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**REPORT TO REGIONAL PARKS COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2020**

SUBJECT 2019-2022 Parks & Natural Resource Management Service Planning

ISSUE SUMMARY

To provide the Regional Parks Committee with an overview of relevant initiatives undertaken by the Regional Parks division to deliver on approved Board Priorities and the Corporate Plan and to consider an increase to the Land Acquisition Fund (LAF).

BACKGROUND

The CRD Board completed its strategic planning early in 2019 and approved the CRD Board Strategic Priorities 2019-2022.

The four priorities are:

1. Community Wellbeing – Transportation & Housing;
2. Climate Action & Environmental Stewardship;
3. First Nations Reconciliation; and
4. Advocacy, Governance & Accountability

The priorities were confirmed at the annual check-in on May 13, 2020.

The 2019-2022 CRD Corporate Plan is aligned to the Board direction. It highlights the initiatives the CRD needs to deliver over the Board's four-year term to address the region's most important needs. The Corporate Plan identified 10 initiatives under the Parks & Natural Resource Management, which fall under the Regional Parks Committee's mandate.

Appendix B *Parks & Natural Resource Management - Initiatives Progress Report* provides insights into what has been delivered through the 12 delivery initiatives approved last year, for delivery in 2020. Two initiatives related to environmental protection regarding invasive species and environmental stewardship, are also included.

The Service Planning process gathered information necessary to assemble a provisional budget for Committee and Board review. The purpose of this report is to explain how the Regional Parks divisional program of work connects to the Board Priorities, Corporate Plan and provisional budget.

In addition to the above, the following motion was carried at the CRD Board meeting Wednesday, April 8, 2020:

That staff report back on options to improve the capacity of the CRD Parks Acquisition Fund, for example, starting in 2021 by \$2.00 per year to reach \$40.00 from its current \$20.00.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That Appendix A Community Need Summary - Parks & Natural Resource Management be approved as presented and advanced to the October 28, 2020 provisional budget review process.
2. That the Land Acquisition Fund be maintained at the current rate of \$20 per average residential household assessment.

Alternative 2

That Appendix A Community Need Summary - Parks & Natural Resource Management be referred back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

Initiatives identified in the Corporate Plan (including Board Priorities) cannot be undertaken without resourcing. The Board determines resourcing through its annual review and approval of financial plans. To support the Board's decision-making, staff, through the service planning process, provide recommendations on funding, timing and service levels.

Staff will explore a number of strategies to ensure sufficient funding is in place in future years to sustain the Regional Parks service. A revenue strategy is being prepared for fall 2020 that will identify opportunities to fund new assets. Future additional requisition increases may be also be required to fund significant new infrastructure or to address unforeseen failures of existing priority assets.

During this year's service planning process, staff have been mindful of the fiscal challenges facing the region in the months ahead. To that end, any budget increase or other impacts have been mitigated as much as possible.

Staff have not identified any new service delivery initiatives for 2021 that require additional funding. Priority initiatives from 2020, such as hiring a Recreation Specialist and a Cultural Interpreter, have been completed by repurposing existing vacancies. The Regional Parks Strategy update is also a priority and an options analysis is currently being done in-house and a staff report will be presented at a fall 2020 Regional Parks Committee meeting.

Since 2000, Regional Parks has acquired almost 4,800 hectares through the LAF. The fund was established in 2000 for a 10-year period (2000-2009) at a rate of \$10 per average residential household assessment. In 2010, the fund was extended for 10 years (2010-2019), starting at a rate of \$12 per average residential household assessment and increasing by \$2 per year to a maximum of \$20 in 2014, through to 2019. In 2019, the CRD Board renewed the LAF for another 10-year period (2020-2029) at the rate of \$20 per average residential household assessment.

For 2020, the LAF generated approximately \$3.9 million. The LAF increased from 3.75M in 2019 to \$3.86M in 2020, as a result of the addition of new households (property assessment folios) and will continue to grow with the creation of new households in the region.

If the LAF were increased in a similar phased implementation, each \$2 per average household increment would add approximately \$400,000 of available funds annually for land acquisition. A \$2 per average household increase represents a 2.5% increase to the total Regional Parks budget, and less than 0.15% increase to the CRD operating budget. By 2030, the LAF could generate in excess of \$8 million per year, resulting in a net 25% increase compared to the current Regional Parks budget or a 1.5% increase compared to the current CRD operating budget.

Service Delivery Implications

The Community Need Summary provides an overview of all work that needs to be undertaken in order to meet regulatory requirements, satisfy Board direction and meet the needs of the communities we serve.

To date, increased attention has been placed on educating the public on social distancing, staff and public safety and additional signage to increase awareness of prevention activities. This, in some cases, has required limited access or alternative approaches to public access, customer service, public engagement and meetings. It is anticipated that further COVID-19 impacts to service delivery will be realized throughout 2021.

The acquisition of new land often requires additional funds for management, development and operations. These costs are not included in the estimated costs to acquire land identified in the Land Acquisition Strategy. The management and development cost for each acquisition are identified in a report to the Board when it considers acquisition of a specific parcel.

On average, the cost to manage one hectare of CRD regional parkland is \$957/year. Sustainable service delivery needs to consider and plan for the growth of the CRD regional parks system over time. For example, maximizing optimization strategies and revenue generation options would be the priority for long-term system sustainability, as opposed to additional LAF funding.

Social Implications

Regional park visitation statistics indicate an upward growth trend in annual use. Higher visitor use puts utilization pressure on existing infrastructure, creating an increased need for ongoing maintenance or earlier replacement of assets.

Sustainable service delivery needs to consider and plan for the environmental and social carrying capacity of the parks and trails.

Regional parks and trails contribute significantly to the environmental, economic and social sustainability of the region and are a defining ingredient of the region's livability. However, given the social and economic uncertainty associated with the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic and other cost pressures emerging on requisitions across the Capital Regional District service areas at present, it is prudent to maintain the current LAF levy at the current level.

CONCLUSION

Staff have been progressing initiatives and actions identified in the Corporate Plan, including Board Priorities. The Board determines resourcing through its annual review and approval of financial plans. As per previous years, to support the Board’s decision-making, staff are providing recommendations on funding, timing and service levels through the service and financial planning processes.

RECOMMENDATION

The Regional Parks Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That Appendix A, Community Need Summary - Parks & Natural Resource Management be approved as presented and advanced to the October 28, 2020 provisional budget review process.
2. That the Land Acquisition Fund be maintained at the current rate of \$20 per average residential household assessment.

Submitted by:	Jeff Leahy, RPF, Senior Manager, Regional Parks
Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P. Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: Community Need Summary - Parks & Natural Resource Management
- Appendix B: Parks & Natural Resource Management – Initiatives Progress Report

Parks & Natural Resources Management

Strategy

Target Outcome

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

Strategic Context

Strategies

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

Trends, risks and issues

- Protection of important ecosystems, species and cultural values - With increasing visitor use, protecting park values while offering recreational opportunities is a major challenge. Compliance education is one of the best tools to alleviate these pressures.
- Sustainable Funding into the Future – Resourcing levels may have been adequate in the past, but now, with an expanding land base and higher levels of use, resources for the construction of new assets are not sufficient. A revenue strategy is being prepared for Fall of 2020 that will look at a fair and equitable system of administering Regional Parks and Trails user fees.
- Helping Understand and Fight Climate Change – The CRD continues to work with researchers and academics to collaborate on climate change research in our parks and protected areas.
- Planning for Regional Parks – With new Regional Parks opening and with the public and First Nations increasing their participation in the park planning process, it is more important than ever to ensure preparation of management plans is timely and effective. Management Plans are essential for the protection of values and the management of activities.
- Aging infrastructure continues to be a concern as some critical assets are reaching the end of their serviceable lives and require increased effort and money to renew or replace them.
- Connecting with Nature – Outdoor space and activities play an important role in the lives of residents of the capital region especially during COVID times.
- COVID 19 – 2020 has been typified by the efforts required to manage against the spread of Covid-19.

2021 Summary

From remote meetings, to changes in public consultation, from frequency of facility cleaning to the sheer number of people seeking social distancing opportunities in the parks, 2020 has been particularly challenging for staff to find new ways of protecting themselves and others as they manage the public expectation to have outdoor areas in which to recreate.

- Managing for Growth - Population growth and aging of the region’s current population will have profound implications for the Regional Parks and Trails as well as their assets.
- Embracing First Nations Relationships through Cultural Connections - Respect for First Nations traditions, culture and communities will be an important part of CRD Regional Parks’ future. That future includes more First Nations communities showcasing their heritage and cultural practices as well as offering opportunities for park visitors to learn about indigenous perspectives.

Services

Core Services Levels	
Service	Levels
<p>Planning, Resource Management & Development</p> <p>Contribute to effective and efficient decision making through plan and policy development, natural and cultural resource management, capital development planning, project management and geographic mapping; development of the Strategic Plan and park management plans. Provide oversight of the land acquisition program. Guide the implementation of scientific and technical work related to environmental management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage two Management Plan processes with at least one approval annually; direct and conduct engagement with, on average, three First Nations per plan. • Evaluate 20 candidate properties for land acquisition and complete one acquisition per year. Annual budget of \$3.7m. Develop activity reports and strategy documents. • Support planning and provide project management where needed for capital facility projects, annual expenditures to \$2m. • Manage two contracts per year for technical planning studies or services. • Undertake five conservation projects per year and maintain existing formal partnership agreements. • Manage asset inventory data and coordinate renewal forecasting asset management and capital project planning • Provide spatial and GIS data analysis and collection for a range of purposes, including existing and new digital data sharing

Community Need



2021 Summary

	<p>agreements and up to 200 public and internal cartography products for 34 parks and 100s of sign posts, park facilities, trails, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and develop asset management data. • Respond to around 70 development referrals per year.
<p>Regional Parks Operations Responsible for the daily operations and maintenance of regional parks, attending to nature centres, campgrounds, washrooms, trails, beaches, picnic areas, parking lots, bridges, kiosks and signs; implementing restoration projects and overseeing park safety and security, including bylaw enforcement and fire management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage and maintain 400km of park trails, 55 washrooms and 132 garbage containers (most serviced daily) • Undertake 20+ infrastructure and facility replacement and repair projects annually • Every year, prepare or update a Facilities Plan and 33 Operating Plans • Manage three campgrounds; meet target of 65% weekend occupancy rate at Sooke Potholes and Island View Beach (from May to September) • Conduct 5,000 compliance and enforcement patrol hours annually (CRD bylaw enforcement officers and CRD park rangers)
<p>Visitor Services Connect people with the natural environment, conduct social science research and planning, provide park volunteer opportunities for residents, cultivate community partnerships and provide administrative services; provide web-based park information and publications to the public, and issue park use permits for group picnic shelters and special events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 580 volunteers delivering 5,700 hours of engagement, parks and trails condition checks, and invasive species removal • Deliver 120 educational programs, 130 nature outings and 10 outreach events annually • Process 240 special events permits annually • Conduct up to eight Visitor Use Surveys annually <p><i>(subject to COVID-19 health protocols)</i></p>
<p>Regional Trails Manage Regional Trails system to protect and operate three regional trails that provide a transportation and recreation function and that provide non-motorized trails for active transportation and recreation to connect municipalities, electoral areas and the region with adjacent jurisdictions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate, manage and maintain 95km of multi-use regional trails • Conduct 250km of boom flail vegetation removal annually

Community Need



2021 Summary

<p>Support Services</p> <p>The core services listed rely on the support of several corporate and support divisions to effectively operate on a daily basis. These services are reported on in the Accountability Community Need Summary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services include Human Resources & Corporate Safety, Corporate Communications, Asset Management, Financial Services, Information Technology & GIS, Information Services, Legislative Services, Facility Management, Fleet Management, Legal Services, Risk & Insurance and Real Estate Services.
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Initiatives

Ref	Initiative	Description	Year(s)	Status	2021 impacts
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Regional Parks did not submit IBCs for 2021

Initiative approved in prior years which have now been delivered or absorbed in Core Services:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6a-8 – Capital Reserve and addition of 5 FTEs* • 6b-4 – Enhance Parks Operations* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6e-1 – Land Acquisition Fund Renewal • 6f-1 – Dog Management Policy Framework |
|--|--|

Business Model

Funding

Who contributes

- All 13 Municipalities and 3 Electoral Areas
- Support Services: varies per service

Funding Sources

- Requisitions, grants, donations and non-tax revenue

Reporting Structure

- [Regional Parks Committee](#)

Community Need Key Performance Indicator (KPI)			
Definition and Source	2019 Actual	2020 Forecast	2021 Target
<p>Metric 1: 100% of critical infrastructure in the Regional Parks and Trails system in good or better condition</p> <p>Percentage of critical infrastructure in the Regional Parks and Trails system that is in good or very good condition; data from asset management sustainable report cards.</p>	75%	85%	90%
<p>Metric 2: Maintain a visitor experience satisfaction rate of 85% or better for Regional Parks and Trails</p> <p>Percentage of visitors that described their overall experience with Regional Parks and Trails as 'quite satisfactory' or 'very satisfactory'; data from CRD Regional Parks Resident Survey 2017 (collected every 5 years)</p>	85%*	85%*	85%*
<p>Metric 3: A 25% contribution of land acquisition funding from community partners</p> <p>Percentage of the Land Acquisition Fund contributions annually that comes from community partners; data from Land Acquisition Updates</p>	0%	40%	25%
<p>Metric 4: Maintain a volunteer base of greater than 500 people</p> <p>Number of active volunteers in Regional Parks and Trails; data from volunteer registry</p>	526	350	500
Discussion			
<p>Link to Target Outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Land Acquisition Fund provides funding for the purchase of land for regional parks and trails. Tracking community contributions helps demonstrate the sufficient availability of funding and community support for the strategy that has been put in place. Measuring the level of asset renewal investment and condition of parks and recreation trail infrastructure is a good indicator of how well-maintained, and therefore accessible and inclusive, the infrastructure is. This is supplemented by information about visitor satisfaction to ensure that expectations are met and that CRD actions and initiatives are facilitating a good experience for visitors. <p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metric 1: Ensuring critical regional park assets are in good or better condition supports active living and recreation in a safe, inclusive outdoor environment. During COVID times increased access to a safe and inclusive regional parks and trails system is essential to personal health and wellness. 			

Community Need Key Performance Indicator (KPI)			
Definition and Source	2019 Actual	2020 Forecast	2021 Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metric 2: Maintaining visitor experience satisfaction suggests that CRD presence and actions are facilitating more than 7.5M visits where people connect with and embrace the regional parks and trails system. This in turn will generate the support for additional land acquisitions. • Metric 3: Since 2000, with the support of partners, the regional parks system has grown by almost 4,800 hectares through a number of land acquisitions valued at \$62.6M. The CRD partners in land acquisitions have contributed almost \$16.8M, or 27% of the overall cost of the purchases. Going forward, the CRD will seek an average of 25% contribution of land acquisition funding from community partners. The data recorded shows the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2019: \$6.5M invested in acquisitions with no partnership/community contribution ○ 2020: forecasted invested of \$1.1M for three potential acquisitions, with \$775,000 in partnership/community expenditure • Metric 4: Maintain a volunteer base of greater than 500 people. The number of volunteers in 2020 is lower due to COVID-19 and the cessation of volunteer activities. We expect that the volunteer base will return to pre-COVID-19 levels and we will continue to monitor the volunteer numbers in relation to the ongoing pandemic. 			

Parks & Natural Resource Management

Initiatives approved in 2020 Budget		
Ref	Initiative	Progress to date
6a-1	Regional Parks Strategy Update	Progressing - Regional Parks Committee Staff Report scheduled for early 2021 to present options relating to the Regional Parks Strategy update. Options analysis being done in-house.
6a-5	Recreational Initiatives – Recreational Specialist	Completed - Vacant Regional Parks position repurposed and Outdoor Recreation Specialist hired.
6a-8	Capital Reserve*	Completed - \$925,000 incorporated into regional parks capital reserve fund to help address critical assets that require renewal or replacement.
6b-1	Invasive Species Management	Ongoing - Part of core services
6b-2	Environmental Stewardship Programs	Ongoing - Part of core service – Expanded focus on community environmental stewardship.
6b-4	Enhance Parks Operations*	Completed – Two full-time Park Rangers and three full-time Park Maintenance Workers hired. Vehicles and supplies were acquired for the new positions.
6b-5	Mountain Bike Policy*	Progressing – Mountain Bike Committee in place and meetings are scheduled. Report out to the Parks Committee expected early 2021
6d-1	Engage with First Nations First Nations Liaison position	Completed – Vacant Regional Parks Interpretive position repurposed to a First Nations Cultural Interpreter position.
6e-1	Land Acquisition Fund Renewal	Completed – Approved by CRD Board for another 10 years
6f-1	Dog Management Policy Framework	Completed – Framework approved by the CRD Board. Completed in-house and funded through core budget.
7a-10	Jordan River Dam Breach Siren	Completed
13a-1.2	Recreational Programming and Rates – Regional Parks	Completed

* New - Initiatives not in the 2019-2022 Corporate Plan