full breach of the dam	Partial breach of the dam
Estimated cost (1996) of Decommissioning and shoreline restoration	\$58,000	\$277,000 (extra work needed to protect Waugh Creek)
Area of reservoir when full (hectares)	21	35
Area of water body after decommissioning	13.6	7.1
Percent reduction in water body surface area	35%	80%
Area of exposed shoreline to be restored (hectares)	7.4	27.9

*Management Policies*

Explore options other than decommissioning to address concerns about the safety of the dams at Mavis and Jack reservoirs.

Explore options for incorporating Mavis and Jack lakes in the management of water levels for salmon in the Goldstream River.

If satisfactory options for maintaining lake water levels at 50 per cent capacity cannot be found, decommission the dams at Mavis and Jack lakes as planned, using funds allocated for this purpose.

Ensure the dams at Mavis and Jack lakes are maintained to required provincial standards.

Use only native plant species in the re-vegetation of exposed shorelines at Mavis and Jack lakes.

### *Management Actions*

- X Work with the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, and CRD Water, to identify options other than decommissioning for addressing dam safety concerns.
- X Consult with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection to determine if Mavis and Jack lakes have a role in the management of water levels for salmon in the Goldstream River.
- X Prepare re-vegetation plans for the shorelines of Mavis and Jack lakes in consultation with wildlife and fisheries biologists.
- X Incorporate the maintenance of the dams into the management of the park.
- X Design the re-vegetation of exposed shorelines to minimize habitat attractive to non-migratory Canada geese.
- X Prevent the invasion of Scotch broom into the exposed shoreline.
- X Remove any barriers to fish passage from Waugh Creek to Mavis and Jack lakes.
- X Review the need for the water license for Mavis and Jack lakes, and if required have the license transferred to CRD Parks.

### *Diversion Channels*

There are three cross channels, used for transferring water from one catchment to the other, in the park (Map 3). The total length of the channels is about 4200 metres, with an average width of about 1.5 metres. These channels, which are no longer in active use, link Jack Lake to Goldstream River, Waugh Creek to Cabin Pond, and Cabin Pond to a point lower down on Waugh Creek. The Strategic Plan for Water Management states that the maintenance of the cross channels in the park will be transferred to CRD Parks when the management plan is complete.

If Jack and Mavis lakes are retained at 50 per cent capacity, these cross channels may be of use in providing water to the Goldstream River system at periods of low flow to assist with the management of salmon stocks in the river.

### *Management Policies*

Utilize the cross channels in providing water to the Goldstream River system from Mavis and Jack lakes if this option is feasible.

If the cross channels are not needed for water transfers to enhance fish habitat, close channels to prevent the transfer of water from the park into water supply catchment lands.

### *Management Actions*

- X Assess the feasibility of using the cross channels for water transfers to Goldstream River.
- X Assess the maintenance requirements for these cross-channels and incorporate this information into the management of the park.

### ***Communication Towers***

A number of communication towers and weather stations are located within a fenced compound at the summit of Mount McDonald. The lands they are situated on are now CRD Park lands. CRD Water currently holds the leases on this site and on a right-of-way over private lands for a roadway to access the site. Non-park facilities such as these are not commonly managed within regional parks, and their incompatibility with a wilderness park is a park management concern. There are issues such as site access, tower proliferation, and potential site rehabilitation that need to be addressed. This will be a task assigned to the recently formed CRD Parks/Water Steering Committee.

### ***Management Action***

- X Work with the CRD Parks/Water Steering Committee to formulate a strategy for the transfer of management responsibilities for the communication facility site on Mount McDonald.

## Part 3 - Implementing the Plan

### Timing of the Park Opening

Recognising that Mount Wells Regional Park is located within the rapidly developing Western Communities, and the fact that park use is already occurring (and increasing), CRD Parks proposes to make the opening of Mount Wells an early priority. This will help to ensure the ecological values of the park are not compromised by unmanaged use, and that the risk and environmental impact assessments for the rock climbing site commences in 2001.

Conducting the detailed studies needed to determine the precise Trans Canada Trail (TCT) route through the Japan Gulch area is an early priority for CRD Parks. Planning for the route will commence this year to determine what structures (bridges, rail crossings etc.) will be required to link the existing portions of the trail (Niagara Main) to the park staging areas, to the Galloping Goose Regional Trail, and to Goldstream Provincial Park. The plan will be completed by December 2002 or earlier if possible. Construction of this trail will be the first action carried out in Phase 3, the opening of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

CRD Parks will take a phased approach to opening Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park to visitors. The park reserve status will remain, and public use not permitted until public safety and stewardship management actions identified in the implementation process (Phase 1 and 2) have been completed and appropriate facilities and services are in place.

The management transition for Sooke Hills Wilderness from CRD Water to CRD Parks has already begun. A joint CRD staff committee (The CRD Parks/Water Steering Committee) has been formed to oversee detailed planning, develop operational agreements, and conduct environmental and risk assessments needed to for CRD Parks to assume full management responsibility for the Park while protecting the water supply lands.

#### *Timing and Schedule for Opening the Park*

The implementation of the management plan will occur in four phases:

- |   |
|---|
| Phase 1 To be completed by December 2002 (earlier if possible)  |
| X Complete management assessments and agreements with CRD Water   |
| X Conduct studies and assessments for opening Mount Wells Regional Park                                 |
| X Determine precise route for the TCT and trail connections   |
| Phase 2 To be completed by December 2002 (earlier if possible)  |
| X Develop park facilities for Mount Wells   |
| X Open Mount Wells to visitors  |
| X Plan park facilities for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park   |
| Phase 3 Commencing 2003   |
| X Develop park facilities in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park with the TCT being the first priority |
| X Officially Open Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and the TCT to visitors                          |
| Phase 4   |

X Monitor park use and management, and adjust management plan as required
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The areas of the parks open to public use, and the types of recreational activities permitted, will be approached in phases. After the initial effects of recreation and the success of park management are assessed, additional areas of the park may be opened, and additional appropriate recreational activities may be allowed.

The park reserve designation for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park will be maintained until proper park facilities and management agreements between CRD Parks and CRD Water are in place and adequate strategies have been developed to protect water supply lands and natural environment.

The budget of CRD Parks and overall priorities for the management and acquisition of regional parkland could affect the extent and timing of the implementation of the management plan for the regional parks. CRD Parks manages 20 regional parks, seven regional park reserves and two regional trails. Regional parks and trails received an estimated 2.26 million visitors in 1999. Financial and staff resources for managing Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks must be considered in relation to the demands of the entire system of regional parks and trails, and the requirements for responsible park stewardship.

### ***Timing in Relation to CRD Parks Strategic Directions***

The CRD Parks Master Plan identifies six Strategic Directions for regional parks and trails which set out the priorities for the next five years (2000 to 2004). The Master Plan Strategic Directions are incorporated into annual CRD Parks work plans and reflected in the annual budgeting process. These strategic directions, and their relevance to the management of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks, are presented in Table 4.

Although the development of park facilities within regional park reserves, and opening these areas to visitors, are not included in the strategic directions for the period 2000-2004, CRD Parks will respond to the need to protect the land base and act accordingly. This could affect the timing of the implementation of the management plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells in particular. The CRD Parks Strategic Directions will be reviewed, and adjusted if required.

The timing of the implementation of the management plan will also be affected by the initiation of a ten-year parkland acquisition phase for CRD Parks. The acquisition of additional lands for regional parks and trails is one of the six Strategic Directions in the CRD Parks Master Plan. The CRD Board approved a special regional park acquisition levy in 2000. This levy will generate revenue for parkland acquisition for ten years.

Planning and assessment work for the acquisition of new regional parkland, and necessary actions to protect the natural environment and secure newly acquired areas, will require a considerable commitment of time by CRD Parks staff. Due to limited resources, new regional parks acquired during this period may be held as park reserves and not developed for public use. Similarly, lands added to existing regional parks may not be opened to visitors.

**Table 4 - Strategic Directions for CRD Parks 2000-2004**

<p align="center"><b>Strategic Directions</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Relevance to the Management of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Parks</b></p>
<p>1. Protect and maintain the natural environment in existing regional parks.</p>	<p>All aspects of the management plan must be consistent with the protection of the natural environment.</p> <p>Protection of the natural environment will be a priority in the four phases of implementing the management plan.</p>
<p>2. Acquire additional land for regional parks and trails.</p>	<p>The acquisition of new parkland will affect the resources available for implementing the management plan and, therefore, the timing of implementation.</p> <p>The acquisition of areas identified in the management plan will contribute to the protection of the parks and may provide alternate sites for facility development.</p>
<p>3. Complete the regional trail and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation use from Swartz Bay to the Galloping Goose Regional Trail, and from the Galloping Goose to the Cowichan Valley.</p>	<p>This direction provides the impetus for implementing the Trans Canada Trail through Sooke Hills Wilderness.</p>
<p>4. Repair, upgrade or replace major facilities in Elk/Beaver Lake, Gonzales Hill and Thetis Lake regional parks.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>5. Increase volunteer participation.</p>	<p>This will facilitate the expansion of Volunteer Services with respect to Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells and facilitate partnerships with groups, agencies and institutions.</p>
<p>6. Examine opportunities for generating revenue</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>7. Establish partnerships with other park agencies.</p>	<p>This will facilitate CRD Parks and BC Parks working together on issues of common concern relating to the management of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Goldstream, Sooke Mountain and Gowlland Tod provincial parks.</p>

Most of the tasks for the implementation of the management plan need to occur in Phases 1 and 2 before the parks are officially opened to visitors. Adequate planning and management agreements, strategies and actions are required to protect the security of adjacent water supply lands, protect the natural environment, address public safety concerns, provide appropriate facilities and park information and develop needed volunteer programs and partnerships to assist with the management of the park. A listing of the priority tasks for Phases 1 and 2 are provided in Table 5.

It is estimated that at least two years will be required after the parks are officially opened (Phase 3) to review and assess the effects of visitor use and management actions as outlined in Phase 4 of implementation.

**Table 5 - Implementation for Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Parks**

	<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>
<b>Protection of Adjacent Water Supply Lands</b>	<p>Work with CRD Water to develop and implement strategies to prevent unauthorized public access to water supply lands.</p> <p>Participate in CRD Water risk assessments, risk management strategies and monitoring initiatives.</p> <p>Provide park staff with training on risks to water supply and appropriate management practices to minimize these risks.</p>	<p>Develop and implement strategies to enforce provisions relating to the <i>Drinking Water Protection Zone</i>.</p> <p>Participate in CRD Water risk assessments, risk management strategies and monitoring initiatives.</p>
<b>Protection of the Natural Environment</b>	<p>Control priority non-native plant species in sites of high conservation significance.</p> <p>Encourage research that improves understanding of the dynamics of ecosystems and the characteristics and requirements of ecosystems and species in the parks.</p> <p>Construct the trail up Mount Wells after conducting an environmental assessment of the proposed route.</p> <p>Close off access trails to Niagara Canyon area.</p>	<p>Control priority non-native plant species in sites of high conservation significance.</p> <p>Encourage research that improves understanding of the dynamics of ecosystems and the characteristics and requirements of ecosystems and species in the parks.</p> <p>Conduct an environmental assessment of the proposed trail routes up Mount Braden.</p>
<b>Boundaries of the Parks</b>	<p>Incorporate areas identified as potential additions into the CRD Parks acquisition strategy and monitor their status.</p>	
<b>Protection of Cultural and Historic Features</b>	<p>Identify, map and assess the significance of cultural and historic sites in the parks.</p> <p>Determine the fate of historic buildings at Cabin Pond.</p>	<p>Set up protocols for monitoring the condition of cultural and historic sites.</p>
<b>Public Safety</b>	<p>Address safety issues identified in the management plan.</p> <p>Conduct risk assessment of rock climbing on Mount Wells.</p>	<p>Continue to address safety issues identified in the management plan.</p>
<b>Park Facilities</b>	<p>Develop overall concept plan for public lands in the Humpback Reservoir area.</p> <p>Develop a sign plan for the parks.</p> <p>Identify options for the future of the dams at Mavis and Jack lakes.</p> <p>Determine the precise route of the Trans Canada Trail through the park and Japan Gulch area.</p>	<p>Plan and construct park facilities in the Humpback Reservoir area.</p> <p>Install required signs.</p> <p>Address dam safety issues and begin implementation of feasible water diversions.</p> <p>Construct needed facilities and prepare required signs for the Trans Canada Trail through the park.</p>

	<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>
<b>Park Facilities (continued)</b>	<p>Develop strategies to manage users of the Trans Canada Trail.</p> <p>Provide facilities in Mount Wells Regional Park and open park.</p> <p>Undertake assessments and necessary re-routing of the existing trails up Mount Wells.</p>	<p>Implement strategies to manage users of the Trans Canada Trail.</p> <p>Undertake assessments and necessary re-routing of the existing trails up Mount Braden and develop new route up the north ridge.</p>
<b>Park Operation and Maintenance</b>	<p>Develop and implement strategies for managing unauthorized public access to Sooke Hills Wilderness.</p> <p>Develop management agreements on the roles and responsibilities of CRD Parks and CRD Water in the management of Sooke Hills Wilderness.</p> <p>Work with CRD Water to identify costs relating to these management agreements and determine the allocation of these costs between departments.</p> <p>Work with CRD Water to develop a transition strategy for the maintenance of existing infrastructure within Sooke Hills Wilderness.</p> <p>Work with CRD Water to determine which roads in the parks should be maintained for management purposes.</p> <p>Review legal agreements relating to the parks.</p> <p>Develop monitoring protocols for assessing the effectiveness of park management.</p>	<p>Determine basic operation and maintenance levels of the opened portions of the park.</p> <p>Incorporate new roles and responsibilities into CRD Parks' operations.</p> <p>Incorporate maintenance of infrastructure within Sooke Hills Wilderness into CRD Parks' budget and operations.</p> <p>Develop plans for decommissioning unnecessary roads.</p> <p>Develop strategies for addressing the management implications of legal requirements relating to the parks.</p> <p>Establish monitoring framework within the parks.</p>
<b>Environmental Interpretation Communication and Information</b>	<p>Develop interpretive guidelines for Mount Wells Regional Park.</p> <p>Prepare an integrated Communications Plan for both parks that fulfills all information and communication needs for opening the parks.</p>	<p>Work with CRD Water and BC Parks to explore options for coordinating and delivering key messages relating to the parks and adjacent lands.</p> <p>Develop interpretive guidelines for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.</p> <p>Develop brochures/information sheets for the parks.</p>
<b>Volunteers and Partnerships</b>	<p>Develop a volunteer program for the parks.</p> <p>Explore partnerships to assist with the implementation of the management plan.</p>	<p>Establish volunteer program for the parks.</p> <p>Explore partnerships to assist with the implementation of the management.</p>

## ***Budget and Staffing***

Phases 1 and 2 of the implementation of the management plan will require considerable commitment of financial resources and staff time from both CRD Parks and CRD Water. A separate report detailing costs and a number of possible park options will be presented to the CRD Parks Committee for their consideration during the plan approval process.

The availability of funds and staff for Phase 1 will require CRD Board approval, and be subject to the overall priorities of CRD Parks and the demands of managing the existing system of regional parks and trails.

## **Park Operations**

The development, operation and maintenance of regional parks and trails are carried out within the framework of the CRD Parks Master Plan, CRD Parks regulations, established policies, procedures and standards, and specific requirements in the management plans for individual regional parks and trails.

Regional parks and trails are to be operated and maintained in a manner that protects the natural environment and cultural features, provides safe and clean facilities for park visitors, and safeguards the public's financial investment in facilities.

Operations staff construct, upgrade and maintain trails, facilities and infrastructure such as roads and bridges, install and maintain signs, co-ordinate the enforcement of park regulations, suppress wildfires, and undertake environmental restoration and habitat enhancement projects.

The CRD Water Strategic Plan for Water Management makes statements that affect the operation and maintenance of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park:

- X CRD Parks will need to address issues and activities in the park relating to the security of water supply catchment lands.
- X CRD Water should retain responsibility for mapping fuel loadings and predicting fire behavior, detecting fires, and initial fire response in the park in cooperation with CRD Parks.
- X CRD Parks will need to take on the maintenance of roads, culverts, dams, and water diversion channels in the park to mutually agreed upon standards or provincial regulations.

There is a need for detailed agreements on these subjects and an ongoing working relationship between CRD Parks and CRD Water. The two departments will also need to determine how costs relating to park operation and maintenance should be allocated. This will be a task of the newly formed CRD Parks/Water Steering Committee. The agreements will be subject to consideration by the CRD Parks and Water Committees and the CRD Board. The agreements must also address administrative concerns. Maintenance responsibilities relating to federal and provincial regulations also need to be identified.

CRD Parks also needs to review the legal and financial agreements between CRD Water and other agencies that relate to Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. All management agreements and reviews need to occur well in advance of opening the park to visitors.

### *Management Policies*

Clarify with CRD Water respective management responsibilities relating to security, wildfires, and infrastructure in the park.

Clarify financial obligations relating to security, wildfires and other management issues of concern to both CRD Parks and CRD Water.

Investigate all legal and financial agreements relating to Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and assess the management and financial implications.

Adjust or renegotiate legal and financial agreements as required to make them consistent with the management priorities for the park.

### *Management Actions*

- X Work through the CRD Parks/Water Standing Committee to address management and operational issues relating to Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells.
- X Develop and implement agreements with CRD Water relating to security, fire protection, road maintenance and other management issues of common concern in Sooke Hills Wilderness prior to opening the park to visitors.
- X Identify costs relating to these management agreements and determine how these costs are to be allocated between the two departments.
- X Work with CRD Water to develop a transition strategy for the maintenance of roads, culverts and other facilities and infrastructure in the park.
- X Work with CRD Water to develop a strategy to determine which roads in the park should be maintained and maintenance standards to provide necessary access for recreation, fire suppression and park operations.
- X Work with the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection to clarify monitoring and maintenance responsibilities for the decommissioned dams at Mavis and Jack reservoirs.
- X Identify maintenance requirements for water diversion channels.
- X Review all legal and financial agreements relating to the Sooke Hills Wilderness and prepare a report on the management and financial implications.

### ***Fire Protection, Watershed Security and Maintenance Agreements***

As stated in the section on Park Operation and Maintenance, detailed costs for these management activities need to be determined, and allocated between CRD Parks and CRD Water. The joint CRD Parks/Water Steering Committee will develop the management agreements needed to cooperatively manage the parks while protecting the water supply lands.

### ***Construction of Park Facilities***

The construction of park entrance facilities and trails will require a commitment of funds from the CRD Parks Capital Development Fund. Detailed cost estimates for each phase for the implementation of the management plan will be brought forward as part of the annual CRD Parks budget process. Funding will also be required for the annual maintenance of infrastructure

that is the responsibility of CRD Parks. These costs will be brought forward as part of the annual CRD Parks budget request.

### ***Public Safety***

The combined size and rugged terrain of the parks, their variable weather, and day-use only status will require visitors to be adequately prepared. There are many cliffs and steep rock faces in the Veitch and Mount Wells portions of the park that could pose a safety risk to people who stray off designated trails. There is the potential for conflicts between people and wildlife, and dogs and wildlife. Rock climbing is occurring on cliffs in the western portion of Mount Wells Regional Park.

CRD Parks and CRD Water vehicles will need to use some of the roadways in the parks that will also be used as trails. Kapoor Lumber Company has an easement for vehicle access to their lands along Kapoor Main and a portion of Jack Main.

It will be necessary to create a safe crossing of the CRD Water Goldstream Gate area for the Trans Canada Trail. This area is used for equipment storage and as the main entrance for authorized vehicles to the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area and possibly Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

Existing unauthorized trails connecting the park with Goldstream Provincial Park along Niagara Creek Canyon cross the tracks of the E and N Railway very close to the railway trestle over the creek. The Trans Canada Trail and any trail links between Sooke Hills Wilderness and Goldstream Provincial Park would also need to cross the railway tracks.

There is a walkway along the top of the dam at Humpback Reservoir. The dam will be an attractive feature for visitors to the area. The existing railings along the top of the dam would be very easy for children to climb.

### ***Management Policies***

Provide park visitors with information about the importance of adequate preparation, personal responsibility, and safety concerns.

Develop safety policies for the use of authorized vehicles on roadways in the parks that are designated trail routes.

Work with CRD Water to address safety concerns along the route of the Trans Canada Trail through the Goldstream Gate entrance to the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.

Work with BC Parks and the E and N Railway to address public safety concerns at railway crossings associated with the Trans Canada Trail and trail connections with Goldstream Provincial Park.

Ensure public safety considerations are incorporated in the design and location of trails and facilities.

Do not open trail routes until safety concerns are addressed.

### *Management Actions*

- X Orient trails and facilities away from safety hazards whenever possible.
- X Develop risk management strategies for issues or activities in the park if circumstances warrant.
- X Develop an information strategy to make park visitors aware of the importance of adequate preparation and safety considerations when visiting the park.
- X Develop medical emergency evacuation plans in cooperation with appropriate agencies.
- X Develop policies governing the safe use of park vehicles on roads which are designated trails.
- X Work with Kapoor Lumber Company to address concerns about public safety when company vehicles use Kapoor Main.
- X Coordinate messages on safety relating to wildlife with the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection.
- X Close the walkway along the top of the dam at Humpback Reservoir to public use or improve the safety of the existing railings.

### *Consultation*

Implementation of the management plan will involve continued consultation with environmental groups, recreation groups, adjacent landowners, provincial and regional government agencies, local governments and First Nations.

## **Environmental Interpretation**

Environmental interpretation plays an integral role in the management of regional parks and trails.

Two major goals for protection of the natural environment in the CRD Parks Master Plan are:

- X To provide park visitors with stimulating educational experiences that will offer them a greater appreciation of the region's natural ecosystems and cultural resources and motivate them to conserve and protect these ecosystems and resources for future generations.
- X To provide current, accurate and comprehensive information to visitors to help them understand and enjoy regional parks and trails.

Interpretive programs and interpretive media (for example, brochures, kiosks, displays) help make regional residents and park visitors more aware of the natural and cultural history of regional parks and opportunities for appropriate recreational experiences and activities, and highlight their role in the stewardship of the parks.

CRD Parks is preparing an interpretive plan that will provide overall direction for environmental interpretation and will identify themes and messages for individual parks, consistent with those of the overall system.

The CRD Parks Interpretive Plan will be recommending the development of interpretive plans for some parks and trails, and interpretive guidelines for others, to be developed in conjunction with park management plans and park management guidelines. Given the complexity of issues in the Sooke Hills, an interpretive and communications plan will be developed for this park.

The size, characteristics, location, and role of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park suggest a number of important themes for environmental interpretation and information:

- X Priority park management messages (for example, protection of adjacent water supply lands and protection of the natural environment).
- X Links between the drinking water supply, natural landscapes and watercourses in the park, and the salmon run in Goldstream Provincial Park.
- X The significance and sensitivities of bunch grass and wildflower meadow and mossy rock outcrop communities and the importance of staying to trails.
- X The significance of marbled murrelets nesting in stands of older forest in the park and their sensitivity to disturbance from human activities.
- X The importance of large areas for sustaining native ecosystems and species, particularly large mammals such as bears, wolves and elk.
- X Public safety messages.
- X Wilderness skills.
- X The cultural history of the area .
- X The transition between two biogeoclimatic zones: Coastal Douglas Fir and Coastal Western Hemlock and how this is reflected in vegetation.

Educational messages will highlight the proximity of the CRD Water catchment lands and Goldstream Provincial Park to Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park, and the common interest these agencies have in protecting the integrity of the natural environment and the quality of our drinking water supply.

The promotion of Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park must consider the two priorities for the park, the limited trail routes, facilities and parking available, the level of difficulty associated with hilltop trails, and the potential for overcrowding in the initial areas to be opened to recreation.

### *Management Policies*

Develop an interpretive plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

Develop and deliver consistent messages about risks to the regional drinking water supply, in cooperation with CRD Water, and how visitors to Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park can minimize these risks.

Coordinate environmental interpretation programs, interpretive and educational displays and facilities, and the production of park brochures and other information on the relationship between Goldstream Provincial Park and Sooke Hills Wilderness.

Explore the possibility of conducting joint public tours of Sooke Hills Wilderness and the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area with CRD Water.

Match the promotion of the park with the constraints imposed by the two management priorities, limited trails and facilities, and rugged nature of the terrain.

### *Management Actions*

- X Develop a complete and integrated communication plan for making park visitors aware of issues relating to drinking water quality, environmentally sensitive areas, and public safety associated with Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park as well as interpretive messages.
- X Develop environmental interpretation programs on the natural and cultural history of the parks and the role of adjacent water supply catchment lands.
- X Assemble appropriate information and identify key messages to communicate through appropriate media.
- X Produce a brochure for Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park in consultation with CRD Water and BC Parks.
- X Work with CRD Water and BC Parks to develop interpretive and educational displays for the visitor center at Goldstream Provincial Park on our drinking water supply, the natural and cultural history of the parks, and appropriate behavior in the parks.

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers play an integral role in the management of regional parks and trails. They are vital contributors and essential team members. Their effort, spirit and ideas are central to the ecological and organizational health of the region's protected areas. Opportunities for groups and individuals are diverse. Volunteers act on their conservation beliefs and dedicate their time throughout the year, and throughout the regional parks and trails system. As this system grows, volunteers become increasingly involved in the stewardship of CRD Parks.

The need to protect a natural environment the size of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks, and concerns about the security of the adjacent water supply lands, provide considerable opportunities for the expansion of CRD Parks Volunteer Services. A strong volunteer program will be essential in the management of these large and diverse regional parks.

The volunteer program for the Sooke Hills Wilderness will focus on the following goals:

- X Protection and conservation of the natural environment
- X Protection of the adjacent water supply lands
- X Public safety and bylaw education
- X Information distribution
- X Restoration of disturbed natural habitats
- X Interpretation of the natural environment

### *Management Policies*

Involve volunteers in the protection, conservation and restoration of the natural environment of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks.

Involve volunteers in protecting the security of the adjacent water supply lands.

Involve volunteers in interpreting the natural environment.

Involve volunteers in public safety and bylaw education and information distribution.

### *Management Actions*

- X Explore ways of implementing the volunteer warden program in cooperation with CRD Water.
- X Explore opportunities for involving all Volunteers in Parks programs in Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks.

## **Partnerships**

Partnerships are increasingly important as the demand for facilities and services in regional parks and trails rises but budgets have not kept pace. Groups and organizations working in partnership with CRD Parks make it possible to provide a wider range of facilities and services to park visitors. Strong partnership arrangements will be needed to help CRD Parks manage and maintain the integrity of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks.

Part of the vision for the parks is for research to improve our knowledge of native ecosystems in the park and how they function, the effects of human activities on the natural environment and adjacent water supply lands, and the effectiveness of park management actions. Research studies on these topics should be long-term, suggesting the need for partnerships with educational institutions and appropriate agencies.

A strategic direction of the park is to actively seek partnerships and cooperative arrangements with agencies and groups to achieve the management goals for the park. The assistance of recreation, conservation and stewardship groups, historic societies and other groups and organizations would be beneficial in helping achieve management goals and implement the management plan.

### *Management Policies*

Explore opportunities for partnerships with CRD Water, BC Parks, YMCA Camp Thunderbird and other recreation and education groups and agencies to deliver key park messages to participants in their programs.

Explore opportunities for partnerships with educational institutions, stewardship groups and relevant government agencies in studying and monitoring wildlife species within the park.

Explore opportunities for partnerships with stream stewardship groups and relevant government agencies to assess, monitor and enhance fish habitat within the park.

Explore opportunities for partnerships with educational institutions and appropriate government and non-government agencies in monitoring ecosystem functions and long-term environmental change.

Explore opportunities for partnerships with educational institutions in monitoring the effects of human activities in the park.

Explore opportunities for partnerships with recreation groups to assist with the location, designation, mapping and monitoring of trails within the park.

Explore opportunities for partnerships with historic societies and appropriate government agencies in researching and communicating the human history of the park.

# **APPENDIX A**

## **Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Parks Management Plan**

### **Summary of Public and Agency Input**

**February 1, 2001**

# **Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Park Draft Management Plan**

## **Summary of Public and Agency Input**

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**Attachment 1** - Newsletter

**Attachment 2** - Statistical Record of Responses

## **Executive Summary**

The draft Management Plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Parks is the product of considerable input from the public and a number of relevant government agencies. Public input into the plan began with the creation of the Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Park Public Advisory Group in 1998. The advisory group has been assisting with creation of the park vision, management principles and strategic directions for the parks.

CRD Parks staff have also received assistance in preparing the draft plan from the Project Management Team, consisting of representatives of BC Parks, CRD Water, CRD Municipal Services, the Capital Health Region and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. With the draft plan completed, it was timely for the public to review the specific park management policies proposed in the plan. The public was given the opportunity to comment on the draft plan through an open house, workshops and response forms.

### **Open House and Workshop Results**

CRD Parks staff presented the draft plan at an open house and workshop held in November 2000. From this review it was clear there was general support for the proposals outlined in the draft plan, although there was no clear consensus on a number of key issues including timing of the park opening, and proposed policies on camping, rock climbing and cycling in the park.

### **Response Forms**

The public was asked for their views on 14 key subject areas, and given the opportunity to make written comments as well. A total of 137 response forms were received, again indicating overall support for the draft plan, particularly proposed environmental management policies such as:

- Establishment of the Drinking Water Protection Zone and associated restrictions.
- Protection of adjacent lands in the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.
- Locations and requirements of the Sensitive Environment and Environmental Protection zones.
- Protection of the natural environment.
- Recreation activities for the Humpback Reservoir.

Again, there was no clear consensus on the timing of the park opening, or policies regarding camping, rock climbing or cycling access. These issues may require further discussion.

### **Adjacent Landowners**

Several adjacent private landowners were asked to comment on the plan, and some expressed concern about identifying specific properties as areas of interest for future park additions. As a result of these concerns, the map and text of the plan will be changed to provide a more generalized expression of interest on additional lands.

## **Municipal Input**

The municipal councils of Sooke, Langford and Metchosin and the Director for the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area were invited to comment on the draft plan. Langford provided CRD Parks with a number of comments relating to how the parks fit with their Official Community Plan, noted Land Reserve requirements and suggested that emergency access be provided through the park. They also proposed that Langford and CRD Parks meet to discuss a number of issues relating to the routing of the Trans Canada Trail through future development lands, integrating both agencies' park plans and road, and trail issues relating to the park entrances. Metchosin supported the plan, and supported public access to the park as soon as possible. CRD Parks did not receive a written response from Sooke or the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area director.

## **Other Agencies**

As part of the review process, other government agencies affected by the proposed park management plan were also invited to provide input. To date, the provincial Land Use Coordinating Office (LUCO), the BC Assets and Land Corporation and CRD Water have all provided suggestions on how to better manage the parks. LUCO was concerned that the opening of the Trans Canada Trail might be delayed because other connecting lands were not yet available. Further discussions on this issue will take place early in 2001.

## **First Nations Input**

The Beecher Bay First Nations reviewed the draft plan and requested changes to Map 1 to make it clear that reserve islands in Beecher Bay were not included in the park. The map was changed, and a statement will be included to indicate that no reserve lands are included in Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Parks.

## **Where Do We Go From Here?**

CRD Parks staff and the advisory groups will review outstanding issues arising from public and agency comments. The plan will be adjusted to reflect decisions made regarding each of the issues. The Project Management Team and the Public Advisory Group will review the revised draft plan before the final plan is prepared and presented to the CRD Parks Committee and Board. Assuming Board approval, it will then go to the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks for endorsement. Once all approvals have been received, it will then return to the CRD Board for adoption as bylaw.

## Introduction

The public review of the draft Management Plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Parks is the latest step in the process of public input that began with the formation of the Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Parks Public Advisory Group in November 1998. This advisory group has been actively involved in the preparation of the draft plan.

In addition to receiving input from the public advisory group, residents of the region have had opportunities to provide input to the planning process:

1. In July 1999, CRD Parks distributed a newsletter that provided an overview of the two parks, described the management planning process and invited suggestions on managing the parks.
2. In November 1999, a second newsletter was distributed that presented a proposed vision, management principles, and strategic directions for the parks. The newsletter included a response form inviting input on the proposed management framework.
3. In November 2000, a third newsletter was distributed which outlined the draft management plan developed with input from the previous two public planning processes. The newsletter included a response form inviting input and level of support for the proposed policies in the draft management plan.

Previous public input into the vision, principles and strategic directions for the parks was considered in the preparation of the draft management plan. Similarly, public input into the draft plan will be incorporated in the final management plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks.

As was the case in developing the draft plan, the public showed great interest in how the parks should be managed. Public input received through the November 2000 open house and workshop is summarized in Section 1, while input from the response forms is summarized in Section 2. Because management of the parks may affect adjacent lands, private landowners adjacent to the parks were also given an opportunity to provide input into the draft plan. A summary of the results of their input appears in Section 3.

The municipalities of Sooke, Metchosin, and Langford were also asked to provide input into the draft plan. Municipal input is summarized in Section 4.

In addition to the public review process, a number of relevant government agencies were also invited to review and comment on the draft plan. (This review is in addition to the on-going review by the Project Management Team established to oversee the technical aspects of the plan as it was being prepared). A summary of agency responses appears in Section 5.

## **1. Summary of Input from Public Meeting November 18, 2000**

On Saturday, November 18, 2000, an open house was held at the Juan de Fuca Recreation Center in the Western Communities, giving the public an opportunity to review the draft management plan for Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells Regional Parks.

A total of 48 members of the public participated in the open house and the workshops that followed. Also in attendance as resource people were several members of the public advisory group and the project management team. CRD Parks provided an overview of the process undertaken to compile the draft plan and outlined the goals of the workshop.

Following the presentation, workshop participants broke into three focus groups to discuss the policies presented in the draft management plan. Each group was provided with a facilitator, and a member of the public advisory group recorded the group's comments. Groups were encouraged to comment on the policies proposed for the protection of adjacent watershed lands, protection of the natural environment, and the types and locations of appropriate recreation activities. The groups chose not to limit the discussion to these topics, and instead chose to comment directly on a wide variety of subjects relating to Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks.

At the conclusion of the workshop, there was a plenary session where each group presented a summary of their discussion to the workshop as a whole. The following is a brief summary of the discussions.

- There was overall support for the directions proposed in the draft plan.
- There was no general consensus on key issues, including the conservation role of the park versus outdoor recreation needs, the size of the Drinking Water Protection Zone (some found it too big, while others supported the large size) and access to the area for cycling (some wanted more access, others wanted no cycling access at all).
- Both conservation and recreation groups expressed a wish to have the park opened earlier than the draft plan proposes. Conservationists felt that with volunteer park wardens, limited park access might be acceptable, particularly in the southern sections of the park. Recreationists expressed the view that since there were already roads constructed throughout the area, there was no need to restrict access to these.
- The groups expressed the view that allowances should be made for limited and controlled backcountry camping.
- There was also support for allowing rock climbing, particularly on Mount McDonald, where climbing already occurs.
- Cyclists expressed the wish to have more access to park trails than the plan proposes.
- The group acknowledged that enforcement would be difficult over such a large and diverse area, and that public education and Park Wardens would be key components of park management.

## Key Issues Arising from the Public Open House:

- Timing of the park opening
- Proposed policies regarding camping
- Proposed policies regarding rock climbing
- Proposed policies regarding cycling in the park

## 2. Summary of Input from Response Forms

As part of the public review process, response forms (questionnaires) were included in the November 2000 newsletter and distributed at the public meeting. An electronic version of the response form was also available on the CRD Parks web site. The questionnaires asked for the public's views on 14 key subject areas. The public was also invited to make written comments on the park policies proposed in the draft plan.

A total of 137 response forms were returned to CRD Parks for consideration. The statistical analysis of the responses gives a general picture of public opinion about the draft plan. Because the response form refers to issues brought forward in the newsletter, a copy of the newsletter is attached (Attachment 1). The statistical summary of each of the response forms appears as Attachment 2. For the detailed breakdown of responses on each of the questions, including 'no response', please refer to this appendix. The following is a consolidated summary of the responses and comments received on each of the subject areas.

**Question 1.** *To address the many challenges in the management of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells, CRD Parks is proposing a phased approach to opening these parks to visitors (see page 4 of the newsletter). What is your level of support for opening the park in these phases?*

Support or strongly support:	74%
Oppose or strongly oppose:	17%

Comments on this question were divided between those wanting the park opened sooner, and those who supported a cautious, phased approach. Even those that supported a phased approach expressed the view that they preferred to see the park opened before the proposed date of 2005.

**Question 2.** *Do you support the concept of a Drinking Water Protection Zone and associated restrictions (shown on Map 2 and described on page 5 of the newsletter) to protect adjacent lands in the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area?*

Support or strongly support:	84%
Oppose or strongly oppose:	7%

Although this proposal received strong support, comments were nearly evenly split between those who thought the zone might be too large, and those who considered water

protection as a primary concern, and thought the proposed management zone was an appropriate-sized buffer.

**Question 3.** *Do you support the policies to protect adjacent lands in the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area (described on page 6 of the newsletter)?*

Support or strongly support:	82%
Oppose or strongly oppose:	5%

There was strong support for protecting the lands adjacent to the water supply as many regarded water protection as the primary consideration. There were suggestions that management of wildlife in the CRD Water catchment lands could be improved as well.

**Question 4.** *Do you support the locations and requirements of the Sensitive Environment and Environmental Protection zones (shown on Map 2 and described on page 5 of the newsletter)?*

Support or strongly support:	69%
Oppose or strongly oppose:	9%

This question was left unanswered by a number of respondents who indicated they did not fully understand the question or indicated a need to better define what constitutes a “sensitive environment zone”. Those who agreed with the locations and requirements suggested that boundaries of these zones be based upon good science, not park management needs.

**Question 5.** *Do you support the policies on the protection of the natural environment described on page 6 of the newsletter?*

Support or strongly support:	85%
Oppose or strongly oppose:	6%

Although there was overall support for the policies, many respondents indicated that they would like to minimize the closed areas. Both sides expressed the opinion that managing such a large area would be difficult, and suggested park wardens assist in park management.

**Question 6.** *Hiking is proposed as the primary recreational activity in the parks. Cycling and horse-riding will be limited to two regional trail routes along existing roadways through Sooke Hills Wilderness when this park is first opened to visitors. Opportunities for cycling and horse riding may be expanded later, after the initial effects of recreation are assessed. What is your level of support for these proposals?*

Support or strongly support:	56%
Oppose or strongly oppose:	36%

This question evoked the least amount of support, the strongest opposition and the greatest number of comments. Only 38% of respondents strongly supported this policy. Cyclists in particular felt that the policy was too restrictive and unnecessary. Comments included the need to expand the number of cycling opportunities within regional parks, allowance in the plan for single-track trails, and ensuring equal access to the new park to all user groups. Equestrians also indicated a wish to access more of the park than the draft plan proposes.

**Question 7.** *The CRD Parks bylaw states that dogs must be under control in regional parks (either on a leash or returning immediately when called). The draft plan proposes that all dogs be leashed in Sooke Hills Wilderness to protect wildlife, themselves, and their handlers. What is your level of support for this policy?*

Support or strongly support:	71%
Oppose or strongly oppose:	21%

While the majority agreed with the proposed leash policy, others felt that the existing CRD Parks policy of “under control” was adequate. A significant number of respondents were opposed to having dogs in the park altogether, suggesting that managing dogs would be a problem in the parks. Others agreed with the leash policy and suggested that it would be easier to enforce if somewhere on the perimeter of the park a dog off-leash area was provided.

**Question 8.** *Do you have a dog?*

Yes:	14%
No:	47%

Only 14% of the respondents have dogs. Those that do were split fairly evenly over the “on leash” versus “in control” policy.

**Question 9.** *Freshwater recreation opportunities will be provided at Humpback Reservoir (all other water bodies in Sooke Hills Wilderness are within the Drinking Water Protection Zone). The types of activities to be permitted at the Reservoir, and the level of development of the shoreline, are presented on page 7 of the newsletter. What is your level of support for these proposals?*

Support or strongly support:	80%
Oppose or strongly oppose:	5%

Respondents strongly supported the proposed activities. A large number insisted that no motorized boats be allowed on the reservoir, while others suggested that the reservoir be stocked with fish to support fishing.

**Question 10.** *Rock climbing will continue to be permitted in existing defined areas within Mount Wells Regional Park (see page 7 of the newsletter). To protect sensitive*

*vegetation and nesting habitat for birds of prey, this activity will not be permitted in Sooke Hills Wilderness. What is your level of support for these policies?*

Support or strongly support:	71%
Oppose or strongly oppose:	16%

Only 53% strongly supported the proposed restrictions on rock climbing. Many felt that with such a large area, there could be spots where rock climbing would be safe and not damaging to the park. Many respondents indicated that existing sites, particularly those on Mount McDonald, be allowed continued use as rock climbing sites.

**Question 11.** *The CRD Parks Master Plan allows camping to be considered as an option in management plans for regional parks. To minimize risks to adjacent water supply lands and impacts to the natural environment, camping will not be permitted in either park. What is your level of support for this policy?*

Support or strongly support:	64%
Oppose or strongly oppose:	20%

Only 51% strongly supported the ban on camping within the parks. Many respondents felt that a backcountry hike-in style of camping should be allowed. Because of the size of the park, and the length of the proposed trails, many felt that traversing the park would require some type of overnight stay. They expressed the opinion that properly designed wilderness camping at appropriate sites should be allowed. Others suggested that cabins be provided on a permit and registration basis, allowing overnight stays while effectively managing access.

**Question 12.** *The draft plan identifies two potential entrances to the parks: a southern entrance off Sooke Road and an entrance off Humpback Road near Humpback Reservoir (see Map 3 on page 8 of the newsletter). Which entrance do you think is the priority?*

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Southern entrance off Sooke Road:                        | 34% |
| 2. Entrance off Humpback Road near Humpback Reservoir area: | 39% |

Although a slightly higher number supported the Humpback entrance, respondents did not indicate an overwhelming favorite. Many suggested that both entrances were equally important. Others suggested that even more entrances might be required in order to access such a large area.

**Question 13.** *The draft plan proposes that existing trails to two excellent viewpoints be designated for hiking when the parks are first opened to visitors (see Map 3 and pages 7 and 8 of the newsletter). Hilltop hiking trails will be limited to these two areas to protect sensitive areas in other parts of the parks. What is your level of support for these policies?*

Support or strongly support:	67%
Oppose or strongly oppose:	20%

Of the 67% that supported the limitation on hilltop hiking trails, the percentage who strongly supported limited access was only 44%. Many suggested that if done properly, more viewpoints could be created. Some suggested that if only two formal viewpoints were provided, a number of unsanctioned informal pathways could result. Many also suggested that more viewpoints would greatly enhance the park visitor experience.

**Question 14.** *The draft plan proposes that the opening of the Trans-Canada and Sea-to-Sea trails through Sooke Hills Wilderness (see Map 3 and page 8 of the newsletter) be delayed until the sections needed to complete these trails on adjacent lands are opened. What is your level of support for this policy?*

Support or strongly support:	55%
Oppose or strongly oppose:	26%

Other than cycling restrictions, delaying the opening of the long distance trails received the least amount of public support. Most respondents indicated that portions of the Trans Canada Trail in particular should be opened, even if they do not yet connect to trails to the north. Some indicated that opening part of the trail could act as a catalyst to stimulate action on other portions of the Trans Canada Trail.

**Question 15.** *Where do you live in the Capital Region?*

Responses were received from every jurisdiction in the Capital Region including the Gulf Islands. By far the majority of respondents were from Victoria (29.9%), Saanich (26.3%) and Oak Bay (8.0%). The remaining 35.8% of respondents represented the remaining 12 jurisdictions.

From the responses received, there appears to be general (although not unanimous) support for several of the proposed policies, including:

- The establishment of the Drinking Water Protection Zone and associated restrictions
- The policies to protect adjacent lands in the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area
- The locations and requirements of the Sensitive Environment and Environmental Protection zones
- The policies on the protection of the natural environment
- The recreation proposals for the Humpback Reservoir

## **Key Issues Arising from the Response Forms**

Although there was strong support for the proposed environmental policies, there was less support for some of the proposed access policies, leading to the need for further consideration of the following issues:

- Timing of the opening of the parks and trails
- Policies regarding hike-in camping
- Policies regarding rock climbing
- Policies regarding cycling access to the parks

## **3. Adjacent Landowner Input and Changes to the Draft Plan**

There were a number of areas identified in the draft plan as potential additions to the park. The intent was to indicate that some of the park boundaries are based upon administrative land parcels, rather than topographical or natural features. CRD Parks' intention was to indicate the desire to have natural boundaries for the parks, rather than administrative ones. It was clearly stated that this notation did not commit CRD Parks to acquire these lands and that the normal process for acquiring private lands would apply: following the guidelines and procedures outlined in the CRD Parks Master Plan.

Several adjacent private landowners who were asked to comment on the plan advised CRD Parks that designating specific private properties as areas of interest for potential additions to the park caused them concern. Their concerns were centered on Map 6, which identified specific property parcels as areas of interest, rather than general geographical areas.

As a result of discussions with adjacent landowners, the map was changed to indicate the areas of interest as general areas only, without specific property lines being shown. The text was also modified to indicate general areas only without specific properties being identified. The final management plan will reflect these changes.

## **4. Municipal and Electoral Area Input**

Municipalities adjacent to Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks (the districts of Sooke, Langford and Metchosin) were invited to comment on the draft plan. The districts of Metchosin and Langford provided comments, as summarized below:

The District of Langford provided CRD Parks with a number of comments relating to how the parks fit with their Official Community Plan, made note of Land Reserve requirements and suggested that emergency access be provided through the park. They also proposed that Langford and CRD Parks meet to discuss a number of issues, including:

- The routing of the Trans Canada Trail through the Oakcrest (future development) lands.
- Integration of Langford municipal parkland with the regional parks.
- The future development of the Humpback Reservoir for recreational use.

- Road and trail issues relating to the entrance to the parks, including highway and road crossings.

CRD Parks and Langford will meet early in 2001 to discuss these matters.

The District of Metchosin also responded, indicating formal support for the management plan and supporting public access to the parks as soon as possible. CRD Parks did not receive a written response from Sooke or the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area director.

## **5. Other Agency Input**

As part of the review process, other government agencies affected by the proposed park management plan were also invited to provide input. A number of agencies responded with suggestions on how to improve the plan, or expressed concerns about specific actions proposed in the draft plan. These are summarized below.

### **BC Land Use Coordinating Office (LUCO)**

LUCO is responsible for implementing the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) and had a number of comments regarding the terms of the agreement that provided for the TCT within Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park. They also expressed the wish to have the portions of the trail within the park opened as soon as actions outlined in Phase I and II of the implementation are completed, regardless of whether or not trail connections to portions of the TCT further north have been secured.

### **CRD Water**

CRD Water will be an important partner in the management of Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks. As such, they provided a number of suggestions on the interim management of the park, particularly on issues such as fire protection and watershed security. Overall they recognized the need to properly manage the lands adjacent to the drinking water supply. These comments were in addition to the extensive review of the draft plan by CRD Water through its participation on the Project Management Team.

### **BC Assets and Land Corporation**

The BC Assets and Land Commission advised CRD Parks that BC Parks has a Notation of Interest on the Crown Lands on the southern slopes of Mount McDonald, in view of their importance for potential boundary adjustments to Sooke Hills Wilderness and Mount Wells regional parks.